



# Knutsford Town Council

## CONSULTATION REPORT

Proposed changes to Traffic Flow and Car  
Parking in Knutsford Town Centre

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## Preface: Implications of COVID-19 Pandemic

*This public consultation was carried out and the present report written by 27 March, just as the coronavirus pandemic took hold and changed the social and economic life of Britain. The thrust of the proposed traffic and parking scheme is to limit vehicles in Knutsford centre, so making more space for pedestrians, while providing adequate parking around the centre.*

*These joint aims are consistent with changes to the town centre needed now:*

- *to allow the required social distance between pedestrians as they walk about and queue outside shops (currently 2m), and*
- *to allow people to drive to Knutsford to work or shop for as long as the use of public transport is discouraged.*

*The proposed scheme did not address cycling, but it is now clear that provision needs to be made for cyclists to park their bicycles securely close to the town centre.*

## Executive Summary

Knutsford Town Council has carried out a public consultation on proposals to change the flow of traffic in the town centre, and to change vehicle parking provision and regulations. The aim is to make Knutsford more friendly to pedestrians, as a first stage of a 'Masterplan' to ensure long term vitality, appeal and prosperity.

The traffic and parking proposals have three inter-related parts:

- a) changing Princess Street ('Top Street') and King Street ('Bottom Street') to access roads instead of through roads,
- b) making better use of on- and off-road parking spaces, and encouraging the development of at least one CEC multi-storey car park,
- c) reducing the number of parking bays on King and Princess Streets, reserving most for blue badge holders, and enforcing the no-parking regulations and double yellow lines.

The proposals have been well publicised to the Knutsford public. The consultation ran for 6 weeks, closing on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020. 658 responses have been received to a questionnaire, corresponding to about 6% of the adult population. They show substantial support for the proposals, though on some issues views are strongly polarised. About 1,000 written comments were attached alongside the tick-boxes on the questionnaire form, giving insight into issues the public feel strongly about.

The Working Group consider the results to be robust, and give Knutsford Town Council a mandate to request Cheshire East Council for resources to investigate the proposals in detail, with a view to implementing an unfolding programme of changes to traffic and parking in Knutsford centre.

The Working Group considers that the scheme is consistent with the short to medium term measures which the Town Council and CEC need to put in place to encourage recovery of the town centre post-Covid19, and therefore that the results of the public consultation remain valid.

## Conclusions

The number of respondents supporting or opposing the three aspects of the proposed scheme are:

Aspect	For	Against
Discouraging through traffic	426 (65%)	232 (35%)
More parking & a multi-storey	517 (79%)	139 (21%)
Limiting parking on King and Princess Streets	505 (77%)	151 (23%)

The numbers answering the question “Overall, do you support this 3-part scheme as a first step towards securing the future of Knutsford town centre?” were

YES: 383 (58%) | NO: 268 (41%)

61 respondents identified themselves as business owners/ managers; of these 38 voted YES, 23 NO.

The many comments qualify and explain the support or lack of it for the various aspects of the scheme. Topics attracting comment include:

- traffic congestion on the A50 and Adams Hill caused by closing King and Princess Streets to through traffic,
- drivers being confused by the proposed road changes, and disappointed at having to drive around the town, not through it,
- support for a multi-storey especially at the Tatton St. car park, but concern that unless well designed, it would be out of keeping with Knutsford’s heritage.
- concern that a multi-storey on the King Street car park would spoil the view from the Moor,
- traffic along Moorside posing a hazard near the children’s playground,
- the desire to be able to park near a shop and call in for a few minutes, free of charge,
- the pedestrianisation of King Street,
- enforcing the double yellow lines,
- the state of the pavements in King and Princess Streets,
- consideration for the particular needs of town centre residents,
- low cost parking for town centre employees,
- the ultimate need for a bypass.

## Recommendations

- 1) The results of this public consultation give Knutsford Town Council the evidence and mandate to petition Cheshire East Council to engage with the Town Council in analysing the proposals in detail and developing them into an integrated, workable scheme.
- 2) The proposed scheme should be integrated with those additional short term measures being taken to aid the post-Covid19 recovery of the town centre. In particular, regulations are needed to ensure that people can maintain their social distance in King and Princess Streets and neighbouring narrow streets and alleys.
- 3) CEC is called upon to support the proposals, allocate a budget and expert resource, and work hand in hand with Knutsford Town Council to take them further.
- 4) CEC Highways are specifically requested to carry out traffic flow measurements in and around Knutsford and computer simulation of various options for road changes,

consistent with the scheme proposed here. Hence to determine a feasible, detailed plan for traffic. Any highways schemes currently in planning which may have a bearing on this should be held in abeyance until they are harmonised and integrated with the Town Council's proposals.

- 5) The parking review currently in hand by CEC under the Local Transport Plan should take full account of these proposals and the evidence behind them, and work with Knutsford Town Council to develop an acceptable restructuring of public parking in and around the town. This should include car park charges, and studies to prepare for one or more multi-storey car parks.
- 6) The Town Vitality Project, started by CEC and now rescheduled for later in 2020, should work hand in hand with Knutsford Town Council to analyse shopping, dining, footfall, streetscape, community events and other aspects of the town centre, to shape the next phase of the Knutsford Masterplan.
- 7) All parties involved should develop a consensus on the best order in which changes should be made so as to limit disruption and the risk of rework, and to bring early benefits to the people of Knutsford.
- 8) This report on the public consultation should in due course be adopted as an appendix to the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan.

## Background and Motivation

The Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP) was approved by referendum in March 2019 then formally adopted. Section 14 of the KNP states the aspiration to develop a 'Masterplan' for the town centre – an over-arching strategy for developments aimed at ensuring that Knutsford retains its vitality and economic prosperity. This is consistent with academic research into high street decline which stresses the need for a town to re-think its essential qualities and engage all stakeholders in looking to the future.

A working group (WG) was set up, initially under the chairmanship of Cllr. Christopher Gray, to address this. It soon concluded that progress was unlikely to be made unless and until Knutsford's twin over-riding problems had been resolved: too many moving and parked vehicles in King and Princess streets, and too few public parking bays at busy times of the day. The balance between traffic and pedestrians needs to be shifted in favour of pedestrians.

The WG gathered opinions and historical data, researched new data on car parking spaces (March 2018), and considered a number of options for addressing these linked thorny problems. There are many constraints and probably there is no ideal solution. One scheme, devised by Cllr. Gray, emerged as most likely to navigate a course between the competing demands of the various stakeholders. This was tested and refined in committee. It was

presented to Knutsford councillors, and to officials and councillors of Cheshire East Council (CEC) from mid 2018 to December 2019.

In mid 2019 Knutsford Town Council advised WG that the broad concepts were ready to be put to the Knutsford public. Accordingly, preparations were made for a programme of public consultation in early 2020.

This report describes the consultation process, the results obtained, and the WG's assessment of the many comments made.

## Outline of the proposed traffic flow and parking scheme

The proposed scheme has three mutually supporting aspects:

- 1) to discourage through traffic on Top (Princess) and Bottom (King) streets by blocking a short (~40 m) length of each so that it is no longer possible to drive through the full length of either road. These then become access roads.
- 2) to make better use of existing public parking places, both on-road and in CEC car parks, and to encourage the development of one or more CEC car parks as multi-storey parks.
- 3) to limit the number of parking bays on King and Princes Streets and enforce the no-parking regulations.

Aspect 1) also involves closing the exit from Canute Place onto the A50 at the White Bear roundabout, closing the road in front of the Lost & Found, and closing Church Hill to vehicles at the bottom. The central section of King Street would become pedestrian priority.

The details of this scheme are set out in the report 'From Top to Bottom Street' and explained in a video. The reader is referred to these sources for details. The WG emphasise that the three aspects of this scheme have been designed to be inter-related and mutually reinforcing.

## Public Consultation

These proposals were presented to the public first on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2020. The consultation remained open until the morning of Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March, though the published closing date was Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

Four public meetings were held:

- 28<sup>th</sup> January a by-invitation evening event at Knutsford Methodist Church for business owners, managers and landlords in the town centre.

- 30<sup>th</sup> January a similar by-invitation evening event for residents of the town centre held at St John's Church.
- 4<sup>th</sup> February an evening presentation open to any member of the public, held at the Methodist Church.
- 5<sup>th</sup> February a second presentation open to the public, held in the afternoon at the Methodist Church.

The format of each meeting was the same: an opening address by Cllr. Dean, the Town Mayor or Town Clerk explaining the context, a showing of the 18 minute video, followed by round-the-table discussions supported by advisers (mainly WG members). The video first sets the scene then explains the three aspects of the proposal in turn. There were a dozen or so display boards around the room, giving additional information. About 40 people came to the first event, 50 to the second and over 100 to each open one, so in all about 300 people participated. Attendees were clearly interested and discussed the proposals amongst themselves and with Advisers.

All participants were given a 4-page leaflet which outlined the proposals and answered 15 'frequently asked' questions. Accompanying this leaflet was a one-page questionnaire which asked each person to rate their level of support for each of the three aspects of the scheme (referred to as Q1, Q2, Q3), and then vote as to whether, overall, they supported it or not. Comments were also invited on each question. This feedback form is reproduced as Appendix 1. There are 4 tick-boxes for each of the first three questions, and Yes or No for the overall response, making 14 boxes in all.

From 5<sup>th</sup> February the Town Council website contained a prominent page about the Masterplan at [www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/towncentremasterplan](http://www.knutsfordtowncouncil.gov.uk/towncentremasterplan). This included all the material already presented at the four public meetings, namely:

- a page of context-setting explanation with advice on responding to the Council,
- the video
- the report 'From Top to Bottom Street'
- the 2018 report on car parking spaces
- all the display boards used at the meetings
- the 'frequently asked questions' page of the leaflet,
- a street plan showing the proposed roads changes and access routes to private loading bays, delivery yards and parking areas.

Paper copies of the leaflet and the full report were placed in Knutsford public library.

Town Council staff and several members of the working group put considerable effort into encouraging public interest. Positive actions to raise public awareness have included:

- E-mailing and messaging by social media to business owners and managers in respect of the 28<sup>th</sup> January event,
- Delivery of printed invitations to town centre residents for the 30<sup>th</sup> January presentation,
- Publicity in the Knutsford Guardian regularly over several weeks starting at the end of January. This included notices in the Mayor's and Town Clerks' column on page 2, and full page coverage with full internal articles on 30<sup>th</sup> January ('Town Centre Masterplan') and 13<sup>th</sup> February ('Town centre won't change without help').
- Individual members of the WG spreading the message to friends and acquaintances, and to residents via the South Knutsford Residents Association e-mailed newsletter,
- Handing out, in person, splits of paper which drew attention to the Council's web site to parents waiting at the gates of St Vincent RC, Manor Park and Bexton primary schools,
- Handing out in person further such paper slips to staff employed in almost all Knutsford businesses, including upstairs offices, almost all retail shops, bars and restaurants, the cinema and police station,
- Placing posters by all the ticket machines in the public car parks,
- Having a printed notice in the St Vincent's Church magazine,
- A focus-group workshop with sixth form students at Knutsford Academy. Following this the Head of Sixth Form e-mailed all parents of 6<sup>th</sup> form students and gave the link to the Council web site.
- Running a stall at the 1<sup>st</sup> March Makers' Market,
- Running a similar stall at Booth's supermarket on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March.

In short, much effort has gone into gaining the attention of people across the various sectors of the Knutsford public, urging them to understand the proposals and give their feedback.

The whole project – developing the concepts, collecting data on parking, preparation of the public presentation, making of the video, design of the leaflets, collection and analysis of the data – has been done almost entirely by volunteers on the Town Centre WG. The costs to the public purse have been no more than hiring the church for the public events and photocopying the leaflets. Even the display boards at the presentation events were paid for by a member of the WG.

## Method of analysis of the responses

The 'raw results' of this consultation are the ticks and comments which respondents have recorded on the paper and on-line feedback forms. The data therefore has two distinct parts:

- a) the number of ticks in each of the 14 boxes, (quantitative data)
- b) the many comments which people added (qualitative data).



Almost every respondent ticked all boxes, but many left no comments. The number of ticks in each box is taken to be the correct measure of support or otherwise.

The comments give explanation and insight as to why those respondents hold the views they do, but the number of comments on each topic cannot in itself be taken as having quantitative significance. This is because we have no way of knowing what the people who wrote no comments were thinking. Indeed, there is reason in general to suspect that the people who object to a proposal – any proposal – or otherwise feel strongly about the topic are more motivated to make their views known than those people who are content.

The data has been analysed by the Chairman of the WG (Dr. John Coffey since 2018) using a spreadsheet (Microsoft Excel) and word processing software (Word) as follows.

Each response has been given a unique identification (ID) number, prefixed A to F depending on when and where it came from. Appendix 3 gives details. No personal information was collected and all returns were anonymous.

The paper forms were collected and each of the 14 ticked boxes transcribed to the spreadsheet in the same order as printed on the form, and labelled with that person's ID. The text of each comment was typed into a Word document, labelled with the ID and whether that person had voted Yes or No to the overall scheme.

The on-line input was collected in a Google file created on the web site by the Town Clerk. People typed their own comments into this. This comma-delimited file was read into Excel and formulae introduced to count automatically the number of respondents ticking each of the 14 boxes. The numerical results from both the paper and on-line forms were combined, and the totals are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

The written comments were sorted into categories. This was done by reading through the comments, deciding which topics were being addressed overall, and hence determining a number of categories into which the many comments could reasonably be sorted. In the event 37 categories have been used, some containing many more comments than others. Each category was given an abbreviated code. For instance, if points were being made about pedestrians or pedestrianisation the code was 'ped'. The 37 category codes are listed in Appendix 2 and used throughout Appendices 3, 4 and 5. Each comment was then re-read and one, two or in some cases three codes allocated against it in adjacent columns in the spreadsheet. The spreadsheet was then sorted by topic code in alphabetical order and copied to the Word document.

To make the analysis manageable the responses were analysed in three batches over the consultation period: up to 21<sup>st</sup> February, from 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb to 7<sup>th</sup> March, and after that date. They are presented as such in Appendices 3, 4 and 5 respectively. Appendix 3 contains all comments on paper forms (there were few after 21<sup>st</sup> February). Within each of the 37 categories the order of comments is random. Where a comment covers several topics, it is printed in full under one category and relevant extracts are duplicated in the other categories. Apart from the date at which the comments were received, there is no editorial

distinction between the comments in Appendices 3, 4 and 5. The reader is therefore advised to read the three as if they were one.

## The Results

### Level of response

In all 658 returns have been received, 176 paper forms, 482 on-line. Many of the paper forms were collected at or soon after the four public presentations. In Knutsford probably about 10,000 people over 17 or 18 years old, so this (self-selecting) sample is about 6% of the adult population. The WG consider this sufficient for reliable conclusions to be drawn.

### Numerical statistics

Table 1 gives descriptive statistics of the level of support. Referring to Appendix 1 the numbers ticking 'strong support' and 'limited support' have been added together, and similarly those ticking 'modest opposition' and 'strong opposition', for each of Q1, Q2, Q3. The final column of Table 1 gives the margin by which % For exceeds % Against.

Question	FOR (%)	AGAINST (%)	NET FOR (%)
Q1: Pedestrian-priority	65	35	29
Q2: More parking - Multi-storey	79	21	57
Q3: Fewer cars on Top & Bottom Sts	77	23	54
Overall Support	58	41	17

**Table 1: Summary statistics: tick-box results on support 'For' and opposition 'Against' the three aspects of the proposals in response to questions Q1, Q2, Q3, and overall Yes/No in the feedback questionnaire.**

For ease of reference the questions were:

"Please indicate your level of support for these proposals:

Q1) Pedestrian –priority in Top & Bottom Streets ... to limit through traffic in the town centre by closing a short section each of King and Princess Streets so that vehicles cannot drive straight through, and to make the other road closures as shown.

Q2) More parking spaces ... to make better use of the existing public parking areas, and to develop one or two multi-storey car parks.

Q3) Fewer parked cars in Top & Bottom Streets ... to reduce the number of vehicles parked in King and Princess Streets, and to enforce the 'no parking' regulations.

Q4) Overall do you support this 3-part scheme as a first step towards securing the future of Knutsford town centre?

The Overall Support is 58% Yes, 41% No, but the support for each of Q1, Q2, Q3 is significantly higher. On these values alone we can conclude that there is solid majority support for the proposed scheme.

Tables 2 gives the detail behind Table 1. It shows that of the 658 returns the number of people voting an Overall Yes was 383 (58%) and those voting No was 268 (41%). The number ticking 'strong support' to every one of questions Q1, Q2, Q3 was 227 (34%), while only 33 (5%) ticked 'strong opposition' to every question. The table also shows the numbers of respondents in terms of their relationship to the town centre. Since people were asked to tick all the boxes which applied to them, the sum is about 113% of the number of forms returned.

Aspect	Support Level	Number	%
<b>Pedestrian-priority</b>	Strong support	318	48%
<b>Pedestrian-priority</b>	Limited support	108	16%
<b>Pedestrian-priority</b>	Modest opposition	50	8%
<b>Pedestrian-priority</b>	Strong opposition	182	28%
<b>Parking - Multi-storey</b>	Strong support	365	55%
<b>Parking - Multi-storey</b>	Limited support	152	23%
<b>Parking - Multi-storey</b>	Modest opposition	56	9%
<b>Parking - Multi-storey</b>	Strong opposition	83	13%
<b>Few cars Top &amp; Bottom</b>	Strong support	399	61%
<b>Few cars Top &amp; Bottom</b>	Limited support	106	16%
<b>Few cars Top &amp; Bottom</b>	Modest opposition	56	9%
<b>Few cars Top &amp; Bottom</b>	Strong opposition	95	14%

Overall Support	Number	Percentage
YES	383	58%
NO	268	41%

3 x Support/Oppose	Number	Percentage
3 x Strong support	227	38%
3 x Strong opposition	33	5%

Respondent Type	Number	Percentage
Business manager	65	10%
Land/property owner	46	7%
Employed in town	50	8%
Resident in town centre	135	21%
Elsewhere in Knutsford	413	63%
Visitor	37	6%
	65	10%

**Tables 2: Statistics of all responses received**

One striking feature of the results is the polarization into strong support and strong opposition, with relatively few people voting for the limited/moderate categories. This is evidence of strongly divergent views between respondents. The comments added to the questionnaires do indeed show strongly opposed views as a reading of Appendices 3, 4 and 5 will show.

This polarisation notwithstanding, Table 2 shows clear majority support for all aspects of the proposals.

Between the extremes of total strong support and total opposition, the numbers show more support for enforcing parking regulations (Q3: 61% strong support), a lesser level of strong support for more parking and multi-storey car parks (Q2: 55% strong), and less enthusiasm for the scheme for preventing through traffic (Q1: 48% strong support). These values far outweigh the percentage voting 'strong opposition'. Some respondents have shown a tendency to vote just for the those aspects they like instead of seeing the three aspects of the proposals as one integrated scheme. As one example, some people who state their desire to see fewer cars in town have marked support for fewer cars on Top and Bottom street (Q3), but opposition to Q2 about more car parking spaces, and some also to Q1 on limiting through traffic.

It may be recalled that many business owners objected to a proposal made a few years ago to repave the central length of King Street. In this new survey 61 people identified themselves as business owners or managers, and of these 38 have voted Yes and 23 No, conclusively registering more support than opposition.

## Written comments

The reader is directed to Appendix 3, 4 and 5 and invited to judge for themselves where there is consensus and where divergence of opinion amongst the hundreds of comments. The notes below are necessarily those of the Working Group members. The category codes (such as 'ped') reference the corresponding sections of these appendices, which are presented in alphabetical order of code.

A few people are of the view that Knutsford's centre is fine, that there is no significant traffic or parking problem, and they urge that it be left as it is (code: ok). Others disagree and welcome the proposals as a timely and well thought out scheme for solving pressing problems (code : good). Another group acknowledges the problems, but judges that the proposed 3-part scheme is poor, misguided and would make matters worse (code: poor). A significant number have their own thoughts on how the town's problems should be solved (code: alt). Chief amongst these alternatives are a bypass around the town, out-of-town parking, and a park-and-ride. A few feel that their comments will again be ignored (code: ig).

A striking feature is the polarised views over cars in the town centre. This is one of the most controversial issues. Several describe how they enjoy being able to drive into King or Princess Street or Canute Place, and call into a shop for a few minutes free of charge, and expect to do so in the future (code: pop). Some feel, indeed, that this facility is part of the

character of Knutsford (code: her). Several business owners fear that removing this easy facility from people in cars would be bad for business (code: bad). The desirability or otherwise of on-street parking has drawn much comment (code: osp) – to some it is a boon, to others an annoying obstruction. Local residents have particular concerns that they would still be able to move conveniently around town (code: res). Some value being able to drive through the old streets to avoid traffic on the A50 and Adams Hill.

Several respondents call for full pedestrianisation of Top and Bottom streets (code: ped), and there is wider demand for more consideration for pedestrians. Related to this are calls for the pavements to be widened and the kerbs to be removed (code : pav). A few respondents advocate shared space (code: mix), and several call for an immediate low speed limit (code: mph).

Many call for enforcement of the no-parking regulations with immediate effect (code: enf). They are exasperated with those drivers who park on double yellow lines and the current ineffective control by the few wardens. Nor do disabled drivers win unqualified support since, while there is general acceptance that bays on Top and Bottom streets must be reserved for blue badge holders, there is annoyance that some disabled drivers thoughtlessly obstruct access and junctions (code: dis).

Several respondents are adamant that parking must be sorted out first, before any other changes are made (code: pkf). Multi-storey car parks have drawn many comments (code: mult). While many respondents judge them essential, others feel they are unnecessary, and would be too ugly for Knutsford and damage the heritage feel of the town (code: her). Even people who might support them qualify their support by demanding that they are not too high and exemplify excellence in architectural design. There is noted support for a multi-storey at Tatton Street, and several suggest one at Booths (code : boo), though others fear that allowing all-day parking at Booths would be bad for that supermarket's business.

The CEC Waitrose and King Street multi-storey park proposals are more controversial. Some point out that building new apartments alongside these multi-storeys would partly defeat the object since the apartments would take up several parking bays (code: apm). The turn by Gascoigne Halman's building in the proposed new access road from the A50 is judged by several to be too awkward (code: awk). A multi-storey at King Street is objected to strongly, partly because it would adversely affect the view from the Moor, and partly because of extra traffic on Moorside Road, alongside the children's playground (code: moor). The safety of children has been a concern of several (code: saf).

There seems to be more controversy over the first aspect of the proposals, in Q1, to block sections of King and Princess St. and Canute Place and thus divide the town centre into three separate traffic sectors. Some say the proposal is confusing (code: cnf) and that motorists would be endlessly driving round in circles (code: cir). Some point out that these roads involve awkward turns for vehicles (code: awk), or might introduce rat-runs rather than eliminate them (code: rat). Some respondents have misunderstood the street plan, by thinking that all roads in the new scheme would be one-way. Concern is voiced about inhibiting deliveries to shops and homes (code: del). Many say there is bound to be

congestion both in the town and on the A50 and Adams Hill (code: cong). The impact of the proposal on the main roads and hence whether CEC Highways is likely to approve is also extensively discussed (code: main), and is probably one of the major matters of concern.

Respondents also express concern that the disruption which must accompany any changes will damage businesses (code: rup). A few state qualms over the cost of implementing the scheme and where the money would come from (code: fin).

A number of respondents are disappointed that the WG has not included cycling and cycle ways in the proposals (code: cyc).

A number of people have made points about specific parts of the town: Moorside Road (code: moor), Minshull, Green and Tatton Streets (min), Canute Place (can), and Garden Road (gard). The concerns for Garden Road relate to congestion and inconvenience for local residents.

Miscellaneous comments, some on tangential matters, are collected into a single category (code: oth).

## The Working Group's commentary

The numerical statistics in Tables 1 and 2 speak for themselves and show that the proposals have significant public support.

The WG is grateful to the many people who have taken the time to give considered comments and share their concerns about the town centre. It is clear, however, that some respondents have misunderstood what is proposed, and some assert what is merely conjecture. The comments will have most value when the Town Council's proposals are discussed in detail with CEC experts and individual sub-projects derived and specifications drawn up. The public comments point to where priority and emphasis should be given, or constraint applied.

We will not respond to all of these, but make a few general observations then specific points about a few categories.

Having talked to many people about Knutsford, WG members are of the view that many local people feel the town centre now is fragile, with a worrying number of closed down shops, bars and restaurants. Just when the consultation has closed, the coronavirus epidemic is beginning to bite, restricting social gatherings and precipitating an economic downturn which will make matters even more difficult for businesses in the town and for many residents. It is understandable, therefore, that some respondents are wary of making any change in case even modest disruption would cause a rapid collapse. For some people any thought of change is uncomfortable. In contrast, others feel that unless 'something' is done quickly, the town centre will continue to slide downwards. The consultants working with CEC's Town Vitality project will therefore find these results important. This CEC project may clarify and

reassure the Town Council and Knutsford public as to which actions are likely to have the intended effect of ensuring our town's long term success and prosperity.

The comments provide some insight into why a fair number of people have voted No to the overall scheme despite having signalled strong or limited support for one or two of its aspects. It seems likely that they have not seen the proposals as one scheme with three parts, but instead as three independent schemes from which they could pick the one they liked. It is the WG's consensus view that unless the three aspects are taken together, the results will be inadequate to cope with the extra people and cars when 1,000 new homes are built. Therefore, while taking note of the preferences for those aspects which have gained the most votes, the WG rejects 'cherry picking'.

Some people have voted No because they say that some other scheme should be implemented. Three examples are: some want complete pedestrianisation of King Street, some want a bypass, some a park & ride, and some want more facilities for cyclists. Paradoxically our scheme, though less radical than theirs, would go some way towards meeting their aspirations.

On some specific issues:

- a) There is clearly concern about increased congestion on the A50 and Adam's Hill if and when King and Princess Streets become access-only. Section 15 of the KNP states the aspiration to survey traffic flows and address traffic congestion. The WG's preferred approach is to have CEC highways engineers make measurements of traffic flows and use computer modelling to simulate various detailed options. Only when that level of technical assessment has been made should a conclusion be drawn about whether the impact on the mains roads will be unacceptable.
- b) Regarding multi-storey car parks, the WG judge that building at least one in Knutsford is essential to provide more parking, and would also serve the purpose of efficiently and neatly providing ranks of charging stations for electric vehicles, supplied from a dedicated transformer. Architectural design to a high standard, sympathetic to the town centre, will be essential. From the comments, there would be most support for one at Tatton Street, and some for one at Booths. However, there has been significant opposition to a multi-storey on the King Street car park, so any proposals for such a development would need especially sensitive design and attention to safety at the children's playground.
- c) The comments show that there is major controversy over whether the old narrow roads in town should remain through roads for traffic. This has several aspects including: i) the convenience of driving from one end of town without having to use the A50 and Adams Hill, ii) the convenience of parking outside a shop for a short while, iii) the collateral inconvenience to pedestrians and other road users, iv) the knock-on effects on the main A50 and A537 of closing them to through traffic. It would be of great value to this study if the CEC Town Vitality project conducted a

robust investigation to settle the controversy over whether changing King and Princess Streets to access roads would be detrimental or of benefit to local shops.

- d) The WG do not accept the view of some respondents that providing more parking necessarily means attracting more cars into town. Our scheme is intended do provide parking for the cars which people will inevitably wish to use to get to work, shop or dine, yet keep the central old streets sufficiently free of vehicles that people on foot feel safe and at ease.
- e) The desire to be able to park outside a shop and pop in for ‘a few minutes’ is at odds with our aim of making the town centre more pedestrian-friendly. On many days it is not possible to park outside any given shop because other motorists have already parked there. Some drivers stop in the road for a few minutes when they see that a bay may soon become empty, and so hold up traffic. Others park on the double yellow lines. Some disabled blue badge holders have told us that they cannot park on King or Princess St. because all the spaces – even at double yellow lines – are already taken. The volume and size of vehicles today is such that Knutsford cannot have the village feel it had in the distant days of care-free motoring.
- f) Some comments show that the respondent has not correctly understood what is being proposed. An example is the misconception that the general circulation circuits in the three traffic sectors would all be one-way streets throughout.
- g) Regarding cycling provision not being included in the scheme, the WG acknowledges that the proposals have been focused on reducing the dominance of vehicles in the town centre. In our post-Covid19 world cycling is to be encouraged, so there is a strong case for bringing forward those parts of the Masterplan which deal with cycling. Note that there is a separate section of the KNP (§15, T2) on cycling-related plans.