

Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections

Consultation Response and Next Steps
June 2024



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We would like to extend our appreciation to those who have taken the time to engage and provide feedback on these proposals during this formative stage. Your comments and suggestions are appreciated and will help to shape the final designs.

1. Introduction

1.1. Project background

In 2021 Hastings Borough Council (HBC) was one of 101 UK towns to receive a share of the Government's Towns Fund to kickstart the regeneration of the town centre. The funding received formed the Hastings Town Deal Fund programme to deliver various projects including The Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project (the project).

In early 2022, HBC and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) commissioned Arup to develop a concept design (RIBA¹ Stage 2) for parts of the Town Centre. During this stage, Arup engaged with a range of stakeholder groups to ensure there was a good understanding of the project's context and drivers, whilst providing a platform for discussion and comment on emerging proposals. Arup used this insight to inform design concepts and an overall vision and strategy for creating a green and well-connected Town Centre. This initial concept was used as a base for ESCC and HBC to gain the New Town Deal Funding.

1.2. Project site

The project is located within the heart of Hastings Town Centre and sets to transform the area by improving and enhancing the public realm and green connections. The new green network's ambition is to create an environment for people and nature, with safe walking and cycling routes, linking the public realm, green spaces, and important community sites across the town. The site boundary includes Havelock Road, Harold Place, Queens Road and Wellington Place. The red line boundary only includes the public realm and highways, it does not include the surrounding buildings. The design aims to deliver on the following key aims; increase climate and ecological resilience, footfall as well as dwell time and expenditure in town centre, provide opportunities to increase local jobs, promote active travel and improve the area's character.



Figure 1 Image of design taken to consultation

¹ The **RIBA** Plan of Work is a model comprising stages for the design and construction process of buildings and other projects.

1.3. Consultation approach

East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) conducted a 6-week consultation from January 22 to March 1, 2024, to gather insights and feedback on proposed designs for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project. Feedback was collected through a survey and in-person events, alongside statutory feedback from interviews with key representatives. The survey returned a total of 972 responses from individuals who live, work, and enjoy Hastings.

1.4. Full Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections Results Report

The full report on the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections project with analysis and details of responses has been published alongside this ESCC response report to the consultation results. The report can be accessed via this [link](#) on the ESCC Consultation Hub.

1.5. Report purpose

This report aims to outline ESCC's response to the key themes and results from the public consultation outlined both in this document and in the consultation results report.

2. Results from public consultation

2.1. Introduction

A total of 972 responses were received, including online survey responses and those received via post and email. There was a wide mix of responses from stakeholders including residents, transport user groups, businesses, and community groups. It should be noted that the questionnaire was undertaken by respondents on a self-selecting basis, and therefore a non-scientific or selected sample.

2.2. Quantitative questions

The online questionnaire asked whether respondents strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed or neither agreed nor disagreed to each area of the scheme to provide quantitative assessments of the level of support.

We asked how do people feel about the overall proposed ideas for the town centre area?

- 50% agreed or strongly agreed
- 17% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 33% disagreed or strongly disagreed

We asked what are people's thoughts on the proposed changes to bus routes?

- 30% agreed or strongly agreed
- 37% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 23% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 1% did not answer

We asked what are people's thoughts on the proposed changes to Harold Place?

- 49% agreed or strongly agreed
- 24% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 26% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 1% did not answer

We asked what are people's thoughts on the proposed addition of a segregated cycle route from Hastings train station to the seafront?

- 49% agreed or strongly agreed
- 21% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 1% did not answer

We asked what do people think about the ideas to better connect the central area and Wellington Place?

- 52% agreed or strongly agreed
- 30% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 17% disagreed or strongly disagreed
- 1% did not answer

We asked what do people think about the proposed changes to the central area?

- 55% agreed or strongly agreed
- 20% neither agreed nor disagreed
- 25% disagreed or strongly disagreed

2.3. Qualitative questions

Respondents were also asked to provide written comments about the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections proposals. In these sections several key themes reoccurred:

- **Positive sentiment on the need for change:** There was an overwhelming negative sentiment towards the existing town centre, indicating a strong case for change. Overall, the designs were well received with positive support for the pedestrianised link to the seafront proposed for Harold Place.
- **Concerns over cycle route:** Whilst the quantitative analysis indicates support for the station to seafront cycle route, there were concerns about the suggested route's desirability and the risk of improper separation between cyclists and pedestrians, which could create safety issues.
- **Positive impact on Wellington Place:** Respondents appreciated the idea of making Wellington Place more pedestrian-friendly, providing current issues with delivery vehicles and existing traffic restrictions are addressed.
- **Concern over changes to bus routes:** Proposals for bus route changes, particularly the one-way route on Queens Road, were not well received due to concerns about accessibility, pedestrian safety and impact to businesses. Respondents also felt there was insufficient information to assess the impact of these changes.

This feedback, as well as the key themes highlighted below, will inform the approach to RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) Stage 3, ahead of submitting a planning application.

3. ESCC responses to specific themes

Below we have outlined the specific themes and trends that have been identified from the analysis of the consultation qualitative data results and provided ESCC's response.

3.1. Overall comments

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>There were many comments with direct support for the Town Centre proposals, including a focus on accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists, improving the town centre as a whole, and increasing green spaces in the town centre.</p>	<p>We welcome the comments of support for the Hastings Town Centre Public Realm and Green Connections proposals. Increasing safe active travel in the town centre and increasing biodiversity to create a town centre resilient to the changing climate remain as the overall aims and objectives of the package.</p> <p>We have also taken an accessibility audit to identify areas and methods to improve access through the town centre.</p>

3.2. Maintenance

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>You feel the current maintenance and upkeep of the area is poor and have concerns about the plans for ongoing maintenance of the town centre.</p>	<p>We are consulting closely with the ESCC and HBC maintenance teams to ensure there is a suitable management and maintenance plan in place.</p> <p>HBC are developing a long-term management and maintenance plan for the town centre and will include policies for maintenance of the project area. To support this, we are facilitating consultation with colleges and community garden groups to discuss potential community maintenance plans.</p> <p>The design also aims to be climate resilient and use a range of planting species that are low maintenance. The hard materials and paving strategy also looks to use affordable, obtainable and easily maintained materials that can be cleaned using HBC existing machinery.</p>

3.3. Transport

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>You are concerned about the impact on businesses that provide outdoor seating in Queens Road, and events at the Town Hall should a bus lane be introduced.</p>	<p>The concerns around using the currently pedestrianised section of Queens Road as a bus lane is understood. Since the consultation has concluded we have developed two further iterations of the design which were presented at stakeholder workshops in May 2024. These designs remove the proposal for buses in Queens Road and instead retain a carriageway (either 1 or 2 way) on Havelock Road and Harold Place.</p> <p>This means the proposed pedestrianisation of Harold Place is unachievable, but it mitigates against some of the proposed changes to bus routes. We will continue to work closely with the bus operator to understand the impacts of both design options on the bus service in Hastings.</p> <p>We are also developing ways to further enforce pedestrianisation and increase pedestrianisation times in Queens Road and Wellington Place.</p>
<p>You're concerned about the impact of this scheme on congestion on other roads.</p>	<p>Traffic modelling was undertaken to assess the impact of the proposals on surrounding roads. As the design progresses, further modelling will be done to ensure the impact of the scheme is understood, at an acceptable level and where possible mitigated.</p>

3.4. Accessibility

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>You're concerned about the removal of disabled parking.</p>	<p>The updated design options which include retaining a carriageway in Harold Place also include retaining the disabled parking outside Homedane House. We will continue to provide these parking spaces within the town centre as the design progresses.</p>
<p>You said you're concerned about how the plans impact accessibility, and whether the additional greening will allow for maintenance of truly accessible spaces.</p>	<p>We have conducted an accessibility audit to fully understand the current concerns and issues with accessibility in the town centre. The proposals aim to improve accessibility with upgraded paving, accessible seating and reduce street clutter. As the planting strategy is developed accessibility will be front of mind to mitigate planters and tree roots causing issues in the longer term, as well as ensuring clear views and wayfinding throughout the town centre.</p>
<p>You are concerned about the lack of public toilets in the town centre, particularly for a project which looks to increase numbers using the area.</p>	<p>The public toilets in Harold Place were closed and removed by Hastings Borough Council. There are no plans in this project to reinstate them as we do not have funding to build or maintain them within this package. Public toilets can be found at Pelham Place car park, Hastings Train Station, and Priory Meadow Shopping Centre.</p>

3.5. Safety

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>You're concerned about safety for cyclists and pedestrians in mixed-use spaces.</p>	<p>The proposed cycle lane is segregated from pedestrians to improve safety for all using the space. As detailed design is developed, we will consider whether to keep the dismounted area in Wellington Place or consider a separate cycle lane where practical. There is no current proposal for pedestrian and cyclist mixed-use spaces.</p>
<p>You think that Wellington Place should be made more pedestrian-friendly with improved pavements, wheelchair access and seating. You think vehicle access needs to be limited with better traffic enforcement.</p>	<p>The proposed design looks to improve the public realm in Wellington Place, including pavement upgrades and accessible seating. From the consultation it is understood this is a key pedestrian connection in the town centre. As detailed design progresses, we will continue to consider options available to further limit vehicle access to Wellington Place to improve pedestrian safety. However, access for business servicing and delivery drivers also needs to be considered as these are important services for the town.</p>
<p>You said we need to increase safety for the public and you're concerned how the proposed changes will encourage further antisocial behavior.</p>	<p>Increasing public safety remains a key aim for the project. Some of the proposed measures include: increased street lighting, overground crossing to the seafront, and increasing use of the space to increase public surveillance. We are aware of the concerns surrounding putting street furniture in Wellington Place and have reviewed the proposals with Sussex Police's Design Out Crime Officer and Hasting's Borough Council's Community Safety Manager to mitigate antisocial behaviour where possible and design to the Safer Streets guidance.</p>
<p>You said you're concerned about the ability to enforce a truly traffic free area and would like to see what is being proposed to maintain this.</p>	<p>Ongoing traffic enforcement will be further considered at the next stage of design, including the potential for Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras and other enforcement strategies.</p>

3.6. Greening

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>Comments on prioritising carriageway spaces for Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) were mixed. Many were pleased to see flood mitigation measures included, with many concerned about the impact of the changes to traffic accessibility.</p>	<p>The proposed design looks to balance accessibility of the town centre and increasing the town's resistance to the changing climate. During detailed design we will look for more opportunities for SuDS planting to maximise the permeability of the town centre. HBC also continue to work with Southern Water to review further options for SuDS across the catchment (anticipated to start in March 2026) which will help mitigate flooding in the town centre.</p>
<p>You said you were concerned about the local conditions for planting to thrive.</p>	<p>We are working with landscape architects and horticulturist specialists alongside seeking advice from Hastings Garden Town Team to ensure that species selection will reflect the conditions of where they will be grown.</p>

3.7. Town centre management

Comment	ESCC Response
<p>Comments on using the town centre for events were also mixed. Some shared concerns that the town centre is increasingly residential therefore the central area shouldn't be designed to facilitate large events. Others shared comments supporting the use of the central area for events, including extending the market.</p>	<p>The proposals for the central area remain as a flexible open public space to work for everyday accessibility, the existing market, potential for large scale events and large visitor numbers in the summer. Any events planned for this space would be required to follow the existing HBC processes and seek the relevant approvals and permits. This process should mitigate concerns for residents. The design simply ensures the space has the infrastructure to be used in many different ways should its use change in the future.</p>
<p>You are concerned about who would fund and operate activities or festivals in the central area.</p>	<p>Events will continue to be operated by HBC.</p>

4. Next steps

All of the feedback received as part of this consultation will be taken into consideration and where practical will feed into the detailed design stage of the project.

The current schedule for the next stages of the project is as outlined below:

Planning application, as needed	September 2024
Detailed design development	Winter 2024-Spring 2025
Traffic Regulation Order process, as needed	Spring 2025
Start of construction	2025
Construction completed	2026