

Wednesbury Town Centre Public Realm and Urban Greening Consultation Report

April 2024



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1. Consultation Process

1.1 Background

As part of the Wednesbury Levelling Up Partnership Sandwell Council invited 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.

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 29th January 2024 and closed on 11th March 2024.

Sandwell Council 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 13th and Saturday 17th 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 included 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 questions where it has been appropriate to do so and, as a result, not all response totals may equal 100%.

2.3.2 Qualitative Analysis

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

3. Findings

A total of 147 responses were received online as well as a further 138 comments from the in-person events and workshops and one comment via email. The comments from the in-person events aligned with the comments received in the online survey.

3.1 Responses to Quantitative Questions

Responses to the quantitative questions asked in the online consultation survey can be found below. Overall, there is a good level of support for the individual proposals: Area outside the tram stop (67% positive), Victoria Street (58% positive), Holyhead Road (63% positive) and proposed 'Ethelfleda Square' (71% positive), Union Street (61% positive). Roughly 1/5 survey respondents expressed a neutral view of proposals neither liking nor disliking them.

Respondents were asked for further comments on each of the proposals in questions 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 26 and 28 and the responses have been included in the 'Key Themes Analysis' in section 3.2 of this report.

Question 1: Which of the following best describes you? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Someone who lives in Wednesbury	115	78.23%
Someone who works in Wednesbury	31	21.09%
Someone who visits Wednesbury for recreational or leisure purposes including seeing friends or family	30	20.41%
Someone responding on behalf of a business or organisation based in Wednesbury	8	5.44%
Another interested party (Please use the text box below to provide more information)	9	6.12%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 2: How did you find out about this consultation? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Social Media	74	50.34%
Sandwell Council Website	46	31.29%
Press Release	6	4.08%
Word of Mouth	16	10.88%
In Person Consultation Event	5	3.40%
Other	19	12.93%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 3: How often do you visit Wednesbury Town Centre? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
Every day	16	10.88%
1-2 times a week	46	31.29%
3-5 times a week	34	23.13%
A couple/few times a month	36	24.49%
A couple/few times a year	15	10.20%
Other	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 4: What are the most common reasons for you to visit Wednesbury town centre? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Shopping	122	82.99%
Meeting friends and family	38	25.85%
Entertainment	25	17.01%
Work	23	15.65%
To pass through on the way to somewhere else	51	34.97%
Other	22	14.97%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 5: Which parts of the town centre do you generally pass through? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Victoria Street	28	19.05%
Walsall Street	81	55.10%
Union Street	121	82.31%
Upper High Street	97	65.99%
Lower High Street	88	59.86%
Spring Head	81	55.10%
Ridding Lane	48	32.65%
Russell Street	42	28.57%
Shambles	69	46.94%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 6: When do you typically come to Wednesbury town centre? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Weekday daytime	113	76.87%
Weekday evening	40	27.21%
Weekend daytime	82	55.78%
Weekend evening	23	15.65%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 7: How do you typically travel to/from the town centre? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
Bus	25	17.01%
Train	0	0.00%
Car	103	70.07%
Taxi	3	2.01%
Bike	5	3.40%
Walking	73	49.66%
Wheelchair/Mobility Scooter	1	0.68%
Assisted Transport	0	0.00%

Motorbike	0	0.00%
Other	3	2.04%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 8: How does our town centre currently make you feel? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
Very Happy	1	0.68%
Happy	15	10.20%
Indifferent	37	25.17%
Unhappy	49	33.33%
Very Unhappy	45	30.61%
Don't Know	0	0.00%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 9: How easy is it for you to get around the town centre? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
Very Easy	59	40.14%
Somewhat Easy	40	27.21%
Neither Easy nor Difficult	31	21.09%
Somewhat Difficult	11	7.48%
Very Difficult	5	3.40%
Don't Know	0	0.00%
Not Answered	1	0.68%

Question 10: How safe do you feel in the town centre during the day? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
Very Safe	21	14.29%
Somewhat Safe	63	42.86%
Neither Safe nor Unsafe	27	18.37%
Somewhat Unsafe	27	18.37%
Very Unsafe	8	5.44%
Don't Know	1	0.68%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 11: How safe do you feel in the town centre in the evening? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
Very Safe	3	2.04%
Somewhat Safe	22	14.97%
Neither Safe nor Unsafe	23	15.65%
Somewhat Unsafe	32	21.77%

Very Unsafe	42	28.57%
Don't Know	25	17.01%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 12: Does anything stop you from using the town centre more often? (Please select all that apply)

Option	Total	Percentage
I don't feel safe	30	20.41%
There's nothing for me to do	46	31.29%
The shops don't meet my needs so I shop elsewhere	112	76.19%
It's hard for me to travel to the area	4	2.72
Other reason not stated	30	20.41%
Not Answered	0	0.00%

Question 13: How do you feel about the proposed ideas for the overall town centre area? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I like them a lot	26	17.69%
I like them somewhat	39	26.53%
I neither like nor dislike them	46	31.29%
I don't like them	22	14.97%
I really don't like them	12	8.16%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 15: With '1' being the highest priority and '8' being the lowest, please rank your priorities for improving the town centre in the areas shown:

Option	Score
Better lighting	4.96
More CCTV	4.56
More trees and plants	4.43
More benches and places to sit	4.03
More events	3.88
Better signage and directions	3.16
More public art	2.61

Question 17: How do you feel about the proposed changes for the area outside of the tram stop? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like them	47	31.97%
I like them	51	34.69%
I neither like nor dislike them	33	22.45%
I dislike like them	10	6.80%

I really dislike them	4	2.72%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 19: How do you feel about the proposed changes to Victoria Street? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like them	47	31.97%
I like them	38	25.85%
I neither like nor dislike them	30	20.41%
I dislike like them	20	13.61%
I really dislike them	10	6.80%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 21: How do you feel about the proposed changes to the area near Holyhead Road? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like them	49	33.33%
I like them	45	30.61%
I neither like nor dislike them	29	19.73%
I dislike like them	15	10.20%
I really dislike them	7	4.76%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 23: How do you feel about the proposed changes to this space (proposed Ethelfleda Square)? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like them	49	33.33%
I like them	56	38.10%
I neither like nor dislike them	24	16.33%
I dislike like them	9	6.12%
I really dislike them	7	4.76%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 24: Do you like the name Ethelfleda Square?

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like it	40	27.21%
I like it	33	22.45%
I neither like nor dislike it	45	30.61%
I dislike like it	17	11.56%
I really dislike it	10	6.80%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 27: How do you feel about the proposed changes to Union Street? (Please select one option)

Option	Total	Percentage
I really like them	40	27.21%
I like them	50	34.01%
I neither like nor dislike them	27	18.37%
I dislike like them	16	10.88%
I really dislike them	12	8.16%
Not Answered	2	1.36%

Question 29: Which of the following age bands are you in?

Option	Total	Percentage
0-18	0	0.00%
19-30	10	6.80%
31-40	17	11.56%
41-50	31	21.09%
51-60	33	22.45%
61-70	41	27.89%
71 +	10	6.80%
Not Answered	5	3.40%

Question 30: Which gender do you associate with?

Option	Total	Percentage
Female	82	55.78%
Male	54	36.73%
Non-binary	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	5	3.40%
Not Answered	6	4.08%

Question 31: What is your ethnic group?

Option	Total	Percentage
White English/Welsh/Scottish /Northern Irish/British	117	79.59%
White Irish	0	0.00%
White Gypsy / Irish Traveller	0	0.00%
White Roma	0	0.00%
Any other White background	2	1.36%
Mixed White & Black Caribbean	2	1.36%
Mixed White & Black African	0	0.00%
Mixed White & Asian	0	0.00%
Any other Mixed or Multiple background	1	0.69%
Asian or Asian British Indian	4	2.72%
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	3	2.04%

Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	1	0.68%
Asian or Asian British Chinese	0	0.00%
Any other Asian background	0	0.00%
Caribbean	2	1.36%
African background	1	0.68%
Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background	0	0.00%
Arab	0	0.00%
Any other ethnic group	0	0.00%
Prefer not to say	9	6.12%
Not Answered	5	3.40%

3.2 Key Themes Analysis

Respondents provided a range of comments which fall into common themes. These are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1.	
Category	Theme
Positive	<p>Greening – respondents expressed their support of the town centre needing more trees and greenery</p> <p>Pedestrian access – respondents suggested the town is easily accessible for pedestrians to walk around</p> <p>Seating and spaces – respondents were supportive of the measures to increase opportunities to sit and dwell in more pleasant surroundings and a plurality of respondents approved of the location and quality of these spaces</p> <p>Events – respondents expressed a desire for more events in the town centre</p> <p>Independent shops – respondents made positive references to the new café in the town centre</p>
Suggestions for Improvements	<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>Safety – respondents stated there should be an increased police presence, better lighting and CCTV</p> <p>Accessibility – respondents expressed the need for benches to be fitted with armrests to aid people sitting and getting up from them</p> <p>Retail environment – respondents suggested there should be an improved variety of shops, market offer, potential canopy on Union Street and better maintained buildings</p>
Negative	<p>Vehicular movement – respondents raised issues at Market Place and difficulty crossing at Holyhead Road</p>

	<p>Parking – respondents commented on the cost of parking and the lack of parking metres which allow them to pay with cash</p> <p>Appearance of the town centre – respondents commented poorly maintained buildings</p> <p>Antisocial behaviour – respondents stated their concerns on various issues such as drug dealing and usage, drunk and disorderly behaviour particularly in the evening</p> <p>Market – respondents have referred to the market moving location and the market offer</p> <p>Use types – respondents commented on the number of food takeaways, hairdressers and nail bars in the town centre</p>
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While the majority of respondents were supportive of the proposals for ‘Ethelfleda Square’ and the naming of the space, several alternative names were suggested in response to Question 25 of the consultation survey, including:

- Wodensburgh Walk
- Woden Square
- Russell Square
- Viking Square
- Love Square
- Wednesbury Square
- Sidney Webb Square
- Ethelfleda’s Wheel
- Picnic Square
- Wednesbury Urban Circle
- Boothroyd Square
- The Oval
- Vitality Square
- Town Square
- Central Square

4. Conclusion

Overall, the consultation exercise received a total of 147 online survey responses, 138 comments from the in-person events and workshops and one email response.

As can be seen by the quantitative and qualitative feedback, the majority of respondents were supportive of the public realm and urban greening proposals. A range of valuable comments and suggestions have been received and will be incorporated into the final design for the scheme and the name of the new square will be chosen by the public.

Comments relating to wider concerns about the town centre will be shared with the relevant Sandwell Council departments and partners to ensure these issues are raised. The council also seek to address these issues, where possible, in the draft masterplan which will be consulted on in May 2024.