



STRATEGIC PLAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

AUGUST 2022



LOCAL COUNCIL
AWARD SCHEME
QUALITY GOLD

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INTRODUCTION

This report concludes the community engagement undertaken between 27th June until 5th August 2022. The aim of the consultation was to inform the development of the council's new corporate/strategic plan.

The aim of the consultation was to provide the council with an understanding of the community's priorities. It was purposely a broad open consultation without closed questions.

The consultation was promoted in local media, via the council's e-mailing list and online with a promotional video starring all 15 town councillors.

The council ran five community workshops as part of the consultation three were held at Egerton Place (weekday morning, weekday evening and Saturday afternoon), one evening session at The Welcome and one evening session via Zoom.

In addition to the open workshops, a workshop was held at the Knutsford Academy with a class of year 9 students (and a few year 12s).

In advance of the formal workshops a trial was held with invited individuals and this was used to refine the format of the workshops; the data they provided has been included in the analysis.

After initial analysis it was noted that the response rate from the Longridge area was poor. The Town Council was especially keen to reach this area which is traditionally harder to engage and therefore lacks a voice. In August the Town Council held an additional mini-engagement session on the green outside the Welcome with three shortened versions of the workshop questions.

48 people attended the community workshops (including the trial session). 162 responses were received for the online survey¹. Approximately 30 students were at the Academy session. 18 residents gave their views at the additional

¹ There were some technical issues which prevented some form submissions from being received.

event at Longridge. A total of 258 residents were engaged in the consultation.

DEMOGRAPHY

RESPONDENT AGE

Age data was provided for 235 responses. It was not collected at the trial session nor the additional Longridge event.

Age Range	Percentage
< 21	12.77%
21-30	3.83%
31-40	11.49%
41-65	40.85%
65+	31.06%

Comparing the age range of respondents to the 2011 census data² shows that older people (40+) are over represented (71.9% of responses vs 49.2% of population) whilst younger adults (21-40) are under represented (15.3% of responses vs 28.5% of population).

Due to the session at the Knutsford Academy, older children (10-21) are well represented (12.8% responses vs 10.3% of population). The main responses in this age category were from the Knutsford Academy session. Whilst age was not collected, some under 16s were also engaged at the additional Longridge session.

POSTCODE DISTRIBUTION

Postcode data was collected at the workshops (excluding trial) and online survey. Postcodes

were mapped to show the geographic distribution within the town to identify gaps.

The maps show a broad distribution of responses from across Knutsford was received with the notable exception of a low response rate for Longridge and also from the Legh Road Conservation Area.

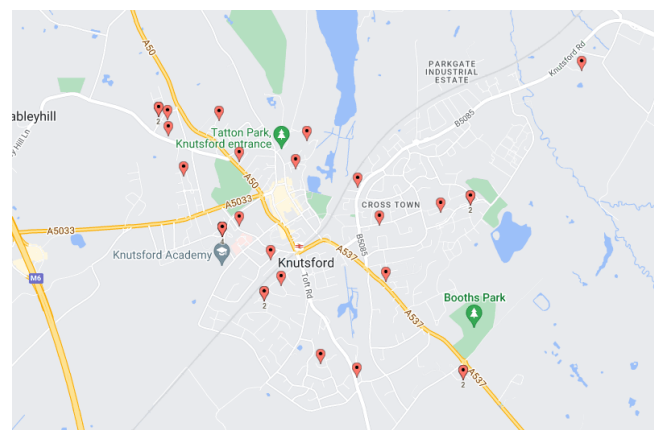


Figure 1 Workshop Attendee Distribution

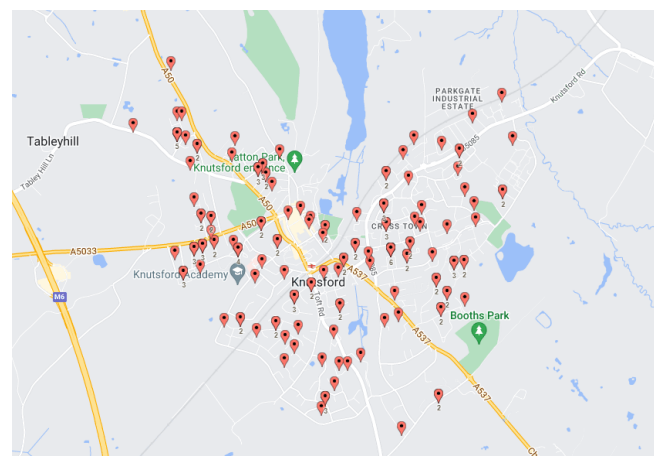


Figure 2 Online Survey Response Distribution

The additional engagement event at Longridge was held to elicit more responses from this area as it is recognised as an area of deprivation where engagement is more challenging.

² Parish data from the 2021 census is not yet available.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES SUMMARY

ISSUES FACING KNUTSFORD

The first question asked people to provide:

Issues affecting Knutsford that the Town Council should address

Provide as much/little detail as you wish

There is no need to provide solutions

Don't think about practicality or cost - we're looking to understand what the raw issues are

At the additional event in Longridge, people were asked what they disliked about Knutsford.

Each individual response was broken down into its constituent parts i.e. where one respondent listed three issues they have been detailed separately. In total 779 comments were made for this question.

Each comment was categorised and there were 35 emerging areas which elicited more than 5 comments. Each theme has been summarised as concisely as possible. The number at the end is the total number of responses in that theme.

1. The need to improve pedestrian and cycling infrastructure across the town and connecting to other areas to promote active travel, a number of specific areas were highlighted (49)
2. Pedestrianisation (both completely or partially e.g. shared space, reduced traffic). Frustration expressed at the lack of action on this over many years. (45)
3. Litter, dog fouling and the general cleanliness/standards of maintenance across the town (43)

4. Poor public transport links, the reliability and frequency of rail services and the lack of connectivity across the town / to other towns. (41)
5. The condition of roads and pavements (38)
6. The lack of availability of parking within the town centre and inconsiderate parking (37)
7. The lack of diversity in the town centre, particularly the lack of more affordable shops and high number of eateries. Some comments called for more high street brands - this was particularly prevalent at the Academy session which accounted for 22 of the comments in this theme (36)
8. The level of traffic/congestion/through traffic across the town (32)
9. Various comments about open spaces, suggesting enhancement, improvements to the network, improvement to Heath/Moor (30)
10. The challenge of accessibility within the town centre due to narrow pavements, poor parking, lack of dropped kerbs etc (27)
11. Various comments about the importance of the town centre, concern about rents/rates etc (24)
12. The need for improved medical facilities and the lack of NHS dentistry (23)
13. The impact of the housing development on schools, GPs and other infrastructure (22)
14. The lack of facilities/activities for young people was cited by both adults and young people. Students also highlighted the lack of employment opportunities for those still at school. (22)

15. The importance of improving the environment, through ecological enhancements (20)
16. Opposition to further housing development (19)
17. The lack of affordable housing (in both the sense of being affordable and social housing) (17)
18. Concerns around public safety, drug use/dealing at Longridge and ASB. (15)
19. Speeding traffic (15)
20. Various specific and general highway issues (14)
21. Calls for additional/continuation of diverse events spread across the year. (14)
22. The need for additional activities/services for children and adults (12)
23. Impact of flights from Manchester Airport (12)
24. Calls for improvement to and additional play areas (12)
25. The need for a community hall (10)
26. Concern about climate change (10)
27. The need for enhancing community / support for community organisations (10)
28. The promotion of public health, healthy eating, exercise and tackling loneliness (10)
29. The need for more support for local business (9)
30. Improved connectivity with Longridge, enhancement of the Welcome, specific local issues on the estate (9)
31. The importance of 60 King Street, highlighting the need to prioritise it and make it cost effective. (7)
32. Limited facilities and poor swimming pool at the Leisure Centre (7)
33. The need for investment in the Market Hall (7)
34. The need for additional EV charging points (6)
35. The need to preserve the town's heritage (6)

WHAT TO PRESERVE

The second question asked people to detail:

things are currently good but need to be monitored to ensure they remain good.

At the additional event in Longridge, people were asked what they loved about Knutsford.

In total 315 comments were made for this question.

Each comment was categorised and there were 13 emerging areas which elicited more than 5 comments. Each theme has been summarised as concisely as possible. The number at the end is the total number of responses in that theme.

1. Public open space – many specifically mentioning the Moor and the Heath (54)
2. The heritage and history of the town; its architecture and character (53)
3. The programme of town events, including May Day, the Music Festival, Pumpkin Path and Beer Festival (40)
4. The Town Centre – its independent shops and character (24)
5. The ‘market town vibe’ of Knutsford – its uniqueness and small town feel (17)
6. The current size of the town – maintaining the Green Belt and not building further housing (16)
7. Community spirit (14)
8. The Town Ranger (9)
9. Efforts to plant trees and create meadows (7)
10. The Makers Market (7)

11. The Welcome (7)

12. Tatton Park (6)

13. Shops on Longridge (6)

WHAT TO IMPROVE

The third question asked people to detail:

things that would benefit from some improvement - be that large or small.

At the additional event in Longridge, people were asked what they felt needed changing or improving in Knutsford.

In total 442 comments were made for this question.

Each comment was categorised and there were 17 emerging areas which elicited more than 5 comments. Each theme has been summarised as concisely as possible. The number at the end is the total number of responses in that theme.

1. Town Centre – pavement widths, congestion and pedestrian access. 15 comments called for pedestrianisation (60)
2. Public Open Spaces – 13 comments related to the Heath (e.g. cleanliness, railings), 9 called for additional play equipment in the town, 7 related to the Moor and 14 called for additional facilities e.g. outdoor gym, additional orchards, improvements to spaces network. (43)
3. Highways – pavements, road surfaces, overhanging hedges and other specific issues (40)
4. Active Travel – cycling improvements, provision/access to rights of way (30)
5. Public Transport – train services and bus connectivity (28)

6. Car Parking – primarily in the town centre but also on residential streets which are used by commuters (27)
7. The cleanliness of the town and littering (21)
8. Environmental objectives – tree planting, meadow creation and reduced mowing (17)
9. Events through expansion and introduction of additional (15)
10. Promotion and understanding of Knutsford's heritage including enhancement of the Heritage Centre (12)
11. The Market Hall (10)
12. 60 King Street (8)
13. Access to affordable housing / housing meeting specific needs (8)
14. The Makers Market – variety, congestion and litter (7)
15. Traffic – volume, congestion and speed (7)
16. Streetscene - additional flower displays, attractiveness of streets (6)
17. Enhancement of medical facilities and access to healthcare (6)

WHAT TO AVOID BEING INVOLVED IN

The fourth question asked people to detail:

things you don't want to see the council getting involved in

In total 57 comments were made for this question, many comments were specific or infrequent and the main overarching theme was to avoid party politics and work in the interests of the town.

CURRENT SERVICES

Respondents were given 10 'votes' to allocate to 9 groups of the council's current services where they could indicate the importance of each group by allocating it more votes than others.

At the in-person sessions, many used their votes on specific services within a theme rather than overall. The analysis is therefore split into three sections: online voting, in person and Academy session. All sessions had a 10th option where they could write in a service they felt is important that is not currently provided.

ONLINE SURVEY

The total number of votes allocated to each category was calculated and averaged. The ranked services across all age categories were as follows:

Service Theme	Votes	Average
Environment and Streetscene	325	1.9
Open Spaces	238	1.4
Town Centre Management	215	1.3
Events	163	1.0
Planning	162	1.0
Community	127	0.8
Markets	116	0.7
Christmas Lights	116	0.7
Public Toilets	96	0.6
Other	37	0.2

The results were also analysed based on the age group of respondents to assess if different age groups gave differing priorities. Environment and Streetscene was consistently the highest rated and the top five services were broadly consistent.

Rank	21-30	31-40	41-64	65+
1 st	Environ.	Environ.	Environ.	Environ.
2 nd	TCM	Open s.	Open s.	TCM
3 rd	Events	TCM	TCM	Open s.
4 th	Markets	Events	Planning	Planning
5 th	Open s.	Markets	Events	Events
6 th	Xmas.	Planning	Xmas.	Comm.
7 th	Comm.	Comm.	Comm.	Markets
8 th	Toilets	Xmas.	Markets	Toilets
9 th	Planning	Toilets	Toilets	Xmas.

IN PERSON SCORING

The physical workshops saw people voting for specific services as well as the overall boards. The top 20 services voted for were:

1. Public Toilets
2. Town Ranger
3. Town Centre Masterplan
4. Open Spaces
5. Commenting on Planning Applications
6. Christmas Lights
7. Events
8. Town Centre Planting
9. Nature Action Plan
10. Community
11. Heritage Centre Grant
12. Citizens Advice Grant
13. Speed Indicator Devices
14. Market Hall
15. PROW/Village Green Applications
16. Knutsford Music Festival
17. Christmas Lights Switch On
18. Bins and Benches
19. Business Support
20. Markets

The lowest ranking 10 services were:

47. Council Offices
48. Blue Plaques
49. Voucher Scheme
50. Town Awards
51. Mayoralty
52. Shop Christmas Trees
53. Promotional Events
54. Market Licensing
55. Higher Town Green
56. Obelisk Green

ACADEMY SCORING

Like the physical workshops, most votes were cast for individual services. Some students campaigned for votes from others on specific services.

The top 20 services voted for were:

1. Bunny Hop
2. Public Toilets
3. Makers Market
4. Christmas Market
5. Christmas Lights
6. Events
7. Cemetery
8. Food and Drink Festival
9. Pumpkin Path
10. Music Festival
11. Christmas Lights Switch On
12. Remembrance Sunday
13. Environment and Streetscene
14. Town Ranger
15. Open Spaces
16. Bins and Benches
17. Best Dressed Window Competitions
18. Market Hall
19. Library and Office Garden
20. Special Events

The bottom 10 services voted for were:

47. Heritage Centre Grant
48. Millennium Bursary
49. Tabley Hill Chapel
50. Blue Plaques
51. Higher Town Green
52. Obelisk Green
53. Planning
54. Crib Service
55. Citizens Advice Grant
56. Mayoralty

SERVICE COMMENTS

Respondents were invited to comment on the services the council provides. 141 comments were received.

General (27)

The majority of these comments stated their overall satisfaction with the council's services.

Some suggested specific services were not valued and others highlighted improvements needed in non-KTC services.

Events (20)

The majority of these comments praised the programme of events and how they bring community together.

Other comments suggested improvement to publicity, more creative events, additional events and events which are aimed more at residents and older people. One comment criticised a specific event and another the need for event staff.

Town Centre Management (19)

8 of the comments related to pedestrianisation / public realm improvement. 2 comments highlighted the need for coach/improved car parking, 2 highlighted the need for business incubation and 3 questioned the need of the council's involvement.

4 comments suggested that more should be done to promote tourism, including the provision of a Tourist Information Centre.

Markets (15)

6 comments questioned the benefit of the Makers Market or noted the challenge of navigating the market whilst 2 comments stated they love the market and 1 noted they don't but that others do.

Comments highlighted support for the Market Hall and improvements to the building.

Environment and Streetscene (13)

5 comments related to the Town Ranger, generally praising the role with individual comments suggesting its duties be better publicised to get suggestions from the public and that there is more than one-person's work.

Comments in relation to the environment praised the work on the nature action plan, tree planting etc and encouraged more action and individual comments on streetscene (blue plaques, benches, SIDs) were made.

Public Toilets (8)

3 comments noted the toilets are good, 1 that there isn't enough and 2 were unaware there were any public toilets. 2 comments suggested they should be free.

Public Open Space (7)

Individual comments noted that Obelisk Green and Higher Town Green weren't well known, suggested the council take on other open spaces (Longridge parks and the Moor) and recognised the council's work on some spaces.

Planning (6)

Comments suggested assisting the community in understanding the process/involvement better and continuing to represent Knutsford.

Christmas Lights (3)

Two praised the lights, one suggested simpler lights be provided.

Other

Other comments included:

- the need for improved communication within the town
- The need to improve the council offices
- The need for more to be done for community organisations/community development
- Greater working with Tatton Park
- Concern around 60 King St / need to get it running
- The lack of council attention to greater concerns e.g. cost of living, food bank use

CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the engagement activity was to provide direction from the public as to where the council's priorities for the next 10 years should be. Assessing the comments raised through the various questions the following overarching themes can be identified.

1. The need to develop Active Travel options and promote cycling and walking for leisure and transport.
2. The importance of a strong Town Centre and action on improving the public realm, accessibility, pedestrianisation and improved parking.
3. Support for a strong community events programme both to bring the community together and to bring footfall to the town centre.
4. The importance of supporting community organisations and developing/maintaining the sense of community within the town.
5. Longridge faces additional/differing challenges and is disconnected with the rest of Knutsford.
6. There is support for action to improve the natural environment and tackle climate change
7. The importance of the town's network of green spaces and the need for enhancements to the network
8. The need to ensure the town has access to the right and improved facilities/services including additional community meeting

spaces and enhancement to the Market Hall and 60 King Street

9. The need for more activity and facilities for young people
10. The need for improved health facilities and activity on preventive health
11. A desire to enhance standards of maintenance, cleanliness and attractiveness of the town
12. The need for improved public transport connectivity
13. The importance of preserving and celebrating the town's heritage
14. Dissatisfaction with the standard of highways and pavements
15. Concern about the volume and speed of traffic
16. The importance of the Town Council's active involvement in the planning system