



Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Study

Stakeholder and Community Engagement Report

LD&DESIGN



Contents

1.0	Walking Tour	8
2.0	Stakeholder Workshops	12
3.0	Community Pop-up	54
4.0	Talking Point Questionnaire	62
5.0	Overall Conclusion	71

Appendices

- Appendix A Engagement Flyer
- Appendix B Community Pop-up Questionnaire
- Appendix C Talking Point Questionnaire

This document is to be read in conjunction with the following separate reports:

1. Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Study - Baseline Evidence Report (LDA Design)
2. Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Study - A Reimagined Royal Spa Town of the Future (LDA Design)
3. Town Centre Study: Transport & Carbon Baseline Report (City Science)
4. Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Retail Study and Healthcheck (Knight Frank)

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This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2015



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ROYAL

Feedback forms
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre Plan

Feedback forms
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre Plan

Feedback forms
Royal Tunbridge Wells
Town Centre Plan

Overview

A series of engagement events took place in October and November 2022 to discuss the future for the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre. This engagement process was an informal first step to inform the Town Centre Study undertaken by LDA Design, City Science and Knight Frank alongside Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and the Town Centre Working Group. The purpose of the engagement was to discuss the future of the Royal Tunbridge Wells with local people and businesses, share local knowledge, participate in developing ideas and a vision for the future Town Centre Plan, and for the LDA Design, City Science and Knight Frank team to hear local views and reflect on the feedback. Various forms of engagement were undertaken including in person workshops, a community pop-up event and a questionnaire on the on-line engagement platform Talking Point.

This engagement report provides an overview of the various engagement events that took place, and summarises the ideas and opinions raised. It should be noted that this document is a summary of the comments raised and does not provide commentary on the viability or suitability of proposals, it is simply documenting the process and responses. Further future public engagement will take place as part of the Local Plan process and Town Centre Plan where ideas can be refined and developed further.

The report is structured in the following way:

1. Walking Tour

- A summary of the walk with the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Working Group that took place on 10th October 2022

2. Stakeholder Workshops

- Introduction to the format of the workshops
- Key themes – a summary of the comments made during the workshops
- Overview of the Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop that took place on 11th October 2022
- Overview of the Public Realm Improvement Workshop that took place on 11th October 2022
- Overview of the Opportunities for Development Workshop that took place on 12th October 2022

3. Community Pop-up

- Overview of the event in Tunbridge Wells Town Centre at the Five Ways Precinct (12th October 2022)
- Key themes – a summary of the comments made at/after the pop-up event

4. On-line Talking Point Consultation via Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's website

- Overview of the responses received during the four week consultation period (26th October to 22th November 2022)

We are very grateful to all those who took part in the various engagement events.



1.0 Walking Tour

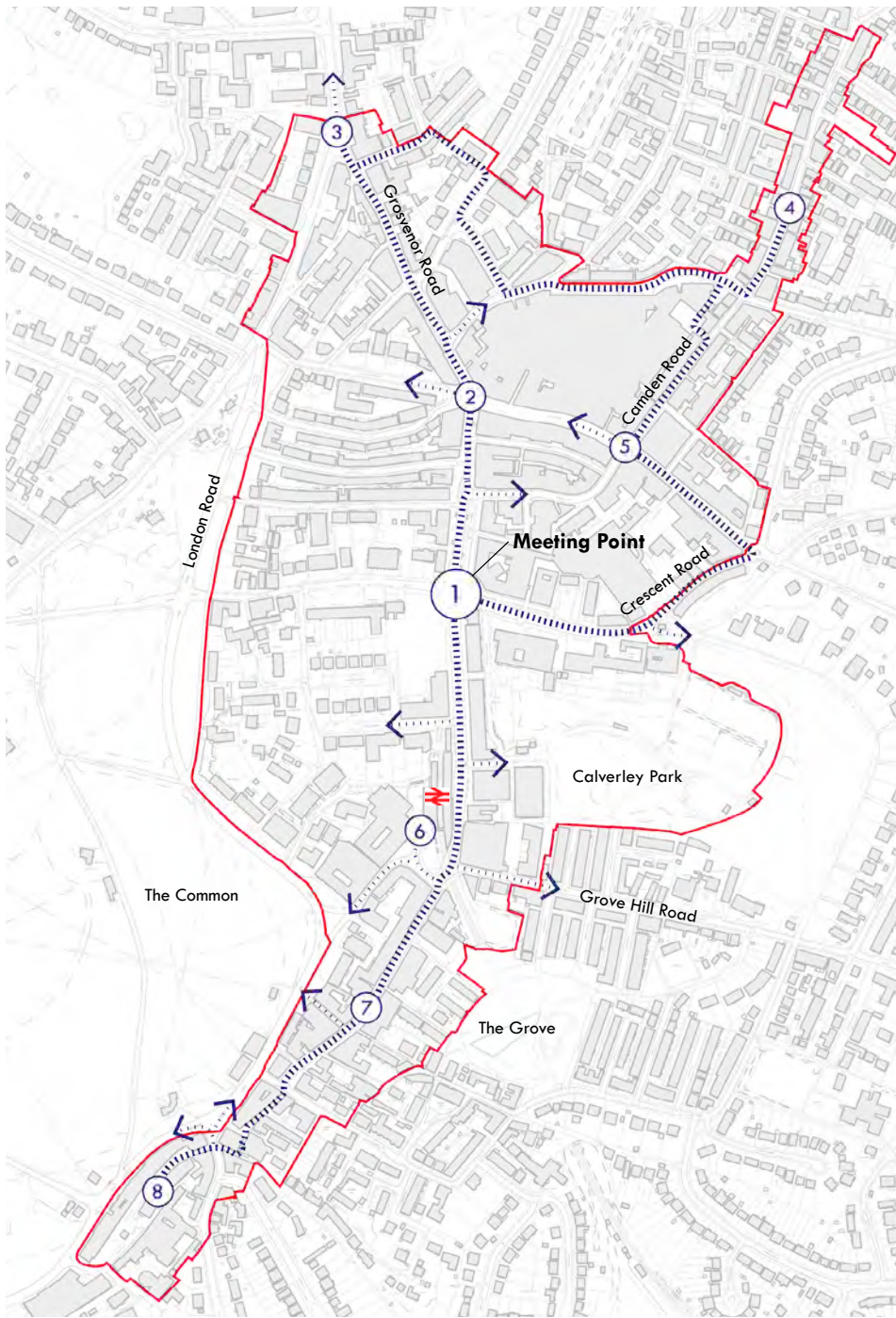
Tuesday 11th October 2022

LDA Design and City Science joined representatives from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Working Group on a walking tour around the town centre.

The tour consisted of a two hour walk around the Town Centre Study Area, stopping at key points along the route as identified on the walking tour map (on the next page). Feedback and thoughts from the group were varied in terms of their views on the success of recent works to Five Ways and the area outside the Town Hall; the dominance of car; and concerns around pedestrian connectivity throughout the town. A summary of the points raised are set out below and grouped according to location within the Town Centre Study Area.

1.1. Northern part of the town centre

- One way road layout – Is this still necessary? What are the alternatives? Can this be analysed? Remove railings and make safer. Improve
- Bus station – Is the one way system multi-storey car park a good location for a bus station with residential above?
- Grosvenor Road – Shops are doing well. What can help the street? Should there be a separate study?
- Grosvenor Road – used to be benches but were removed due to anti-social behaviour.
- Grosvenor Road roundabout – unpleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. A car dominated gateway into the Town.
- Tesco / Other building façades – Review building frontages. What can be done to improve the street frontage?
- St John’s area to the north – Refuse retail applications to encourage trips and spend in the town
- Solomon’s College – There used to be more education uses in this area. What happened? Can this use be reintroduced?
- Twitten – a local phrase for a cut through / a narrow path or passage
- Camden Road – Should the area linking to the town centre be one-way?
- Camden Road Traders – Liaise with the BID
- Station Road – historically workshops e.g. Travis Perkins, the character has changed
- Character areas: Key Street conditions to be reviewed



Royal Tunbridge Wells Walking Tour Route

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. Meeting Point (Assembly Hall / Town Hall / Amelia Scott / ABC Cinema Site) | 5. Calverley Road / Crescent Road |
| 2. Five Ways Precinct, Meadow Road, Grosvenor Road | 6. Tunbridge Wells Train Station / Torrington Car Park / Mount Pleasant Car Park |
| 3. St John's Road | 7. High Street |
| 4. Camden Road | 8. The Pantiles |

- Connections and movement are key. Lots of barriers
- Highways – dominated and polluted. How does this change?
- Public realm - Upgrade public realm outside Tesco & Fuggles cafe – Remove a vehicular lane and street clutter, widen footways, tree planting

1.2. Civic area

- AXA site – vacating the site opposite the Town Hall as they have another site in the SE of the Town.
- Camden Market Square – a cold and shady place with limited / no visual connection to Camden Road. Small square with mature trees doesn't work. Adjacent tenants have left. How can this area be made to work better? (Refer to 3rd photo on the next page)
- Camden Road – only a couple of bus services a day
- RVP food market – Reinstate asap
- Monson Road, also known as the precinct
- Carrs Corner (local phrase) / Crescent Road roundabout – A dangerous intersection. Difficult to cross
- Crescent Road vacant unit on corner at Carrs roundabout and units along Crescent Road. A gateway position on corner and a busy street. How could this be improved?

1.3. Mount Pleasant Road

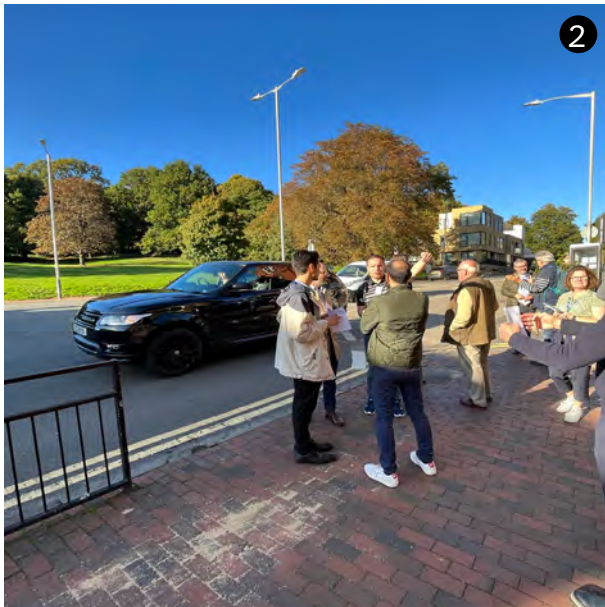
- Arcade (Sainsbury's building) opposite the station terminates with a car park. Can views and routes to the park be prioritised?
- Station roundabout and bridge crossing – Remove roundabout and barriers, widen footways, improve pedestrian experience
- London Road roundabout by The Common / The Pantiles - Remove roundabout and barriers, widen footways, improve pedestrian experience, Oxford Circus crossing
- Network Rail site by station – Could this be better used and redeveloped?
- Shop fronts – Animate upper levels (Folkestone) with different colours
- Key events – Some are at Calverley Grounds. Visitors then don't spend in the town centre. Can key events be relocated in the town centre?

1.4. The High Street and The Pantiles

- High Street – “one way has made it much quieter and a lot less road rage”
- High street – the pilot schemes have been a success, the changes (making the road one way) wouldn't have happened without the pilot scheme.
- Engagement – Get KCC, Bus, hotel and leisure operators, BID, retailers, residents on board
- Health and well-being / Spa town – How can more of this be made?

- Evening economy – Lack of night life / Bars
- The town centre is tarmac dominated
- Lack of pocket spaces
- What are the drivers of a good place? Schools, WIFI, leisure etc.

1. Walking Tour - RVP Food Court
2. Walking Tour - A26/London Road by The Pantiles
3. Walking Tour - Camden Market Square
4. Walking Tour - Mount Pleasant Road opposite the Amelia Scott



2.0 Stakeholder Workshops

The overall aim of the workshops was to engage with key stakeholders, including local interest groups, borough/district councillors, local traders, travel operators/groups, developers, and attendees from other local authorities to better understand and appreciate the range of views and experiences, and to develop a shared vision for the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre.

Over 45 invited stakeholders (invite attached at Appendix A) attended the three themed workshops – Movement and Decarbonisation, Public Realm Improvements and Opportunities for Development and contributed ideas. These ideas highlight the communities' concerns and suggestions for improvement within the town centre and will assist in the development of strategic recommendations for 2040 vision of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan.

Each workshop included a challenges and ambitions (post-it notes) workshop and a hands-on planning workshop. The event was staffed by team members from a wide range of backgrounds including masterplanners, landscape architects, transport engineers, sustainability specialists and retail and leisure experts.

The workshops were in four parts:

- **Challenges:** What are the problems with the Town today in respect of the theme of the workshop? Where are people's concerns?
- **Ambitions:** What would you like to see happen? What does 2040 in Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre look like?
- **Breakout Groups:** Discuss themes in more detail. Each group presented back their thoughts and ideas to the remainder of the group to spark further discussions and identify common goals.
- **Priorities:** Each member was given 3 votes to choose their top priority themes previously identified in the breakout group presentations.

The outputs from the workshops are explained in the next section.

2.1 Key Themes - Stakeholders

To distil the views derived from the engagement activities, a series of 'Key Themes' have been developed. They set out the stakeholders views derived from the Stakeholder Workshops and are highlighted by quotes from attendees.

2.1.1. A Spa Town

Royal Tunbridge Wells is a Spa Town, founded on the principles of well-being and health in the early 17th century following the Chalybeate Spring discovery. Many noted that Spa Town status is an asset that draws tourists to the Town, but its full potential is not currently being realised. The Town should again focus on health and well-being, and the surrounding environment should induce a peaceful atmosphere. To achieve this, the participants suggested introducing water features, well-integrated green infrastructure, and active streetscape, and celebrating and showcasing the vast amount of preserved historical assets. These elements should be interlinked and tell a story to attract visitors and establish Royal Tunbridge Wells as a well-being destination.

“Celebration of spa town!”

2.1.2. Character & experience

The linear nature of the town centre creates opportunities as well as challenges. The form naturally creates different areas of character between the top and bottom of the town centre. There were many discussions about how this should be dealt with, whether the Town requires further connectivity north-to-south, or whether there is benefit in the different parts having a different draw and therefore people visit at different times. While there was no consensus on this, it was clear that the distinction in character is something that should be built on, celebrated and reinforced within the Vision. This includes joining up events, businesses, and institutions to create links between events throughout the Town.

“Back to a buzzing place”

2.1.3. A new gateway

Currently the arrival experience into Royal Tunbridge Wells from the north via the St John's Road (A26) roundabout is rather poor, vehicle dominant and lacks a pleasant environment for pedestrians and cyclists. There is an opportunity to reconsider this gateway into the town centre and create a high quality, attractive setting upon arrival. There are plans in place for improved cycle routes along the A26, this along with the introduction of street trees and/or widening of pavements would create a more welcoming environment for pedestrians and cyclists. These improvements to the gateway should extend into Grosvenor Road, an area that many noted has a good selection of shops but has suffered from antisocial behaviour.

2.1.4. Appearance and maintenance

Local people and businesses feel passionately about the Town and its assets. However, many feel that more could be done to enliven the place including improving the external facades of existing buildings, introducing colour to add vibrancy to the street scene, consistency of signage and improve the maintenance of surface materials. Many recognised the benefits of the recent improvements to the Millennium Clock / Five Ways Precinct in improving the pedestrian experience. However, some noted that the area in front of the Town Hall could go further e.g., to further reinforce the 'square' feature in front of the memorial, introduce seating and more greening of the street.

"Make people look up above the shop windows"

2.1.5. Pedestrian and cycle connectivity

There is a desire to promote and improve sustainable modes of travel throughout the town centre such as walking, cycling, and providing adequate space for buses so that they do not dominate the streetscape while also being accessible. A review of the pedestrian and cycle crossing points at key locations Carrs Corner, Mount Pleasant / Crescent Road, Vale Road and the High Street, and Cumberland Walk to the Pantiles, to follow desire lines and re-prioritise the non-car uses was a key aspiration. Furthermore, providing designated cycle lanes that are separated from cars and pedestrians and increased cycle parking spaces. There's an opportunity to create pleasant sustainable travel routes through the town centre that are generous, landscape led and connect the cultural and heritage assets in the town.

"A thriving, bustling and well balanced (meet the needs of all forms of transport and businesses, walk cycle or drive) town centre – welcoming, safe and accessible"

2.1.6 Provision for leisure

Participants were keen to see an improved leisure offer for Royal Tunbridge Wells that provides activities and facilities for all residents, that supports the day and night-time economy. Whilst cultural places such as Trinity Theatre, Amelia Scott and Assembly Hall have been highlighted and praised - the attendees recognised that there is a severe lack of leisure & recreational uses catered towards the younger demographic.

Suggestions for leisure uses included a cinema, swimming pool, night club, indoor bowling as well as spaces for events such as outdoor bars or markets. Some noted that the Town Centre Plan can act as a wider placemaking strategy to help bring forward a coordinated retail, leisure and public realm plan.

“A place to be somewhere with your family and to have a whole day out”

2.1.7. Attracting and retaining the younger generation

Participants stated that there is a lack of facilities such as leisure or retail for young people and that they are currently priced out of Royal Tunbridge Wells due to high rent prices. Some higher education facilities are located in the northern part of the town centre, it was therefore suggested that options to expand this post-graduate offer, a connection to arts and culture or language facilities within the town should be explored. It was acknowledged through the engagement that there needs to be further discussion with younger representatives that live and work in Royal Tunbridge Wells to feed into the Town Centre Plan and play a part of shaping the future of the Town.

“To have a thriving town centre, with good night-time economy and lots to do for young people”

2.1.8. Town centre living

The workshops revealed that stakeholders would like to see a rich mix of uses within the town centre incorporating a range of housing, including affordable. Participants noted that a number of recent planning

permissions include retirement living and therefore the focus going forward should be on affordable housing for families and the younger generation. It was recognised that new development will not be the only way of introducing more town centre living, and that the conversion of upper floors of retail and infill sites could also be explored. The location of new housing should maximise connectivity to open spaces and sustainable modes of travel.

“A range of housing including affordable to bring a younger demographic to town”

2.1.9. The retail offer

Many acknowledged the varied retail offer that exists in Royal Tunbridge Wells, including independent shops on Camden Road, however there are also a number of vacant units including the food court within the Royal Victoria Place. Participants expressed a desire for shops that cater for younger people and families as well, such as clothing and for places for markets and cultural events to take place in the northern part of town. Some referred to the Camden Market Square as being shaded and cold and disconnected from Camden Road and Victoria Road and therefore does not work as a market space. The retail offer and variety of shops reflects the character areas across the town, and the future plans for retail should reflect and enhance these differentiations in identity.

“A town which caters for a mix of ages – through retail, community uses etc..”

“A more sustainable town with more to do”

2.1.10. Traffic and vehicular movement

Traffic through the Town, congestion at peak times and the movement of HGV's through the town, in particular along the A26 and B2023 are a concern for local people. A key aspiration for participants is to reduce the traffic dominance of key routes and spaces and give priority back to pedestrians, cyclists and activities such as markets or spill out space for shops and cafés. The wider movement network through the town for larger vehicles should be considered as a whole as part of the Town Centre Plan. Participants proposed exploring the repurposing of a car park for a bus station, or the creation of designated layover spaces for buses to park for longer periods of time. There are a number of bus services that service the Town and connect to surrounding towns and villages, however due to the number of operators this has resulted in a number of different bus stops and timetables. Participants suggested a more coordinated approach to bus information e.g. an app or integrated ticketing systems that will improve the accessibility to and appeal of using public transport over the car.

“Connectivity not always clear/obvious”

2.1.11. A green focus

Many noted the amazing greenspaces that are located within or next to the town centre such as The Common, Calverley Grounds and the Grove. More should be made to link these greenspaces together and into the town centre through greening of streets and opening up routes and views to these spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. It is evident that a lot of events already

happen in these spaces all year round, however they are contained within the greenspaces. How can they be used as a catalyst for more activity in the town centre especially for the younger generation and families?

“A vibrant, sustainable town with limited cars in the centre – will have good links to the surrounding areas by active travel. A green and attractive environment.”

“Need more greenery, trees and planters for shade and clean air”

“Linking existing parks with urban open spaces in a seamless way through green corridors”

2.1.12. Parking provision and repurposing of buildings

There are a number of multi-storey car parks within the town centre, with varying levels of usage. Many participants discussed the potential to repurpose these buildings into uses that serve multiple functions, for example a mobility hub that incorporates bus layover spaces, cycle parking provision and repair shop, or even leisure uses. Meadow Road car park has been identified as an opportune location for redevelopment. Participants were keen to reduce the amount of on-street parking within the town centre to lessen the vehicle dominance of cars on streets and the associated congestion and even create car free zones to improve the streetscape.

“A vibrant, sustainable town with limited cars in the centre...”

2.1.13. Future opportunities

Stakeholders discussed potential development opportunities (RTW Local Plan sites not included) within the town centre. This list is intended to be a summary of the points raised at the engagement events, some of which may not be appropriate for the Town Centre Study or Plan at this time. The following opportunities have been highlighted:

Mount Pleasant Road – Can be perceived a physical barrier due to the topography of the street, how can points of interest and places to dwell be incorporated to make the journey pleasant and worthwhile? Many also commented on the desire for something to happen on the former ABC cinema site.

Vale Road / Station Approach – Explore opportunities to redevelop existing car park and office blocks into medium to high density affordable housing

Amelia Scott Community centre – Creation of new F&B (Food & Beverage) space on top of the existing building

Calverley Grounds – A new ‘pop up’ events auditorium

Royal Victoria Place – Introduction of leisure uses e.g. a cinema or bowling alley to improve the night-time economy. Review of retail spaces within the building and consider opportunities for residential or higher education establishments – linking with surrounding uses (as opposed to campus-based universities).

Meadow Road Car Park – Re-purposing of the existing car park to create a new mobility hub with places for buses to park for longer periods and a bus station.

Civic Quarter – potential to redefine the area into a mixed-use hub for offices, residential, arts, potential hotel and a health hub

Monson Road / Northern Mount Pleasant Road – Introduction of temporary local food market stalls and events to increase footfall and aid the local economy

Grosvenor Road – Re-distributing some of the existing retail into offices & housing

Ely Court & RVP Food Court – Revamp existing facilities and make the area quirky, unique, and vibrantly full of outdoor restaurants and bars

Camden Road – Introduce one way vehicular route and widen pavements for shop fronts and outdoor seating areas

The outputs from the workshops are explained in the next section.



AMBITIONS

OPPORTUNITIES
FOR DEVELOPMENT

CHALLENGES

ST
PACT
ENTIAL
ES
BUILDING
REAL

2.2 Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop

Tuesday 11th October 2022

The Movement and Decarbonisation workshop aimed to identify the current state of vehicular, cycle and pedestrian movement throughout the town centre, and how participants envisage its transformation towards the future.

After identifying and discussing movement and decarbonisation challenges and ambitions as a group, the attendees were split into four breakout tables to discuss commonly highlighted 'key themes' in further detail:

- Breakout Group 1 - Traffic & Parking
- Breakout Group 2 - Public Transport
- Breakout Group 3 - Movement
- Breakout Group 4 - Active Travel

Stakeholder representatives from the following groups attended the workshop:

- Kent County Council (KCC)
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Together (BID)
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC)
- Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum
- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)
- Tunbridge Wells Town and Local Areas
- Brighton & Hove (bus company)
- Commons Conservators
- RTW and Area Access Group

2.2.1. Challenges

A summary of the challenges raised during the workshop are set out below:

- Poor pedestrian environment, narrow footpaths along key routes and congestion causes air pollution issues
- Unsafe crossing points for pedestrians and cyclists that do not follow desire lines e.g. A26 to The Common and south from the High Street to The Pantiles
- Lack of secure cycle parking
- Not a cycle friendly environment, a lack of segregated cycle lanes
- Conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists e.g. in The Common
- Accessibility
- Lack of safe routes to school by foot or cycle – tend to travel by car
- Traffic volume causing congestion in the town centre, especially at peak AM and PM times on A26 and A264
- Impact of HGV traffic, servicing, and deliveries
- Low parking charges and free parking spaces creates a car and parking dominant environment
- No EV charging opportunities
- A car culture
- Expensive bus services
- Lack of bus layover or station / parking spaces for buses, coaches and school buses
- Lack of real time transport infrastructure
- A lot of bus stops, cluttering streets and building frontages.
- Too much retail
- Lack of political consensus for the future of the town centre, including a lack of support for sustainable travel
- Access from rural areas is poor

Congestion
Associated
Pollution

Traffic
Congestion

A26 + 1
(both ways,
& evening)

Access
from
rural
areas

A roads through
the middle of
town -
including much
HGV traffic

lots of cars
cutting up town
centre

Travel to
Secondary

run - inc.
mable

low domi

"First choice for most is to drive to shops!"

"No designated coach parking for tourists, schools and buses only a 'bus street'"

"Pedestrian problems - poor pavements, few crossings, benches (rest), speeding traffic"

"Connectivity through the centre not always clear / obvious"

"Congestion and associated pollution"

EXISTING
ROAD SETUP
(eg bus lanes)
OUTDATED &
UNDERUSED

Service up /

mile delivery

Whi

2.2.2. Ambitions

A summary of the ambitions for 2040 raised during the workshop are set out below:

- Build in climate resilience
- Leisure activities
- Greenspaces and greening of the streets embedded as part of the town centre
- Safe for pedestrians and cyclists, including school children
- Very few cars in the town centre and more pedestrianised areas
- Friendly for all ages and abilities
- Clean and welcoming
- A vibrant, thriving, and sustainable place
- A welcoming town
- A visitor destination
- Great public transport and rail connections
- Improved pedestrian and cycle routes from the wider area into the Town

Movement and Decarbonisation

What is your ambition for Royal Tunbridge Wells?

Panasonic

CHALLENGES

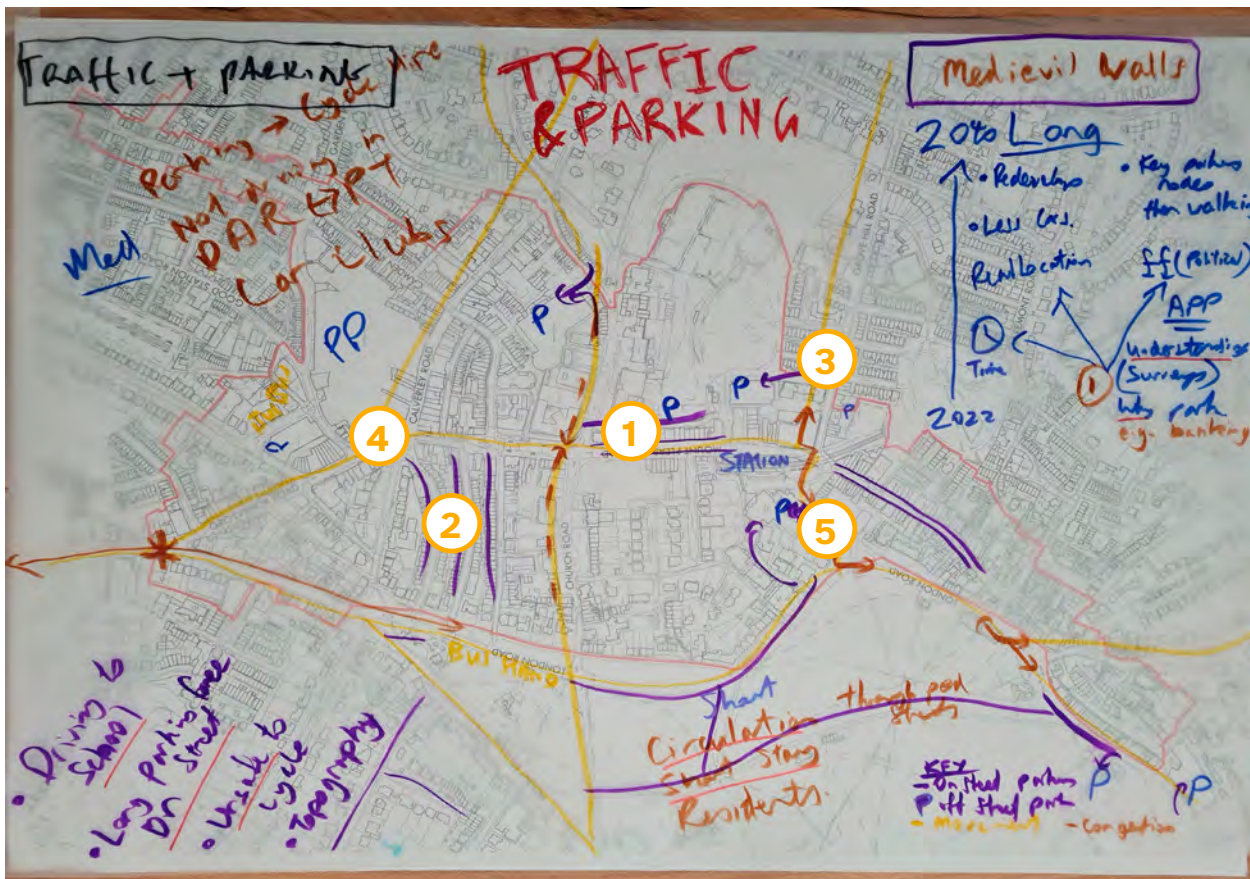
“A vibrant, sustainable town with limited cars in the centre – will have good links to the surrounding areas by active travel. A green and attractive environment.”

“A vibrant town built around culture and heritage”

“To have a thriving town centre, with good night-time economy and lots to do for young people”

“A thriving, bustling and well balanced (meet the needs of all forms of transport and businesses, walk cycle or drive) town centre – welcoming, safe and accessible”

“A one stop town to work, rest and play!”

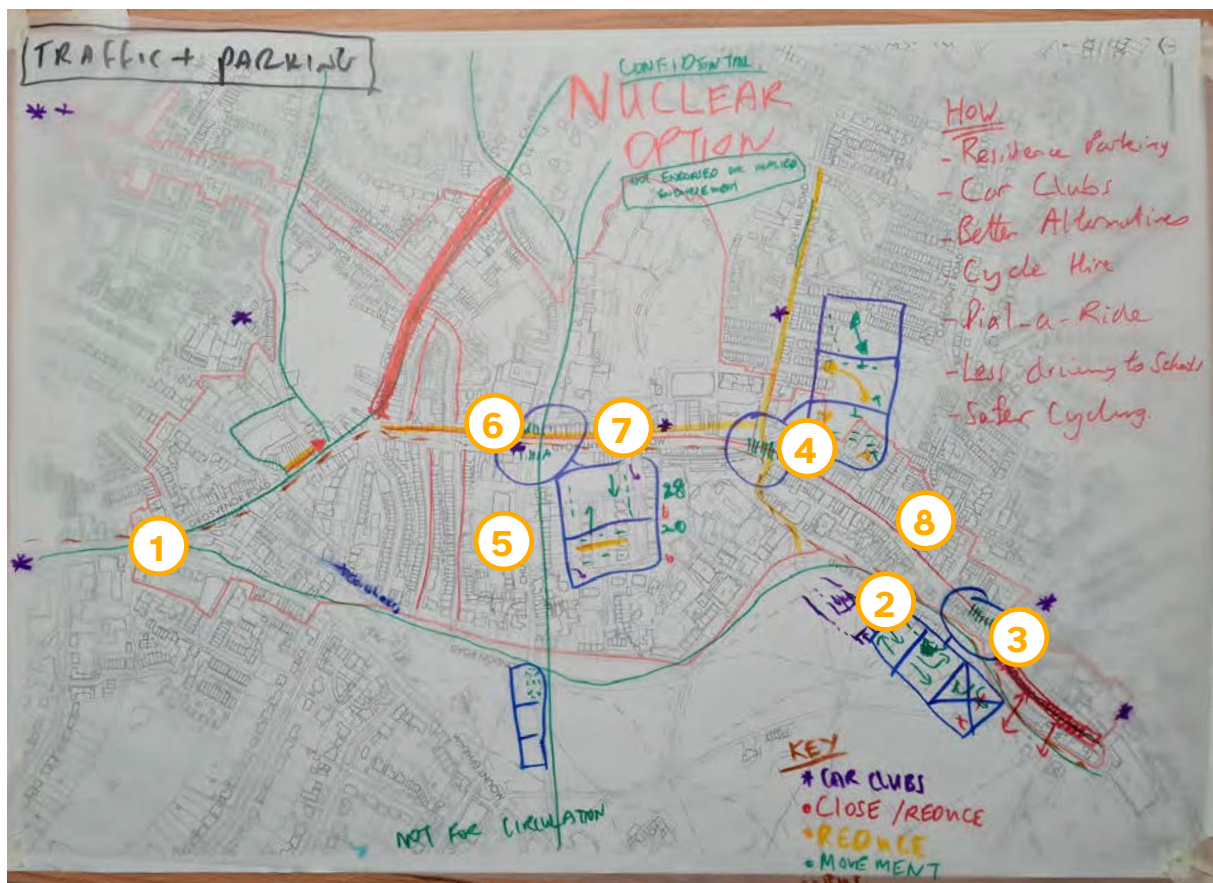


Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop - Traffic & Parking breakout group

2.2.3. Breakout Group 1 - Traffic & Parking

The photograph above is the plan that was drawn during the breakout discussion, and the key points discussed were as follows:

1. Improve on-street parking restrictions (currently free 1hr), to reduce circulating to find parking (encouraging greater use of off-street parking).
2. Undertake surveys of on and off street parking occupancy and length of stay.
3. Introduce more residents parking zones and car club vehicles.
4. Improve shared alternatives to driving (e.g. cycle hire, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)).
5. Introduce a contraflow bus and cycle lane, to avoid the one way road layout.



Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop - Traffic & Parking breakout group (continued)

2.2.4. Breakout Group 1 - Traffic & Parking (continued)

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Address the issue of parents needing to drive kids to schools from the town centre.
2. Provide more crossings of London Road to The Common.
3. Signalise the crossroads at London Road / Nevill St, to narrow the carriageway, improve pedestrian flow between High Street (via Chapel Place) and The Pantiles, and introduce a crossing to The Common.
4. Signalise the crossroads at Mount Pleasant Road / Vale Road / Grove Hill Road, to improve pedestrian alignment.
5. Reduce through access to side streets.

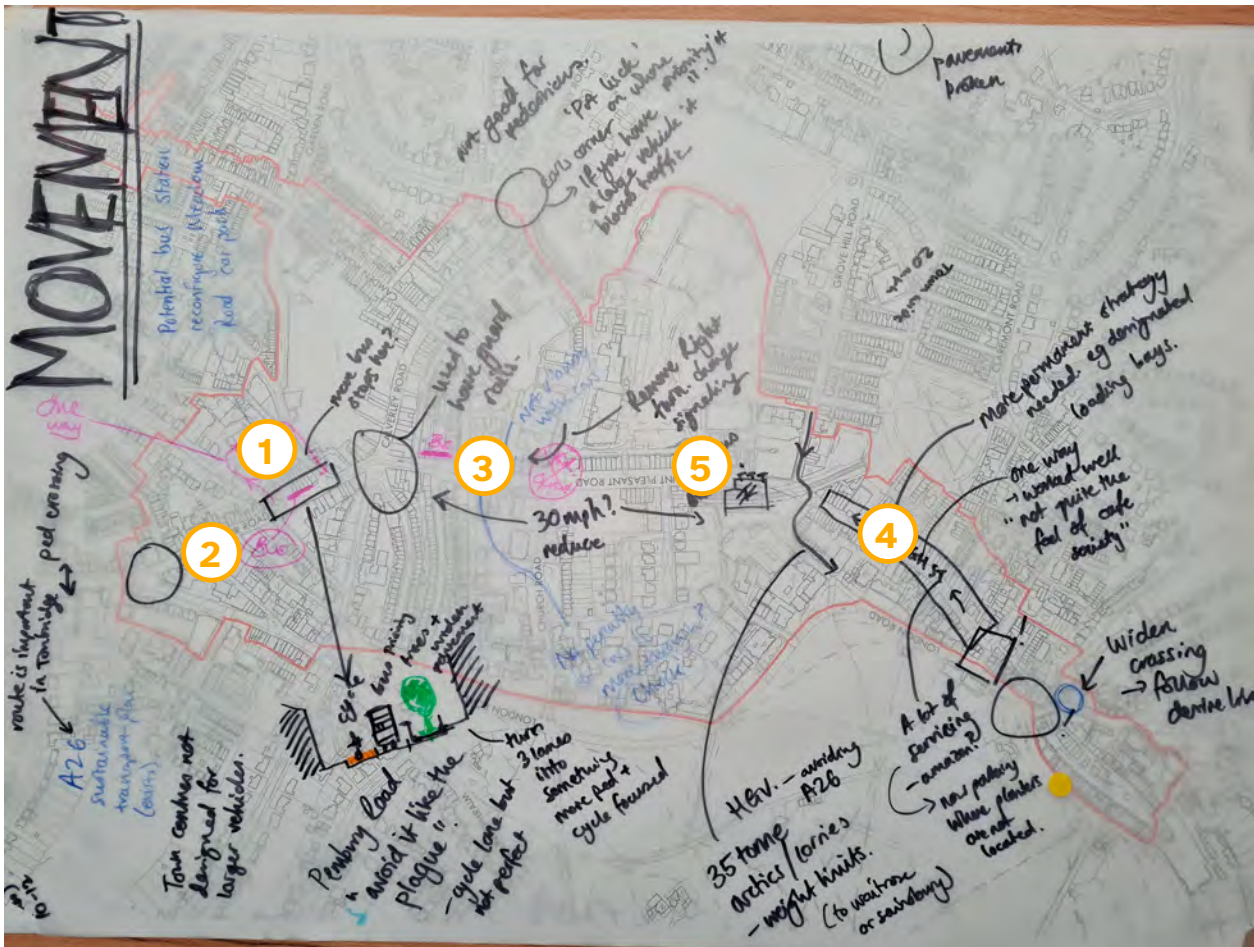
Extreme Movement Options

6. Close selected roads to general vehicles and reduce freight access to outside core hours.
7. Make Grosvenor Road / Mount Pleasant Road bus and cycle only (with segregated dual cycle path) from Upper Grosvenor Road to Grove Hill Road.

2.2.5. Breakout Group 2 - Public Transport

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Bus regularity - Can be every 20 mins but traffic from the north into the town is the problem.
2. Bus station - A central point with good driver facilities - Transform the one way road layout and car park site or central cinema site!
3. St John's Road (northern roundabout) - Bus only into the town therefore meaning main traffic moves freely north-south.
4. Trips - To change this condition need to understand trips - Schools, through and work traffic. What are the problems and solutions.
5. Bus combined tickets - These are being introduced. Means using different bus services (companies) is no longer problematic.
6. Bus App - Develop one central joined up system for all routes and operators.
7. '90s shopper hopper bus - Would this help join up movement through the town?
8. Suggested Park and Ride scheme east and/or south of the town centre? Would require priority bus lanes.
9. Ring road west - Can this be looked at? But would mean more cars?
10. Rail - Re-open rail cutting from the West Station. Introduce more services.
11. Walk times to be mapped from / to different areas of the town centre.



Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop - Movement group

2.2.6. Breakout Group 3 - Movement

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Potential bus station instead of Meadow Road Car Park.
2. Reduce road width on Grosvenor Road and introduce designated cycle lane and greening e.g. street trees.
3. Create Oxford circus style crossing between Mount Pleasant and Church Road.
4. How can we reduce servicing e.g. on the High Street to build on the success of the one-way system.
5. Widen crossing to follow desire lines.

2.2.8. Understanding Priorities

Each breakout table presented back to the rest of the workshop attendees, summarising the key points they had discussed. These were summarised during the presentations on a flip chart in the form of a list of interventions. Each attendee was asked to vote for the statement, or statements they felt were a priority for the town centre. Each attendee was given three votes, the results of this are set out below:

- **Improve cycle access – segregated routes (13 votes)**
- **Bus station (9 votes)**
- **Remove cars from the centre of the town centre (8 votes)**
- **Pedestrian Movement – improving crossing points e.g. desire lines, safety and priority for pedestrians (8 votes)**
- Coordinated bus information e.g. an app for all services (5 votes)
- Bus parking (4 votes)
- Linking greenspace – sign posting (3 votes)
- Cycle parking – increase number and more awareness (3 votes)
- Transit North-South e.g. Town Hopper (2 votes)
- Park and Ride / Lotto Train (2 votes)

- Remove free car parking / restrict where people can park (2 votes)
- Improve gateways (entrances) into RTW e.g. Grosvenor Road (2 votes)
- Designated bus lanes (1 vote)
- Awareness of speeds (0 votes)
- Remove on-street parking – A29 / Mount Ephraim (0 votes)
- Integrated ticket system for buses (0 votes)
- Expand car club (0 votes)
- HGVs – remove from A26 (0 votes)

The stakeholders found it essential to enhance existing cycling infrastructure and pedestrian walking experience by improving desire lines and crossings.

Furthermore, to remove cars from the town centre and to provide a central bus depot to reduce congestion, air pollution and vehicular dominance.

2.3 Public Realm Improvements Workshop

Tuesday 11th October 2022 14:00 - 16:00

The purpose of the Public Realm Improvements workshop was to discuss the existing condition of the public realm (i.e., the spaces between the buildings, the streets, parks, street furniture such as seating, landscape features) within the Town Centre Study Area and explore potential changes that could take place and ambitions for the future.

Following a group discussion with all attendees about challenges and ambitions, the participants were asked to split into four breakout groups to elaborate upon commonly mentioned themes, these were:

- Breakout Group 1 - Heritage & Culture
- Breakout Group 2 - Streetscape
- Breakout Group 3 - Green & Blue Infrastructure
- Breakout Group 4 - Character & Uses

Stakeholder representatives from the following groups attended the workshop:

- RTW Together (BID)
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC)
- Tunbridge Wells Civic Society (TWCS)
- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)
- RTW and Local Areas
- Ashford Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells in Bloom
- RTW Town Forum
- Brighton & Hove (bus company)
- RTW and Area Access Group
- Commons Conservators
- Kent County Council (KCC)

2.3.1. Challenges

A summary of the challenges raised during the workshop are set out below:

- Reducing amount of streetscape clutter (e.g., signs, poles & street barriers)
- Sprucing up shop fronts
- Greening areas
- Sustainability connectivity improvements
- Topography affects accessible townscape
- Public realm and street maintenance
- Removing “grot spots”
- Reducing tarmac dominance in the town centre
- Lack of money – quality is expensive in RTW
- Linkage within the town centre & green infrastructure
- Condition of existing pavements – cracks, uneven paving & infilled with tarmac
- Lack of a clear focal point in the north
- Unattractive and uninviting crossings
- Noise and air pollution
- Reducing traffic congestion
- Lack of public toilets

PUBLIC REALM IMPROVEMENTS

CHALLENGES

TREE LINED
STREETS

Landscaping open
spaces with green
planting spaces to
take away the way
of 'modernisation'

CELEBRATION
OF HISTORIC
PLACES

celebration of
spa ♡
- water features
- fountains,
- paddling pool

Make people
look up above
shop windows

NATURE

GREENER TO
OF TOWN

NATURE

Not enough
greenery
trees

Food growing in
the town eg
fruit trees,
mini allotments,
back garden

Joined up
CULTURE
(single etc)

get rid of
old telephone
boxes

spaces for
pavement cafe
space for
market

need more
green
- Public
work
spaces

che
stking

noise and air
pollution

EV charging
points

Ch
SP
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“Public realm is really broken up & inconsistent across the town”

“Need more greenery, trees and planters for shade and clean air”

“Lack of community gathering spaces”

“Traffic, congestion and lack of alternative routes”

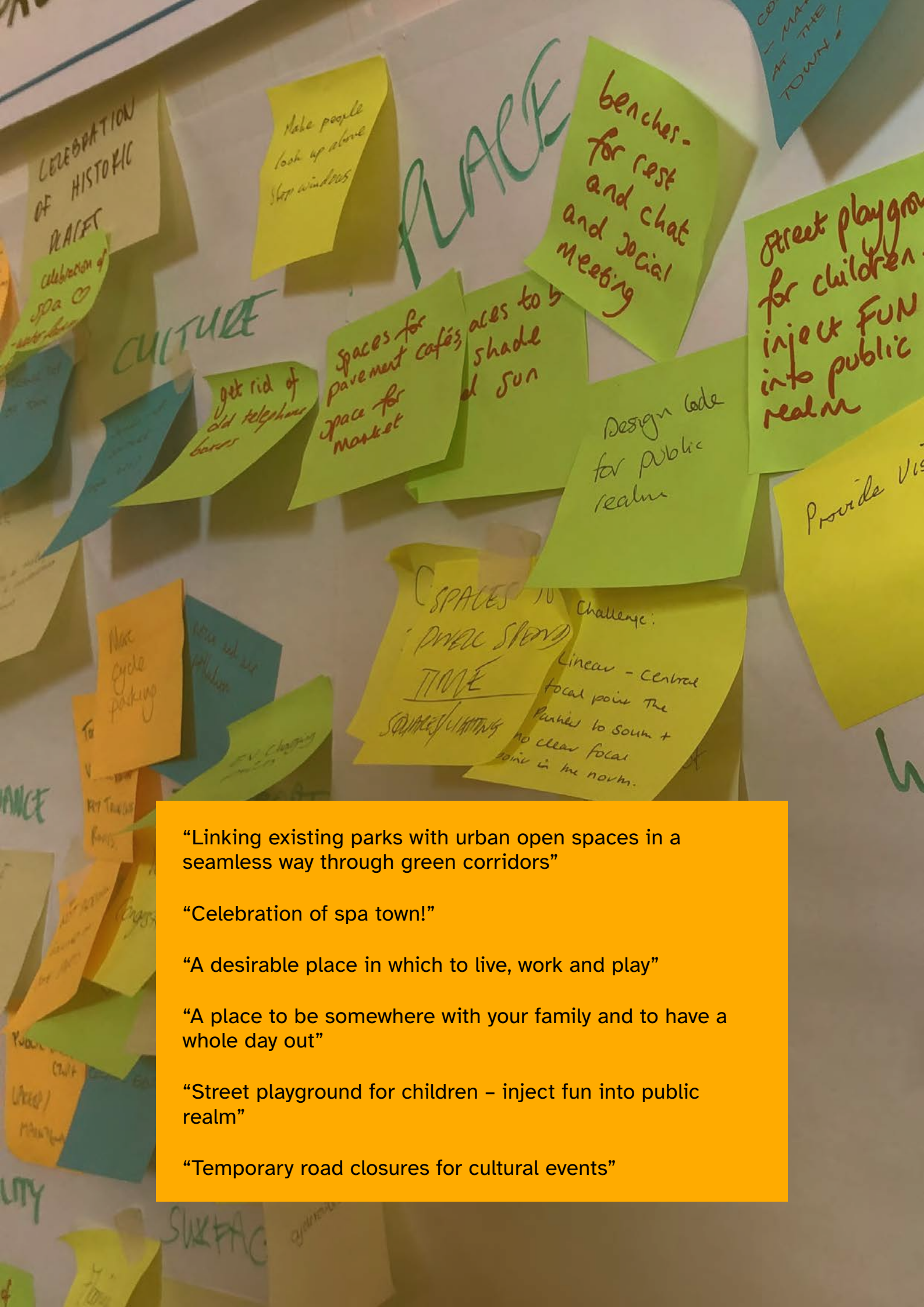
“Noise and air pollution”

“Repairing building fronts in prominent places by precinct & removing clutter from pavements”

2.3.2. Ambitions

A summary of the ambitions for 2040 raised during the workshop are set out below:

- Street playground for children
- Desirable seating areas
- Improved public wayfinding (e.g., noticeboards & maps)
- Reinstatements of red brick pavements
- Floral street planters
- Vibrant shop fronts with outdoor seating space
- Interesting public realm focal points within town centre
- Traditional street food markets
- Outdoor family leisure facilities
- Spaces to dwell, socialise and spend time
- Pleasant cycle parking spaces
- Cycle routes
- A palette of coloured frontages – quirky and funkier at the top of town
- Connected footpaths/walkways which avoid pollution
- Celebration of historic places & spa town
- Well showcased buildings above shop windows
- Tree lined streets
- Food growing in the town (e.g., fruit trees, small allotments & biodiversity)
- Consistency in surface & building materiality
- Active travel prioritised
- EV charging points



CELEBRATION OF HISTORIC RAFT

Make people look up above
Shop windows

PLACE

benches for rest and chat and social meeting

street playground for children
inject FUN into public realm

CULTURE

get rid of old telephone boxes

spaces for pavement cafes, spaces to be shaded from sun
space for market

Design code for public realm

Provide Vis

SPACES TO
PLACE SPEND
TIME
SOURCE/WAITING
Challenge:
Linear - central focal point
Pushed to South + no clear focal point in the north.

New cycle parking

new and old buildings

EV charging

“Linking existing parks with urban open spaces in a seamless way through green corridors”

“Celebration of spa town!”

“A desirable place in which to live, work and play”

“A place to be somewhere with your family and to have a whole day out”

“Street playground for children – inject fun into public realm”

“Temporary road closures for cultural events”

PLACE

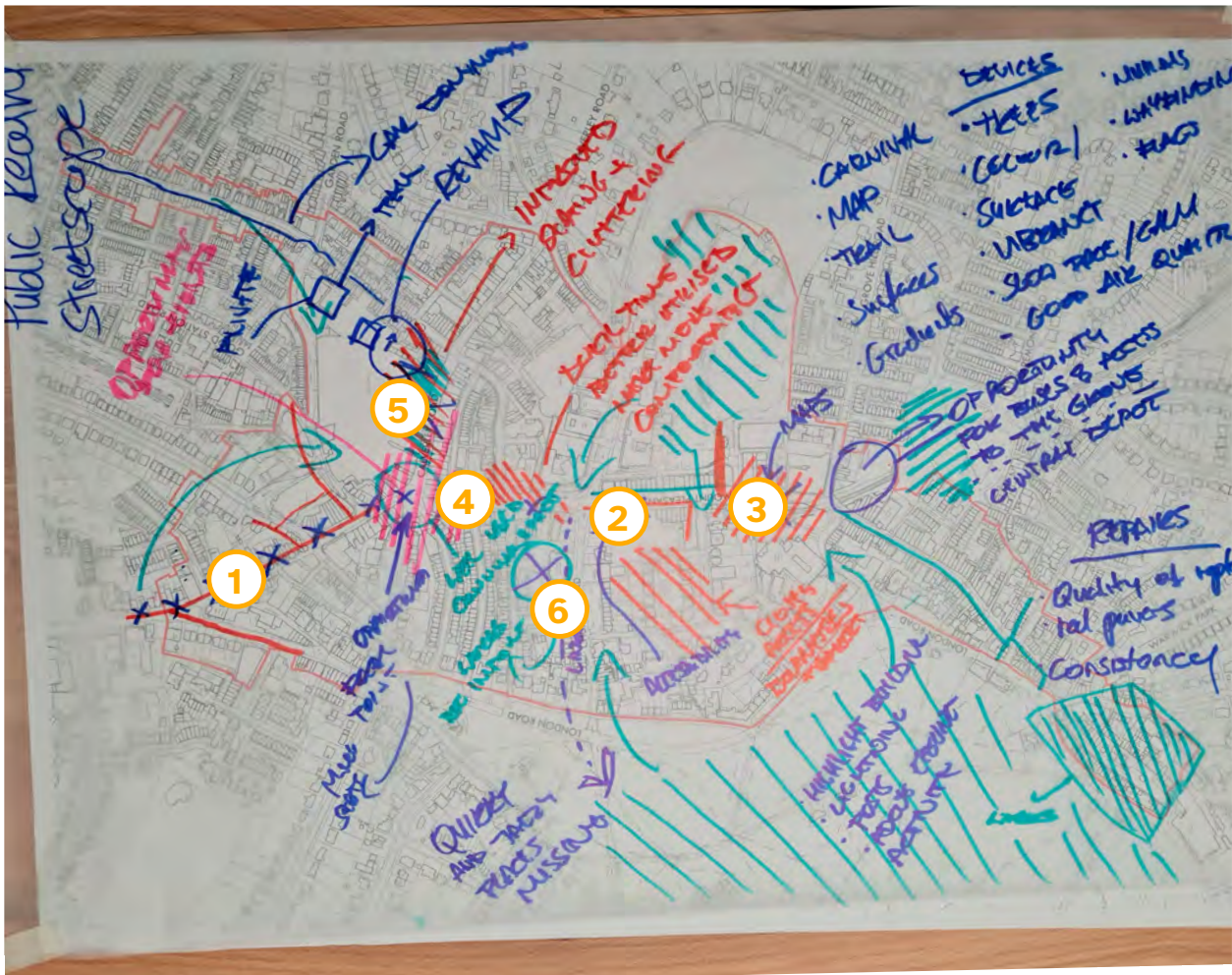
CITY

SURFACE

2.3.3. Breakout Group 1 - Heritage & Culture

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Conservation areas – Review character areas
2. Bespoke design studies – How to improve areas behind high street fronting Grove Park and Calverley Grounds interface with small multi-storey car park
3. Heritage trail / Guided Walks – App, blue plaques, signage, heritage audio, bar codes on buildings or ground to explain history of buildings and occupants
4. Tourist Information – Make more of the Spa Town and Spring
5. Buildings – How to maintain heritage building quality? / How encourage people to look up above ground level
6. Historic photographs – Review early c19th Century historic photos – Mount pleasant was green with low curbs
7. General – Poor entrances to town. Better gateway to the north. Narrow pavements and traffic
8. Shop Front Design Guide / Shop Front Funding – BID / painting
9. Grove Park – Should be inside the town centre boundary
10. The Common – Better access to the The Common
11. Water – Fountains / Duck Pond

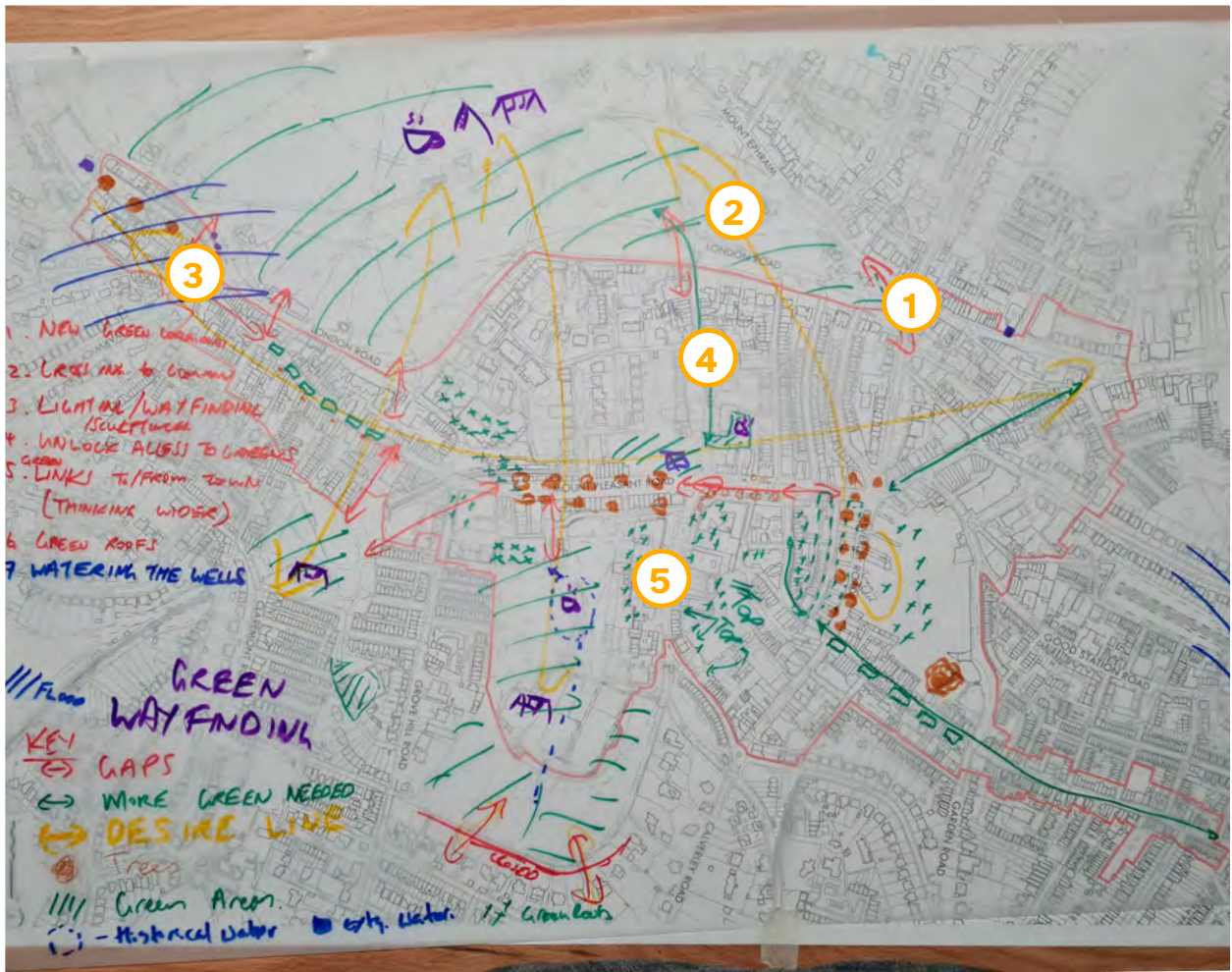


Public Realm Improvements Workshop - Streetscape breakout group

2.3.4. Breakout Group 2 - Streetscape

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Reduce congestion on Grosvenor Road and revamp the existing streetscape
2. The Western edge of Mount Pleasant road is identified as a weakness due to the lack of ABC cinema site development & architecture
3. Tunbridge Wells train station arrival experience requires significant improvement
4. Car dominance & inconsistent shopfronts draw attention away from the architecture
5. Lack of vibrant, quirky and unique places
6. Direct to The Common & Calverley Grounds through green corridors

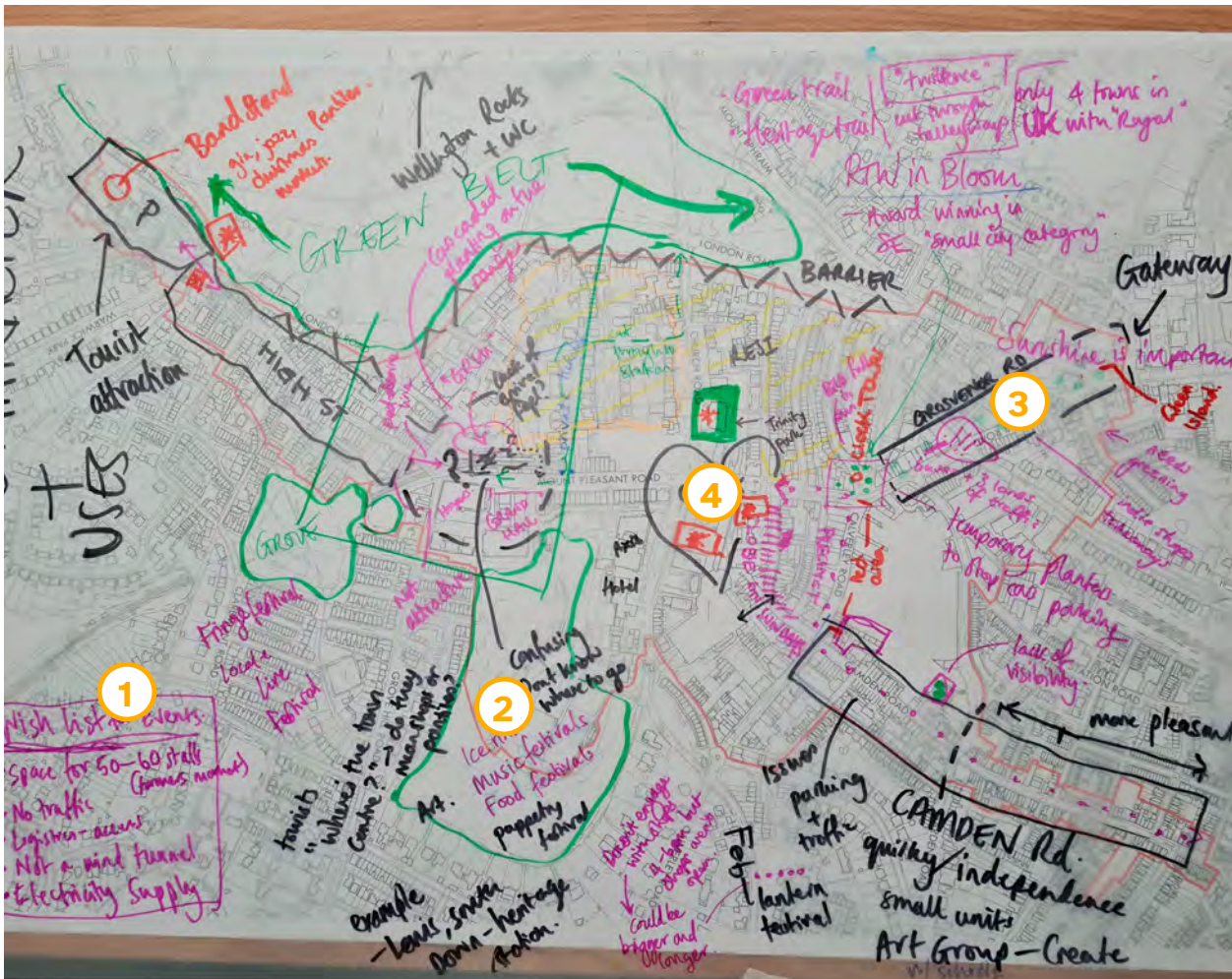


Public Realm Improvements Workshop - Green & Blue Infrastructure breakout group

2.3.5. Breakout Group 3 - Green & Blue Infrastructure

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. RTW is in close proximity to a lot of green spaces, which could be unlocked (red arrows) with better connectivity and integration (e.g. links between The Pantiles and The Common)
2. Aim to improve integration with long-distance walking, cycling and green corridors to/from the town
3. Look to leverage the Water in the Wells as a theme for wayfinding
4. Aim to green key corridors (green lines and boxes)
5. Implement Green Roof Strategy (green x's)



Public Realm Improvements Workshop - Character & Uses breakout group

2.3.6 Breakout Group 4 - Character & Uses

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. A wish list for events in Royal Tunbridge Wells
2. A lot of events take place in Royal Tunbridge Wells but more coordination is needed with the traders
3. Green Grosvenor Road and create an attractive gateway into the Town
4. There are distinctive areas within the Town e.g. Camden Road, the High Street, The Pantiles, RVP. We need to reinforce the civic heart in the centre

2.3.7. Understanding Priorities

Each breakout table presented back to the rest of the workshop attendees, summarising the key points they had discussed. These were summarised during the presentations on a flip chart in the form of a list of interventions. Each attendee was asked to vote for the statement, or statements they felt were a priority for the town centre. Each attendee was given three votes, the results of this are set out below:

- **Linkages with The Common and Calverley Grounds – green corridors, street trees to draw you to the green (12 votes)**
- **Heritage action zones (9 votes)**
- **Improve access to Calverley Grounds – make it more obvious (6 votes)**
- **More greening of the north of the town centre (6 votes)**
- **Improve arrival experience from the Train Station – signage, shout about where things are (6 votes)**
- Remove barriers to pedestrian movement e.g., guard rails and private access (1 vote)
- Introduce more water / evoke water – Spa Town (3 votes)
- Heritage Trails (0 votes)
- Improve gateway from Grosvenor Road (3 votes)
- Make destinations more obvious (e.g., The Pantiles) – signage, desire lines (2 votes)
- More markets in the north (0 votes)
- Link events with traders e.g., lantern festival – open shops (0 votes)
- Remove cars and create space for green and blue infrastructure on the streets (5 votes)
- Introduce colour on buildings (1 vote)
- More seating / parklets / places to dwell, somewhere to eat lunch (4 votes)
- Lighting – at night – all year around like the Cotswold Building (2 votes)
- Park buses at train station (0 votes)
- Improve crossing of A26 (1 vote)
- Street trees on Grosvenor Road (0 votes)
- New development should reflect the character in which it sits (but not a pastiche) (0 votes)
- Reduce and rationalise character areas (0 votes)
- Use of apps to find out more about the place e.g., QR code on a building (0 votes)

The participants primarily prioritised general greening of the town centre and its linkage to towns' distinguished parks, heritage action zones and finally, improving the surrounding train station area to enhance the arrival experience.

2.4 Opportunities for Development

Wednesday 12th October 2022 14:30-16:30

The Opportunities for Development workshop sought to identify potential sites for development and consider the current housing, retail & leisure offer in Royal Tunbridge Wells in order to understand what provisions are required to shape a thriving town centre moving forward.

Through emerging discussions from the challenges and ambitions post-it notes discussion at the start of the workshop, the stakeholders were split into four breakout groups to discuss commonly highlighted themes in further detail:

- Breakout Group 1 - town centre Living
- Breakout Group 2 - Re-purposing Buildings
- Breakout Group 3 - Big Moves
- Breakout Group 4 - Retail & Leisure

Stakeholder representatives from the following groups attended the workshop:

- RTW Together (BID)
- Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC)
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)
- Tunbridge Wells Civic Society (TWCS)
- Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC)
- RTW and Local Areas
- Ashford Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells in the Bloom
- RTW Town Forum
- Kent County Council (KCC)
- Royal Victoria Place Management

2.4.1. Challenges

A summary of the challenges raised during the workshop are set out below:

1. Empty retail units
2. Lack of facilities for younger people
3. Better leisure provision
4. Lack of meanwhile uses
5. Attracting more visitors
6. Shopfront degradation and maintenance
7. 3 Distinctive character areas
8. Improving night-time economy
9. Retail future & high street offerings post covid
10. Insufficient amount of affordable housing
11. Cultural strategy
12. Retirement home influx
13. Small and odd shaped retail properties
14. Aging town
15. Public transport central station
16. Disconnected Mount Pleasant Road
17. Poor sense of arrival from RTW train station
18. Former ABC cinema site
19. Young people currently priced out of RTW due to high rent prices



“Traditional retail has changed – leaving empty retail units and making the top of the town particularly unappealing”

“Retail adaptation post covid”

“Connecting the linear nature of the town more effectively”

“Reasons for coming in”

“Better leisure provision for young people”

“Lack of affordable housing for young people & families”

2.4.2. Ambitions

A summary of the ambitions for 2040 raised during the workshop are set out below:

1. Connecting the linear nature of the town more effectively
2. Further education establishment (e.g., art school, university)
3. Clearly defined town narrative
4. More diverse demographic
5. More housing variation and residents in the town centre
6. Build on culture & history to enhance visitor economy
7. Town hall redeveloped
8. More green infrastructure within urban fabric
9. Vibrant town centre
10. Better movement and connection throughout the town
11. Temporary events and markets to increase footfall
12. Cinema site developed
13. Pedestrians prioritised in the town centre
14. Architecture and building styles unified
15. More bigger retailers (e.g., H&M, Zara & Primark)

2.4.3. Breakout Group 1 - Town Centre Living

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. RVP – North-eastern corner of RVP could be converted to residential forging a strong link to the Camden Road community
2. Primary development sites – Should be promoted next to the station, Calverley Grounds and multi-storey car parks
3. Smaller development sites – Review opportunities for smaller sites (e.g. Surface car parks east of the historic High Street)
4. 10-minute city place – What facilities are required? What are on offer?
5. Private rental sector – Improve affordable offer. Contact providers?
6. Retirement / care homes – How much is needed? Use policies to deliver
7. Open spaces – Maximise connectivity to open spaces
8. Historic grain – Where are the opportunities to restore the historic grain and deliver residential town centre living
9. Retail – Convert upper floors. Policies to promote conversion
10. Camden Road – Control vacancy rate and conversion of retail to residential
11. Church Road to the station area – Infill study to maximise lower density parcels
12. Town centre car club
13. Connections with the Forum

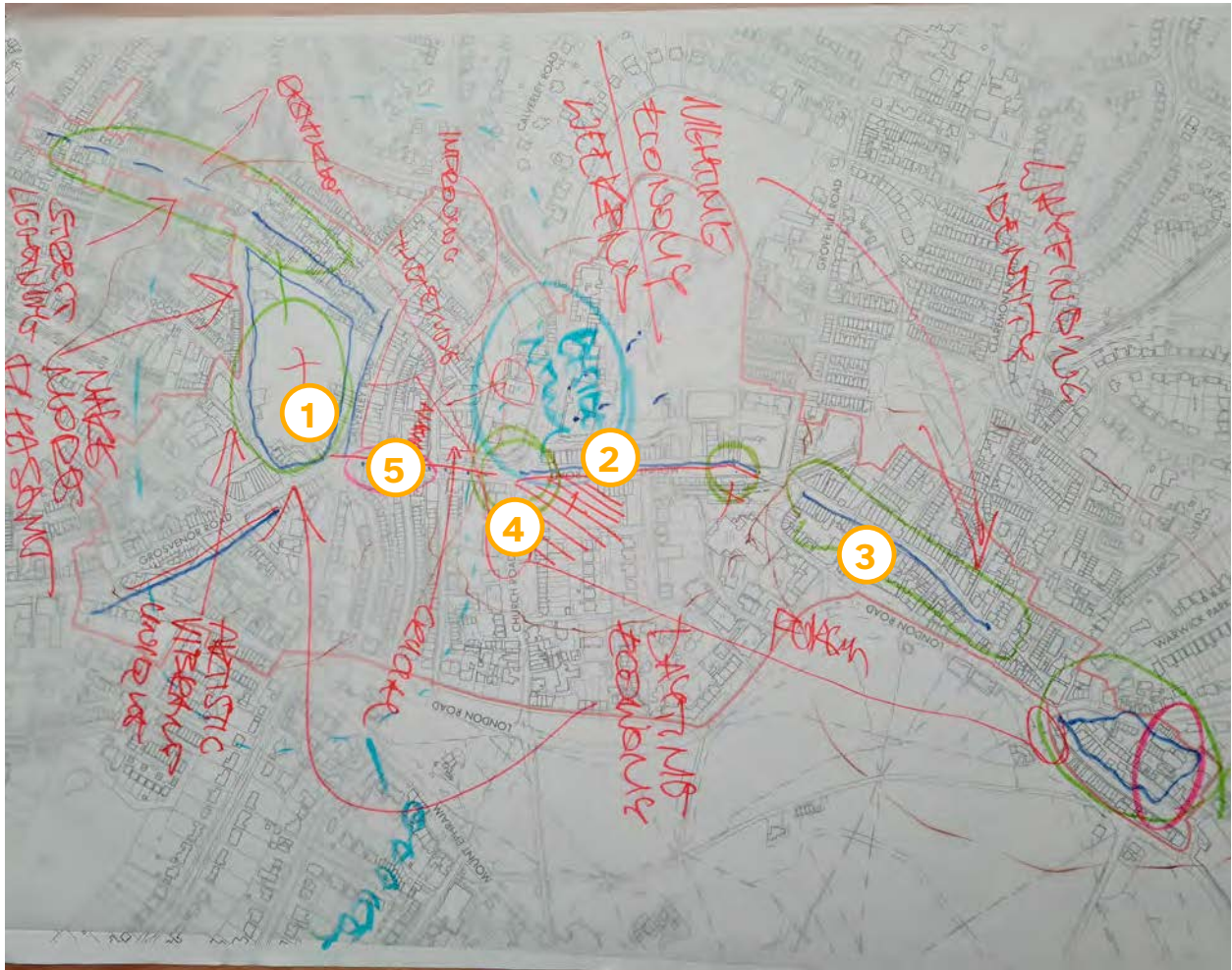


Opportunities for Development Workshop - Re-purposing buildings breakout group

2.4.4. Breakout Group 2 - Re-purposing Buildings

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Residential – block(s) on Vale Road / Station Approach, behind railway station convert to housing (red)
2. Leisure / F&B – Creation of new F&B space on top of the Amelia Scott Community Centre, a new ‘pop up’ events auditorium in Calverley Grounds, a new cinema as part of the re-purposing of RVP
3. Public Realm – Former ABC Cinema site partly allocated to a green, public event space (on crossroads at the intersection of Church Road / Mount Pleasant). Full pedestrianisation of Mount Pleasant Road (North of the Town Hall) and Monson Road, introduction of a one-way traffic system on Camden Road and on the non-pedestrianised section of Calverley Road.
4. Education – partial re-purposing to RVP to ca. 50% of existing retail space. Creation of Further / Higher Education Facility (as opposed to campus-based university) with residual floorspace
5. Transport Hub – re-purposing of Meadow Road Car Park to create a new Central Bus Station
6. Mixed Use – Town Hall (combination of offices and residential, plus potentially a hotel and health hub – the latter to complement the Senior Living Residential as part of the former ABC cinema site)



Opportunities for Development Workshop - Retail & Leisure breakout group discussions

2.4.6. Breakout Group 4 - Retail & Leisure

The key points discussed in this breakout discussion were as follows:

1. Town has distinct retail & leisure 'zones'. Each has their own unique character, fulfilling a different shopping / leisure mission for different types of consumers (workers, tourists, families, youth), across the dayparts (daytime, night-time, weekends)
2. Mount Pleasant Road is a weak spot: identity has become confused / fatigued by delay of ABC cinema redevelopment
3. Zones co-exist / complement one another but identity and linkage needs to be strengthened e.g. The Pantiles 'historic beauty' vs. RVP 'contemporary modern' . Improved wayfinding essential.
4. Leisure offering / night-time economy must be boosted to improve appeal to younger demographics / families
5. Zones can be 'activated' via market stalls, events etc.. but this requires joined up thinking to ensure all zones benefit equally from footfall uplift

2.4.7. Understanding Priorities

Each breakout table presented back to the rest of the workshop attendees, summarising the key points they had discussed. These were summarised during the presentations on a flip chart in the form of a list of interventions. Each attendee was asked to vote for the statement, or statements they felt were a priority for the town centre. Each attendee was given three votes, the results of this are set out below:

- **Higher education / post graduate offer (11 votes)**
- **Improvements to pedestrian connections at intersections (10 votes)**
- **Appeal to younger demographic (7 votes)**
- **Housing in the town centre (5 votes)**
- Affordable housing (5 votes)
- Health hub (5 votes)
- One way / pedestrian prioritised Mount Pleasant (5 votes)
- Develop a brand for Royal Tunbridge Wells (4 votes)
- Transport hub (3 votes)
- Improve wayfinding (2 votes)
- Redevelop Torrington CP (2 votes)
- Electricity generation (2 votes)
- Reimagine the Spa Town – Souvenirs / Identity (1 vote)
- Introduce water – rain gardens (1 vote)
- Residential on upper floors of buildings (1 vote)
- Reinforce retail neighbourhoods identity (1 vote)
- Work hubs with childcare (0 votes)
- Leisure uses (0 votes)
- Outdoor amphitheatre (0 votes)
- Extend town centre boundary to include Grove Park (0 vote)
- A town square (0 votes)
- Infill development for residential (0 votes)
- Create a narrative / identity for the centre of the Town (Civic Area) (0 votes)
- Market space – in the right place (0 votes)

Stakeholders prioritised the need to appeal to a younger demographic and to create a provision for higher education within the town centre to generate a diverse population and to aid the night-time economy and leisure provision.

Furthermore, they have identified a need to provide more housing (particularly affordable) within the town centre and to improve existing intersections between existing areas to navigate consumers between different character areas.

3.0 Community Pop-Up

Wednesday 12th October 2022 11:30 - 13:30

The community pop-up was organised to enable the consultant team to speak with members of the public about their views of the town centre and its future. The pop-up was held at lunch time at the Five Ways Precinct and was well attended by people walking past and talking to the LDA Design and TWBC team.

We provided a questionnaire for local people to fill in, these were completed during the event and received via post, at the Town hall reception and via email afterwards. Approximately 50 people attended and a total of 42 responses were received. A copy of the questionnaire is included in Appendix B of this report.

Some of the questions asked attendees how they had travelled to the town centre that day so that we could get an understanding of the types of travel modes people use, but also any issues or challenges they face using this mode. We found that people generally either used their car (some sharing lifts) or travelled by public transport and walked. Some cycled but those that cycled noted that a lack of designated cycle routes and parking provision means this not a very desirable travel mode.

Summary of the responses regarding forms of travel to the Town:

- 6.6% of respondents cycled to the town centre.

- 36.4% of respondents drove to the town centre.
- 26.4% of respondents travelled via public transport (buses & taxis) to the town centre.
- 33.3% of respondents walked to the town centre.

We also asked attendees at the pop-up to put different coloured pins into a map of the town centre (see photo on next page), each colour signifying a different purpose:

- Green – What do you like?
- Blue – Anything that could be improved?
- Red – Where are the opportunities?

The attendees valued existing cultural facilities, town centre events and available green spaces. They also greatly appreciate their town's historical assets and diverse economy.

However, the participants highlighted a need to improve the existing cycling infrastructure, transport & parking provisions and the quality & types of retail units, particularly on Upper Grosvenor Road, Mount Pleasant and within Royal Victoria Place.



at Tenthredinidae species
2012 2013

LONDON ROAD

WARWICK PARK



Community pop-up event photo collage

3.1 Key Themes - Community Pop-Up

In order to summarise the views derived from the Community Pop-up event, a series of 'Key Themes' have been developed. They are highlighted by quotes from attendees.

3.1.1. Cultural Facilities & Events

Those who participated in the pop-up event were generally positive about the existing cultural facilities & events. People spoke highly of the Trinity Theatre, Amelia Scott, Assembly Hall Theatre & Tunbridge Wells Forum. People also praised available events at Calverley Grounds & The Pantiles however, mentioned that the reinstatement of a bandstand in Calverley Grounds should be considered. Furthermore, there are questions about whether some of these events could potentially be relocated to the northern part of the town centre to aid the local economy. Finally, attendees have also highlighted that there are not many events & facilities catered towards the younger demographic.

There is also a community desire to introduce temporary outdoor traditional food markets & outdoor breakout spaces to the northern part of the town centre. There is a belief that providing these could create a more vibrant setting full of vitality and momentum that will ripple throughout the town and act as a catalyst to attract further retailers & consumers.

“More events, very poor for tourists”

3.1.2. Local Economy

The engaged responders were pleased with the number and diversity of retail units available throughout the town centre. Due to their independent local business nature and variety, Camden Road, the High Street & The Pantiles were highly spoken of and seen by many as a positive influence on the town centre.

However, opinions on the Royal Victoria Place, Upper Grosvenor Road and Mount Pleasant were undecided. A number of attendees commented on the presence of vacant units, a poor night-time economy, undesirable commercial choices (particularly fast-food outlets) and a 'tired' indoor/outdoor character that is unappealing. Respondents also stated a need for more affordable family shops & clothing retailers such as Zara, H&M and Primark to be introduced particularly in the northern part of the town centre.

““More shops for everyone”

3.1.3 Heritage & Culture

Local people have a great deal of affection for their town and its rich history. However, many are frustrated that this is perhaps not showcased enough throughout the town centre. The town centre should display more of the Spa Town and Spring setting from the past, and the design of retail frontages and new developments should use an architectural language that is culturally appropriate & represents the historical essence of the town.

Nevertheless, the attendees appear to be supportive of the idea that Camden Road & area surrounding the Royal Victoria Place should break this convention. The design of new buildings and spaces should be modern and bold. There may be respect and reference to the past however, this should be a development for the 21st century with a unique, vibrant & quirky character.

“Too many of the older features [are] disappearing if Tunbridge Wells [is] advertising itself as a Spa Town – where has it all gone – pump room and spring”

3.1.4 Cycling Infrastructure & Shared Transport Hubs

The responses have revealed that the participants are frustrated that Royal Tunbridge Wells appears to be lagging behind the progress of cycling infrastructure in comparison to other similar sized towns in the UK. The conversations revealed that although the town centre is well connected, due to congestion, car dominance and lack of designated cycle lanes & sufficient cycle parking provision, people tend to avoid cycling into the Town it as it is considered unsafe. Furthermore, some attendees expressed concerns about cyclists and pedestrians sharing the same space due to poor past experiences and potential collisions.

Some mentioned that there is a potential to introduce shared alternatives to moving around the town centre (e.g., electric bikes). However, the older generation is worried about being excluded from this. In addition, there are concerns over reckless riding and disorganised parking & quality of existing infrastructure to support this.

3.1.5. Transport & Parking

Almost all of respondents commented the availability and price of car parking within the town centre. The responses are varied a number suggesting removing vehicles from the town centre and increasing pedestrianised areas, and reducing on-street parking. While others sought more free parking, or longer periods of free parking.

36.4% of respondents drove to the town centre. Although the journey was mainly described as easy, many have highlighted that there is traffic during peak school and work times, and an overall lack of available car parking near main shopping areas.

26.4% of respondents travelled to the event via public transport (buses & taxis). Some have described their journey as pleasant and praised available connections whilst others complained about the buses not being reliable as they do not show up on allocated time slots. Some suggested that an app for local buses and display boards at bus stops would be extremely helpful for both residents and tourists.

33.3% of respondents walked to the town centre with most describing their journey as straightforward and convenient. A number of respondents believe that pedestrians should have priority in the upper town centre, and some suggested fully pedestrianising the lower end of Camden Road and upper Mount Pleasant Road.

3.1.6. Green Infrastructure & Public Realm

The attendees spoke highly of the existing green infrastructure available close to the town centre. More specifically, Calverley Grounds, The Common, Dunorlan Park and The Grove Park. The existing facilities & events within the greenspaces were referred to frequently when answering the question 'What do you like most about Royal Tunbridge Wells?'. Similarly, the streetscapes of The Pantiles and the High Street were often highlighted. Participants enjoy its historic character, peaceful atmosphere, green & floral features (also at Five Ways Precinct) & traditional brick pavements. These characteristics could act as a precedent and a catalyst for other parts of the town centre and its future development.

A group of responders highlighted that the area around the train station and Mount Pleasant Road needs improving in terms of public realm. As a potential resolution, a few participants suggested that the former ABC cinema site could be turned into a green pocket/central square in a heart of the town centre.

3.1.7. Future Developments & Opportunities

Those who participated in the event were optimistic about the town's future. The attendees were asked to highlight potential sites and amenities that could be either developed, repurposed, or rejuvenated for the betterment of the town centre. These responses were captured on a pin board with the different colours of the pin representing whether it was something they liked, or could be improved (see photo on page 55). The following improvements were suggested:

- **Former ABC cinema site** – Vast majority of attendees suggested that the site should be mixed use and incorporate either a cinema or a lido. They have also expressed that the scheme should be “sympathetic” rather than “bulky and modernistic” and its architectural style should match the east side of Mount Pleasant Road. Finally, that on-site development should be catered towards young families rather than retirees.
- **Civic Complex (assembly hall, police station & nos. 9 and 10 Crescent Road)** – Civic society presented an idea where this area becomes a central visitor hub in the northern part of the town centre. Within the hub, the Assembly Hall would be provided with a new wing space and no.9 Crescent Road would now become a Decimus Burton Historic Museum with drawing & dining rooms and authentically furnished bedrooms in the Regency style available to the public.
- **Tourist information centre** – To be introduced near the train station or as a part of the new development on the former ABC cinema site.
- **Royal Victoria Place Food Court and Ely Court** – Spaces to be rejuvenated and made more vibrant and unique. Attendees suggested using the spaces for outdoor restaurants and bars to enhance the local night-time economy and provision for the younger demographic.
- **Millennium Clock Tower (Five Ways Precinct)** – Primarily spoken of in superlatives, a group of responders suggested adding a water feature to strengthen the spa town setting.

- **Heritage Trail** – To enhance the visitor experience, participants suggested creating a heritage trail through the town’s historical assets with more prominent wayfinding. This could aid linkage between the distinctive character areas within the town and enhance the economy throughout.
- **Public toilets** – Attendees suggested addressing the need for public toilets in The Pantiles & Calverley Grounds

1. Community Pop-up engagement event pinboard highlighting potential site improvement opportunities & pleasant areas in Royal Tunbridge Wells
2. The general public conversing and discussing the state of Royal Tunbridge Wells and potential future opportunities



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4.0 Talking Point Questionnaire

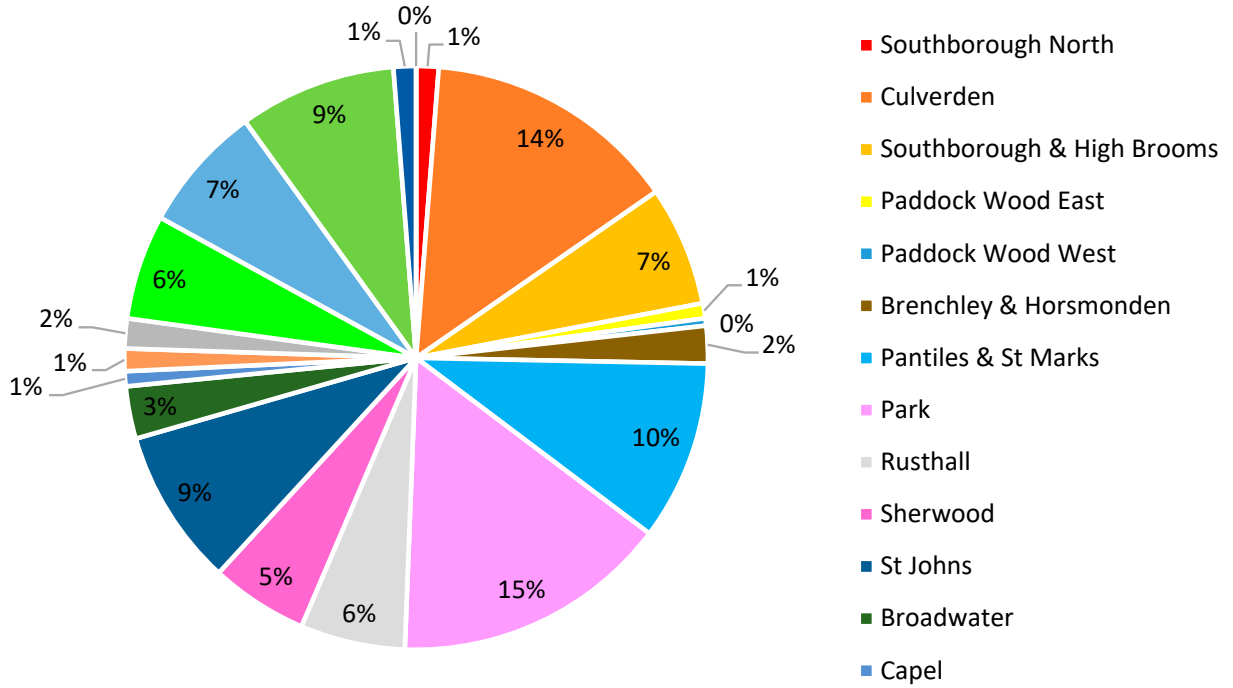
To gain the input of residents and businesses, the Council launched a public consultation on the on-line Talking Point engagement platform that run from the 26th of October to the 24th of November 2022. Through this questionnaire, residents and businesses shared their views and recommendations about the town centre.

The consultation received 26 responses from businesses and 606 responses from residents / visitors, as well as a total of 178 suggestions / comments pinned to the interactive map.

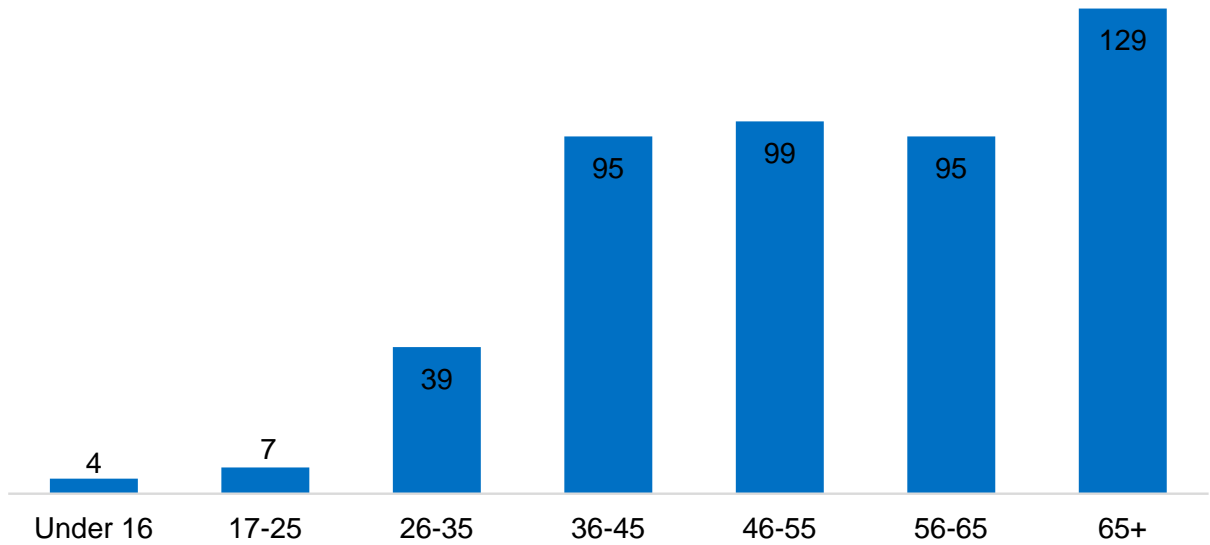
The results show that both businesses and residents are concerned with the current state of the town centre, with both identifying traffic and parking as the main immediate issues. When asked to make recommendations towards the plan, businesses proposed an enhancement of the town centre, better links between the top and lower parts of the town, and an increased promotion and support for community events. Residents asked for more evening economy activities, leisure facilities, and greater range of outlets and affordable retailers.

A copy of the questions asked on the on-line platform are set out in Appendix C.

Wards



Distribution of survey participants based on their place of residence



Distribution of survey participants based on their age range

4.1 Responses received to the Talking Point Consultation - Residents and Visitors

The primary reason residents gave for visiting the town centre was for shopping (selected 455 times), followed by leisure and cultural activities (351) and by visits to parks and green spaces (341).

- Bluewater: free parking and affordable shops.
- Brighton: more variety of shops and activities.

4.1.1 Improving the Town Centre

The data shows that residents would prefer more shops and greater retail diversification in the town centre, as well as an increase in culture, arts and leisure outlets.

Of the respondents who identified the evening economy as something that could be improved: 60,2% (115) said that more food and beverage and entertainment and cinema are lacking in the town.

For Question 13 (Are there other local town centres that you like visiting in preference to Royal Tunbridge Wells? If so, where, and why?) The most frequent responses were:

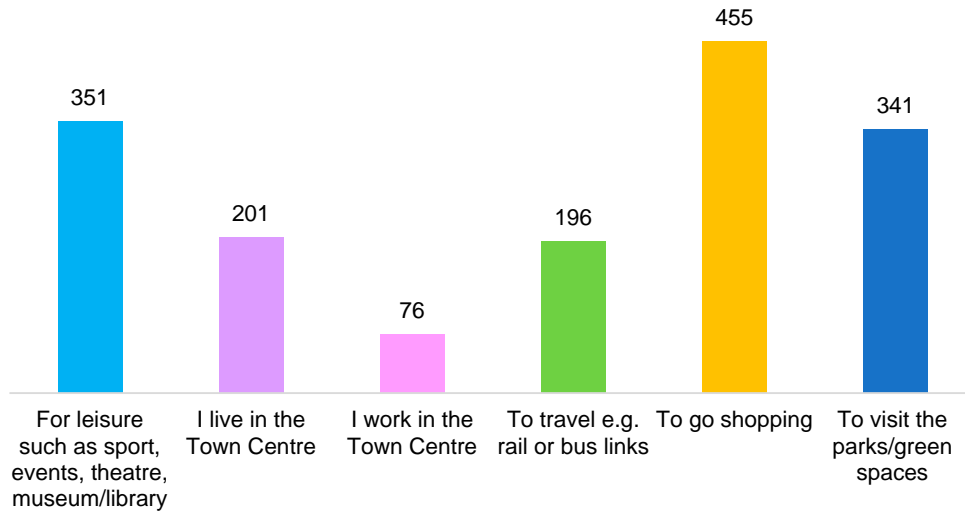
- Maidstone: affordable clothing stores and better choice of restaurants.
- Tonbridge: more shops and free parking on Sundays.
- London: theatres, leisure, and shops.
- Sevenoaks: vibrant town centre, cinema, and more shops.

4.1.2 Transport and Parking

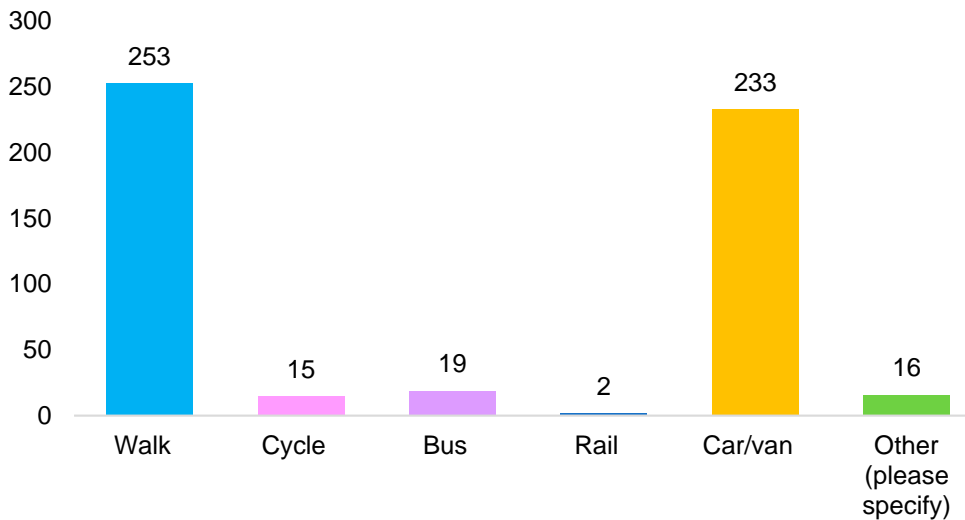
Most of the residents choose to walk to the town centre (chosen 253 times), and to drive (233). The preferred car park by residents is Royal Victoria Car Park and on street parking, which demonstrate the vital importance of the Council run car parks to town centre footfall.

In question 16 (Do you experience any difficulties accessing the town centre via your chosen method of travel? 68% of residents responded that they do not experience any difficulties. Of the residents who do (33%) most cited traffic congestion as the biggest difficulty, followed by parking affordability. A few of these complaints were about the lack of disability access in RVP car park and about illegal parking along Camden Road, although most of the complains were in regard to high parking fees and lack of affordable short-term parking. The residents who walk or cycle are concerned about safety due to a lack of appropriate crossing points and cycle routes around the town. The problems with public transport that are also mentioned are the lack of affordable options and complaints regarding the bus timetables and lack of evening buses.

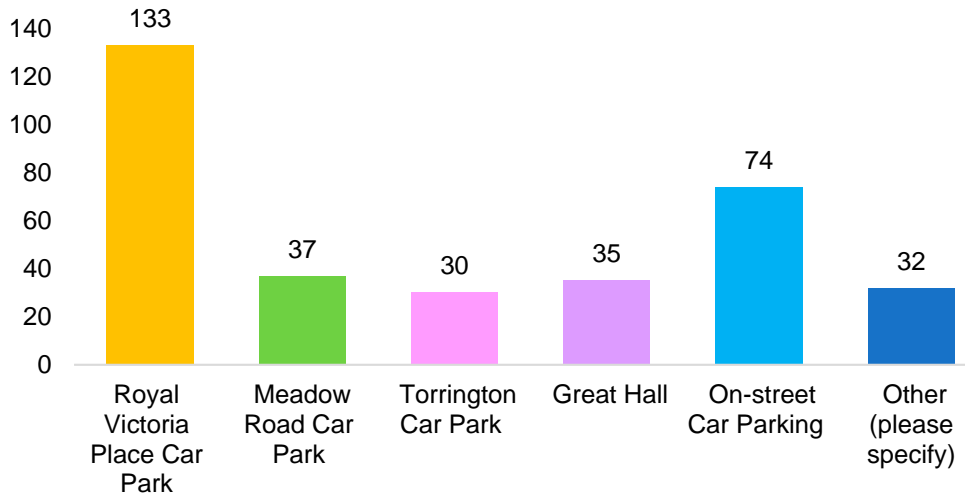
Question 10 - What are your reasons for using Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre? (Select all that apply)



Q14 (Typically, how do you travel to the Town Centre?)

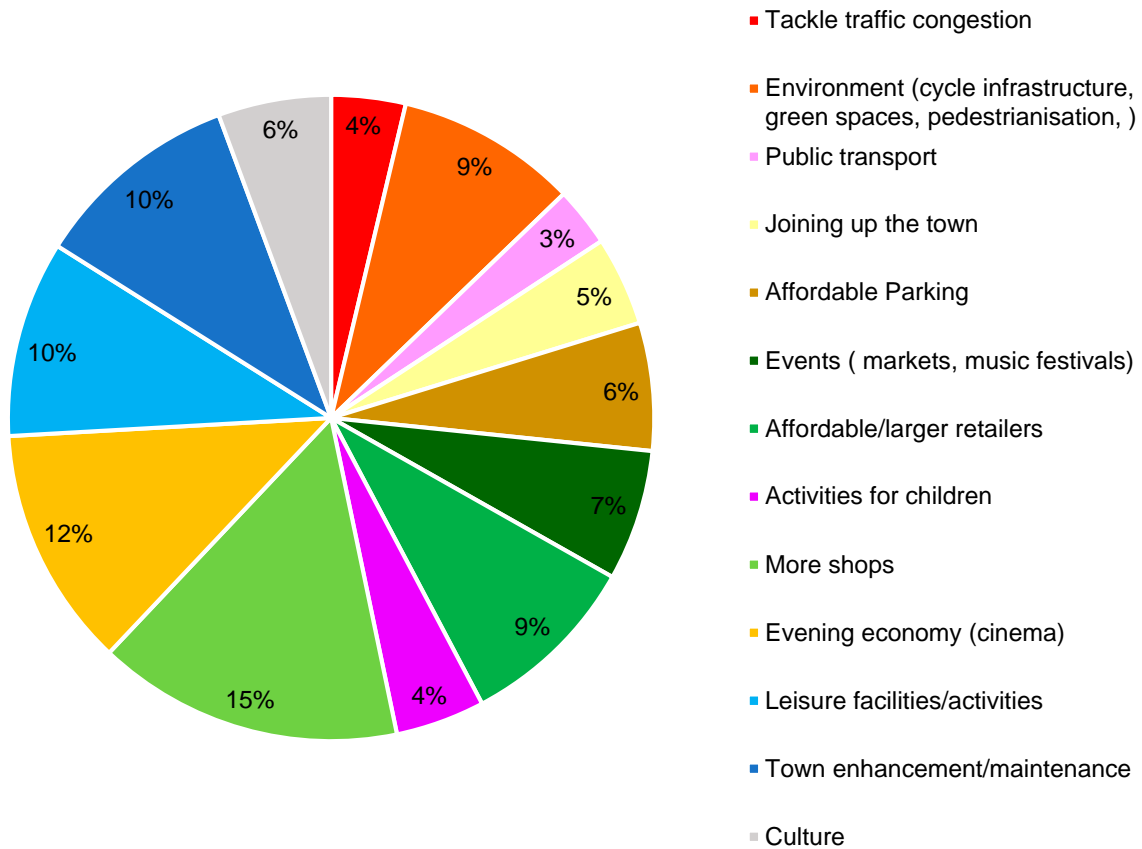


Q15 (If you drive to the town centre, where do you park?)
Other (please specify)



The breakdown of survey respondents' responses to questions 10, 14, and 15

Question 18 (Do you have any other comments about how you want to see the Town Centre develop in the future?)



The breakdown of survey respondents' responses to question 18

4.1.3 Further Comments

Question 18 (Do you have any other comments about how you want to see the town centre develop in the future?) allowed residents to expand on their views on the future of the town centre. Several residents proposed the establishment of a cinema, as they believe this would offer a broad range of evening activities and would benefit the younger generations. Many comments were also focused on the need for more leisure facilities and community events such as markets.

In addition, another trend across resident responses was the need for a greater variety of shops, including independent shops and more affordable retailers for both younger and older generations. Furthermore, several respondents asked for there to be improvements to the accessibility of the lower part of the town (High Street and Pantiles) and to invest in the overall enhancement/attractiveness of Royal Tunbridge Wells.

4.2 Responses received to the Talking Point Consultation - Businesses

The majority of businesses that completed the questionnaire are in the hospitality sector (10), in retail (6) or come from office-based service sectors (6). Out of the 26 businesses, 23 are based in the town centre

4.2.1 Commuting

Out of the 26 businesses, 12 of them answered that their staff drive to work and 8 answered that their staff usually walk, whereas none of the businesses said their staff travel by train.

According to the survey results, the most frequently used car parks for commuters are Crescent Road and Royal Victoria Place, but most employees prefer on street parking. This shows a preference in free parking.

4.2.2 Improving the Town Centre

For Question 5 (What changes to the town centre would support your business? Give your 3 top priorities) businesses identified the following priorities:

- Reduction in parking fees or the introduction of a 'park and ride' scheme.

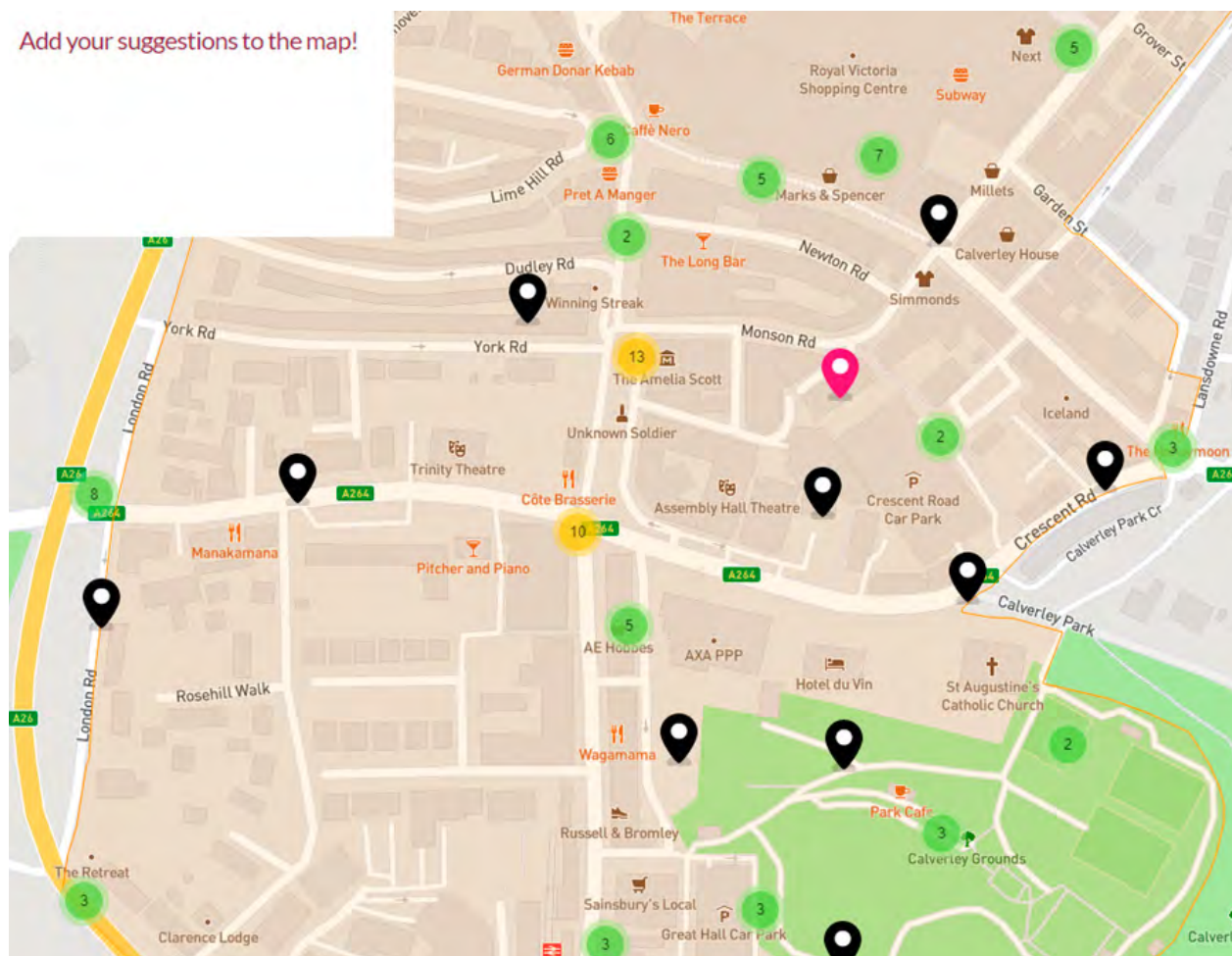
- Promotion of events to increase footfall.
- Creation of better links between the top and lower part of the town.
- Traffic congestion.
- Better cycling infrastructure.

Question 6 (Do you have any other comments about how you want to see the town centre develop in the future?) Allowed respondents to outline a vision for the future of the town centre. Businesses are mainly concerned with the attractiveness of the town to visitors and new customers. Several comments are directed towards the need to renovate the old cinema site, the protection of the town's architecture, and the need to invest in new development to transform the town into a unique tourist destination. Other priorities that are mentioned relate to the need to reduce traffic congestion and to promote the opening of larger retailers, particularly clothing stores to younger people.

4.5 Interactive Map

By the 24th of November 2022 the map had 55 contributors and 178 pins placed. The list below represent the trends in the comments and the locations where most pins were placed. The main issue raised by residents is the lack of appropriate crossing points in various locations around the town. The issue of traffic (speeding cars, air pollution, illegal parking) also appears in various comments.

Residents and businesses are both concerned with the enhancements of the top part of the town, particularly Camden Road and Grosvenor Road. In addition, several comments asked for more innovative planning and development around the town to maintain harmony with the heritage and historic buildings of Royal Tunbridge Wells.



Interactive map used on Talking Point Questionnaire

Overview of pins and comments placed on the interactive map:

22-87 London Road (between The Commons and the Pantiles)

- **Number of pins on the map:** 12
- **Comments:** Dangerous road with lack of lights and crossing points.

Camden Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 11
- **Comments:** Planting trees/cycle parking/traffic congestion.

Royal Victoria Shopping Centre

- **Number of pins on the map:** 10
- **Comments:** More retail/fewer empty shops.

84 Mount Pleasant Road (between Prezzo and The Amelia Scott)

- **Number of pins on the map:** 10
- **Comments:** Need for a better/clearer zebra crossing.

74 Mount Pleasant Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 7
- **Comments:** Cinema site development.

Pantiles junction to High Street

- **Number of pins on the map:** 7
- **Comments:** Better entrance to the Pantiles.

121-123 Mount Pleasant Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 6
- **Comments:** Street cleaning and furniture.

Calverley Grounds

- **Number of pins on the map:** 5
- **Comments:** Lighting in the evenings and improvements in basketball court.
- **Number of pins on the map:** 3
- **Comments:** an event area/stage here.

9 Vale Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 5
- **Comments:** Safer crossing to the train station.

87 Mount Pleasant (in front of the Town Hall)

- **Number of pins on the map:** 5
- **Comments:** Clearer left/right turn markings at the junction.

Pembury Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 4
- **Comments:** Traffic congestion, dangerous for cyclists.

Upper Grosvenor Road

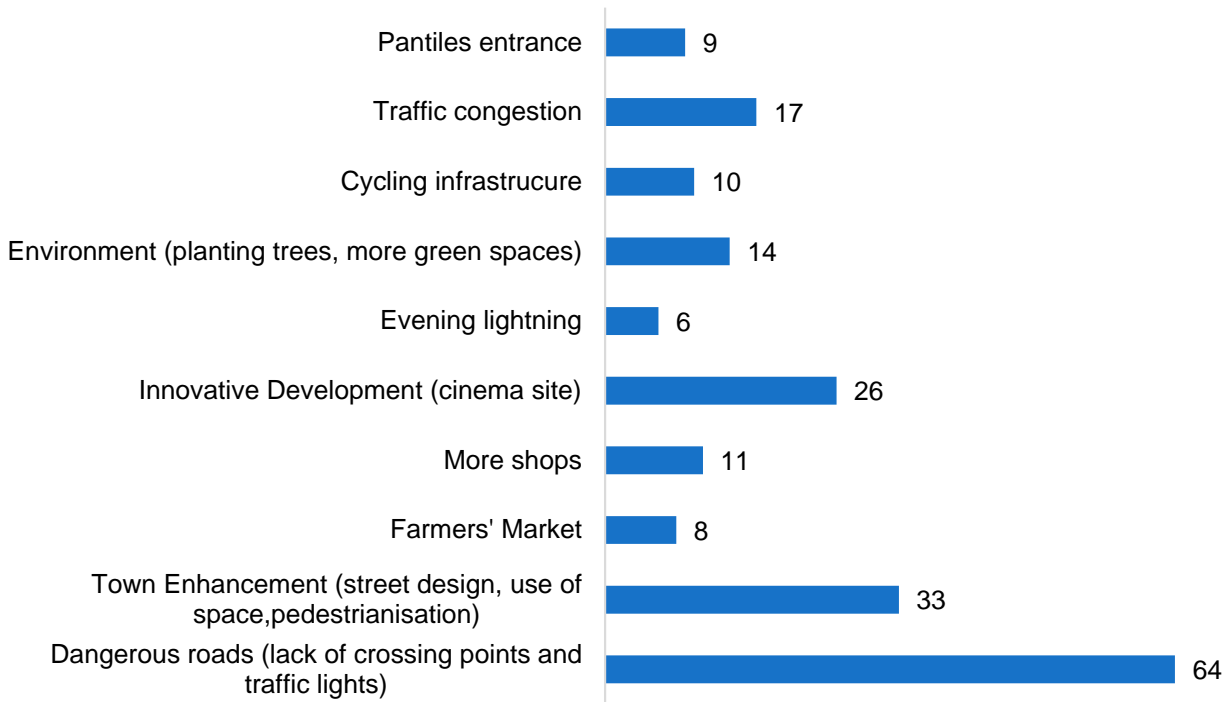
- **Number of pins on the map:** 4
- **Comments:** Lack of crossing points, traffic lights and speed limit.

High Street

- **Number of pins on the map:** 4
- **Comments:** Traffic congestion.

19 Calverley Road

- **Number of pins on the map:** 3
- **Comments:** Redesign area.



The breakdown of survey respondents' trends included within the comments

4.6 Conclusions

Based on the survey responses the following conclusions can be drawn:

- Traffic congestion is a major problem within the Town. This affects the number of visitors and the quality of the environment. These problems are exacerbated as several roads are dangerous for pedestrians and lack designated crossing points. These responses underline the necessity in supporting the delivery of transport infrastructure improvements, alongside the promotion active travel schemes, to help address these issues and concerns.
- The Plan should focus on creating a more vibrant town. Many respondents asked for more evening economy activities, including opening more low-cost restaurants and a cinema.

Both residents and businesses highlight the need to diversify the types of enterprises in the town centre and suggest including more leisure activities and shops. Further, the responses make it clear that there would be considerable support behind inviting larger affordable retailers to the town centre.

- Other alternative parking initiatives should be considered, such as affordable short-term parking, as this would attract more visitors to the town centre.
- Another priority for the plan should be to create better linkages and consistency between the top and lower part of the town centre. The lower part is recognised by respondents as a thriving force whereas the top is believed to be in a state of decline.

5.0 Overall Conclusion

The engagement process was an informal first step to inform the Town Centre Study undertaken by LDA Design, City Science and Knight Frank alongside Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) and the Town Centre Working Group. The purpose of the engagement was to discuss the future of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre with local people and businesses, share local knowledge, participate in developing ideas and a vision for the future Town Centre Plan, and for the LDA Design, City Science and Knight Frank team to hear local views and reflect on the feedback. Various forms of engagement were undertaken including in person workshops, a community pop-up event and a questionnaire on the on-line engagement platform Talking Point.

A number of engagement exercises were undertaken with key groups and individuals to agree the aspirations for the town centre. They include:

A Walking Tour

A two-hour walking tour of the Town Centre Study Area was undertaken with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Town Centre Plan Working Group. Observations from the group were varied with comments focussed on the success of recent public realm works, the dominance of the car, and concerns around pedestrian connectivity amongst other things.

Stakeholder Workshops

Three workshops were held in the Town Hall in October 2022, which aimed to engage with key stakeholders, including residents and traders. The purpose was to better understand the range of views and experiences, and to develop a shared vision for the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre. The workshop findings informed a number of “Key Themes” as follows:

- A Spa Town
- Character & Experience
- A New Gateway
- Appearance and Maintenance
- Pedestrian and Cycle Connectivity
- Provision for leisure
- Attracting and retaining the younger generation
- Town centre living
- The Retail Offer
- Traffic and vehicular movement
- A Green Focus
- Parking provision and repurposing of buildings
- Future opportunities

Community Pop-up

The community pop-up was organised to enable the consultant team to speak with members of the public about their views of the town centre and its future. The pop-up was held at lunch time at the Five Ways Precinct and was well attended by people walking past and talking to the LDA Design and TWBC team. To summarise the views derived from the event, the following “Key Themes” have been established:

- Cultural Facilities & Events
- Local Economy
- Heritage & Culture
- Cycling Infrastructure & Shared Transport Hubs
- Transport & Parking
- Green Infrastructure & Public Realm
- Future Developments & Opportunities

Talking Point Questionnaire available on Tunbridge Wells Borough Council’s website

The results show that both businesses and residents are concerned with the current state of the town centre, with both identifying traffic and parking as the main immediate issues. When asked to make recommendations towards the plan, businesses proposed an enhancement of the town centre, better links between the top and lower parts of the town, and an increased promotion and support for community events. Residents asked for more evening economy activities, leisure facilities, and greater range of outlets and affordable retailers.

Next steps

Further future engagement will take place as part of the Local Plan process and Town Centre Plan where ideas, suggestions and further testing will be refined and developed further.



Appendix A - Engagement Flyer



Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

We want to hear from you with your views about the future of Royal Tunbridge Wells!

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) is currently working on the preparation of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan (TCP). The TCP will be a land use planning document – a Local Plan specific for the town centre area, comprising of a vision, strategy, masterplan and planning policies for the town centre to ensure its long-term prosperity and success.

TWBC and the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan Working Group have recently selected a group of consultants to undertake a Town Centre Study to inform the future TCP. These are LDA Design, Knight Frank and City Science.

We would like to hear from you with your views about the future of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre and LDA Design will be basing themselves in Tunbridge Wells town centre on the 11th and 12th of October to hold a series of engagement events and workshops. Please see the second page for a programme of events taking place.

There will be three themed workshops which key stakeholders are invited to attend at the Town Hall, these are:

Opportunities for Development Workshop:

A regeneration themed workshop to discuss opportunities within the Town for commercial, employment, cultural and residential development, including:

- Reviewing the Town Centre Study boundary and key sites within it;
- Discussing areas of risk / opportunity for the commercial offer in the town;
- With input from economic consultant Knight Frank, consider mechanisms to bring premises back into active use, measures to prevent further vacancies and measures to target the additional or alternate uses that the local community would like to see in the Town; and

- Review opportunities in the context of the post-covid economy and working practices; this could include local businesses to the evolution of the economy towards a more circular model in which local supply chains are optimised and waste is reused and or recycled.

Public Realm Improvements Workshop:

A workshop to discuss opportunities to improve the public realm to the benefit of local residents and maximise its attractiveness as a location for tourists to visit, looking specifically at areas that can be improved for pedestrians. A key part of this will be developing a strategy to reinvigorate the identity of the place, respecting its history, and maintaining its value but finding opportunities to celebrate its distinctiveness.

Movement and Decarbonisation Workshop:

A transportation themed workshop to discuss the principles of movement across the Town including:

- Current issues – e.g. congestion;
- Moving around the town – where do residents/visitors go – impact of geography and topography of town;
- Walking and cycling routes;
- Bus services and infrastructure;
- Parking – on and off-street; and
- New technology – electric cars, bikes and scooters#.

City Science will bring their knowledge of ‘carbon first’ approach to design, considering the transport strategy in light of the move towards net zero. They will blend this thinking with their understanding of healthy, liveable neighbourhoods and mobility hubs.

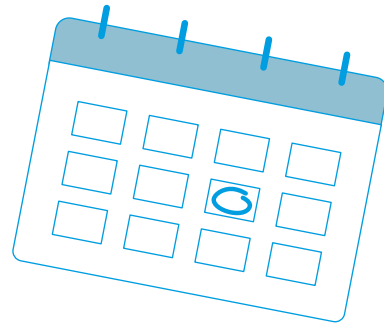
A public session will also take place at the Millennium Clock Tower (The Fiveways precinct) 2 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1, 2TB.

Public pop up session

We will run one pop-up event with mapping material available. An opportunity to meet individual members of the community to sound out their understanding of key issues or matters to be addressed in the Town Centre Study. This session will be about listening to local people and understanding the key issues that concern them.



Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan



What's On

We are proposing to hold a series of engagement events during the w/c 10th October 2022.

The programme is as follows:

Event	Venue	Time
Tuesday 11th October		
Workshop 1 - Movement and Decarbonisation	Town Hall, Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1RS	10:00 - 12:00
Workshop 2 - Public Realm Improvements	Town Hall, Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1RS	14:00 - 16:00
Wednesday 12th October		
Pop-up Consultation Desk	Millennium Clock Tower (The Fiveways precinct) 2 Calverley Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 2TB	11:30 - 13:30
Workshop 3 - Opportunities for Development	Town Hall, Mount Pleasant Road, Tunbridge Wells TN1 1RS	14:30 - 16:30

We would ask that people register for the workshops as we are limited on places for some of the events.

To book your place at a workshop, please contact the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council at: planning.policy@tunbridgewells.gov.uk



LDÄDESIGN

Appendix B - Community Pop-up Questionnaire



LDĀDESIGN

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Vision – Have Your Say

Questions	Answer
What are the reasons for your visit to Royal Tunbridge Wells today?	
How did you travel to the Town today? How easy was your journey?	
What do you like most about Royal Tunbridge Wells?	
<i>(Please turn over)</i>	

Is there anything you'd like to see improved in Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre?	
Any other comments about the Town Centre	

**Pop your completed form in the feedback box,
or feel free to take this away and email or post
your response to LDA Design:**

rebecca.frost@lda-design.co.uk

**Rebecca Frost
LDA Design
First Floor Hanover House
Queen Charlotte Street
Bristol BS1 4LG**

Appendix C - Talking Point Questionnaire

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

Take the survey!

Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Resident
- Business

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

Business name:

(Required)

Note: This field is optional.

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

What is your type of business?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Retail
- Hospitality
- Office based services
- Leisure/culture
- Other (please specify)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

Is your business based within the Town Centre

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

What changes to the Town Centre would support your business'? Give your 3 top priorities.

(Required)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

How do you or your staff usually travel to work?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Walk
- Cycle
- Bus
- Rail
- Car/van
- Other (please specify)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Car/van for How do you or your staff usually travel to work?

If you or staff drive, where do they park?

(Choose all that apply)

- Crescent Road Car Park
- Royal Victoria Place Car Park
- Meadow Road Car Park
- Torrington Car Park
- Great Hall
- Car Park
- On-street Car Parking
- Other (please specify)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Business for Are you a resident or are you responding on behalf of a business?

Do you have any other comments about how you want to see the Town Centre develop in the future?

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

What are your reasons for using Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre? (Select all that apply)

(Choose all that apply) (Required)

- I live in the Town Centre
- I work in the Town Centre
- To travel e.g. rail or bus links
- For leisure such as sport, events, theatre, museum/library
- To go shopping
- To visit the parks/green spaces

Is there anything lacking in the Town Centre, for example?

(Choose all that apply) (Required)

- More shops / different shops
- More leisure / culture / arts
- Evening economy
- Activities for children
- Other (please specify)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Evening economy for Is there anything lacking in the Town Centre, for example?

Evening economy

(Choose any one option)

- Food and beverage
- Entertainment – theatre/cinema or other entertainment
- Food and beverage and theatre/cinema or other entertainment

Are there other local town centres that you like visiting in preference to Royal Tunbridge Wells? If so, where and why?

(Required)

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

Typically, how do you travel to the Town Centre?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Walk
- Cycle
- Bus
- Rail
- Car/van
- Other (please specify)

Answer this question only if you have chosen Car/van for Typically, how do you travel to the Town Centre?

If you drive to the town centre, where do you park?

(Choose all that apply)

- Crescent Road Car Park
- Royal Victoria Place Car Park
- Meadow Road Car Park
- Torrington Car Park
- Great Hall
- On-street Car Parking
- Other (please specify)

Do you experience any difficulties accessing the town centre via your chosen method of travel?

(Choose any one option) (Required)

- Yes
- No

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for Do you experience any difficulties accessing the town centre via your chosen method of travel?

Please specify what difficulties you have experienced:

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

Do you have any other comments about how you want to see the Town Centre develop in the future?

Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre Plan

Talking Point Tunbridge Wells

We have a couple of extra questions about you, is this ok?

(Choose any one option)

- Yes
 No

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for We have a couple of extra questions about you, is this ok?

What is your postcode?

(Required)

Note: This information will not be shared outside of TWBC, and will be used to help improve our services.

Answer this question only if you have chosen Yes for We have a couple of extra questions about you, is this ok?

What year were you born in?

(Required)

Note: This information will not be shared outside of TWBC, and will be used to help improve our services.

If you would like to be updated on the progress of the Town Centre Plan, please enter your email address here:

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