

HUNGERFORD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

FINAL DRAFT



Study Area

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- The Canal
- Hungerford Town Hall
- Civic Core
- Hungerford High Street
- Hungerford Market
- Station Road and The Cuttings
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01 Purpose and Process

Purpose

This report was commissioned to guide and support the future of Hungerford town centre, in the context of continuing growth of the town, the preparation of its Neighbourhood Plan and continuing change in what society expects and demands from our town centres.

The purpose of this study has been to develop a set of projects and actions that will enable Hungerford town centre to adapt and respond to these changes and to thrive socially and economically. Whilst this report considers Hungerford it should be noted that it has been undertaken in parallel with a similar study for Thatcham. This dual process has enabled consideration of the similar issues that they both face as market towns, to view the different ways in which they are used and perceived by their local communities, and to identify the distinctly different ways in which they need to respond.

Process

Perhaps most importantly, successful market towns are driven by their local communities, and through a 'bottom-up' approach to change that creates a distinctive local identity.

This creates a loyal and committed local catchment. It is attractive to visitors seeking to discover something different from the standard High Street. It creates political consensus and helps support external funding bids. The studies for both Hungerford and Thatcham have therefore been heavily focused on local engagement, through walkabouts, workshops and on-line surveys.

The recommendations within this report are directly linked to the outcomes of this engagement, and the priorities for change. They present a strategy of action, but not a rigid blueprint for its future, enabling Hungerford to continue to evolve and adapt. In some areas there is considerable agreement within the town on how to proceed. In other areas more work will be needed to establish a consensus. Whilst this report represents the outcome of this particular study, it must therefore be seen as the start of a process that continues to involve the community of Hungerford in the development and implementation of the priority projects their town needs and deserves.

02 Key Issues



This study has had regard to the following existing documents and reports:

- Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan 2036 Aims & Objectives
- Hungerford Neighbourhood Development Plan 2036 Consultation Responses
- Hungerford Town Plan Refresh 2013
- Western Berkshire Retail & Leisure Commercial Assessment 2016

This existing information has been supplemented by a walkabout with officers and members from West Berkshire Council, members of Hungerford Town Council, representatives of Town & Manor and other stakeholders, together with our own analysis and review of the town centre. We have not sought to prepare a formal 'health-check' for Hungerford town centre, but to proceed as quickly as possible to identify the key issues facing the town centre, test these with stakeholders and local residents and propose potential solutions.

The following key issues were identified through the review of existing information, walkabouts with stakeholders and the first stakeholder workshop:

- Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre
- Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure
- Improving space for indoor and outdoor markets and events
- Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & other start-up businesses
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street
- Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre
- Integrating community facilities within the town centre

Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford’s heritage

Hungerford's strength as a visitor and tourist destination, including the antiques trade, means that it supports more shops, cafés and restaurants than would otherwise be the case for a town with its population. 89% of respondents to the Town Plan refresh stated that it was important or very important to "Promote Hungerford as a tourist destination to support local businesses and help improve facilities for both visitors and residents."

The Town Plan refresh has policies to "Promote Hungerford as an historic market town for visitors", and to "Use Hungerford's location at the heart of the North Wessex Downs AONB to promote it as a base from which to explore the area".

The Neighbourhood Plan notes the importance of tourism to the economy of Hungerford, and the vibrancy of its High Street. The heritage qualities of the town create local civic pride as well as boosting tourism.

Over 80% of respondents to the recent Neighbourhood Plan consultation agreed that one of the reasons they like living in Hungerford is that it is an attractive tourist town.

Despite this, in the consultation responses to the Town Plan refresh, around two thirds of respondents felt that Hungerford did not make the most of its potential as a tourist destination. The walkabout and the stakeholder workshop identified a number of areas where work is being undertaken to improve and promote the tourism offer, such as the Heritage Trail and funding to improve the Virtual Museum as well as the range of events promoted by the Town & Manor, Town Council and other organisations. It also identified areas where the heritage offer can be improved, particularly around the Canal, Town Hall and The Croft. These issues were therefore included in the on-line survey to assess the views of the wider community.



Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre

Hungerford, as an historic market town and a distinctive antiques trade, attracts a large number of visitors. The longer it can keep these visitors in the town, the more they will spend and the more local businesses and services they will support, benefiting the local economy and local residents.

The proposals to develop the Heritage Trail in Hungerford recognise the need to encourage wider exploration of what the town has to offer. This includes not just the Canal and the Common, but interesting independent areas such as Bridge Street, the distinctive offer around The Croft, the history of the Town & Manor and associated festivals and its historic coaching inns.

The study has therefore put emphasis on helping visitors explore more of Hungerford, through wayfinding and interpretation, making it easier to move around the town as a pedestrian, with footway and towpath improvements, and by making existing attractions more accessible and more welcoming as tourist destinations within the town.



Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure

A walkabout along the canal was held with representatives of the Canal & River Trust (CRT), with Rev Saunders of St. Lawrence's Church, Karen Salmon of the Chamber of Commerce and Hugh Pihlens who is responsible for the Hungerford Virtual Museum website.

The CRT identified a clear opportunity to extend overnight moorings in Hungerford, and to increase day visitors who are attracted to historic market towns with interesting, independent businesses. Average spend from such visitors (particularly overnight) in the town centres is significant and would bring substantial benefits to Hungerford. It was considered that improvements would need to be made to the towpath, the facilities along the canal and the connections and signage to the

town centre. A clear overlap was therefore identified with the work being undertaken by the Chamber of Commerce to promote the Hungerford Heritage Trail.

The condition of the towpath is of course critical as it is how most visitors will access the canal. The walkabout with stakeholders highlighted areas where the towpath condition is relatively poor, particularly in winter, and areas where it feels narrow and unsafe.



Integrating community facilities within the town centre

The variety of community facilities within Hungerford is considered one of its strengths, but they are often hidden away from the High Street.

The Croft is the most significant area, being of community and heritage importance to the town. Croft Hall, the Field Centre and Hungerford Club and associated leisure facilities, together with the 'village green' quality of the space and the proximity to St Lawrence's Church creates a distinctive environment which would be of interest to visitors, not just local residents. It is therefore part of the proposed Heritage Trail for Hungerford.

This area also hosts festivals and markets, but is connected to High Street by the relatively unattractive and poorly signed Church Lane. Improving this connection was seen as a key issue for Hungerford, as was creating stronger links to the canal which were discussed with the Hungerford Club, the church and the CRT.



Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street

Key objectives of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan include:

- Seeking to improve road safety by considering lower speed limits, junction improvements and possible changes to road layouts.
- Minimising the effects of traffic congestion in the town centre and especially the High Street for the benefit of pedestrians and all road users.
- Encouraging walking and cycling in the town.

The Town Plan refresh also notes the objective of encouraging walking and cycling (to reduce use of the car) and specifically to “Investigate opportunities to improve the access to the Tesco car park, having regard to pedestrian safety”.

82% of respondents to the Town Plan stated that it was important or very important to “Increase environmental awareness, reduce carbon footprint and encourage green living” and High Streets are often the most visible indicator of a town's commitment to tackling climate change.

This work has highlighted again the impact of HGVs travelling through Hungerford on the physical environment and historic qualities of the town, an issue noted in the Town Plan refresh. Whilst it was not within the remit of this study to consider alternative routes for HGVs, it has considered measures to slow traffic and give greater priority to pedestrians, which could help mitigate the impact and in the longer term make Hungerford less attractive as a through route for large vehicles.

Market towns generally serve a compact local catchment, with residents having relatively easy walking and cycle routes into the town centre, and a large percentage of Hungerford's residents do walk into the town centre. Hungerford also serves a wider rural population which is increasingly reliant on access by car, and it also attracts relatively large numbers of tourists from further afield. The strategy understands that some people will need to travel by car and looks to make car parking arrangements as straightforward as possible, maximising the usage, efficiency and attractiveness of existing car parks, whilst minimising the visual and environmental impact of traffic and parking on the High Street.



Improving the 'walkability' of a town does however also bring important social, economic and environmental benefits. It improves physical and mental health, it improves air quality and helps address climate change and our surveys regularly show that those people who walk into town centres are more likely to spend their money in local and independent shops and to support the evening economy.

However, footway widths along Hungerford High Street are often narrow, permitting little more than the functional movement of pedestrians from one place to another. The town could and should do more to encourage visitors to pause, explore and enjoy the public realm which would have a significant benefit in extending visitor dwell time in Hungerford and encouraging local residents to walk into the town centre.

It is therefore an important challenge for Hungerford to find consensus within the town on the way to balance between the convenience of on-street parking and the benefits of providing more space for people and businesses.



Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & other start-up businesses

A key objective of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan is to:

“Encourage businesses and support initiatives which promote a vibrant high street and increase the range of shops, services and eating places in the town for the benefit of residents, tourists and visitors of all ages.”

The Town Plan refresh also noted the desire to ensure that Hungerford High Street was not filled with the same shops as ‘every other High Street’. Independent businesses bring a stronger sense of identity to a town centre, particularly market towns. They also help make a town centre less vulnerable to decisions made at a national level.

Recent national surveys indicate that whilst there has been a decline in demand for retail floorspace from national retailers, those towns which have focused on independent retailers have seen growth. The 2016 retail assessment highlights the level of competition which Hungerford faces from the much larger centres of Newbury, Swindon and Marlborough, which will make it difficult for the town to attract large numbers of national retailers and even more important that it puts in place measures to promote local independent businesses.

Surveys also indicate that a significant number of the working population are spending at least two days a week working from home. The positive impact of hybrid working / working from home on small town centres such as Hungerford is being measured in a raft of studies. This shift in working patterns provides more opportunities as the spend shifts from larger towns and cities to a more local spend which in turn can support more local businesses.

The 2016 retail assessment highlighted that there is expected to be significant growth in spending on leisure & cultural activities and on eating and drinking in the West Berkshire area. The Canal & River Trust also highlighted the level of spend from day trips and overnight moorings and the importance that such visitors attach to being able to spend this in local, independent pubs, cafés and restaurants.

The physical survey of Hungerford identified relatively few opportunities for local pubs and cafés to spill out into the street and the lack of activity along the canal. This activity is far more likely to be concentrated in lanes and courtyards to the rear of buildings but this limits its visibility for visitors and tourists. Where seating is provided on the street it is often squeezed against the building to make room for bins and on-street parking. It is considered therefore that there is scope for Hungerford to widen and improve its offer in this respect.



Improving space for indoor and outdoor markets and events

A key objective of the Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan is to:

“Encourage a growing range of cultural and community events which appeal to all age groups and help to attract visitors to the town who, in turn, benefit the local economy.”

The Town Plan refresh also notes the importance of the Hungerford’s distinctive local events and festivals, and states that it will “Continue to support existing and future cultural events such as Hocktide, HADCAF (the Community Arts Festival) and the Victorian Extravaganza”.

Hungerford has a popular weekly market with a strong local food offer in a highly visible location. This is complemented by monthly and seasonal markets and events in The Croft area, which is less visible to casual visitors and tourists. There are also market stalls provided within the Corn Exchange room in the Town Hall.

The workshops identified a clear desire to make more of the opportunities for markets and events in Hungerford, particularly inside and outside the Town Hall.

Markets provide variety and diversity, history and character. They are an expression of community, and help build a strong sense of local identity. They provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to access trading opportunities, offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally, and providing affordable fresh food produce. They are popular with tourists and with local communities so long as they create a distinctive local identity, showcasing local businesses. They are an important ‘tool’ for driving town centre footfall, increasing dwell time, and ultimately helping to build and promote the ‘brand’ of a place.



Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station

The rail station and surrounding area is an important arrival point for Hungerford, for rail passengers and for those using Station Road car park. It is only a 2minute walk from the High Street (via The Cuttings) but feels significantly more distant.

The availability of car parking in Hungerford was a major issue in the Neighbourhood Development Plan consultation. Tesco car park and Station Road car park are the two most significant car parks in the town centre.

The quality of arrival into Station Road car park in particular does not reflect its proximity to the town centre and it appears to be the least popular car park in the town centre. Addressing this could bring significant benefits to the town centre, reducing parking pressure on the High Street and potentially allow for some relocation of on-street parking.



Enhancing arrival to the town centre

The importance of enhancing arrival into Hungerford was highlighted at the walkabout and in the workshops. There are a number of key gateways which would benefit from improvement, for pedestrians, cyclists, rail passengers, canal users and motorists. Arrival points on the edge of Hungerford, from the A4 into Bridge Street, and from the south into the High Street are important indicators to visitors of the quality they can expect from the town centre. Arrival points at car parks are similarly important first impressions for visitors.

The canal is an important arrival point, and the connections to High Street and Bridge Street are in need of improvement and promotion. And the routes for pedestrians, into the town centre from the car parks should not be forgotten and there is a cluster of these important gateways at the centre of the High Street, at The Cuttings, Park Lane and Church Street as well as the exit from the Tesco car park.



03 Engagement Findings

HUNGERFORD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

HemingwayDesign, NEW Masterplanning & Urban Movement are working with West Berkshire District Council, as well as Hungerford Town Council, and other stakeholders on how to improve Hungerford town centre.

We have held meetings and workshops with local stakeholders, and are now seeking the views of residents, workers, business owners, and visitors on what should happen.

Please scan the QR code below to take the survey or visit <https://www.westberks.gov.uk/thatcham-hungerford-strategies> to find out more



On the behalf of West Berkshire District Council, your enquiries and comments will be analysed by HemingwayDesign. Copies will be made available to the relevant planning authority so it can note your comments. Your personal details will not be placed on the public record. Your personal details will be held securely by HemingwayDesign in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018, will be used solely in connection with the Thatcham Town Centre Strategy and, except as noted above, will not be passed to any third parties. HemingwayDesign will only keep your personal details until the studies have been completed

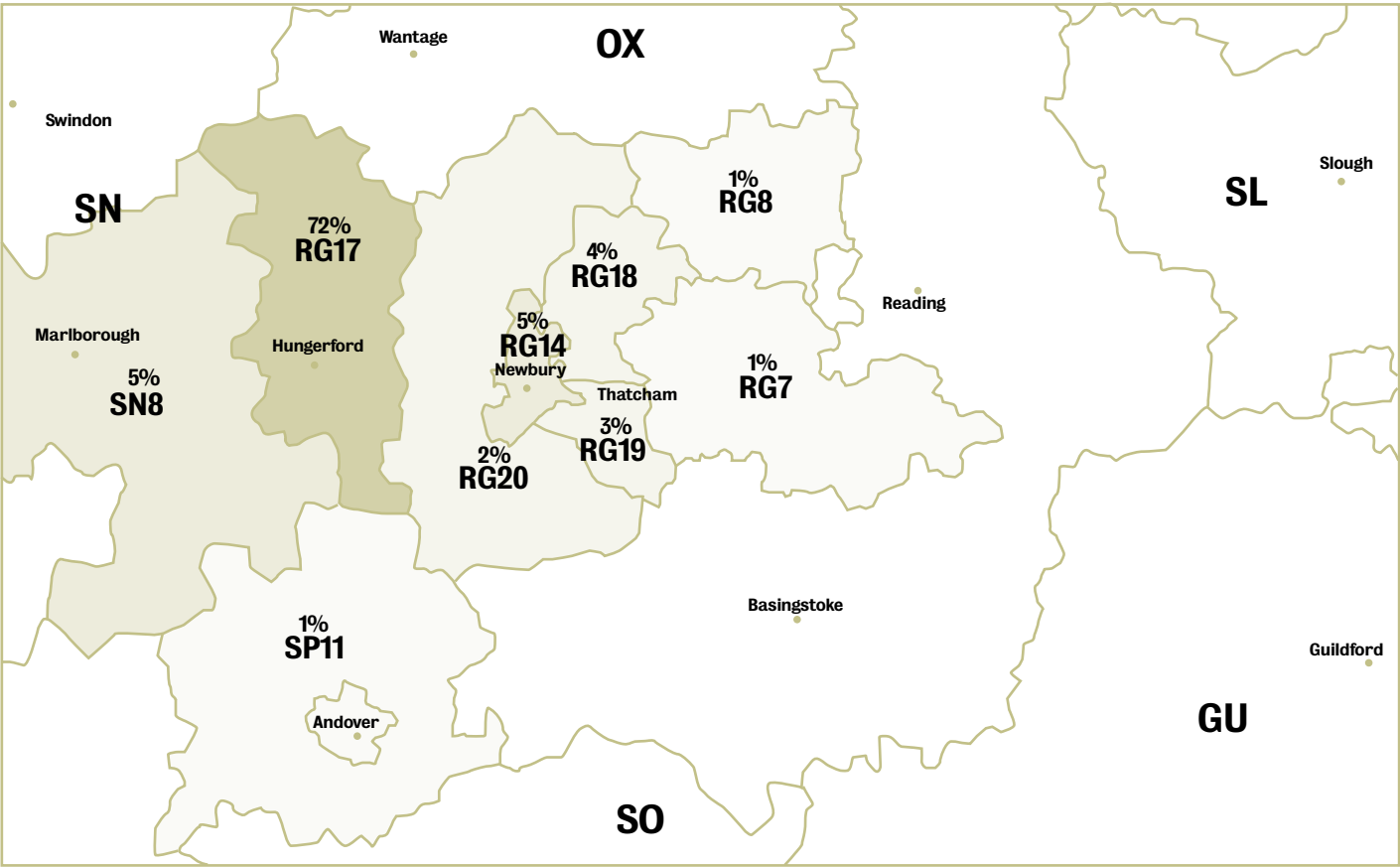
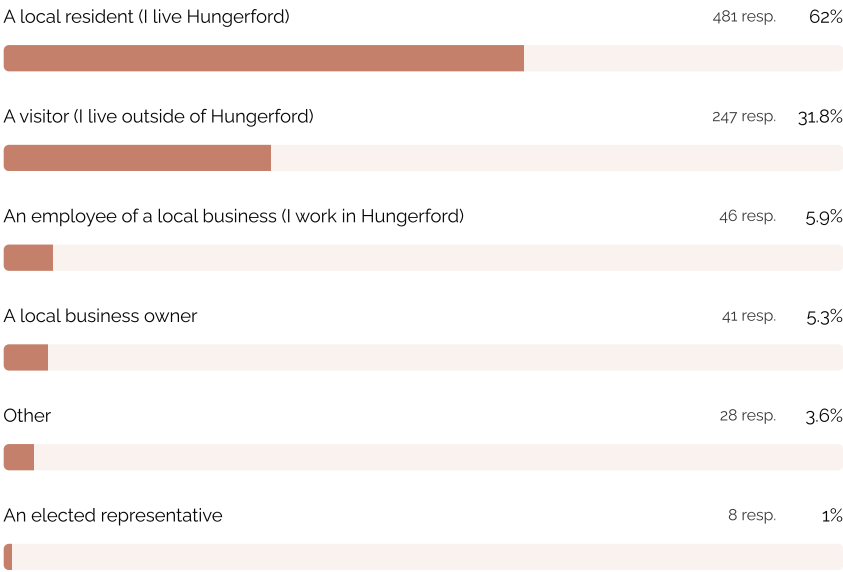
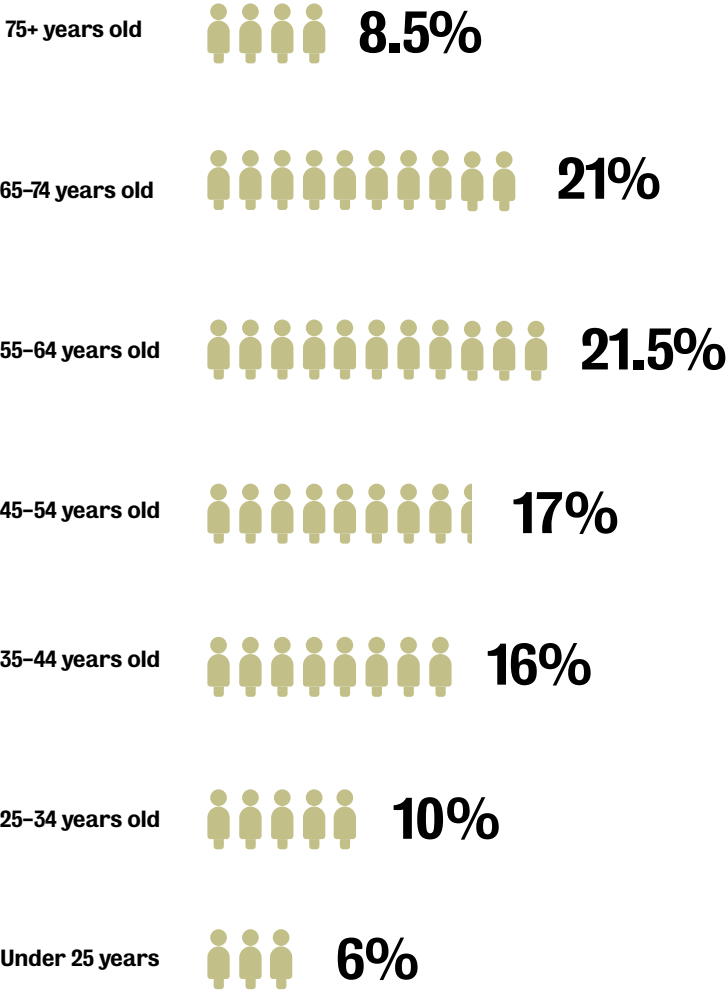
   

The strategy responds to priorities highlighted through public and stakeholder consultation. The survey questions were agreed with stakeholders via workshops and subsequent correspondence. This section of the report documents the responses from the public survey, which was open from the 5th of December 2022 to the 9th January 2023, receiving 784 detailed completions.

Demographics

The greatest response was in the 55-74 age ranges, 42.5% of respondents were within this range. There was however a good response rate across all age ranges. Around 10% of West Berkshire residents are aged 15-24, and the survey response rate was 6%.

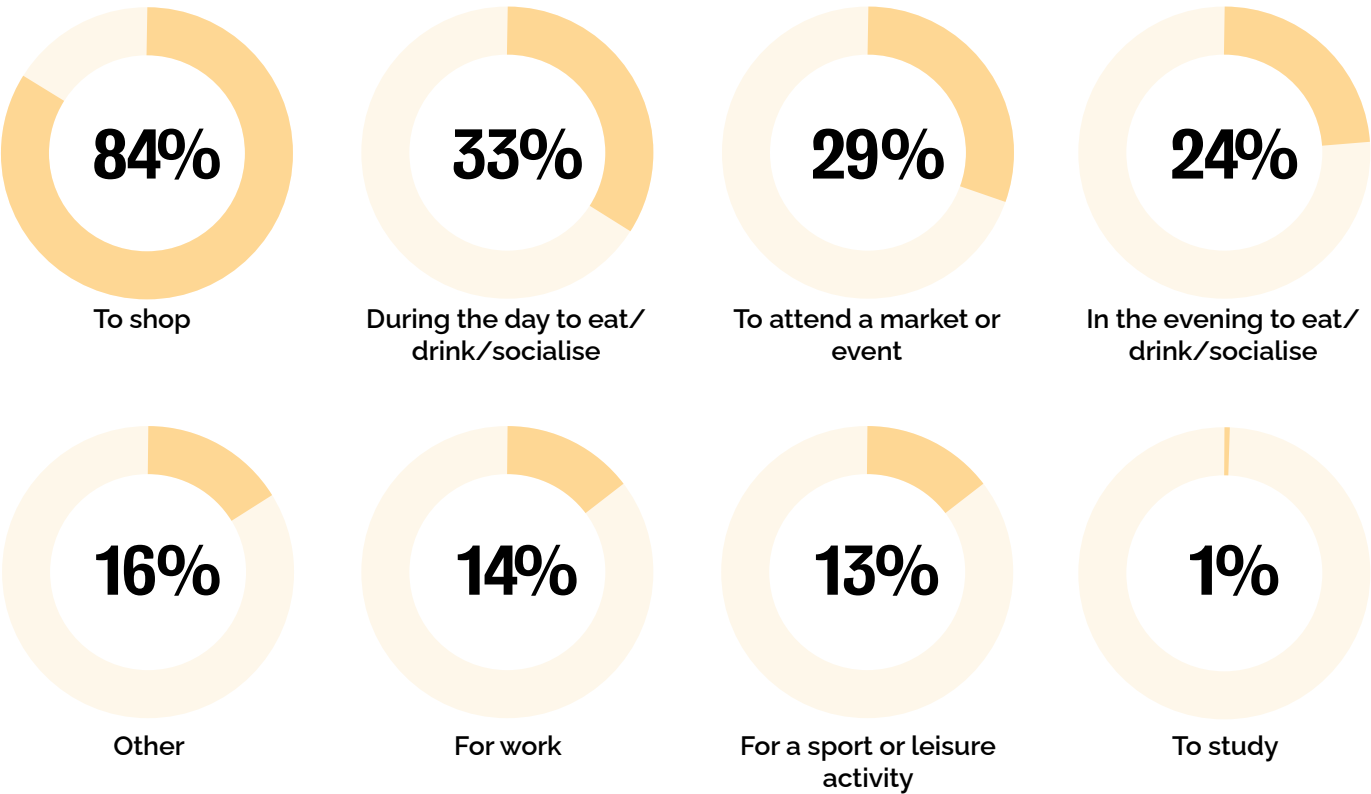
62% of survey respondents identify as local residents of Hungerford, 32% are visitors, 11% of respondents work for or own a local business.



Visiting the town centre

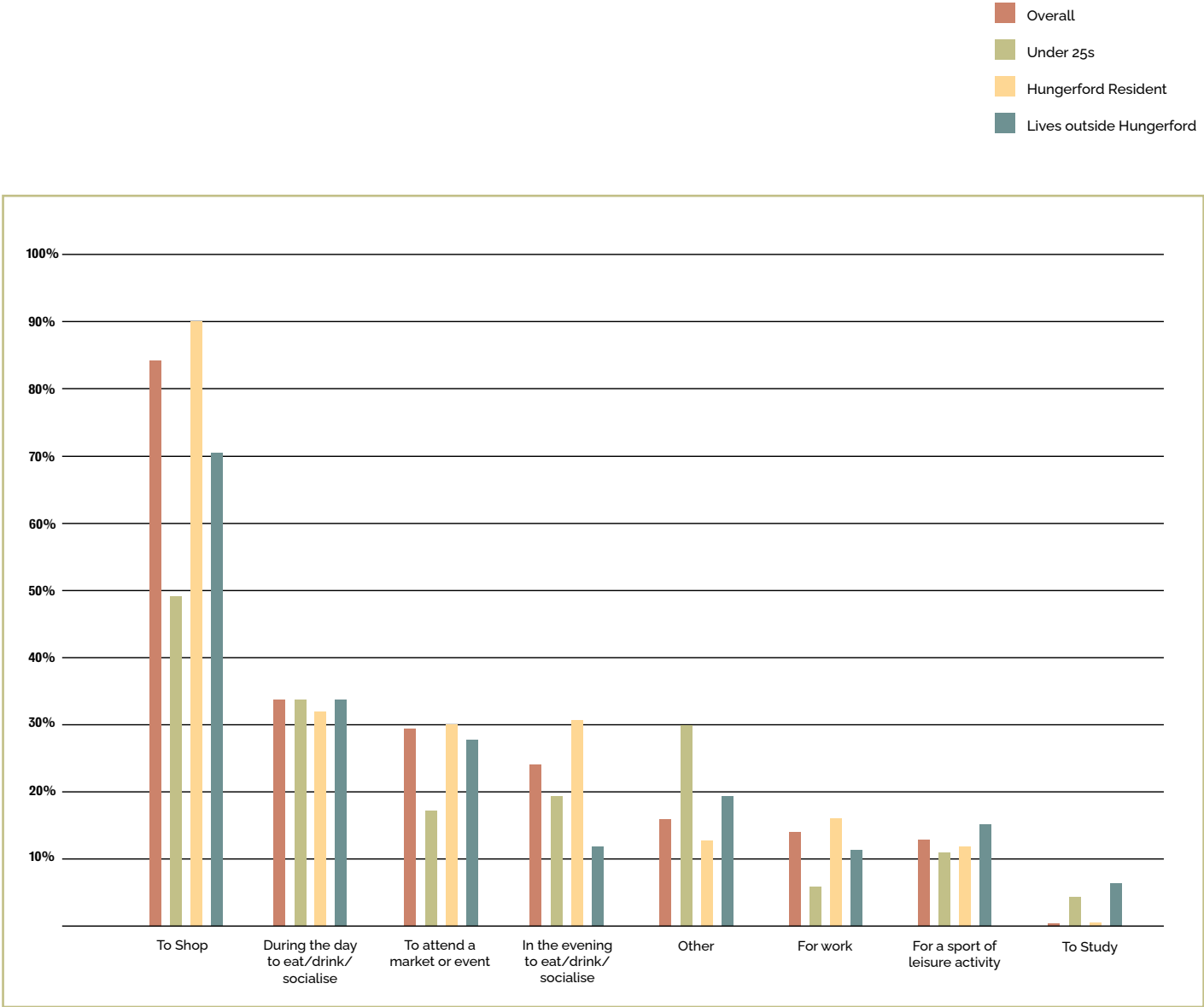
84% of respondents say they usually visit the town centre to shop. 33% are most likely to visit to eat, drink, or socialise in the daytime.

Other common reasons for visiting include visiting family, taking children to school, walking or driving en route elsewhere, and to visit the GP, dentist, post office or library.



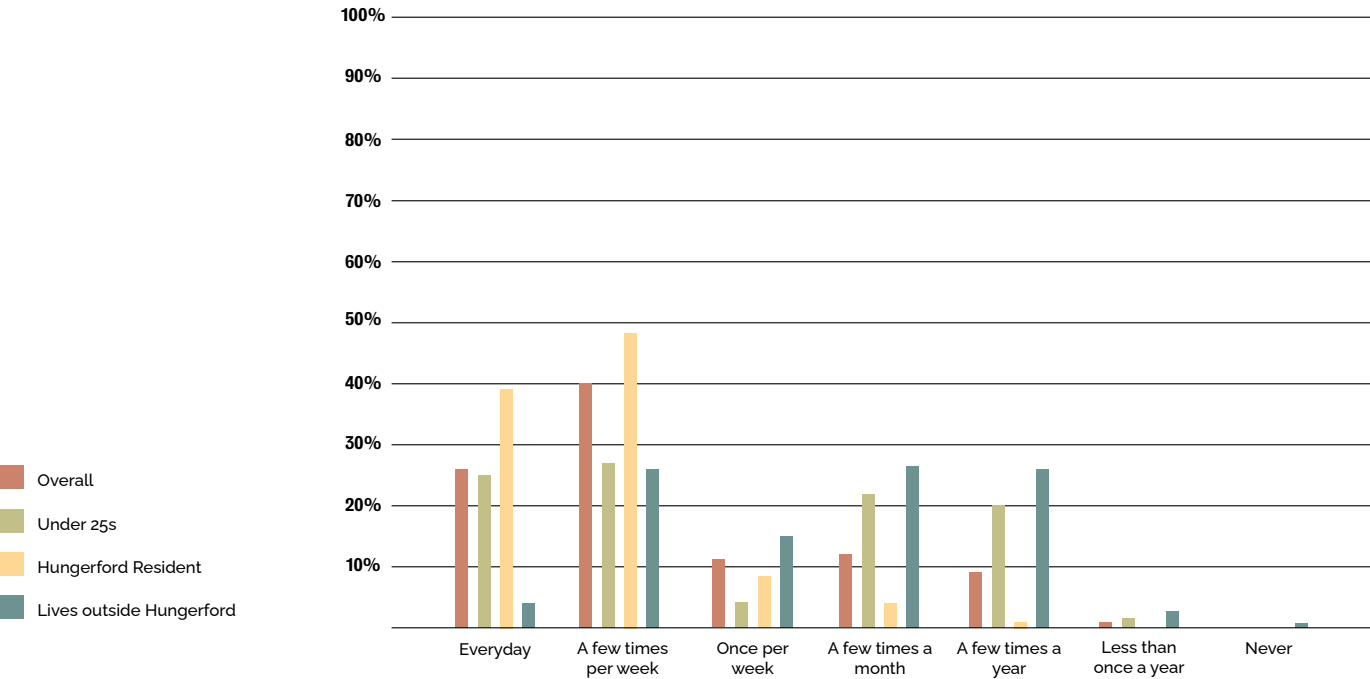
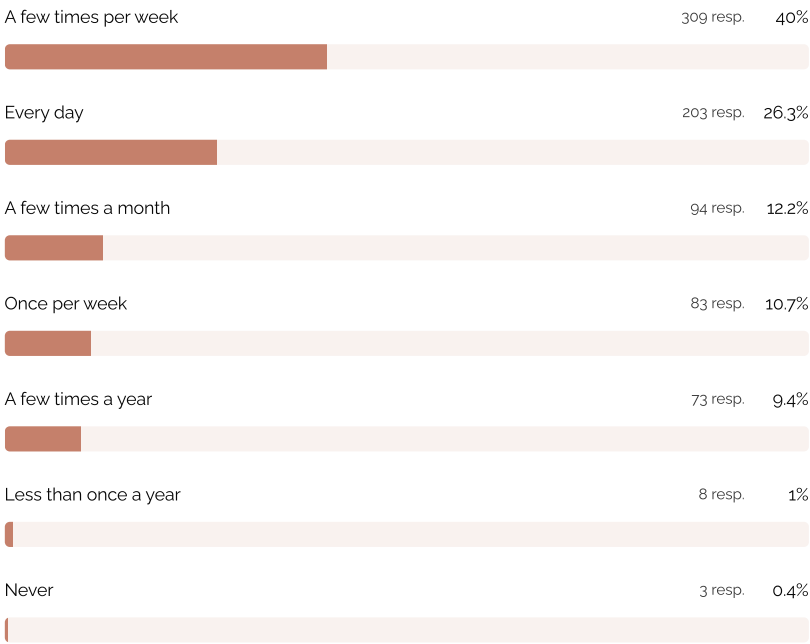
49% of respondents under the age of 25 say they visit the town centre to shop, compared to 84% overall.

U25s are also less likely to attend a market or event in the town centre than other demographics.



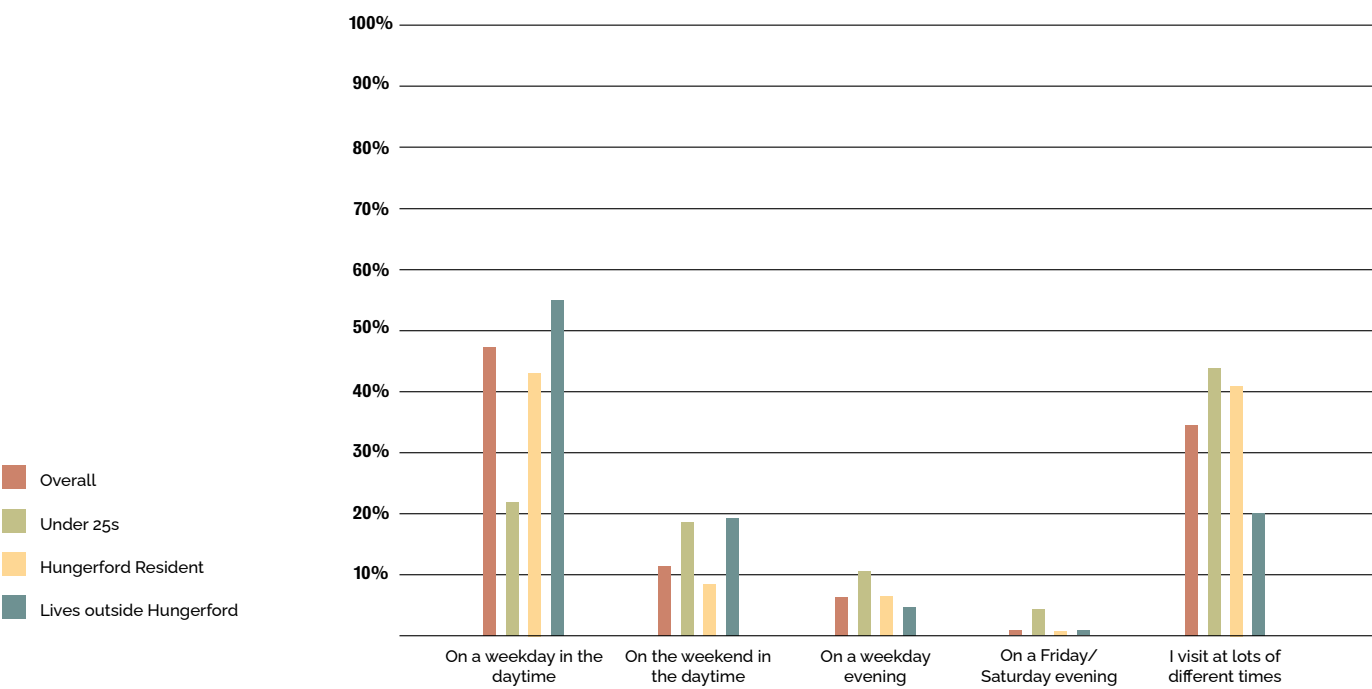
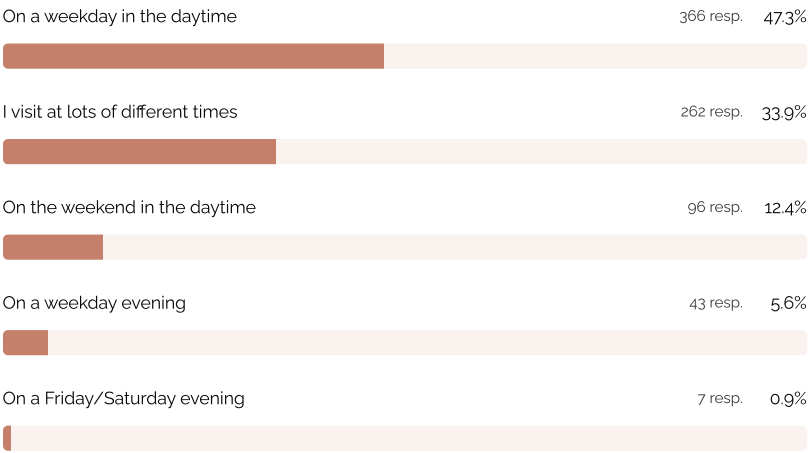
Visit Frequency

66% of respondents state they visit Hungerford Town Centre a few times a week or more. This drops to 50% for U25s.



Time of visit

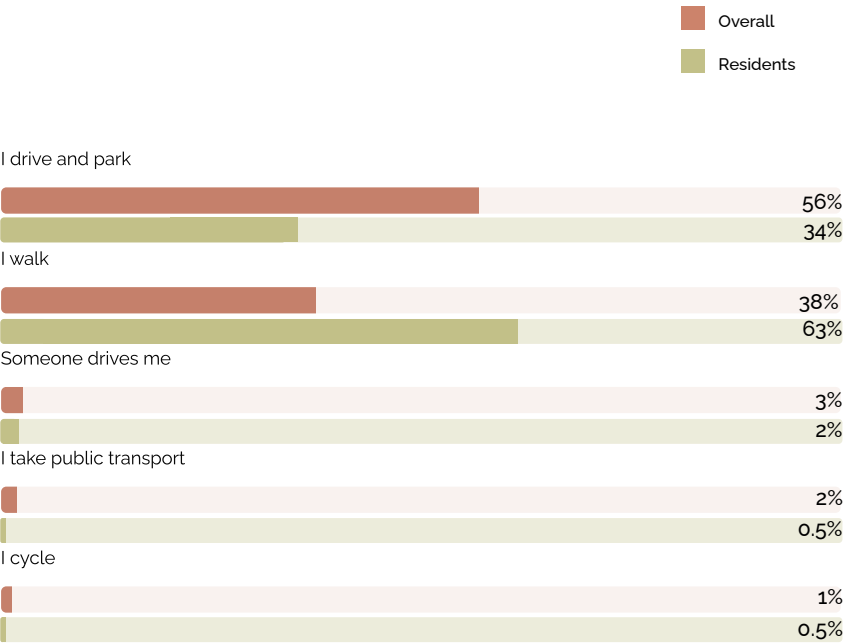
47% of respondents say they are most likely to visit the town centre during the day on a weekday. 34% will visit a various times, whilst 12% are most likely to visit on the weekend during the daytime.



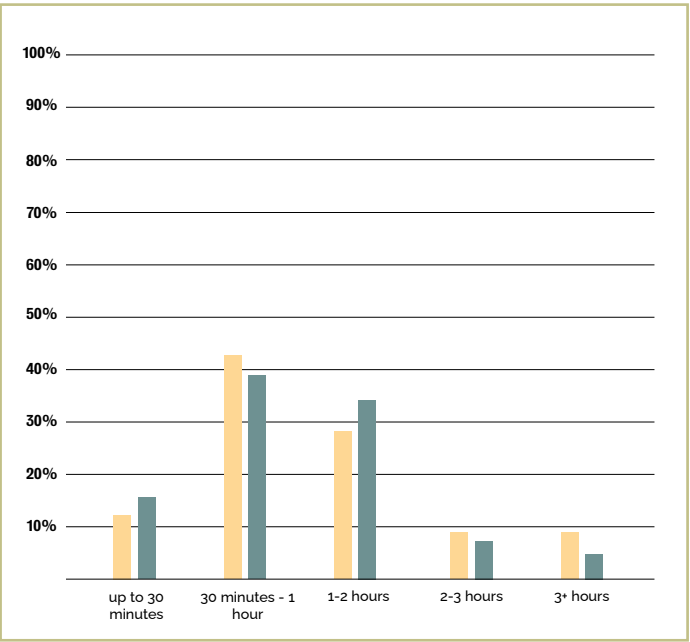
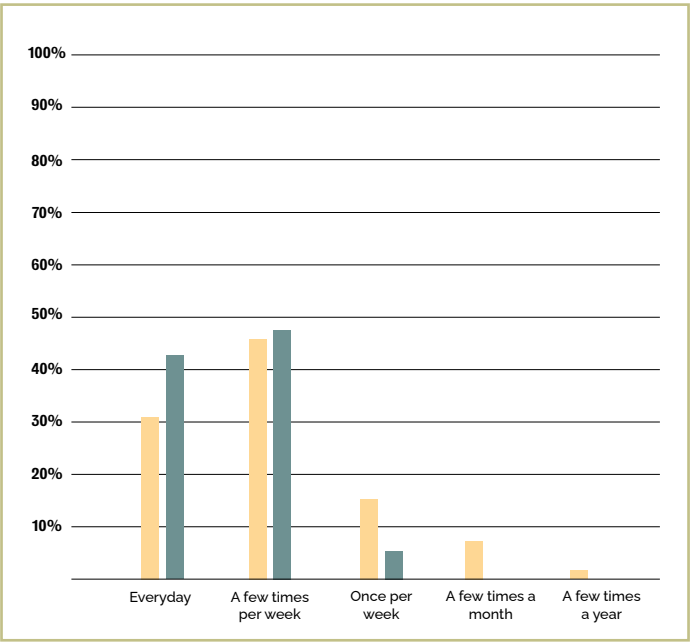
Travel

63% of local respondents usually travel to the town centre on foot, whilst 34% drive and park.

Local respondents that walk or cycle to the town centre visit the town centre more frequently than those that drive and park.

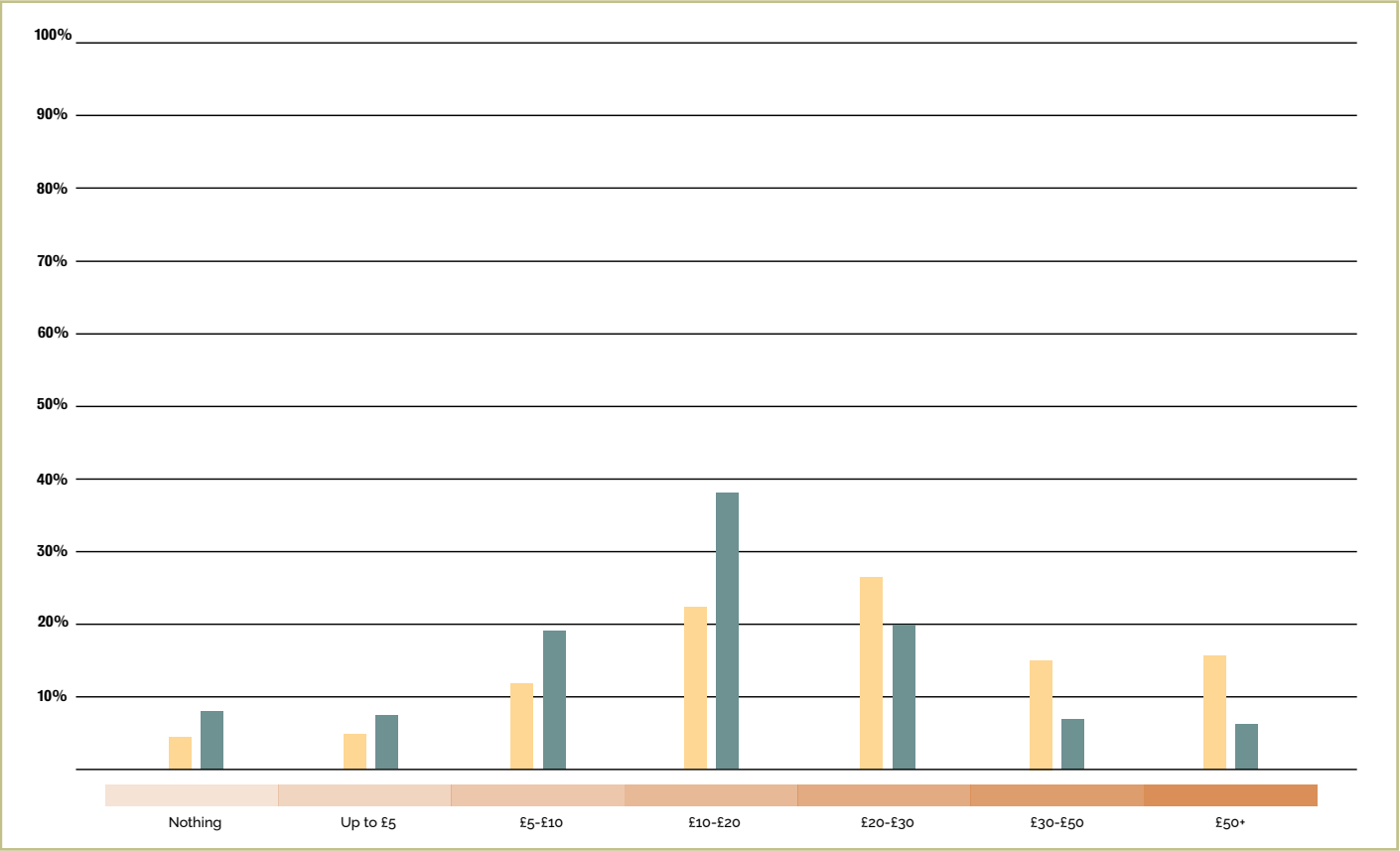


Drive
Walk/Cycle



Visit frequency / Mode of transport

Length of visit / Mode of transport



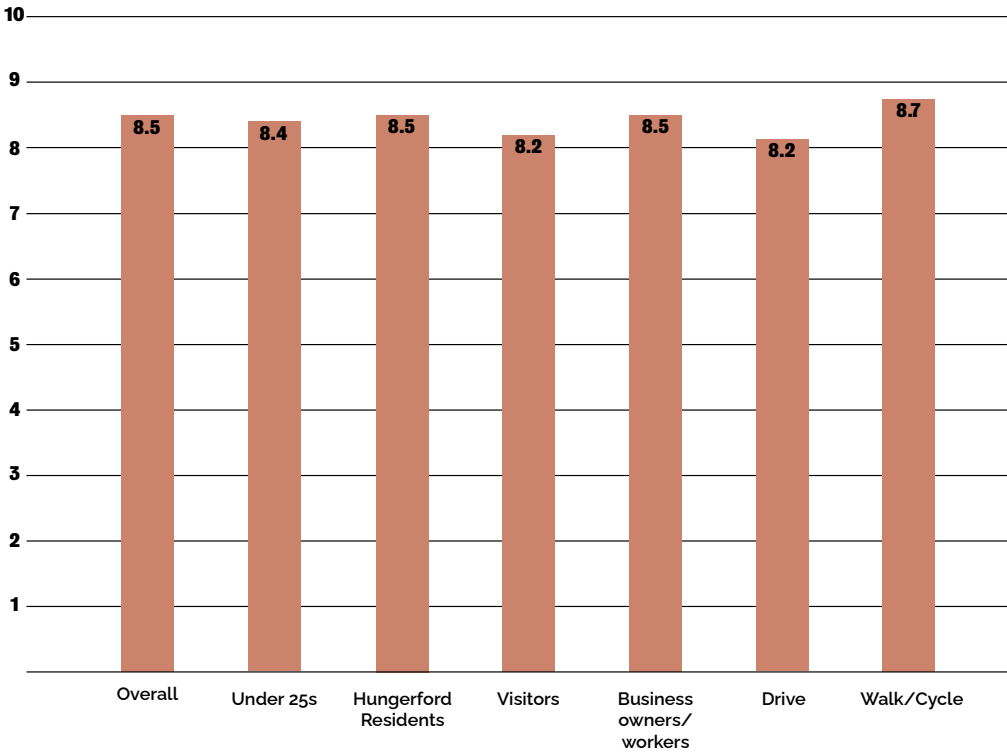
Spend / Mode of transport

Issues & Opportunities

A number of issues and opportunities were highlighted through stakeholder engagement and initial site appraisals. These issues were then agreed with stakeholders for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

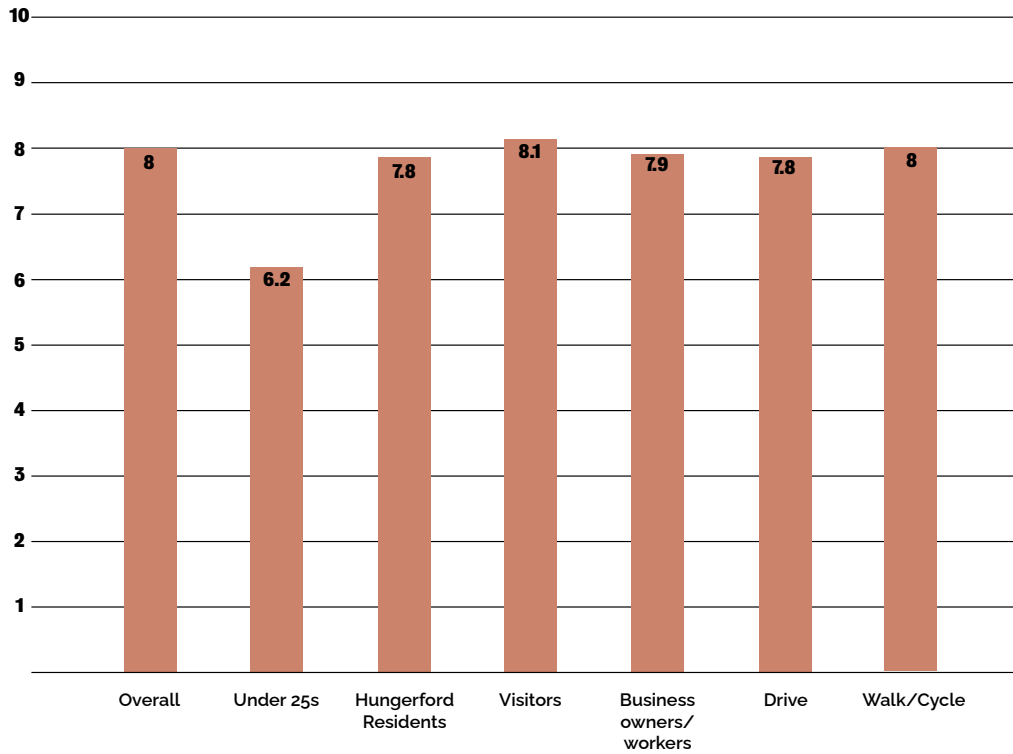
Respondents were asked to rate the importance of these issues and opportunities, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

Increasing opportunities for independent cafés, restaurants, retail, & new businesses



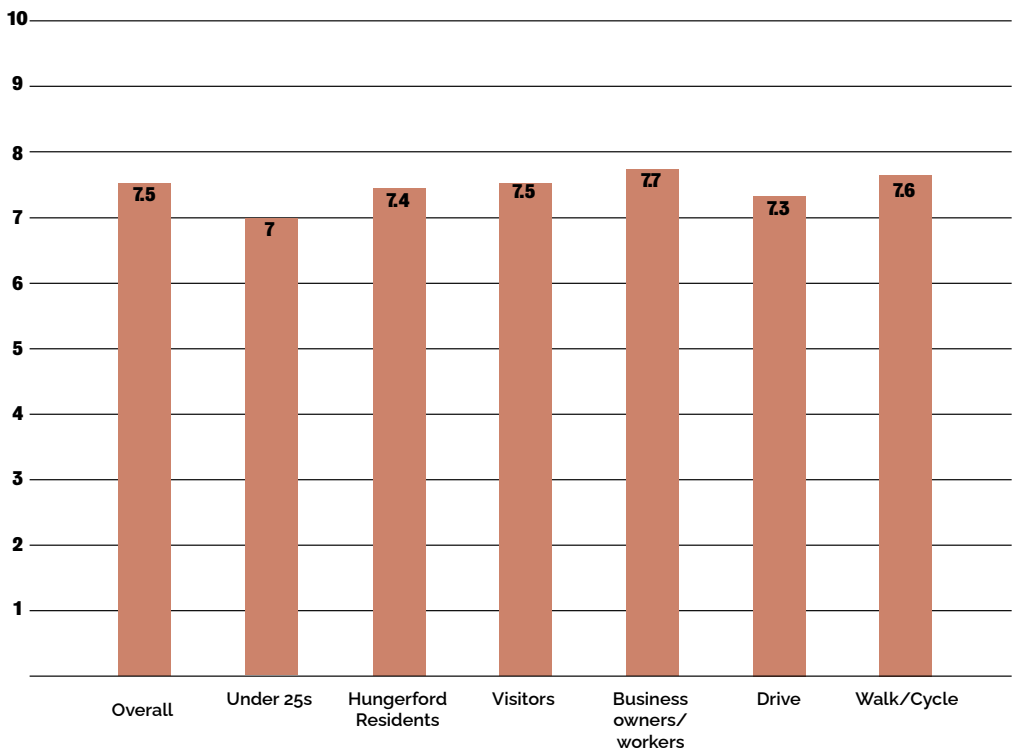
8.5
Average rating

Promoting the use of the canal and green spaces for recreation and leisure



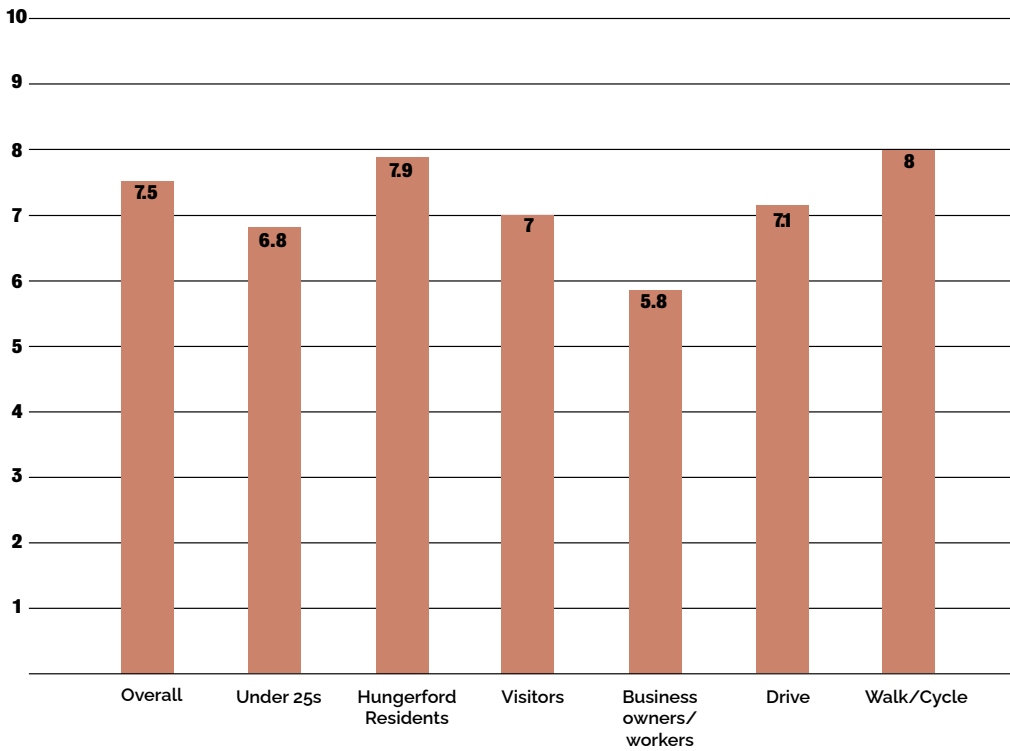
8.0
Average rating

Improving space for indoor & outdoor markets and events



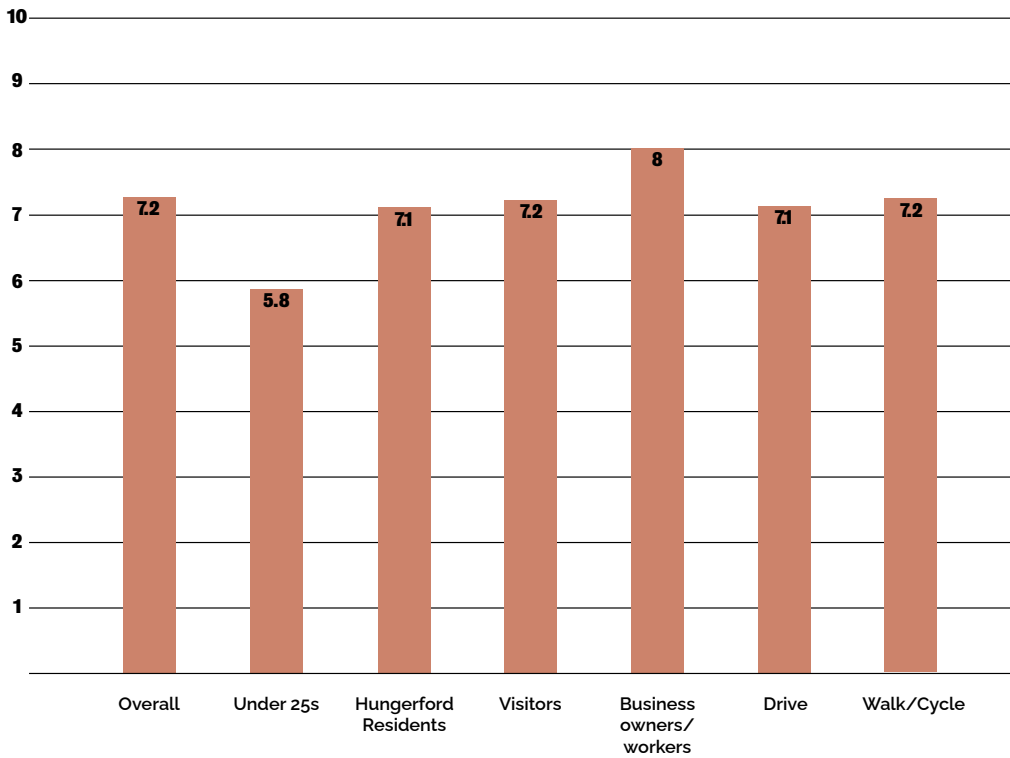
7.5
Average rating

Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street



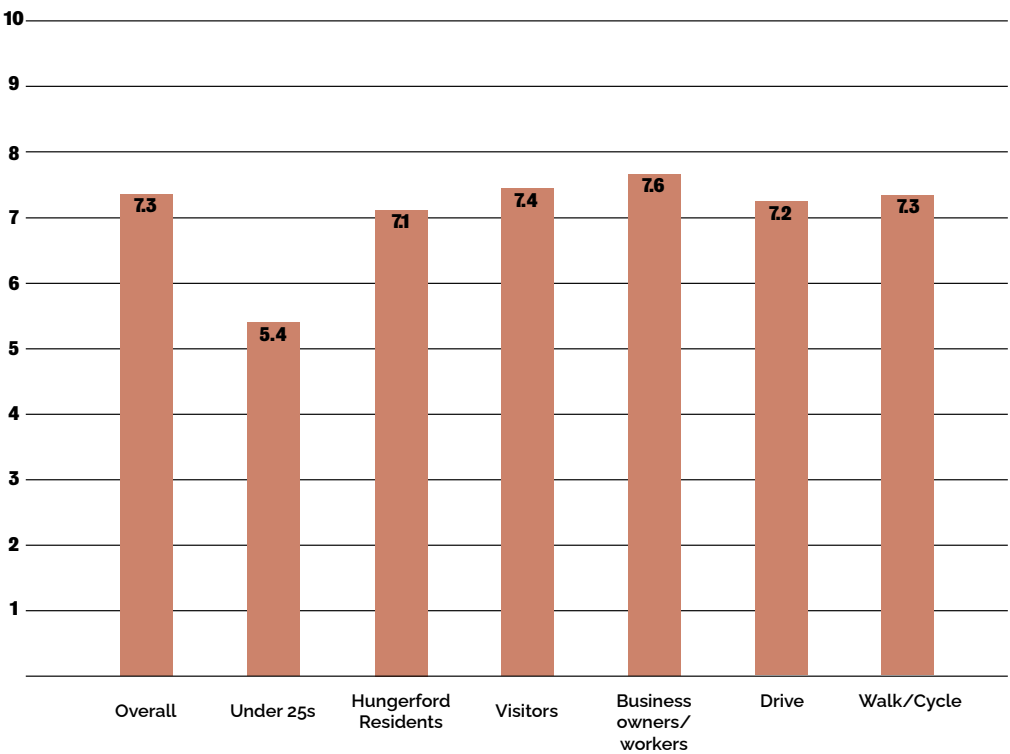
7.5
Average rating

Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of the town centre



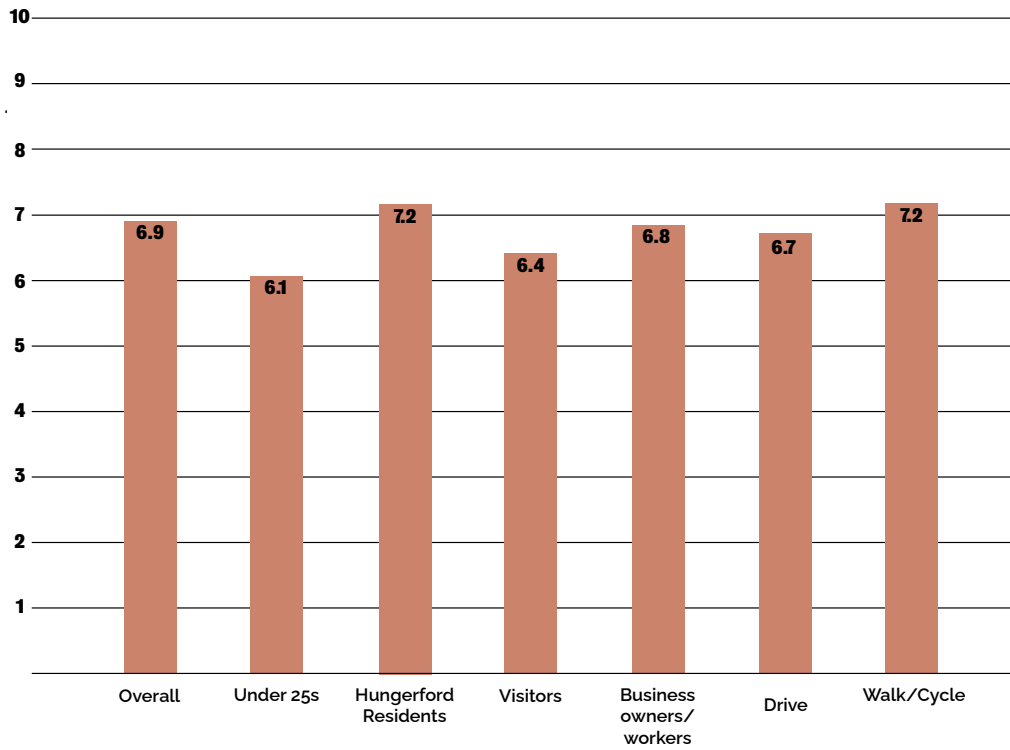
7.2
Average rating

Encouraging tourism by promoting Hungerford’s heritage



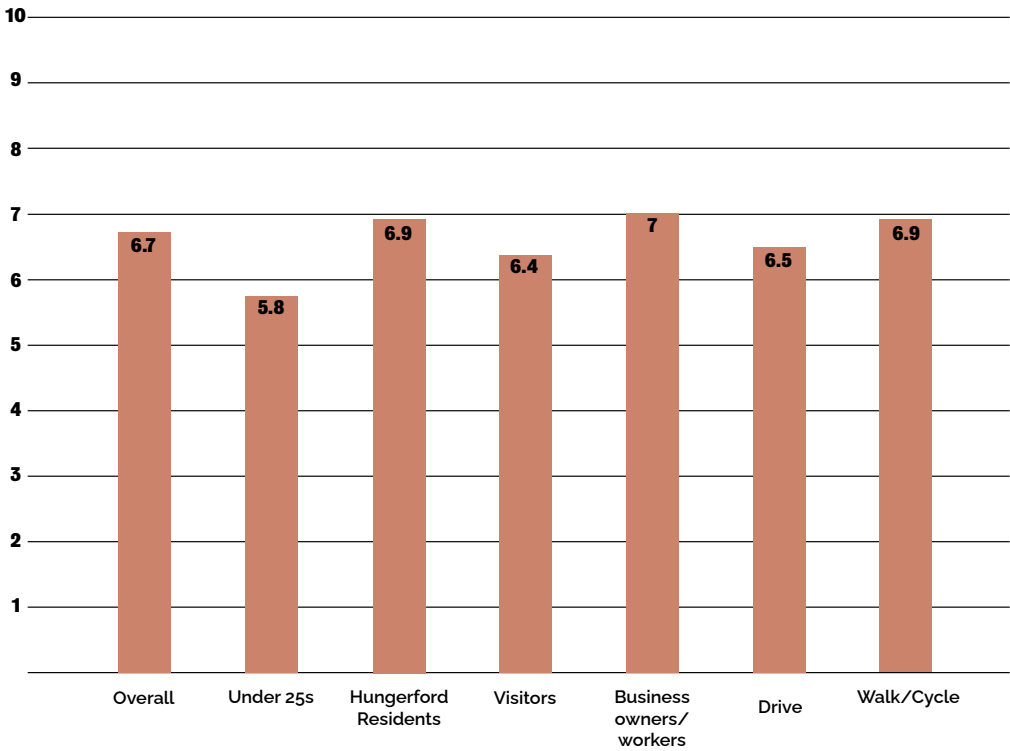
7.3
Average rating

Integrating community facilities within the town centre



6.9
Average rating

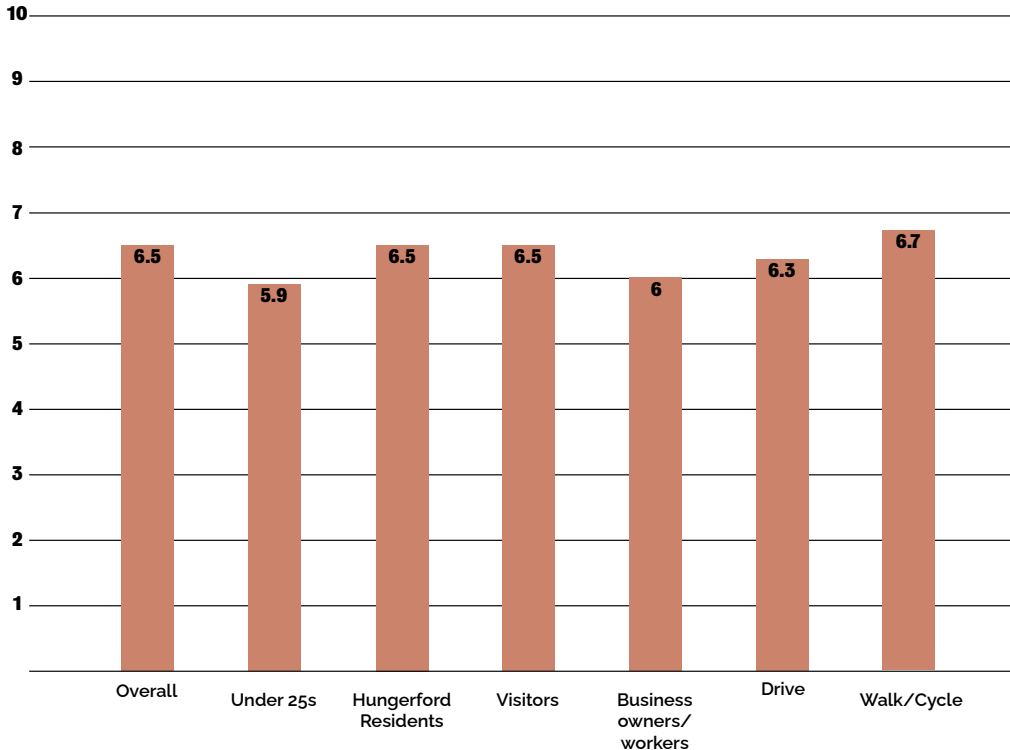
Enhancing arrival to the town centre



6.7

Average rating

Improving walking routes to the High Street from car parks and rail station



6.3

Average rating

When asked if there are any other issues respondents think should be addressed common themes include:

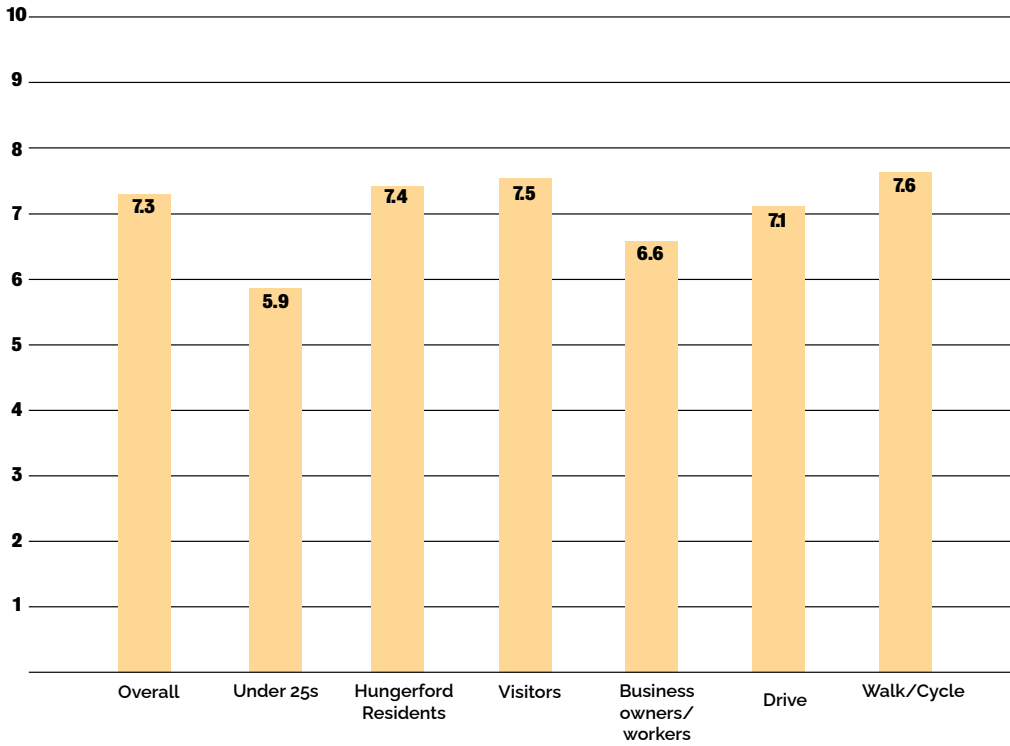


Improvements

At the first stakeholder workshop, attendees were asked to consider ways in which the town centre could be improved. A series of potential improvements were agreed for testing with the wider community via the on-line survey.

Survey respondents were asked to rate the importance of these improvements, from 1 (unimportant) to 10 (vital). The responses are shown here, with the highest scoring issues listed first.

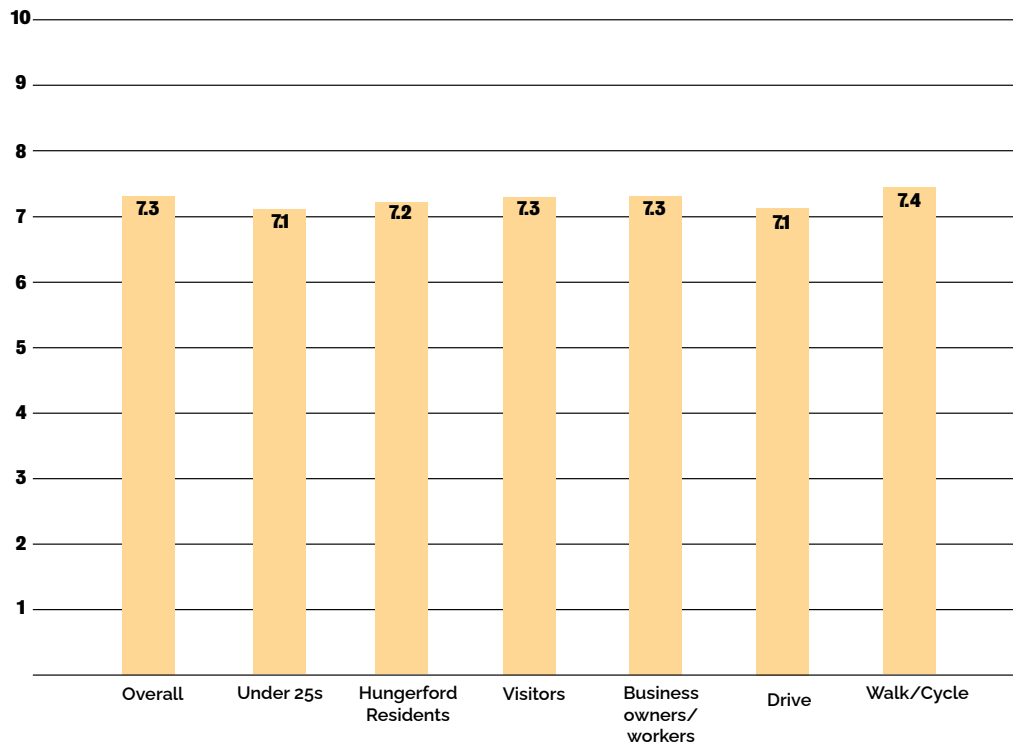
Encourage use of the canal through improved wayfinding, lighting, planting, or art interventions to signal the canal from High Street, alongside improving the canal towpath itself



7.3

Average rating

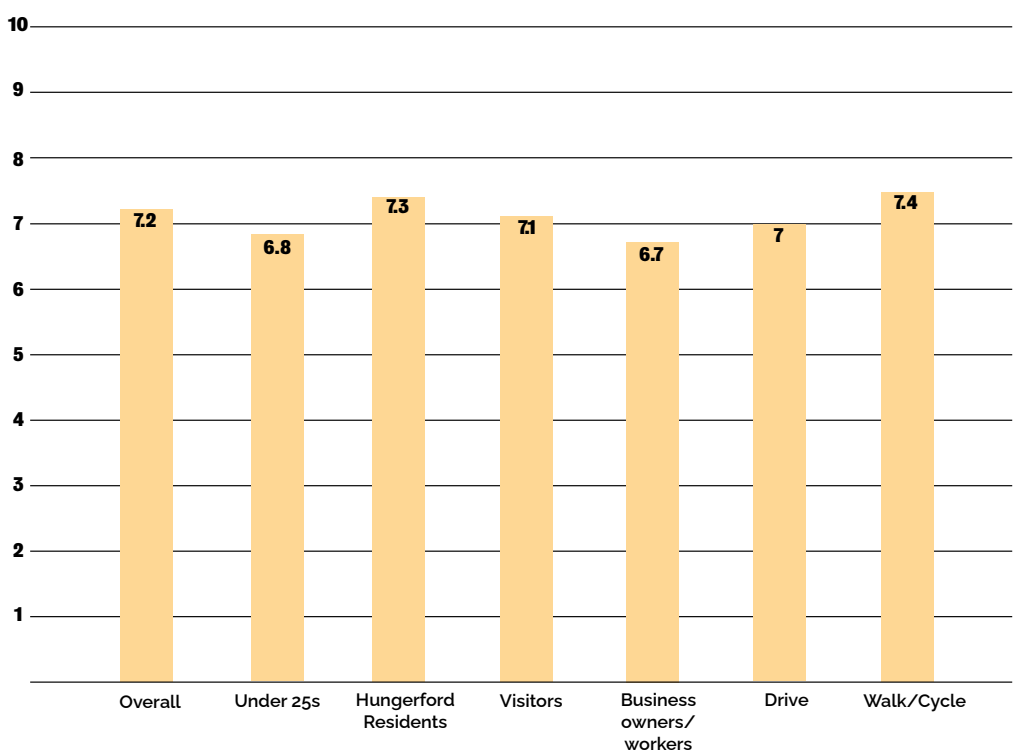
Help the Town and Manor use more of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops



7.3

Average rating

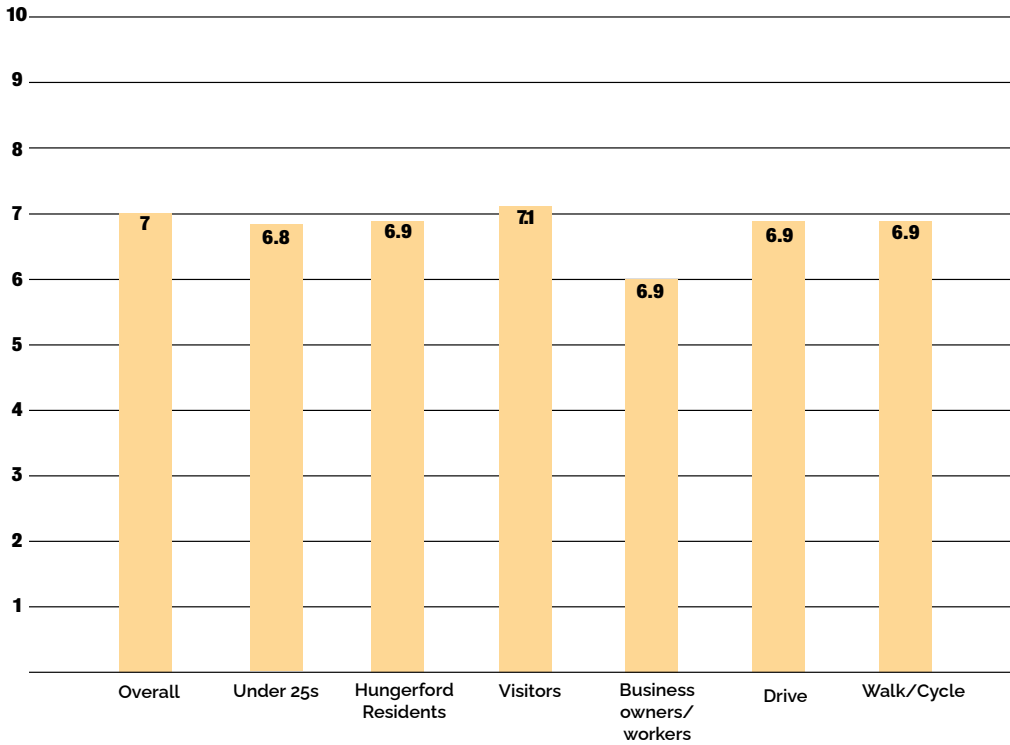
Improve the area outside Town Hall to create a central focal space in the town centre for events & markets and enhance its setting



7.2

Average rating

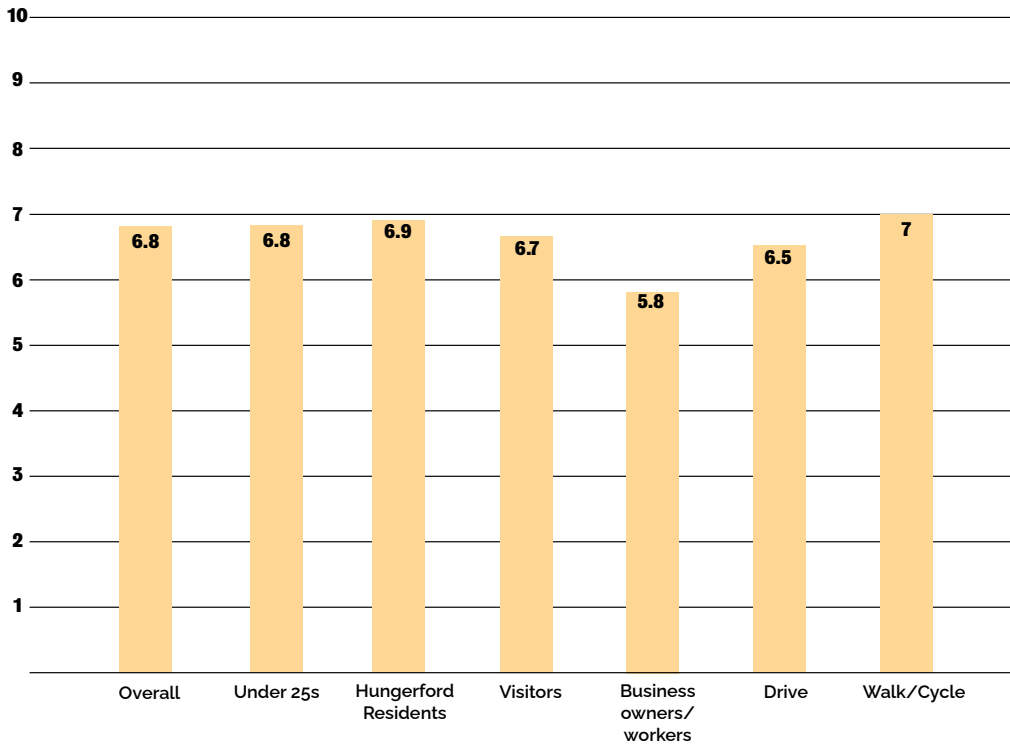
Increase opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal



7.0

Average rating

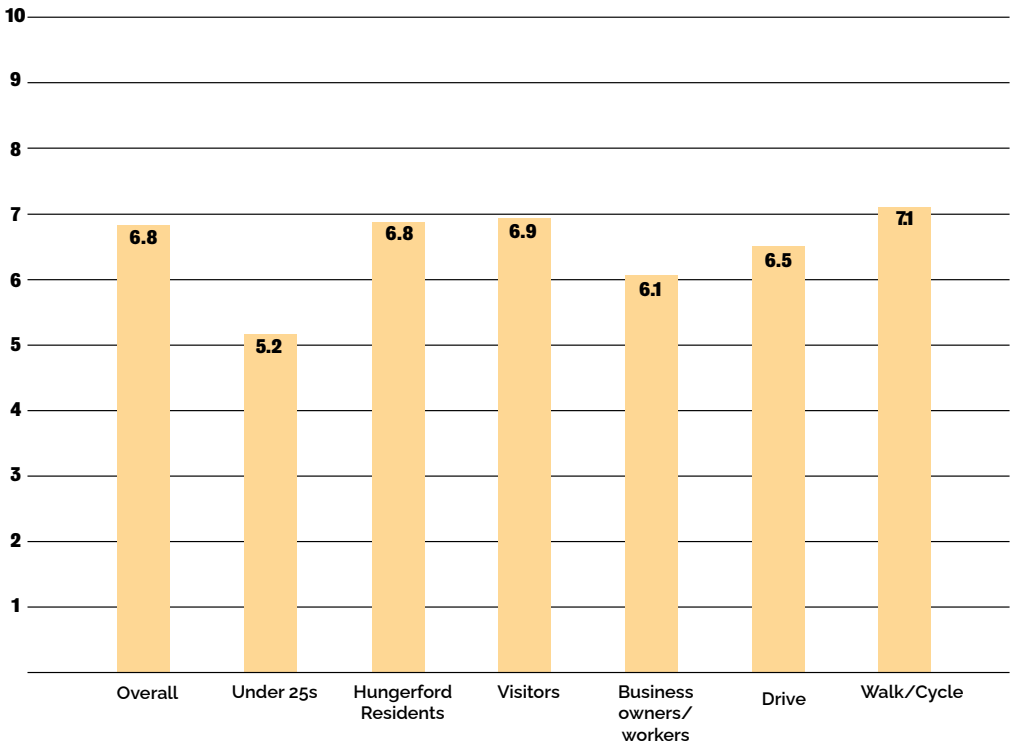
Improve signage, lighting, surfacing & greenery along Church Lane to strengthen connections to The Croft, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence’s Church



6.8

Average rating

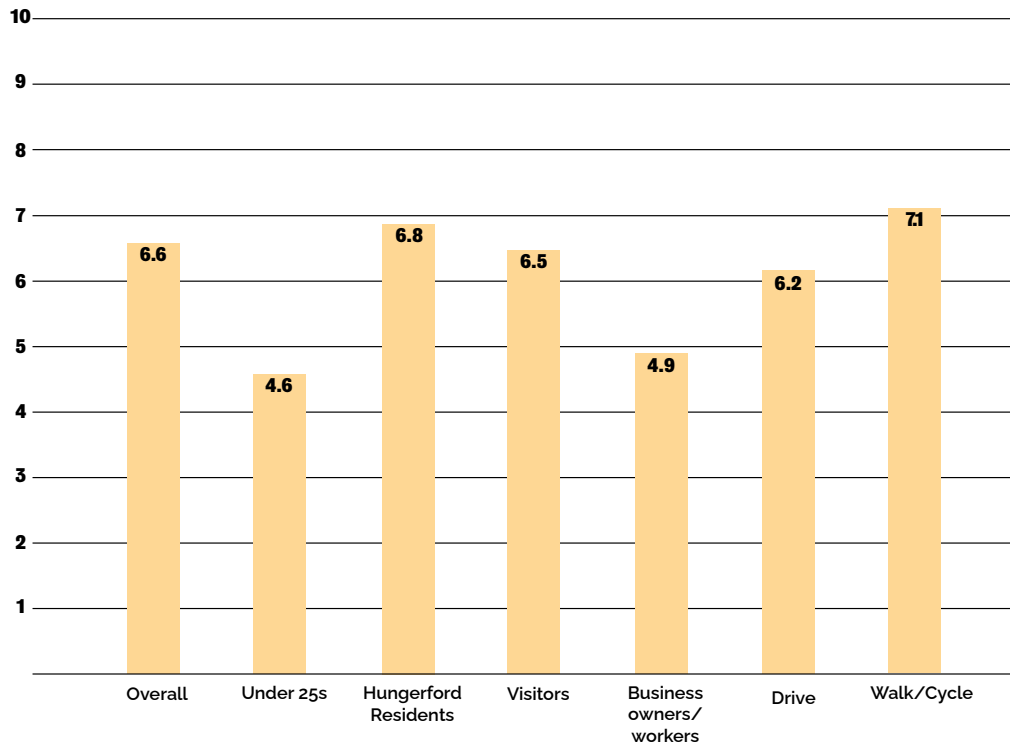
Encourage use of Rail Station car park with better signage and better walking links to High Street



6.8

Average rating

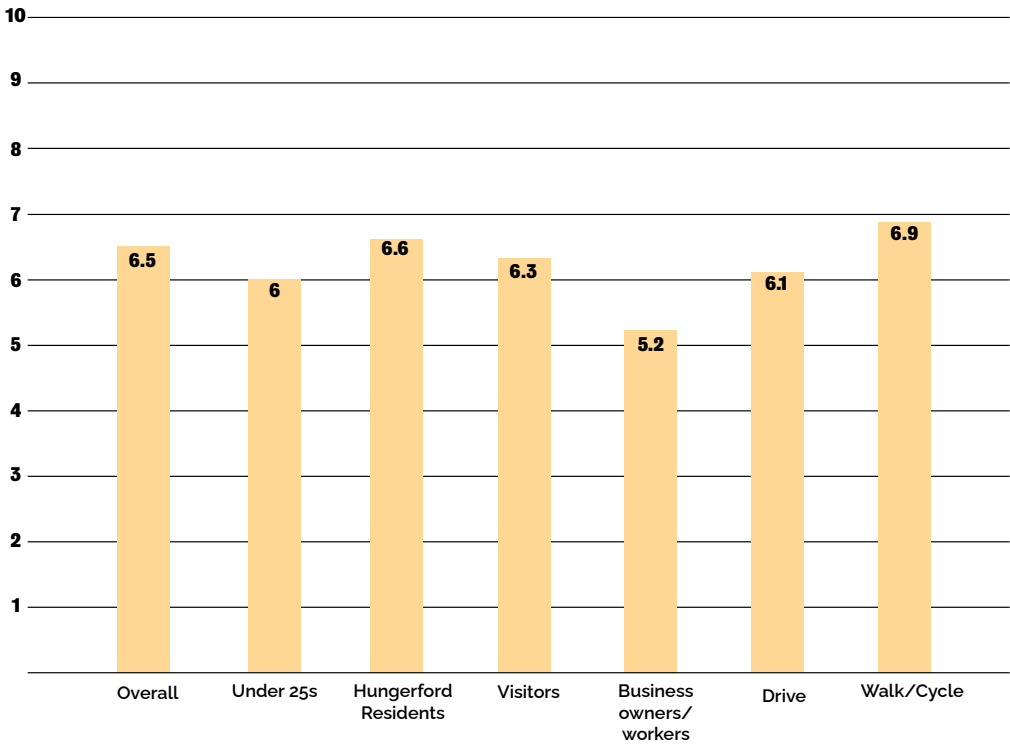
Introduce 20mph zones to reduce the impact of traffic through the town centre



6.6

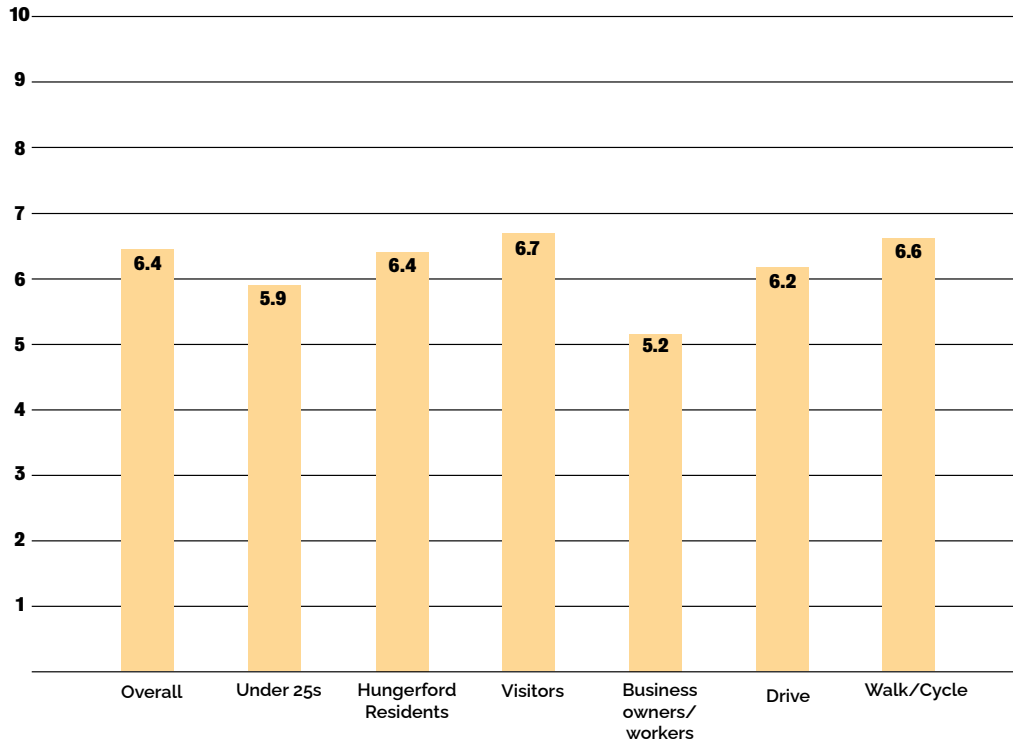
Average rating

Improve pedestrian journey via ‘The Cuttings’ to better integrate the rail station and Hungerford Common



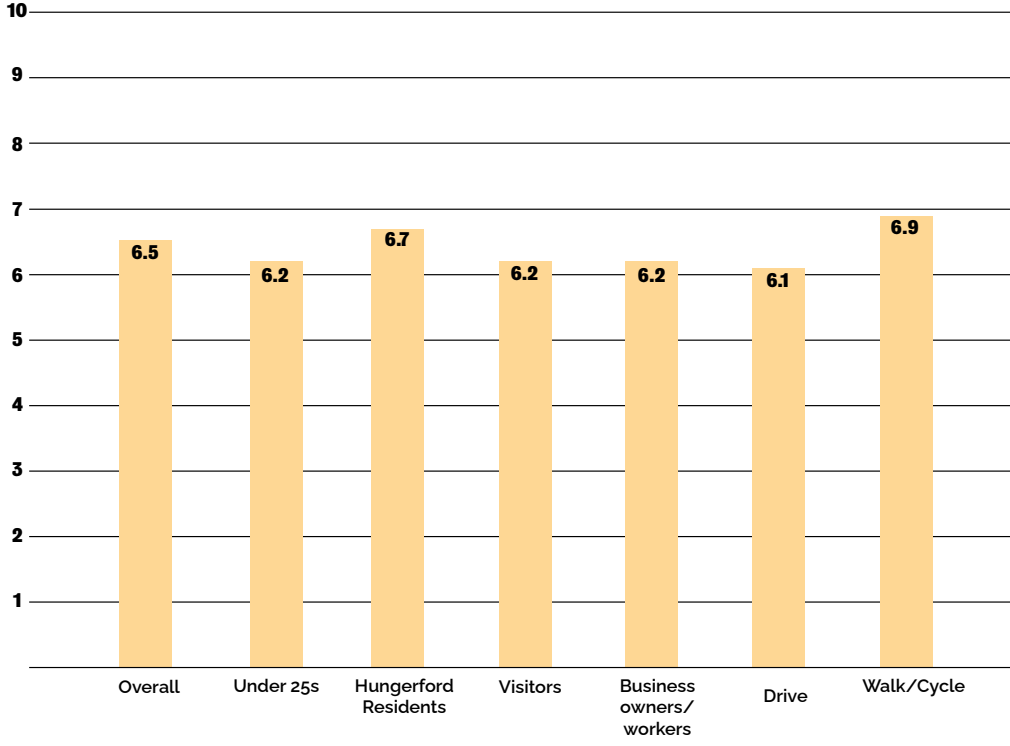
6.5
Average rating

Widen footpath along Church Street to improve connections to car park, Library, Hungerford Hub & public toilets



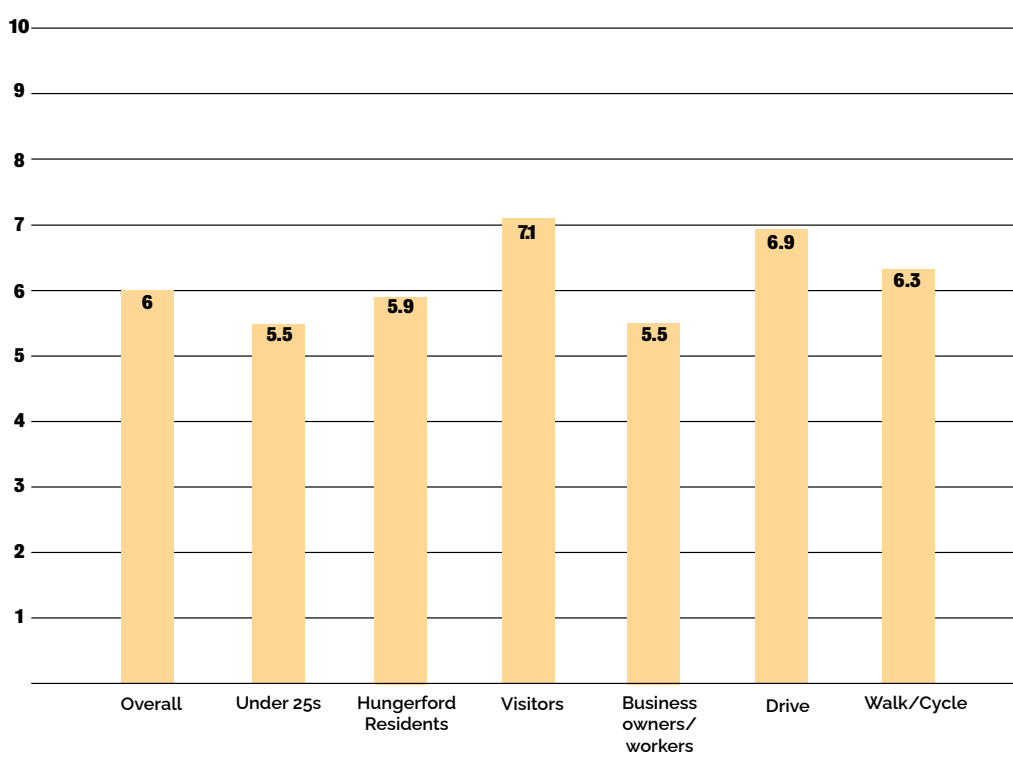
6.4
Average rating

Widen pavements where possible along High Street to allow for dwell and spill-out space, and to improve setting of heritage buildings



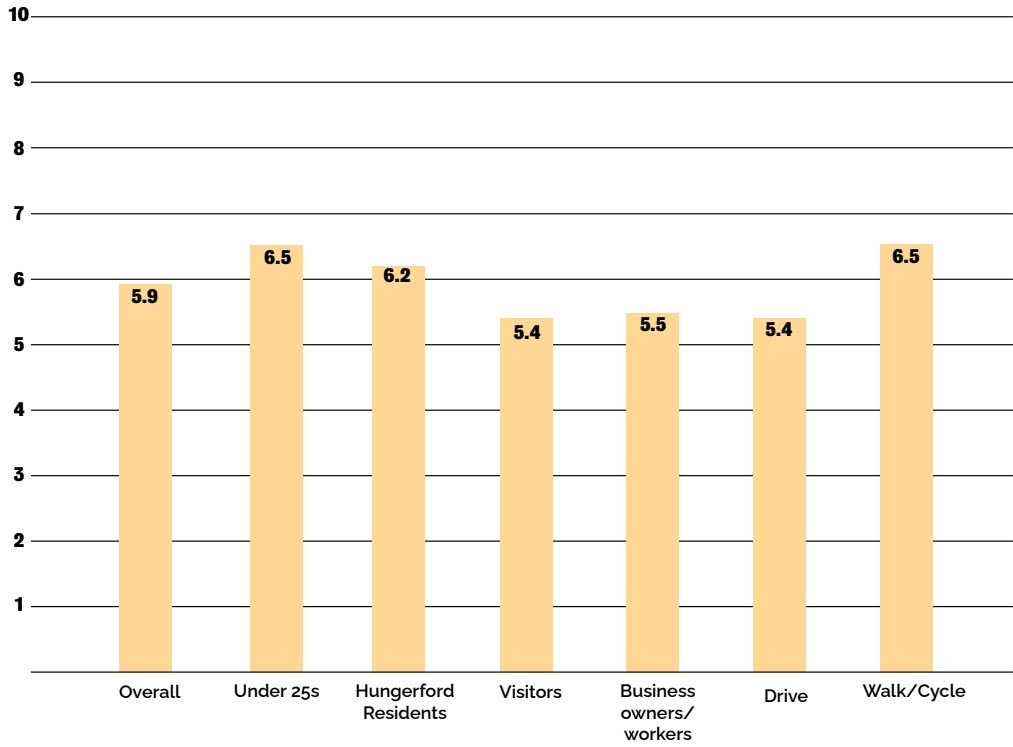
6.5
Average rating

Create space for a physical museum/heritage centre



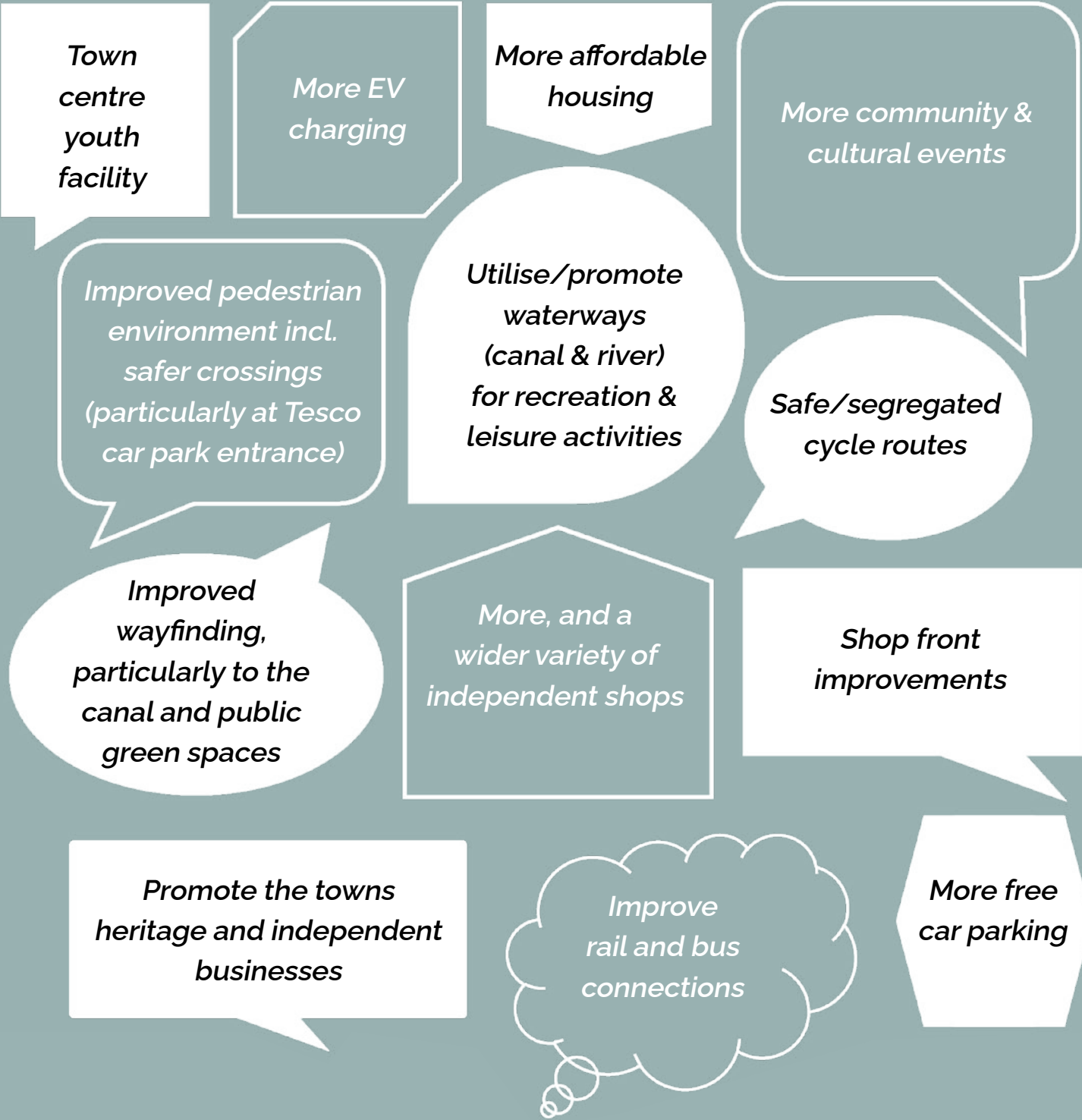
6.0
Average rating

Remove some on street parking on the High Street to create more outdoor space for cafés and businesses



5.9
Average rating

When asked if there any other improvements required common themes include:



Stakeholder Workshops



Following the initial Stakeholder workshop held in November 2022 and completion of the public survey a follow-up workshop was organised with the help of Hungerford Town Council. This was held on the evening of January 19th, 2023 at the Town Hall.

The purpose was to present the findings from the recent survey and to have the invited guests discuss in a workshop session how the priorities for Hungerford could be developed as projects and ideas.

At the end of the workshop each group fed back to the larger audience to share their discussion points.

Discussions centred around improvements to and promotion of the canal for leisure use.

Participants expressed a clear desire for the area outside the Town Hall to become a focal civic space for the town, a place for social and community activity, and activated more frequently with events and markets.

Markets were also a key discussion point. Participants stated desire for more specialist markets, helping to attract visitors that would otherwise visit other market towns in the region.

Comments

Market - Hub of town. very important to town.

Town Hall - KEY BLDG. - MARKETING BETTER - MORE AVAIL. FRONT OF BLDG. IMPORTANT.

TOWN-SIGNAGE - RESCO'S. - canal. - New signs everywhere.

Gateway Entrance - Station

move spaces - to 2nd floor / 1st car park High street.

encourage shop fronts to be better ~~modernised~~ looking old & tired - Great example - Roxtons. Funzi Club.

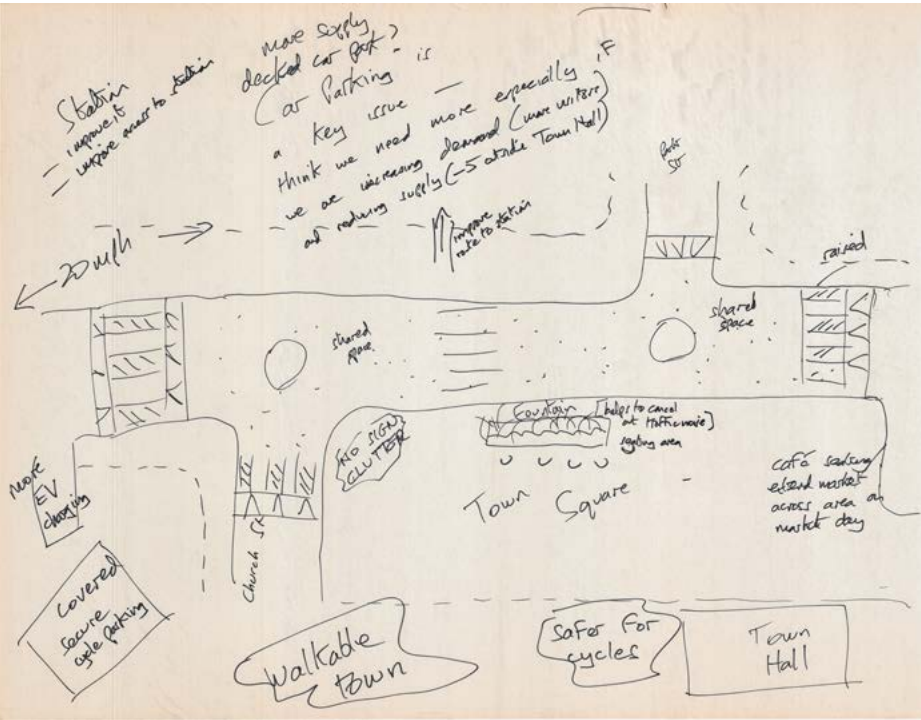
Address. Traffic - Current traffic lights helping speed.

marsh / common assets use and promote more to visitors.

Canal - Brings large number of. Visitors. - 10 metre strip - cafe / Picnic Seating.

Dog leg Road. - making more of a market Square.

Traffic Calming - one way section.



04

Strategy & Projects

Projects:

- The Canal
- Hungerford Town Hall
- Civic Core
- Hungerford High Street
- Hungerford Market
- Station Road and The Cuttings
- High Street (Dods Building)
- Bridge Street

The strategy focuses on promoting the distinctive heritage of Hungerford that residents feel needs to be made more of, on integrating the community elements that residents value and on promoting distinctive independent businesses that reinforce both the local identity and the important antiques trade which underpins much of Hungerford's tourist appeal.

Improving the canal was identified in all engagement exercises as a key objective for Hungerford. It is an important green space, community resource, heritage feature and visitor destination. It has significant potential to keep people in the town longer and boost trade for all businesses. There is considerable consensus for delivering these improvements and committed stakeholders willing to help deliver them. It must therefore be a priority project for the town.

The strategy recognises the need to promote local and independent retailers, as well as health, community, leisure, business, residential and recreation uses to create a vibrant town centre. It recognises the strength of the antiques business in Hungerford, its role in bringing tourists to the town, and seeks to build on this strength.

The Canal

The Kennet & Avon Canal is the gateway to Hungerford for many visitors in the summer who arrive by narrowboat wanting to explore historic towns. Creating better connections between the canal and the rest of the town centre should therefore be a priority, encouraging visitors to explore Hungerford as a whole.

There are a number of themes that have been identified for possible improvements along the canal, and the plan identifies opportunity areas along the canal which can help deliver these:

The towpath

There are areas where the towpath condition is relatively poor, particularly in winter, and areas where it feels narrow and unsafe. Discussions have been held with the CRT and other stakeholders about improving the width and condition of trail while maintaining rural feel (e.g. using compacted scalplings/ gravel).

Wherever possible, the canal towpath should seek to provide a minimum width which allows two people to walk side by side, pass other canal users comfortably, cycle where possible and to feel safe alongside canal edge. Areas have been identified where the path can be widened, and combining this with trimming back over hanging/ overgrown planting will make the route more pleasant. Such measures will also assist users with buggies, mobility scooters and wheelchairs to enjoy the canal.

East of Town Bridge, the quality of the towpath rapidly deteriorates becoming muddy / narrow and difficult to navigate. It is important to maintain this green link along the canal for residents but also for visitors moored overnight to ensure that they have safe and inviting routes back to the town centre.

Heritage interpretation

There are already proposals underway to promote a Heritage Trail for Hungerford, both virtually and with a printed leaflet. Discussions with CRT indicate that they would be keen for this trail to incorporate the Canal and its historic importance to Hungerford. Signage and interpretation boards should therefore be coordinated across the canal and the rest of the town centre to present a single heritage 'brand'. It will also encourage visitors to the canal to explore the different heritage attractions and destinations across Hungerford.

Wayfinding and connections to other attractions

The heritage trail can be supplemented by signage to encourage visitors to walk along the towpath to visit other attractions. Wayfinding signage should help encourage residents and visitors to explore the canal but also explore other routes back to the town centre. Signage could include useful information such as distance to next bridge, connection across to marshes, routes to the High Street, Bridge Street, historic pubs, antique shops, cafés and community uses.

To the east, the signage can indicate the presence of a circular walking route along the canal, returning to the town centre via the Railway Tavern and The Cuttings, or further afield via Hungerford Common. These routes are important facilities for visitors but also for local residents who value the towpath as a recreational area.

The most obvious connection is to encourage visitors to walk west along the towpath to St Lawrence's Church, which is also part of the Heritage Trail, and to the Marshes. The church is not visible from the central

Wharf area but signage to indicate that is no more than 5minutes walk, and what attractions it has to offer, will help encourage people to venture west along the towpath.

The church is keen to promote such visits and heritage trail would encourage a circular route back to the town centre, via The Croft and Hungerford Club and promoting these important facilities. Creating a more welcoming entrance/ route through church yard, which makes it clear that visitors are encouraged, and links back to town centre and adjacent community uses.

Opportunities can also be investigated to create more connections to the canal from the town, in particular between the Wharf and St Lawrence's church. Initial discussions with stakeholders indicated that routes could potentially be created into The Croft area of town, but these would need to be considered further with Town & Manor and Hungerford Club representatives.

Seating

Places to rest along the canal will be increasingly important if visitors are to be encouraged to explore further afield.

Ideally there should be clear points of interest where seating can be provided, integrated with the heritage interpretation boards, and these should be located where they draw people along the canal. Additional seating could be provided on the Wharf green area, where it is understood that a 'Friendship Bench' is being installed by the Chamber of Commerce, but opportunities should also be investigated along the towpath to the east and west of Town Bridge.

From the Wharf, the first visible point of interest to the east is the lock where visitors would be likely to spend time watching boats navigate the canal. By clearing some of the undergrowth and widening the towpath, an attractive seating area could be created alongside the tennis courts, adding a further point of interest and promoting the leisure activities available. If possible, discussions could be held with the Hungerford Club about occasionally allowing public routes through to The Croft area.

The next point of interest should be on the curve of the canal, to encourage visitors to continue their walk along the canal. This could form part of a space along the rear of the Croft Field Centre, where there is a gate and again discussions could be held regarding formalising this as a route to The Croft and the High Street. An information board could advise visitors of the short distance to the Church which is not visible because of the bend in the canal.

The third point of interest is the church, the swing bridge and the entrance to the Marshes. This is an area where visitors can be directed along a longer natural walk, or back through the churchyard towards the community attractions of The Croft area.



Precedent / Brecon

Brecon has interpreted the heritage of the canal and reused materials from the Locks to create bespoke seating



Precedent / Todmorden Public Art Trail

Todmorden Public Art Trail is a small scale regeneration project opening up access to the canal, creating new walkway links, with new paths, eating areas and planting. Public art installations reflect the town's heritage and fruit and vegetable planting reinforce the Incredible Edible Todmorden Green Route.



Precedent / Connecting Colliers Wood

Public realm improvements in Colliers Wood Town Centre create a sense of arrival and celebrate local identity through a series of interventions addressing routes to the high street and re-establishing the presence of River Wandle and Wandle Park.

Charred timber cobbles reference the charcoal burning, while the iridescent tiles referenced the Art and Crafts heritage. Wandle print 'wood block' style bespoke benches were developed in collaboration with a local

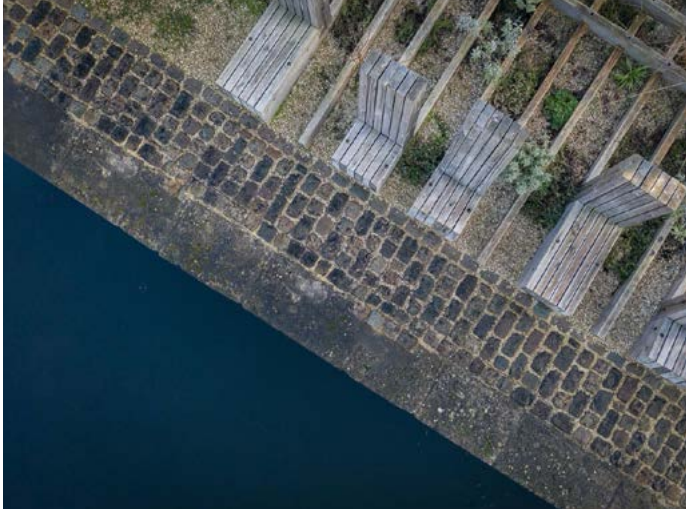


artist to further celebrate this Arts and Crafts heritage and champion creative practices that still exist in the area. The planting palette responds to the Arts and Crafts heritage of the site and the riverine environment of the River Wandle



Precedent / Destock Garden, Long, France

Destock Garden has been designed to evoke the history of trade on the River Somme, with a simple palette of gravel and timber, as if a barge had forgotten one of its loads. Public seating is oriented towards the spectacle of the passage of a boat in the lock, but also to the heritage of the village.



Food & Drink

There is a distinct lack of places to eat and drink along the canal, the closest café being the Tutti Pole Café which has no view to the canal or outside seating. The CRT confirmed that surveys of its members and canal users indicate their support for independent and local cafés. Opportunities should therefore be investigated to address this, through either permanent, seasonal or pop up venues. It is important however that these are relatively 'low-key' interventions which blend with the rural, informal qualities of the canal through Hungerford.

The Wharf is the obvious first location. There is currently a vacant shop unit on the southern side of the Wharf with a small frontage onto the canal and this could provide an opportunity for a new café or for an extension of the Tutti Pole café if they wished. Alternatively there could be opportunities for the Tutti Pole café to operate a high quality 'street van' on the northern green. If opportunities cannot be found on land, then a narrow boat café could be an attractive option, either with seating on board or on the green.

Extending the Tutti Pole 'brand' into a more prominent location along the canal would be beneficial in promoting the wider heritage of the town centre, and be consistent with the canal users desire to see and support individual, local businesses. If the Wharf area was overly busy, the café could also direct visitors to the alternative café south of the Bridge.

Further afield, the Church has expressed interest in hosting a 'National Trust' style coffee and cake van. This could form part of an enhanced space at the entrance to the church and Marsh and create an additional destination to draw visitors along the canal. Alternatively the church itself could act as the café and it has indicated that it would be happy for its toilets to be made available to visitors.



Precedent / Cake on the Cut, Canal boat cafe



Precedent / The Horse Box coffee shop, Bridgewater Canal

Informal recreation and use of the water Overnight stays

The canal is already used by community and leisure groups for activities such as paddleboarding and kayaking. The Wharf provides a relatively safe and easy access to the waterway and is a natural focal point. This should continue to be promoted but opportunities should also be considered to promote such activities to visitors, with paddle board and kayak hire.

It may be that other areas could also be improved to allow access for these groups, particularly during the Summer when there is likely to be increased pressure on the relatively small area of public space with access to the water. Access from Station Road could be one opportunity, given its proximity to public car parking, particularly if the lane was improved for vehicular access.

The Canal & River Trust (CRT) believe that 'canal tourists' would welcome increased opportunities to moor overnight at Hungerford, and would be attracted to visit its historic pubs, interesting cafés and restaurants as well as its antiques shops and wider heritage. Studies from 2012 indicated that day visitors on narrow boats spend an average of £32 in such towns, and for overnight figures the spend rises to £54 per person. There are therefore significant commercial benefits to local businesses from improving the canal to attract more visitors.

If increased moorings can be provided, it is important that the routes to the town centre are easy to navigate, particularly in the evening. The church is also the first point where canals moored west past the swing bridge will 'arrive' at Hungerford needs to feel welcoming. And the route through the churchyard to the Croft and the High Street should be well signed and well lit. From the east, the route to Station Road needs to be safe and wide enough to navigate with clear directions to the town centre along The Cuttings.



Precedent / Bridge 8 Hub

Bridge 8 Hub is Edinburgh's first canal-based urban outdoor activity centre,

Bridge 8 is housed in repurposed shipping containers on the Union Canal and encompasses a cafe and bike repair facility



Precedent / Super Slow Way

Super Slow Way is a consortium comprising the Canal & River Trust, Newground, Arts Partners Pennine Lancashire (APPL) and the district authorities of Blackburn with Darwen, Hyndburn and Burnley and Pendle. Working with partners across the area, the Super Slow Way values and develops social spaces where people can express their own cultural identities and celebrate their own everyday creativity.

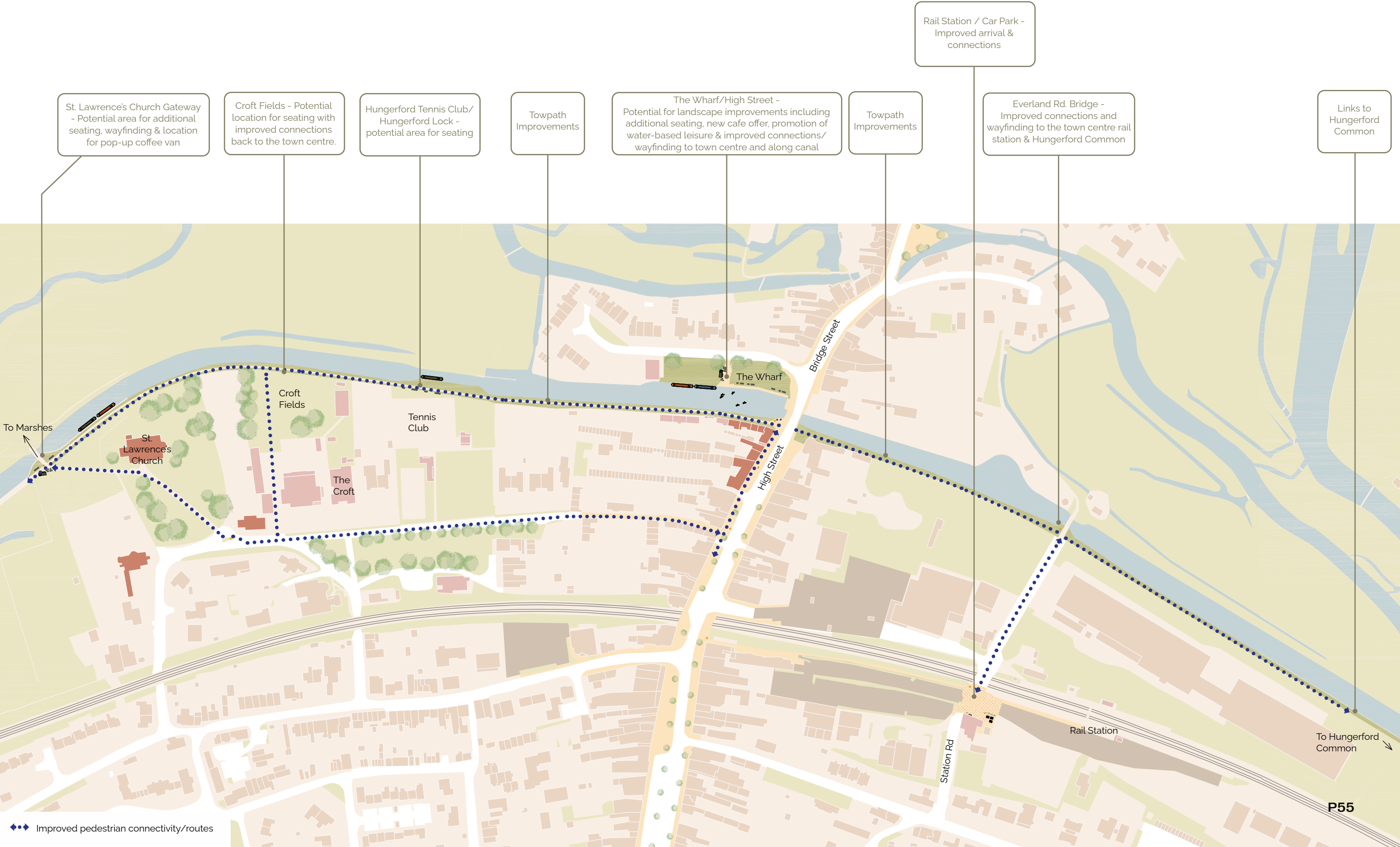
Project Example - The 'Ripple Effect'

The 'Ripple Effect' utilised unused spaces along the canal stretch through Nelson to creating community hubs - places for people to come together; with a particular focus on engaging local young people in activities. From these hubs Super Slow Way hosted a range of activities including canoeing and water sports, led walks, growing and planting and creative workshop.



Project Example - Church Pocket Park

As part of the Super Slow Way Linear Park project, local artist and members of the community cleared, replanted and tended a small canalside park in Accrington to make it a more pleasant place to stop and rest. Introducing more wildflowers to provide varied forage for pollinators.



Hungerford Town Hall

Civic Core

The Town & Manor is a valuable organisation for Hungerford, and an important part of its independent identity and local heritage. Operating the Town Hall is one part of this and the building plays a key role in Hungerford's civic and community life. The survey results confirm this, with the vast majority of respondents prioritising improvements to the external setting of the Town Hall and seeking to make even more use of the buildings meeting rooms for events and activities.

The area outside the Town Hall is currently dominated by highway infrastructure and signage. This undermines the heritage and civic setting of the building, but it also makes it harder for activity within the Town Hall to 'spill out' into the street and advertise the events going on inside. It also creates a disconnect between the street market and the Town Hall. Reconfiguration of these access arrangements could create a stronger civic space at the heart of the town centre, promoting the heritage of the town and reinforcing its distinctive 'Town and Manor' identity.

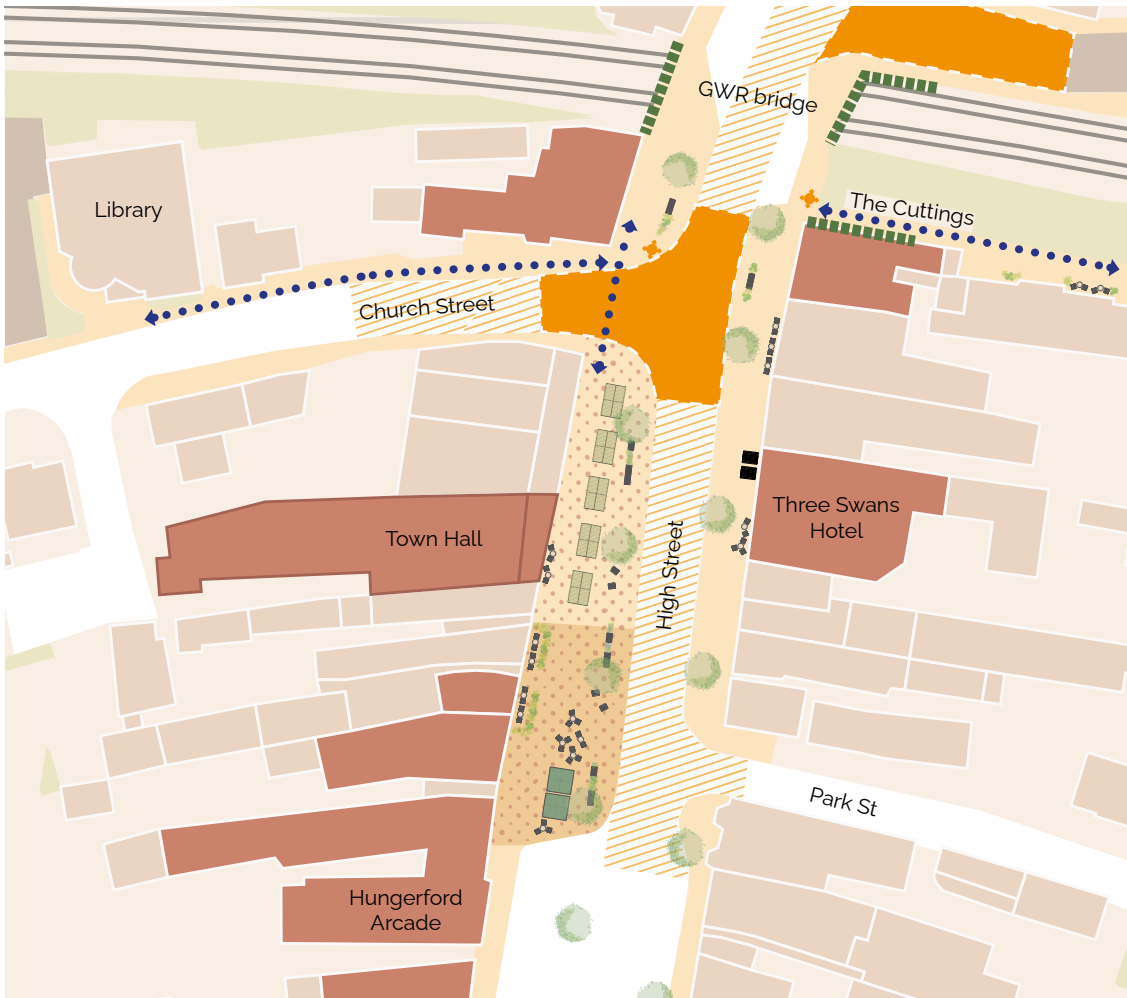
The new space could allow for an extension of the street market to connect with the Town Hall and with the Corn Exchange within. Increasing the use this space for 'vintage' fairs would complement the antiques trade offer and bring more visitors into the town centre. The Corn Exchange can also be a focus for food halls or local craftspeople, creating a low cost 'pop-up' venue for independent businesses.

The Town Hall is the most important civic focal point for the town centre. There is the opportunity for the improvements to the Town Hall to create a stronger 'civic core' for Hungerford. Although the highway does of course need to be retained, the design can give the impression that the new space extends across the High Street to enhance the setting of the Three Swans Hotel, which the Virtual Museum describes as "one of the most important of Hungerford's many coaching inns".

The size of the space could potentially be increased by the relocation of 3-4 on-street parking spaces. This would also allow opportunities for the independent bookshop and adjacent café/restaurant (Eliane) to spill out into the street and market their businesses.

Improvements could extend north to incorporate the GWR bridge and railway, also considered important parts of Hungerford's history. Celebrating the bridge and the railway in this location could also help promote the route to the independent businesses along The Cuttings, the town centre car park and of course the railway station itself.

This would create a strong sense of arrival into the town centre from the rail station, Station Road car park and Church Street car park and for motorists arriving from the south. It would create a new public space on the High Street, complementing the green space around the canal. Introducing an informal, or possibly formal, pedestrian crossing facility on Church Street would also encourage north-south pedestrian flow along the High Street.



- Creation of a 'civic space' outside the Town Hall
- Potential extension of civic space
- Public realm improvements
- Potential traffic calming measures
- Improved junctions including new pedestrian crossings
- Possible location for murals/graphic signage
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Improved pedestrian connectivity/routes
- Listed Building



Precedent / The Square, Wimborne

Enhancements to The Square in Wimborne Minster have seen alterations to the traffic flow to create more pedestrian areas and an attractive 'centrepiece' for the town to host markets, events and cafe spill-out.



Precedent / Romsey Market Place

As part of an overall enhancement project for Romsey town centre, improvements have been made to Market Place. The scheme has been designed to create a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists, provide a new space for public events and markets.



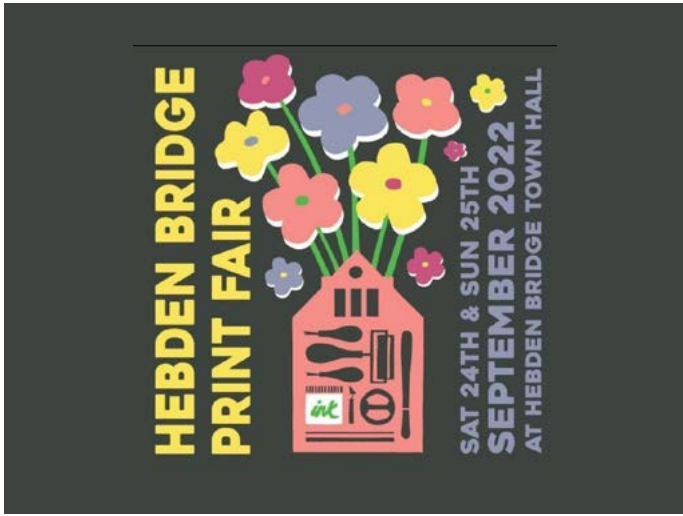
Precedent / Brentford Town Hall & Market Square

The re-configured Market Place now provides a 'living room' for the local community with opportunities for meeting and playing across all generations. Public realm improvements have created an improved setting for the Town Hall, providing flexible space to accommodate regular markets and events.



Precedent / Hebden Bridge Town Hall

The new Town Hall combines a range of services for local people and small businesses. Offering a range of office units for businesses, coworking space, cafe, conferencing and event venues, and a programme of events, activities, exhibitions and markets the new Town Hall buzzes with activity – rightfully taking its place again at the heart of Hebden Bridge's rich community life.



Hungerford High Street
(Queen Anne Building, Cafés & Restaurants)

To the north of the GWR Bridge there is an opportunity to create a second 'civic' space, improving the setting of 16 High Street, an attractive listed building which could have potential as a small heritage/arts building, café or small business space for the town centre. Relocating 5-6 on-street spaces would enhance the setting and make the building more attractive for potential café/bar operators as well as creating spill out space for people dining at The Funghi Club (who have expressed interest in additional outdoor seating).

Relocating 3 spaces on the east of High Street would create further space for outdoor seating for Coffee No1 and Amore Italian Restaurant. This could be combined with extending the pavement to reduce the size of the Tesco junction making it easier for pedestrians to cross and extending the area for seating. Outdoor diners are currently either pressed close to the buildings or pushed to the rear of the building adjacent to bins and service areas. It is recommended that discussions be held with these businesses as to whether they would support a trial replacement of parking with temporary parklets and seating.



Precedent / The Branch Community Centre, Chipping Norton

A former NatWest in Chipping Norton is being transformed in to a versatile multi-purpose community space incorporating community hall & kitchen, public cafe, meeting and function rooms, rentable office space, and community garden. The project is led by The Branch Trust charity established by the local St Mary's Church.



Precedent / The Carling Building, Hitchin

The Carling Building in Hitchin is located just off the High Street and has been converted to provide a mix of flexible workspace, meeting rooms and retail space for local artists and designers. People can book 'hot-desks' for a few hours or reserve a permanent 'fixed desk' for those people increasingly not travelling to the office every day but lacking the space and facilities (or desire) to work from home . Discounts are also offered with local independent cafés and deli's to promote the local economy.



Precedent / Abergavenny

Hungerford can learn from other towns which encourage a slower pace of tourism, promoting both the towns and the countryside which surround them. The Cittaslow Movement is an international network promoting 'slow food', local traditions, sustainable and ethical production as part of a wider 'quality of life' message. Abergavenny promotes itself as an independent food destination, with a renowned food festival on the edge of the Brecon Beacons. It has been successful in attracting high quality cafés and restaurants from Cardiff and other areas on the basis of the wider quality of life it offers.

Hungerford Market

Markets provide variety and diversity, history and character. They are an expression of community, and help build a strong sense of local identity. They provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to access trading opportunities, offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally, and providing affordable fresh food produce. They are an important 'tool' for driving town centre footfall, increasing dwell time, and ultimately helping to build and promote the 'brand' of a place.

Hungerford market is located in a prominent location immediately south of the Town Hall. From our visits, it has an attractive range of stalls, with a strong food offer. Reconfiguring the space outside the Town Hall creates the opportunity to extend the range of stalls available and to connect this more strongly with the Town Hall itself and an indoor market offer.

The public survey and stakeholder events demonstrate that there is desire for an expanded indoor and outdoor market programme. The public survey also highlights that young people are less likely to visit Hungerford town centre for a market or event. Ensuring that the market offer excites and actively draws in younger demographics is essential.

In order to have the best possible impact, markets must be carefully curated and rooted in the locale. There's no one size fits all template for a successful market – the very fact that no two markets are exactly the same is one of the reasons why they're so popular. But there are some key elements that come together to form the foundations of a successful, thriving market event:

Retail: Showcasing local independent designers, makers, artists and craftspeople

Food & Drink: Fresh, local, and sustainable produce and an exciting, evolving street food offer

Entertainment: Music & street performance

Workshops: Hands on, creative, and participatory workshops that engage all ages, and add an element of surprise to keep visitors coming back for more.

Extending the market offer into adjacent areas can help encourage pedestrian flow around the town. Consideration could be given to creating an area beneath the railway bridge which could be suitable for music events or street food as an extension of the market, also helping to promote the connection to The Cuttings.

Markets are already held in the Croft area and stronger physical and visual connections via Church Lane and along the canal would help promote these events to casual visitors. The branding and promotion of a market is as important as the curation and it is important that all these areas are consistent in developing a strong visual identity and in their promotion on social media with high quality photography.



Precedent / Holt Sunday Market

[Holt Sunday Market](#) is a curated monthly market, whereby on the first Sunday of each month April-Dec (every Sunday during July & August) the town centre is closed to vehicles for a day of Norfolk's best independent, makers and street food traders, alongside communal dining & performances.



Precedent / Second Sundays, Andover

[Second Sundays](#) is a new curated street market showcasing Andover's best local talent. Second Sundays brings together some of the best local producers, designer-makers, and artists in the region, alongside street food, live DJs, and free creative workshops, on the second Sunday of every month in Andover town centre.

Station Road & The Cuttings

This is an important arrival point for Hungerford, for rail passengers and for those using Station Road car park. It is only a 2minute walk from the High Street (via The Cuttings) but feels significantly more distant.

The quality of arrival into the car park in particular does not reflect its proximity to the town centre and despite being the largest car park in Hungerford town centre, it appears to be the least popular. Addressing this could bring significant benefits to the town centre, reducing parking pressure on the High Street and potentially allow for some relocation of on-street parking.

The priorities for this car park should be:

- Remove the barrier, which appears to discourage visitors from using the car park.
- Relocate the recycling containers, which would create a much higher quality of arrival in the town centre, and free up additional parking spaces.
- Reconfigure the parking layout on the 'lower' level to create a single, wider pedestrian route to The Cuttings and High Street adjacent to the railway line.
- Ensure clarity on the extent of public parking spaces (as opposed to private residential or commercial parking).
- Discuss with local businesses the possible relocation of reserved private spaces or making the spaces available to the public at weekends and bank holidays.

Improving Station Road as an arrival space for pedestrians, cyclists, train passengers and motorists would help promote use of the car park but potentially bring wider benefits. A high quality public space could celebrate the Rail Station and the Railway Tavern. It could create stronger pedestrian routes connecting the High Street, Kennet & Avon Canal and The Common, encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more of Hungerford. In particular it would create a pedestrian route from The Common and the High Street that takes visitors past the local shops on The Cuttings and avoids the narrow stretch of Park Lane with no footway.

The Cuttings has a cluster of local shops and services and could be promoted with its own identity as a local, specialist lane. The residential surroundings make it difficult for it to be used late in the evening but there is space for cafés to spill out and a 'quirky' environment could be created alongside the railway if the planting was improved and maintained.



High Street (Dods Building)

There is one key area of the High Street (immediately south of the canal) where buildings were identified as in need of physical improvement. This is an important gateway to the town centre, crossing south over the canal bridge into High Street and also a key pedestrian route to the canal from the High Street.

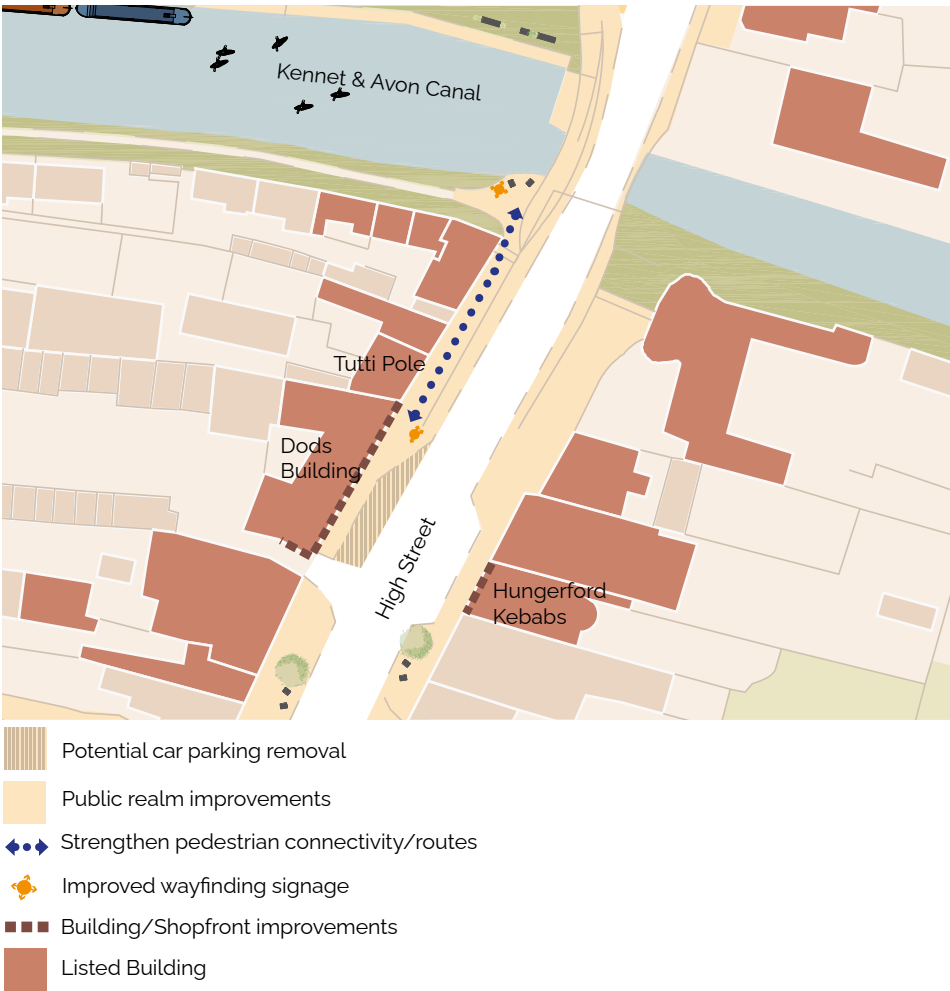
On the western side the frontage of Dods building is clearly in need of improvement, creating a hugely negative impression of the town centre, reinforced by the fact that one of the units is vacant. On the eastern side the properties are not in need of refurbishment to the same degree, but the signage of both Megabet and Hungerford Kebab House undermines the historic quality of the High Street and the quality of the independent businesses which are clustered in this area.

Improving the Dods building, and occupying the vacant ground floor unit, is a priority for the High Street and is an issue that has been considered by the West Berkshire Heritage officers. There is the potential in this area, close to the canal, to create a strong run of independent businesses, building in particular on the presence of the Tutti Pole café and the independent butchers as well as Hungerford Haberdashery.

Extending the blue and white building frontage from the canal to include the Dods building would help create a more coherent image for this area, as well as creating a strong visual presence which would draw visitors north along the High Street and signal the entrance to the canal, which is not obvious to first time visitors.

The pedestrian lane to the canal is also often hidden by vehicles parked in the loading bay in front of the Dods building. Consideration could be given to removing this parking area (which because of the requirement for keep an access clear only has space for 2 vehicles). Widening the footway and reducing some of the railing along the bridge would create a wider and more welcoming gateway to the canal.

The shopfront signage improvements could also be coordinated east of the High Street, with Hungerford Kebabs and Megabet encouraged to support a higher quality Hungerford 'branding'.



Precedent / Shopfront Improvements

Shopfront improvements have been made to 33 businesses across the 7 market towns of Dunstable, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill, Shefford, Biggleswade, Pottton and Sandy, as part of Central Bedfordshire's Market Towns Regeneration Fund.

Bridge Street

Bridge Street is the northern gateway to the Hungerford from the A4, separated from High Street by the canal and bridge. It should be a key part of Hungerford's tourism offer, with a coherent townscape, high quality individual buildings, historic coaching inns, hotels and independent retailers. It has the potential to be marketed as a distinct 'quarter' of the town, but currently feels disconnected from the High Street.

Promoting Bridge Street as a distinct destination with its own identity could help draw people from the canal, and north from the High Street to explore more of the town centre. The heritage trail will also encourage more visits to Bridge Street by directing visitors to particular historic buildings.

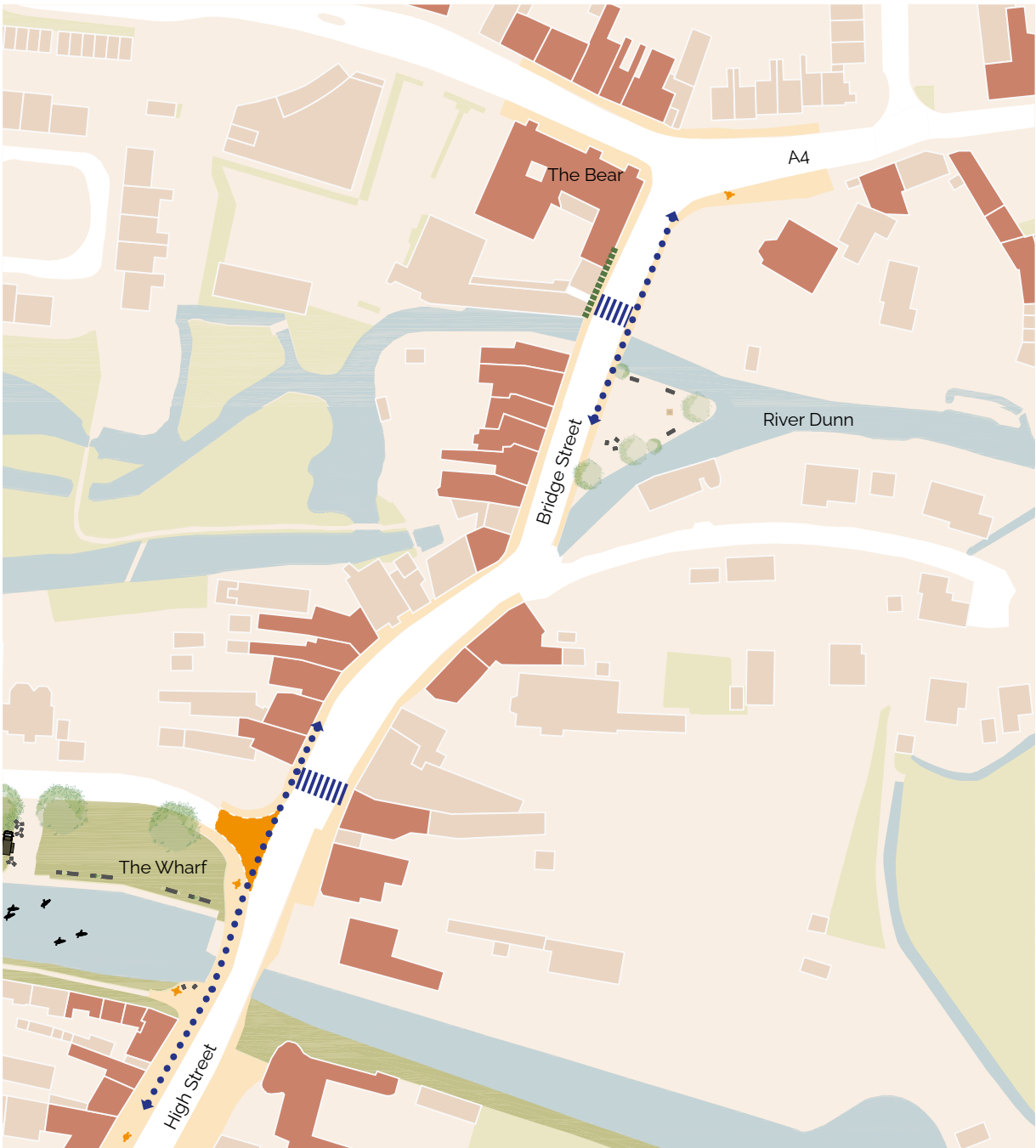
Signage from the A4 (utilising the side of the Bear Hotel) could promote both the arrival into Hungerford, but more specifically arrival into Bridge Street. Signage on High Street (south of the canal) and along the canal towpath/wharf area, could also promote the distinctive identity of Bridge Street. Treatment of the highway could announce this arrival, help to slow traffic and encourage pedestrian crossing of the street.

There is a particular need to improve pedestrian connections from High Street and from the canal to Bridge Street. Narrowing of the highway junction into Canal Walk would reduce the barrier it currently presents to pedestrians, whilst the footway treatment could also be made more continuous between High Street and Bridge Street.



Precedent / Sun Street, Hitchin

Hitchin is proud of its independent businesses and local identity. Within Hitchin, Sun Street promotes itself as a distinct shopping street. Individual businesses identify specifically with Sun Street and the gateways are marked with bespoke planting and signage.



- Public realm improvements including signage to promote independent businesses
- Signage and/or treatment to the carriageway to announce arrival in to Bridge Street
- Possible location for wall mural or graphic signage to promote Bridge Street & Hungerford
- Narrowing of the highway junction into Canal Walk to strengthen north-south pedestrian connections
- Strengthen pedestrian connectivity/routes
- Improved wayfinding signage
- Listed Building

05 Action Plan

This section outlines delivery mechanisms for the projects outlined in Section 4. It considers the process for working up the projects in more detail, the stakeholders that should be involved in that process, the potential timescale for design, engagement and delivery together with possible funding options that could be explored.

The Action Plan is designed to help West Berkshire prioritise its future capital funding programmes, to help identify priorities for allocation of CIL funds, and to support bids to external funding bodies. It is also designed to help coordinate activities within Hungerford so as to maximise value for money from the funding allocated.

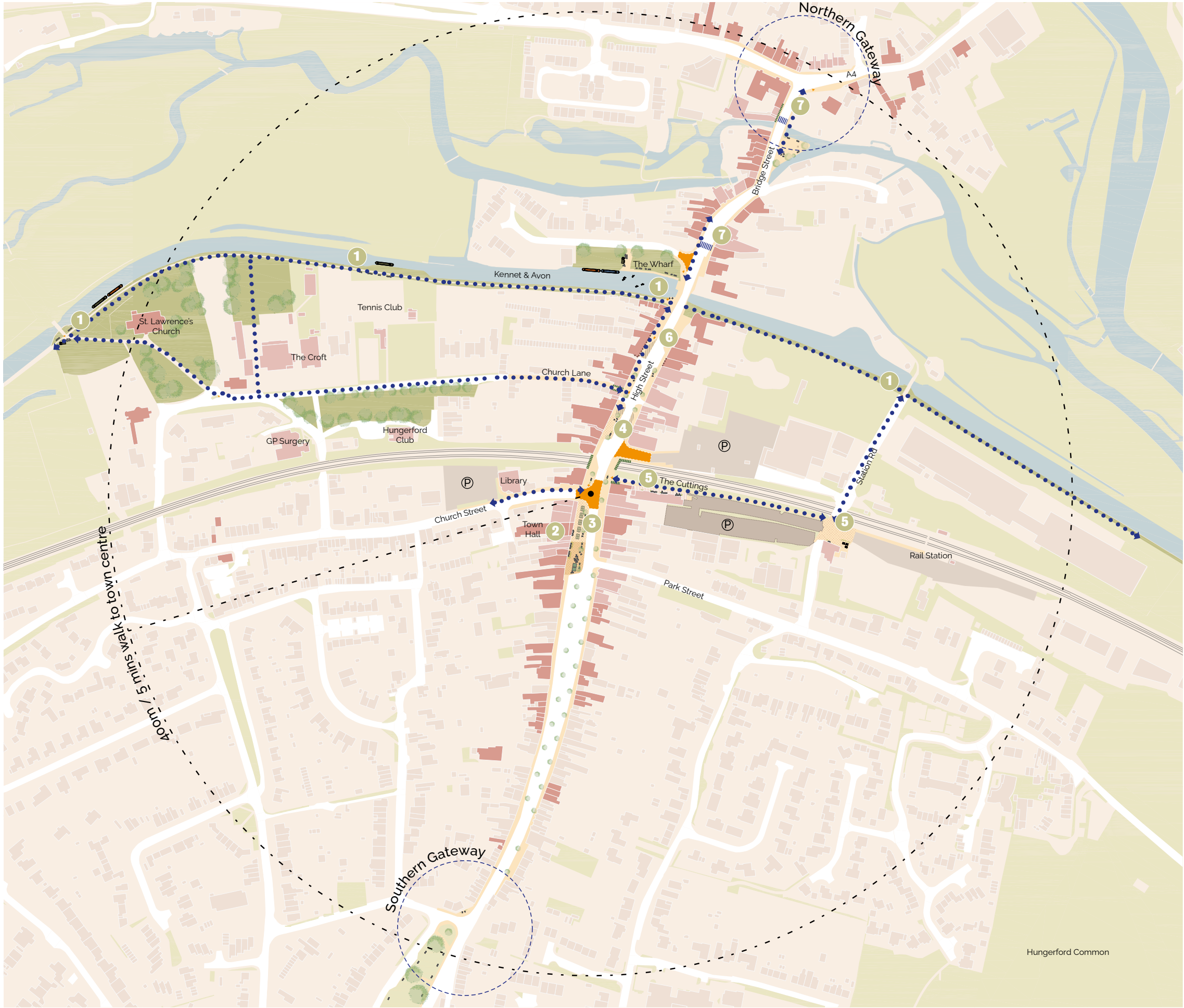
A variety of projects are outlined which are considered to reflect the views expressed through the on-line consultation and stakeholder workshops, and which address the priority issues identified. Together they present a coherent strategy to improve Hungerford over the course of the West Berkshire Local Plan and Hungerford Neighbourhood Plan period to 2036.

It should be emphasised that this is not put forward as a 'blueprint' for Hungerford. The Strategy and Action Plan present different options in the way in which the projects can be taken forward, and the preferred course of action should be determined by the town itself.

The Action Plan identifies how the projects proposed meet the priorities identified by local stakeholders through the engagement process but more detailed design work is needed before these can be delivered. It is essential that this engagement continues as the projects are worked up and allows local stakeholders to shape the more detailed proposals.

The focus of the Action Plan is on short- and medium-term proposals that can be implemented over the next 5 years but there are some projects that may not come forward until later in the plan period. For many projects, such as the canal improvements, a phased approach is likely to be necessary to reflect the availability of funding. For other projects, such as High Street improvements, a trial approach is recommended to test the benefits of the proposals without incurring significant expenditure and allowing the detailed designs to be refined. They are therefore projects that will be delivered over both the short-term and medium-term, but which elements of the projects come forward in the short term will be determined by the local community and by the availability of funding.

It has been noted that Hungerford is performing relatively well. This is not therefore an Action Plan that proposes large elements of change to the town centre, but focuses on targeted improvements to the Canal, the Town Hall and other key areas of the High Street that can bring the most benefits to Hungerford.



Priority Areas for Change

- 1 Canal** - Increasing opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal. Improving the towpath, and creating better connections between the canal and the rest of the town centre.
- 2 Town Hall** - Utilising more of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops
- 3 Civic Core** - Enhancing the setting of the Town Hall, creating a focal 'civic' space in the town centre for events, markets and community activity, and providing opportunity for the Town Hall and independent businesses to 'spill out' into the High Street.
- 4 High Street (Queen Anne Building)** - Creating a second 'civic' space for the town, Exploring new uses for, and improving the setting of the listed Queen Anne building (no.16), and creating space for outdoor seating for the independent cafés and restaurants in this area.
- 5 Station Road & The Cuttings** - Improving Station Road as an arrival space for pedestrians, cyclists, train passengers and motorists. Creating stronger pedestrian routes connecting the High Street, Canal and Hungerford Common, and promoting The Cuttings a local, specialist lane.
- 6 High Street (Dods Building)** - Public realm improvements and potential removal of the parking area in front of the Dods building to enhance arrival into High Street from the north, and improve connections to the canal. Alongside shop/building front improvements to support a higher quality Hungerford 'branding'.
- 7 Bridge Street** - Promoting Bridge Street as a distinct destination, encouraging visitors to explore more of the town and promoting the arrival in to Hungerford.

Short Term Priority Project

The Town Hall

A series of opportunities were presented for inside and outside Hungerford Town Hall in Section 4, including:	Stakeholder Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify opportunities for vintage markets, craft businesses and events to complement antiques offer,• Redesign of external space to create spill out areas for markets and events,• Public realm scheme to enhance 'civic' core of Hungerford and mark connections to local destinations and independent businesses.	The survey results showed that improving the Town Hall is considered a priority project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:	
	• Help Town and Manor make more use of the Town Hall for specialist markets, pop-ups and independent shops	(7.3)
	• Improve the area outside the Town Hall for events & markets and enhance its setting	(7.2)
The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:		
• Increasing opportunities for independent businesses		(8.5)
• Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street		(7.5)
•Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage		(7.3)
• Integrating community facilities within the town centre		(6.9)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre		(6.7)
• Introduce 20mph zones to reduce impact of traffic		(6.6)
• Widening footpath along Church Street to improve connections		(6.4)

Delivery costs and funding	Council capital funding as well as potential LEP funding. The social, community, economic and cultural benefits of the project could potentially open up opportunities for funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund or from Greenham Trust.
The capital cost of the internal projects would be relatively small, with costs primarily relating to any additional staff needed to help deliver improved events and the costs of marketing and promotion. It is not anticipated that any internal changes are needed to the Town Hall to facilitate these new events.	Action and timescale
An area of at least 300sqm should be considered for improvement in front of the Town Hall. The cost of improvements to The Square, in Wimborne town centre, which included the removal of parking and highway infrastructure and replacing with an event space, was approximately £500,000. The size of space is broadly comparable to Hungerford Town Hall but costs will have increased since the scheme was delivered around 10 years ago. It is also considered beneficial for any improvements to be coordinated with wider 'civic' improvements to the mini-roundabout which would increase the costs. The cost of delivering a new public space more recently in Romsey, of similar area but with associated highway changes was stated at £3m.	Discussions should be held with Town & Manor regarding the potential for widening the range of markets and events held inside and outside the Town Hall. Enquiries should be made to identify any new local traders, crafts people, artists or other businesses who may wish to be part of such an event.
The cost of the external improvements will depend on the precise extent of the area to be improved along the High Street, whether this extends to consideration of the mini-roundabout and surrounding highways, and to what extent the existing cobbles can be retained within the new design. Until these issues are resolved it is recommended that a budget of at least £1m should be identified for design and delivery of this project.	A coordinated series of market and events could be prepared (including The Croft area) for potential trialling in the new external space in Summer 2024, ideally in parallel with improvements at The Wharf and possible trialling of improvements elsewhere on the High Street (see below). Discussions would need to be held initially with bus and taxi operators to confirm that the current arrangements can be changed.
Coordinating the scheme with wider highways improvements, and measures to slow traffic and improve crossings for pedestrians, opens up West Berkshire	The trial period would allow the relative success of the proposals to be evaluated and the views of businesses and the wider community obtained. If appropriate, a specification could then be drawn up for a permanent scheme. It should be noted that delivery of an additional major scheme in this timescale could put pressure on the resources available within the West Berkshire Highways team.

Short Term Project

High Street Dods Building

Section 4 identified the importance of creating improved connections between the High Street and the Canal, via the Dods Building and highlighting the cluster of independent shops in this area.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results showed that improving this area is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:

- Encourage use of the Canal through improved wayfinding and interventions to signal the canal from High Street (7.3)

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street (7.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

Costs for improving the Dods building should be borne primarily by the owners, but it may be appropriate to provide grants or funding to support refurbishment, particularly shopfront improvements. Such grants could be used to promote the space for local, independent businesses, as well as promoting tourism by encouraging use of the Canal.

Funding could come from the West Berkshire capital budget, from the LEP, Shared Prosperity Fund or Greenham Trust.

Action and timescale

Improving the appearance of the Dods building should be a short term priority as its appearance has a significantly negative effect on this important part of the High Street. Ideally any improvements should be made at the same time as improvements to the Wharf area of the Canal, and at the very least the frontage should be painted and 'refreshed'. Improving the public realm outside the Dods building should be coordinated with refurbishment of the building with a target date of Spring 2024. The improvements should also be coordinated with improvements to Church Lane (see below).

Short Term Project

Bridge Street Identity

The promotion and marketing of Bridge Street as an independent 'destination' was identified in Section 4 as an opportunity for Hungerford.

Stakeholder Priorities

Supporting Bridge Street businesses was identified as a project following the on-line survey and would address a range of stakeholder priorities, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- Increasing opportunities for independent businesses (8.5)
- Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage (7.3)
- Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more (7.2)
- Enhancing arrival to the town centre (6.7)
- Introduce 20mph zones to reduce impact of traffic (6.6)

Delivery costs and funding

The capital costs associated with the proposals relate primarily to signage. A budget of £50,000 would provide for a branding exercise and 3-4 signs/planters at the entrances to Bridge Street. This is in addition to any wayfinding signage as part of the Heritage Trail and could also include mural/signage on the side wall of The Bear Hotel.

The project could be extended with treatment of the carriageway to mark arrival into Bridge Street, either through slight narrowing of the carriageway, through a change in materials or a change in colour. All would help reinforce the identity of Bridge Street, announce arrival into Hungerford town centre and reduce traffic speeds.

Action and timescale

There is no set timescale for this project. Implementation is wholly dependent on support from the range of businesses located along Bridge Street. The priority therefore would be to engage with those businesses to gauge the levels of support for marketing Bridge Street as a distinct, independent quarter of Hungerford.

Short Term Project

Church Lane

Section 4 identified the importance of creating improved connections between the High Street, The Croft and St Lawrence's Church via Church Lane.

Stakeholder Priorities	
The survey results showed that improving this area is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:	
•Improve signage, lighting, surfacing & greenery along Church Lane to strengthen connections to The Croft, Hungerford Club and Church	(6.8)
The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:	
• Increasing opportunities for independent businesses	(8.5)
•Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage	(7.3)
• Encourage use of the Canal through improved wayfinding	(7.3)
• Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more	(7.2)
• Integrating community facilities within the town centre	(6.9)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre	(6.7)

Delivery costs and funding	Action and timescale
Costs for improving Church Lane can vary according to the level of ambition. The absolute priority is to sign and light the entrance from High Street to create a welcoming and visible route to The Croft Area. Wall signs/murals and wall lighting could be installed for a budget of £50,000 but needs to be coordinated with the proposals for the Heritage Trail.	Any improvements would need to be worked up in partnership with Town & Manor, Hungerford Town Council, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church (with other stakeholders in the area) as well as the Chamber of Commerce as promoters of the Heritage Trail.
The scope of the project could be extended with additional signage, lighting and interpretation boards around The Croft or through treatment of the paving to indicate the route between the High Street, the Church and the Canal. It could also be integrated with the Canal project, to create well lit and inviting routes to the town centre from the areas where overnight moorings are provided.	Ideally the improvements to Church Lane should be coordinated with the Heritage Trail but also with delivery of towpath improvements along the canal and improvements to the Dods building and link to the Wharf. This will help create a comprehensive circular heritage route for visitors.
Funding could come from the West Berkshire capital budget, with potential contributions from Town & Manor as Trustees of The Croft.	

Short – Medium Term Priority Project

The Canal

A series of opportunities were identified for improving access, information and activities along the Canal, including:

- Improvements to The Wharf green space, seating and seasonal (local) café operator,
- Promote additional mooring opportunities and promote links to town centre pubs, cafés and shops,
- Improved signage and interpretation (linked to Heritage Trail)
- Opportunities for low impact visitor recreation (such as paddleboarding and kayaking)
- Narrow junction of High Street with Canal Walk to create stronger pedestrian entrance.

Stakeholder Priorities

The survey results confirmed that improving access to the canal and the activities along it were both considered priority projects by residents and visitors, with scores from the survey results shown in brackets:

- | | |
|---|-------|
| • Promoting the use of the canal for recreation and leisure | (8.0) |
| • Encourage use of the canal through improved wayfinding, lighting, planting etc. alongside improvements to the towpath | (7.3) |
| • Increase opportunities for play, exercise and social activity along the canal | (7.0) |

The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:

- | | |
|--|-------|
| • Increasing opportunities for independent businesses | (8.5) |
| • Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage | (7.3) |
| • Improve space for indoor & outdoor markets and events | (7.5) |
| • Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more | (7.2) |
| • Enhancing arrival to the town centre | (6.7) |
| • Widen pavements to improve setting of heritage buildings | (6.5) |

Delivery costs and funding

Discussions have been held with the Canal & River Trust (CRT) regarding potential costs of improving the towpath. The priority area for Hungerford is approximately 1 km in length. Improvement schemes in other areas such as Sandwell and Loughborough suggest that around £1m per km should be budgeted for improvements such as resurfacing, signage/interpretation boards, lighting, wayfinding, benches, planting and increasing mooring sites. The CRT has indicated that implementation costs can potentially be minimised by involving volunteers and the Church has also indicated its support for this.

Funding from CRT is likely to be limited but they can provide resources and volunteers which may be considered as 'match funding'. The scheme can bring significant social, economic, cultural, health and environmental benefits and could attract funding from the LEP, Sustrans, Greenham Trust as well as West Berkshire capital funding. Match funding through complementary improvements, or resources could be investigated in discussions with Town & Manor, Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church. The opportunity should also be taken wherever possible to seek improvements to the towpath from any future planning applications along the canal.

Action and timescale

Over the next 6-9 months the priority should be to scope out the design of possible improvements to the Canal.

This should include:

- Engage with Canal & River Trust and local stakeholders on range of activities to be encouraged
- Engage with Canal & River Trust and local stakeholders on improvements to the towpath, signage and seating
- Coordinate interpretation boards content and design with wider Hungerford Heritage Trail
- Engage with Hungerford Club and St Lawrence's Church on connections from towpath to Croft Area
- Engage with CRT, local businesses (including Tutti Pole café) and stakeholders on opportunities for temporary cafés along the canal
- Engaging with Canal & River Trust on preferred locations for increased overnight moorings.

Further discussions need to be held with CRT on realistic timescale for implementation, however the trialling of temporary/floating food outlets at The Wharf could potentially be 'fast tracked' for this Summer, along with opportunities for informal recreation.

The design of wayfinding and interpretation boards should be prioritised so that it can be coordinated with the wider Heritage Trail and improvements to the Virtual Museum.

Wider improvements will almost certainly need to be phased over the next 2-3 years to respond to the availability of funding and CRT resources. Priority should however be given to improving the towpath, seating and signage from The Wharf to St Lawrence's Church. Delivery of additional moorings should ideally be coordinated with towpath improvements and potential new routes to the town centre through the Church and Hungerford Club in particular.

Short – Medium Term Project

Queen Anne Building - High Street improvements

Alongside the Town Hall, other opportunities were presented for improvements to the High Street in Section 4, including improvements focused on Queen Anne Building and the cluster of cafés and restaurants in this location.

Stakeholder Priorities	
The survey results showed that improving the High Street is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:	
• Widen pavements to allow for spill-out space and improve setting of heritage buildings	(6.5)
• Remove some on-street parking to create more space for cafés and businesses	(5.9)
The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:	
• Increasing opportunities for independent businesses	(8.5)
• Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street	(7.5)
• Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage	(7.3)
• Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more	(7.2)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre	(6.7)

Delivery costs and funding
The action plan identifies discrete areas which can be taken forward independently, or as part of a comprehensive scheme of improvements.
In front of 16 High Street (Queen Anne building), areas for improvement can be as small as 3-4 parking spaces or more comprehensive and up to 10 parking spaces. The more comprehensive scheme would provide wider pavements and spill out space for 3 or 4 cafés and restaurants clustered in this area as well as space and improved setting for the currently vacant listed building. This would help promote bringing the building back into use, for a café, heritage or community use or a combination of those. Interest has also been expressed in delivering small business space in the town centre and this could be incorporated.
Costs can therefore vary, from small scale changes of around £200,000, up to £500,000 with improvements around the Tesco car park junction to make pedestrian crossing easier and safer. A comprehensive scheme for the whole area could therefore require funding of up to £1m, depending on the degree to which existing materials can be retained or reused.

Action and timescale
It should be noted that whilst the majority of respondents favoured replacing some areas of car parking with more seating and areas for eating and drinking, a number of respondents are not supportive and it is important that a consensus be achieved within the town. It is recommended therefore that smaller trials be conducted to test the level of support for the schemes, the impact on traffic and the impact on businesses.
Trials should be conducted during the Summer when visitor numbers are highest and there is more opportunity for sitting out in the evening. Priority areas for trials should be agreed with the businesses closest to the parking spaces affected, particularly Coffee No1, Amore and The Funghi Club, and implemented in those areas which have business support. Provision of temporary planters and parklets in the parking bays will create separation from the traffic and allow more space for pedestrians and tables and chairs outside the restaurants. The cost for 4 parklets would be in the region of £50,000, but they can be moved and reused. Consideration should also be given to identifying temporary or 'pop-up' uses for the vacant Queen Anne building. This is a priority heritage building in a prominent central location, and could, for example, provide a 'pop-up' home for the virtual museum or to launch the Heritage Trail.
Providing temporary arts, cultural or craft uses, small business space and a community café would bring additional life to the street, particularly if undertaken at the same time as the High Street improvement trials. It is recommended that discussions be held with Coop (the building owners) about the potential for such activity.

Short - Medium Term Project

Station Road and The Cuttings

Improving arrival at Station Road and promotion of The Cuttings as an independent business location was identified in Section 4 as an opportunity for Hungerford.

Stakeholder Priorities	
The survey results showed that improving Station Road and The Cuttings is considered an important project for Hungerford, with scores from the survey shown in brackets:	
•Encourage use of Rail Station car park with better for signage and walking links to High Street	(6.8)
•Improve pedestrian journey via The Cuttings	(6.5)
The scheme would also address other stakeholder priorities:	
•Increasing opportunities for independent businesses	(8.5)
•Reducing impact of traffic on the High Street	(7.3)
•Encourage tourism by promoting Hungerford's heritage	(7.3)
•Encouraging visitors to stay longer and explore more	(7.2)
• Enhancing arrival to the town centre	(6.7)

Delivery costs and funding

The capital costs are associated primarily with reconfiguring the entrance to the car park and creating a stronger sense of arrival with a new public space. A budget of around £100,000, depending on the nature of the public realm improvements, could be sufficient to relocate the recycling bins, create a more attractive entrance and potentially combine the pedestrian routes along the railway. Coordinated signage to announce arrival into The Cuttings from the station car park and from High Street should be included within this budget. Funding should come from West Berkshire Highways and capital budgets, and some funding should be sought from Network Rail for improving and maintaining the planting along the railway line. Consideration should also be given to seeking contributions from future planning applications around Station Road.

Action and timescale

The priority would be to find an alternative location for the recycling bins, enabling more parking spaces to be provided and the entrance to be redesigned. Further surveys should be undertaken to establish the degree to which the barrier dissuades visitors from using the public car park, and whether it would be preferable to maintain a consistent approach to payment across all the West Berkshire car parks in the town centre.

Ideally, the recycling bins should be relocated, and additional spaces provided at Station Road car park, by Summer 2024 the likely date for the first trials for High Street improvements, ensuring replacement parking spaces were available in the town centre. Creation of an arrival space on Station Road, and improved pedestrian routes to the High Street and The Common could be implemented as funding becomes available.

HUNGERFORD TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

FINAL DRAFT