

Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm and Urban Greening Interim Consultation Report

February 2024



Contents

Contents	1
1. Consultation Process	2
1.1 Background.....	2
1.2 Scheme Aims and Objectives.....	2
1.3 Publicising the Consultation.....	2
2. Methodology	3
2.1 Confidentiality.....	3
2.2 Consultation Survey.....	3
2.3 Analysis of Consultation Responses.....	3
2.3.1 Quantitative Analysis.....	3
2.3.2 Qualitative Analysis.....	3
3. Findings	3
3.1 Key Themes Analysis.....	3
4. Conclusion	5

1. Consultation Process

1.1 Background

As part of the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Sandwell Council is inviting residents, businesses, and community groups to have their say on plans to improve the public realm in Wednesbury Town Centre.

The public realm is the space between buildings that is open and accessible to everyone. This might include pavements, public squares and green spaces. This project aims to make Wednesbury town centre more inviting and safer, attracting more visitors which will help local businesses to grow.

The project will build on the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone works in the Conservation Area through improving paving materials, providing new trees and planting to improve the look of these areas and bring environmental benefits.

We are also proposing a reimagined area named 'Ethelfleda Square' between the bus station and Union Street to provide a flexible space for events and socialising that celebrates Wednesbury's history as a market town and industrial centre at the heart of the West Midlands.

Following consultation, we expect construction works to start around early summer 2024 with completion in spring 2025.

1.2 Scheme Aims and Objectives

The Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm and Urban Greening project aims to:

1. Create safe, lively and welcoming public spaces whilst promoting active and sustainable travel via walking, wheeling and cycling.
2. Encourage better use of public spaces with more seating and spaces to relax.
3. Promote biodiversity and greening to contribute to the health and wellbeing of people and to help protect against a changing climate.

1.3 Publicising the consultation

The consultation was launched on Monday 29 January 2024 and will run until 11 March 2024.

Sandwell Council has utilised a range of channels of communication to publicise the consultation including:

- Press release
- Internal council communication posts via email
- Council social media posts
- Sandwell Consultation Hub online survey

- Two in-person events in the town centre – Tuesday 13 and Saturday 17 February 2024
- Leaflet drops at key town centre locations, businesses and Friar Park Millennium Centre
- Four workshops with community groups including; Sons of Rest – Wellbeing Group, Age Well, Friar Park Millennium Centre Youth Group, We are Wednesbury Group
- Wednesbury Library – consultation materials provided

2. Methodology

2.1 Confidentiality

All responses to the survey were made anonymously and confidentially. The survey was conducted in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

2.2 Consultation Survey

The survey was a mixture of qualitative and quantitative questions, with the qualitative questions requesting people's comments to explain their views and give suggestions. A plan of the proposals was provided alongside artist impressions to provide a visual tool.

2.3 Analysis of Consultation Responses

2.3.1 Quantitative Analysis

Analysis was conducted on all responses to the quantitative questions. Percentage figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number for the majority of questions and, as a result, not all responses totals may equal 100%.

2.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

Each of the qualitative responses have been analysed and assigned to a theme or themes relevant to the question asked.

3. Findings

As of February 19 2024, a total of 133 responses have been received online alongside a range of comments from the in-person events and workshops. 'Appendix 1' provides an overview of the responses to the quantitative questions, Table 1. provides a breakdown of the qualitative data.

3.1 Key Themes Analysis

Respondents have provided a range of comments which fall into common themes.

Table 1. – Key Themes

Position	Theme
Positive	<p>Independent shops – respondents made positive references to the new café</p> <p>Greening – respondents made positive references to more trees being needed in the town centre</p> <p>Pedestrian access – respondents suggested the town is easily accessible for pedestrians to walk around</p>
Suggestions/ Improvements	<p>Variety of shops – respondents suggested more types of shops should be available in the town centre</p> <p>Public amenities – respondents suggested there should be a children’s play and event spaces, a public toilet, more benches and places to sit and bins</p> <p>Retail environment – respondents suggested there should be an improved variety of shops, market offer and better maintained buildings</p> <p>Safety – respondents stated there should be an increased police presence, better lighting and CCTV</p>
Negative	<p>Antisocial behaviour – respondents have referred to various issues such as drug dealing and usage, drunk and disorderly behaviour particularly in the evening</p> <p>Appearance of the town centre – respondents have commented on the town looking rundown and untidy particularly poorly maintained buildings</p> <p>Use types – respondents commented on the number of food takeaways, hairdressers and nail bars in the town centre</p> <p>Parking – respondents have referred to the cost of parking and the lack of cashless parking metres</p> <p>Market – respondents have referred to the market moving location and the market offer</p> <p>Vehicular movement – respondents have referred traffic issues particularly on Market Place</p>

4. Conclusion

This interim report provides the consultation responses from 29 January until 19 February 2024. A total of 133 responses have been received online alongside a range of comments from the in-person events and workshops. The full consultation report will be provided to the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Board once the consultation has closed and analysis has been complete.

A range of valuable comments have been received by these responses and will be incorporated in revisions to the scheme to ensure any issues relating to the public realm and urban greening proposals are resolved to alleviate problems raised. Comments relating to wider town centre issues such as parking and traffic will be shared with the masterplan project team to address in the draft masterplan proposals. The consultation report will be shared with internal council colleagues and external stakeholders to ensure issues regarding anti-social behaviour and crime are reported.