

HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE

People First Zone Consultation Report

Introduction

A key object for the Newport High Street Heritage Action Zone is to create the first part of a “People First Zone” in Newport town centre through making improvements to the High Street and St James’ Street that provide greater space and priority for pedestrians while also enhancing the conservation area including the setting of key listed buildings.

Early community engagement took place on the People First Zone in 2020/21, building on what had already been discovered during the Shaping Newport survey in 2018. This was used to shape the development of early plans, which were developed by a Community Design Panel, consisting of a professional design and engineering team from Hampshire County Council, local residents, businesses and advocacy groups. The resulting masterplan was presented in this consultation which sought to understand the public’s views on the plans overall, as well as receiving detailed feedback to help shape further development of the plans.

Three phases of work were consulted on, though it was only anticipated that one or two of these could be delivered with current HAZ funding. By consulting on further phases, it enables these to be developed further with confidence and seek additional funding to deliver them.

An online consultation tool supplied by Placechangers was used to present the scheme and collect feedback. The plans were divided into 6 areas, with respondents invited to comment on each area separately. In addition, a short survey at the end collected more general views and key demographics. All responses were optional, to allow people to focus on the areas they wanted to comment on without having to work through the whole survey if they so wished.

The consultation material was also published in PDF form with a questionnaire which could be printed and returned by post. There was also an option to receive a printed copy to respond to. Postal responses were added to the Placechangers system before analysis took place.

The consultation ran from 1st February to 16th March 2020.

Produced by the Newport High Street Heritage Action Zone
Issued 16th May 2022



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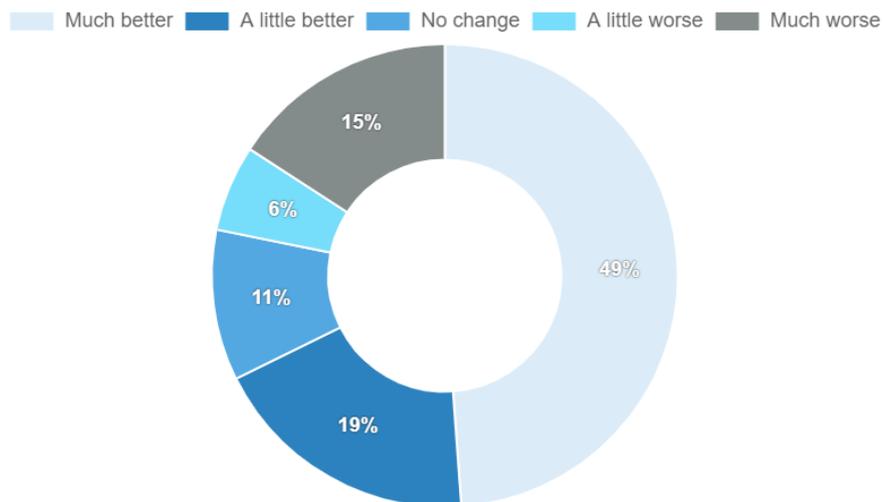
Responses

Responses were received from 182 people. As all questions were optional, numbers responding to each question do not represent the total number of respondents.

Responses to the scheme overall

Three questions were asked relating to the scheme overall. The responses were as follows.

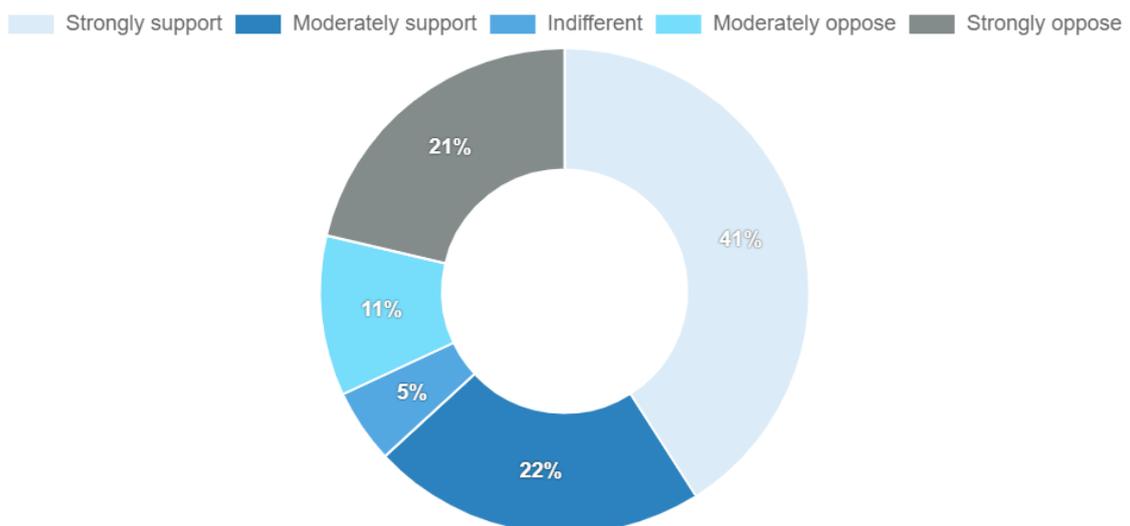
Overall, do you think the proposals will make this area better than it is now?



n=133

68% of respondents thought the proposals would make the area better, 22% thought it would make the area worse. (Variance from sum of percentages in the chart is due to rounding).

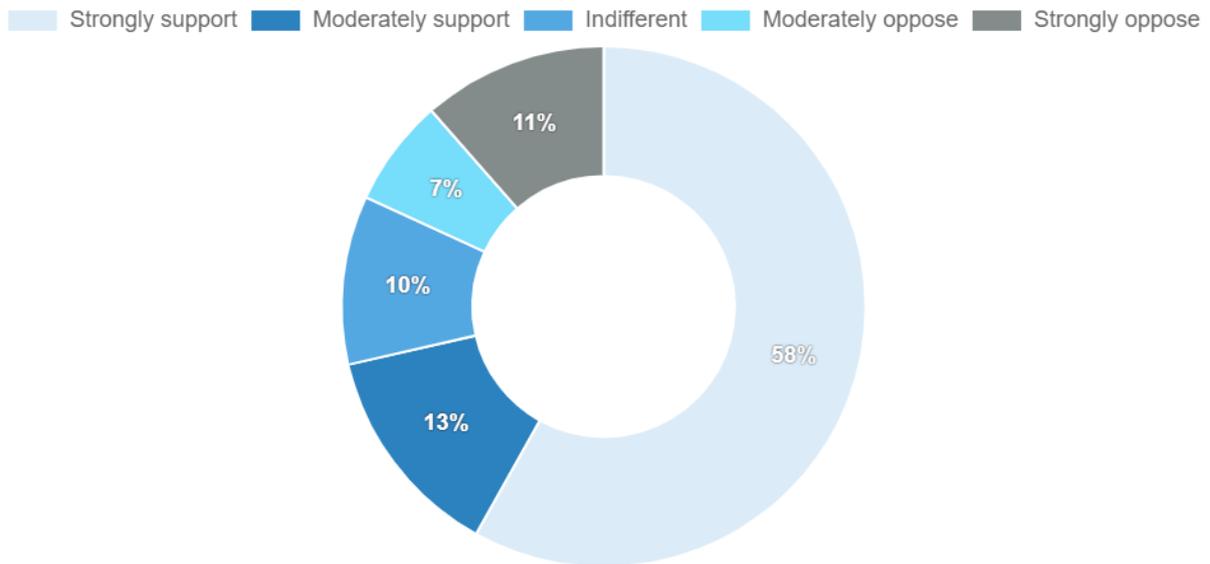
In general terms, how strongly do you support the overall plan?



n=122

63% of respondents supported the plan, 32% opposed them.

If the plans were modified to take account of any specific issues you have raised, how strongly would you then support the overall plan?



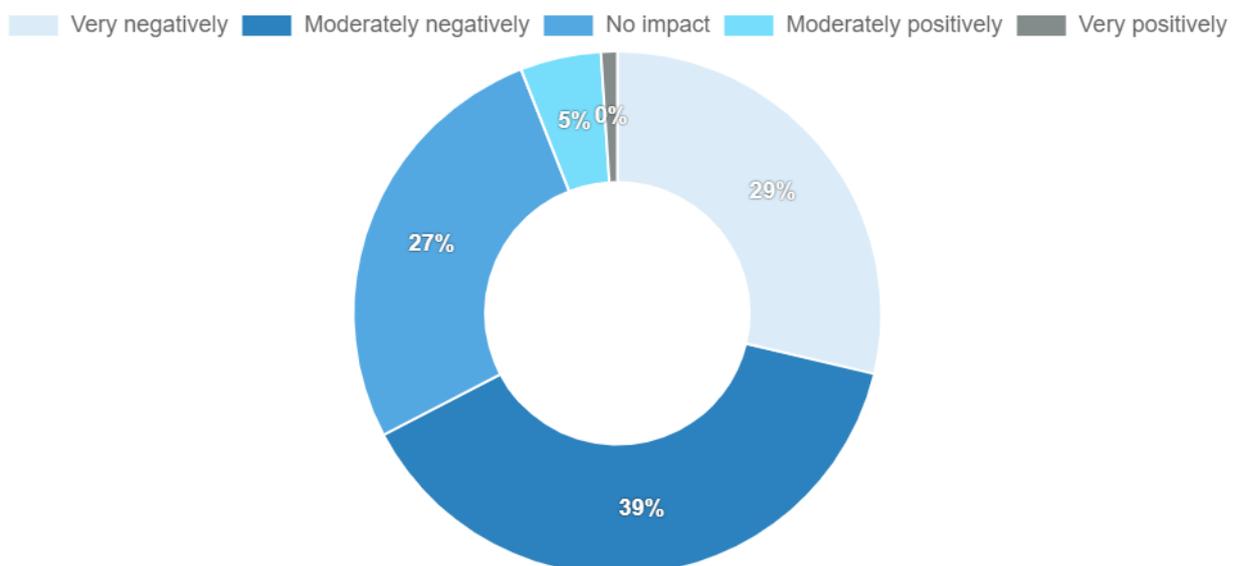
n=105

71% of respondents supported the plans if concerns were addressed, 18% remained opposed.

The majority of those who did not answer this question but did answer the previous one already strongly supported the plans (n=9). Others moderately supported (n=2), were indifferent (n=2), moderately opposed (n=2) or strongly opposed (n=2).

Four questions were asked about the impact of traffic on people’s experience of the town.

How do the current traffic arrangements in the town centre impact on your experience of the town?



67% of respondents indicated that current traffic arrangements negatively impact their experience of the town. Only 6% indicated a positive impact on their experience.

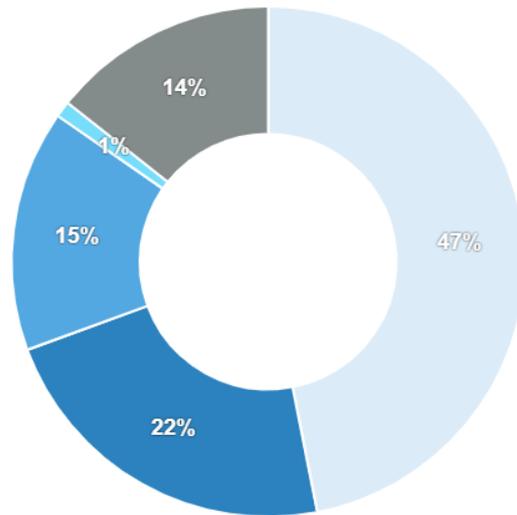
Are there any aspects of the current traffic arrangement in the town centre that you particularly like or dislike?

This was a free-text response question. 59 respondents provided an answer which were classified to draw key themes together. Some respondents made multiple points. Some responses did not relate to the question and have not been included in this table.

Dominance of cars/volume of traffic/speed of traffic	21
High cost of parking/lack of free parking	6
Circulation system/Lack of alternatives route (e.g. bypass)/Poor to drive through	5
Poor for cycling	4
Pavement width/pedestrian environment	4
Traffic lights (excessive amounts, poorly synchronised)	4
HGVs/ buses/tractors in town centre	2
Insufficient parking (leading to driving to search for space)/lack of accessibly located parking	2
Poor quality of car parks	2
Dislike bus lanes/buses in odd directions	2
Junction outside McDonalds	2
Dislike St Thomas' Square being closed to vehicles	1
Like bus lanes	1
Long waits at pedestrian crossings	1
Town centre provides a good shortcut	1
Cyclists riding on the pavement	1
Like ability to park in the High Street	1
Like Upper St James Street for convenience stops	1
Lack of priority for public transport	1
Poor access from the west	1
Congestion	1

Would having more pedestrian space make your experience of the town better?

Much better A little better No change A little worse Much worse

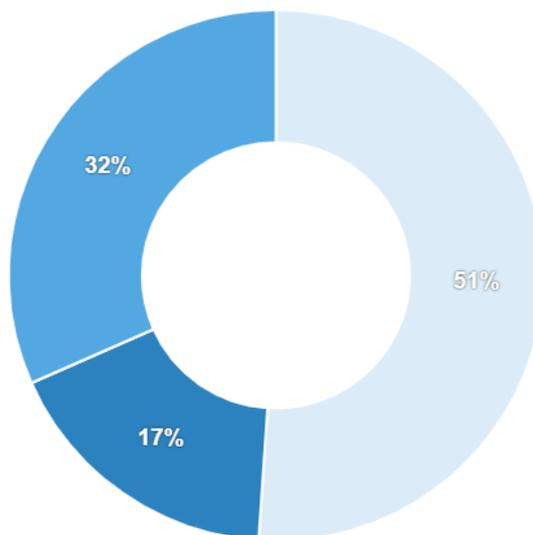


n=98

69% of respondents thought more pedestrian space would make their experience of the town better, 15% thought it would make it worse.

Would reducing the amount of traffic in the town centre improve your experience of the town, if there were suitable alternative routes around the centre?

A lot A little Not at all



n=98

68% of respondents thought reducing the amount of traffic would improve their experience of the town a little or a lot, while 32% suggested it would not improve their experience at all.

Demographic information

The majority of respondents (53%) came from the Newport/Carisbrooke/Gunville area with 45% from elsewhere on the Isle of Wight and 2% not on the Isle of Wight (n=95).

41% of respondents described themselves as female, 59% as male (n=93). The Isle of Wight's population is 51% female¹.

The table below shows the age profile of respondents compared to Isle of Wight population data.¹

	Respondents	IOW
Under 16	1	15
16-24	2	8
25-34	15	10
35-44	13	10
45-54	20	13
55-64	28	15
65-74	11	15
75-84	3	10
85 or over	0	4

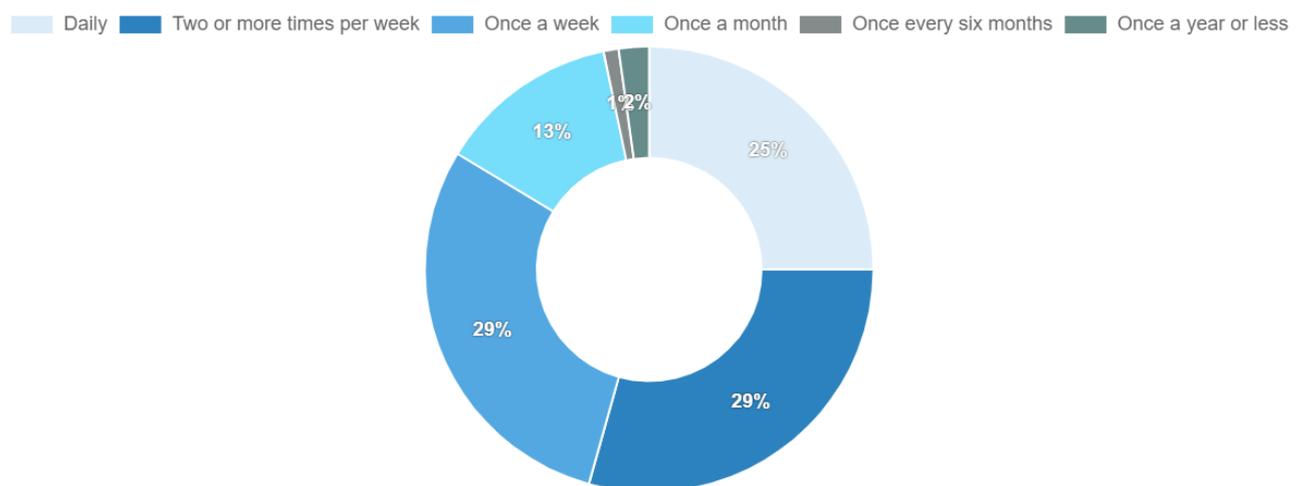
n=92

13% of respondents specified their day-to-day activities were limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted or is expected to last at least 12 months (n=86)

Visiting the town centre

Four questions were asked regarding how respondents visit Newport town centre

Which of the following best describes how often you generally visit Newport town centre?



n=92

¹ Office for National Statistics, Mid-Year Population Estimates, UK, June 2020.

84% of respondents specified they visit the town centre at least weekly, with 25% visiting on a daily basis.

How do you normally travel to Newport town centre
What is the main way you normally travel to Newport town centre

Mode	% of respondents who normally use this mode	% of respondents who cite this as their main mode
Walking	42	34
Bicycle	12	7
Bus	14	6
Car/van driver	59	42
Car/van passenger	22	4
Other	3	6

Gender differences

Women were more likely to think the proposals would improve the area than men were. 78% of women thought the proposals would improve the area, 62% saying it would make it much better, compared with 67% of men, 43% of whom thought it would make it much better.

Women showed stronger support for the plan than men, with 76% of women expressing support (50% strongly) compared to 60% of men (35% strongly supportive).

When asked about support for the scheme if plans were modified based on their feedback, women still showed stronger support for the plan than men, though the difference is smaller, with 73% of women expressing support (68% strongly) compared to 72% of men (56% strongly supportive).

There was little difference in response to the question “How do the current traffic arrangements in the town centre impact on your experience of the town?” between women and men.

The majority of both women and men suggested more pedestrian space would make their experience of the town better (70.2% and 70.9%) but women were more likely (54%) to rank it “much better” than men were (45%).

Responses of both men and women regarding reducing the amount of traffic in the town centre were similar.

Differences based on travel mode

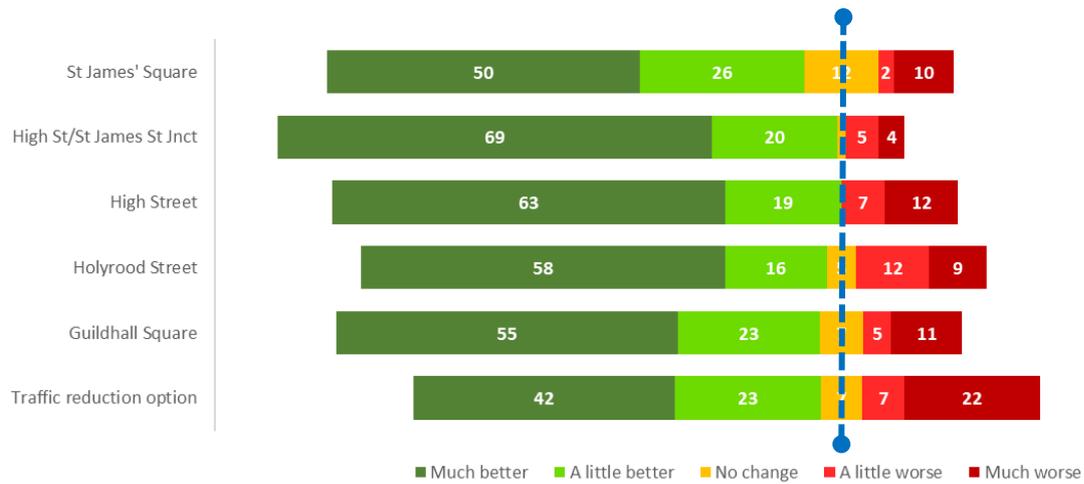
When examining responses based on the usual mode of travel to access the town centre, there is a notable difference between those who usually travel by car and those who use public transport, walk or cycle.

People who usually travel by car are much more likely to strongly oppose the plans (31% compared with 5% for other modes) and much less likely to strongly support the plans (31% compared with 53% for other modes).

Responses for each area of the plans

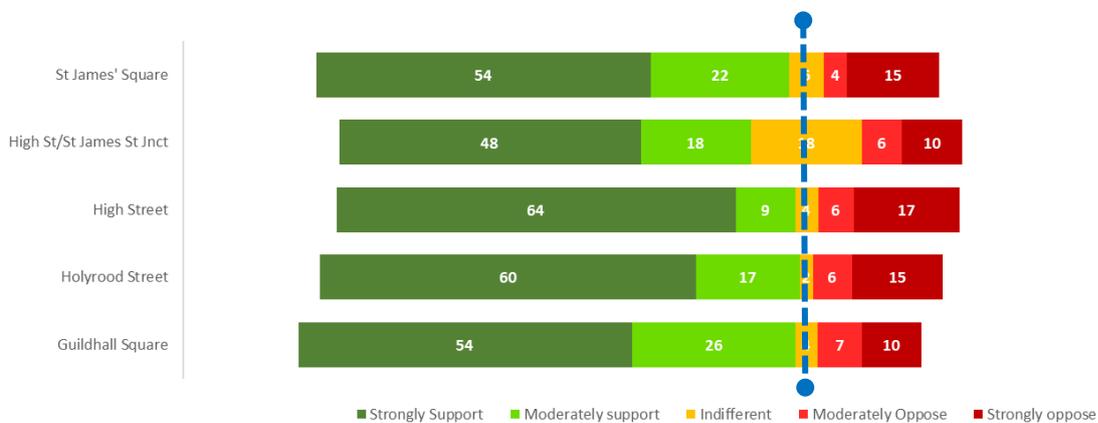
Two key questions were asked for each area:

Do you think the proposals will make this area better than it is now?



Between 65% and 89% of respondents thought the proposals would make the area better than it is now.. Changes at the High St/St James Street junction were seen as making the greatest improvement, with 69% of respondents specifying these would make the area much better than it is now and 20% that it would make the area a little better.

In general terms, how strongly do you support this part of the scheme



Between 66% and 80% of respondents supported each part of the scheme, with Guildhall Square receiving the highest percentage of respondents in support.

In addition, respondents were asked if there were particular elements of the scheme, they liked or disliked, and if they wanted to make any other comments on proposals in that areas. Comments made across these free-text questions were categorised and frequently made comments summarised in the tables below. Numbers in brackets represent the number of respondents making a comment in that category

Holyrood Street

Positive	Negative
One way traffic (8)	Reduction in parking/lack of alternative parking (4)
Better/wider pavements (5)	West side footway should be widened rather than creating east side footway (3)
New east-side pavement (5)	Should be completely closed to traffic/pedestrianised (3)

St James' Square

Positive	Negative
Better/wider pavements (10)	Reducing the number of vehicles - knock on traffic/longer journeys/Should be key traffic route/vehicle access (5)
Improved/raised crossings (9)	
Greenery/planting/trees (8)	
Repaving in consistent materials (5)	
Cycle parking (3)	
Controlling café space (3)	

St James' Street/High Street Junction

Positive	Negative
Removal of guard rail (9)	Should be pedestrianised (6)
Better/wider pavements (5)	More green time for pedestrians will increase congestion/pollution (3)
Extending crossing time at lights (3)	Removal of guard rail (3)
Raised table crossings (3)	

High St

Positive	Negative
Better/wider pavements (13)	Loss of convenient on street parking (9)
Removal of parking (5)	Should be pedestrianised (3)
All/most of it/general support (3)	

Guildhall Square

Positive	Negative
Taking traffic away from Guildhall/improved setting (5)	Quay Street remaining open (junction should be closed completely) (3)
All/most of it/general support (4)	Lack of two-way cycling (needs contraflow cycling) (3)
Greening (3)	One-way system (3)
Better/wider pavements (3)	

Key themes

One-way restrictions

Various comments were made on one-way restrictions included in the proposals. Some respondents were opposed to any further one-way restrictions, perceiving this as an impediment to moving around the town. Some questioned the logic of both Holyrood and Quay Street being one-way in the same direction. Other supported the approach. Several respondents highlighted a need for two-way cycle access on these streets, in line with Department for Transport guidance.

Levels of vehicle access

Varied views were expressed on vehicle access. Some respondents suggested the proposals do not go far enough and vehicles need to be completely banned from the town centre, through traffic should be removed, or other restrictions needed to be in place. Other respondents suggested the measures would cause traffic problems in surrounding streets and make driving through town difficult. Some respondents suggested revoking existing restrictions, for example opening up St Thomas' Square as a through traffic route to relieve congestion around the town. Vehicle access was seen by some as essential to the survival of the town and by others as the main impediment to its regeneration.

Parking

Parking was raised as an issue by many people. Comments mentioning parking were categorised based on the nature of the comment and shown below. Numbers relate to the number of comments rather than the number of people making them; in some cases, people have left similar comments in multiple places, and often one person has commented on several themes.

- Opposed to removal of High Street parking (21)
- Expressed support for removal of High Street parking (12)
- Alternative parking options are full/there is no alternative parking (3)
- Comments on parking charges (too high/should be free/nearest car parks are expensive etc.) (22)
- No disabled parking is included/proposals ignore disable people/disabled parking is removed (5)

Some respondents may not have fully understood the provision in the plans for disabled parking bays to be introduced to the High Street and Holyrood Street.

Questions over priorities

Some respondents questioned whether the proposals should be a priority for public spending, citing other actions they perceive need to be taken in priority to the proposed improvements (some of which form other Heritage Action Zone priorities). Others suggested that the plans do not go far enough and so will not fully address the problems the town faces and hence are a waste of money. Several respondents suggested there is no problem with the current environment for pedestrians in town and so the scheme was not needed.