

Draft Surbiton Town Centre Improvement Strategy Results of Phase 3 Public Consultation

October 2009

1 Background

1.1 The final stage of the Surbiton Town Centre Draft Improvement Strategy consultation took place in September and October 2009. It sought the views of residents, businesses, key stakeholder groups and visitors on the proposals contained in the draft strategy document.

1.2 Access to the strategy was made available through the following:

- Staffed exhibitions in Surbiton Town Centre on 24th – 26th September (including a stand at the Surbiton Festival);
- Permanent exhibition in Surbiton Library from 28th September to 31st October; and,
- Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames' (RBK) website.

1.3 Access to the strategy document (reference copy only), summary exhibition boards and comments cards were provided at all of these sites. The comments card was prepared to manage responses efficiently through a small number of tick-box questions and space for other comments. In addition to the comments card, stakeholders were given the options of making comments by telephone or email.

1.4 Stakeholders were made aware of the consultation by the following means:

- Letters to all businesses and residents residing in the study area;
- Letters to nearly 100 key stakeholder groups;
- Press releases and advertisements in the local press (Surrey Comet, Kingston Guardian and Informer);
- Posters displayed around the town centre; and,
- 1,000 leaflets handed out at in the town centre, including outside the rail station.

1.5 Additionally, separate meetings were held between RBK officers and taxi drivers, SCARA, South West Trains, local businesses, and some local residents.

2 **Comments Card**

2.1 As mentioned earlier, the comments card was designed to be the principal means of collating feedback on the draft strategy. This sought to gauge support for the overall strategy and proposals at key locations, along with the prioritisation of improvements across the town centre. It also asked respondents to indicate their main purpose(s) for visiting the town centre since this may influence their thoughts. The content of the comments card is reproduced below.

Surbiton Town Centre Improvement Strategy
HAVE YOUR SAY

What are your main purposes for visiting the town centre? (Tick all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Station	<input type="checkbox"/> Work/business	<input type="checkbox"/> Shopping
<input type="checkbox"/> Recreation/social	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please state)

Thank you! Please write any further comments in the box

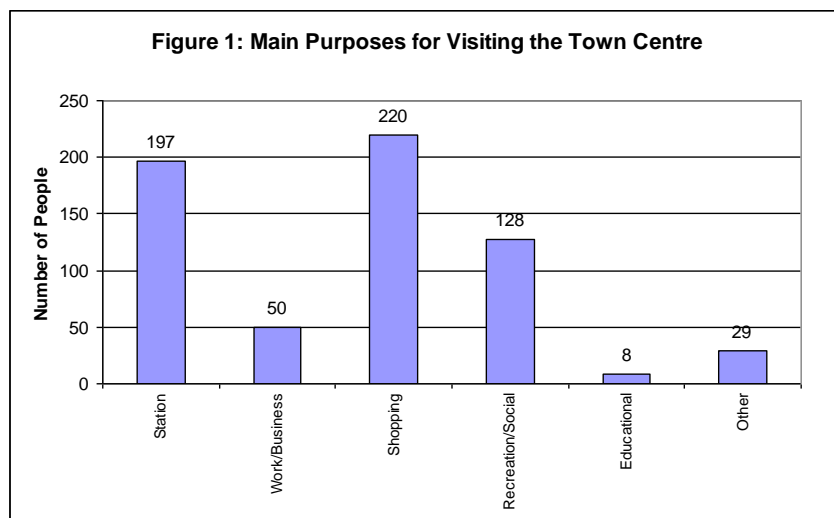
3 **Response Rates**

3.1 A total of 286 comments cards were completed, of which 57 were submitted on-line. This however does not represent the high level of interest in the draft strategy: approximately 1,500 attended the staffed exhibition alone.

3.2 The following sections provide a summary of the response to each question, with some broken down by the main purpose(s) for the respondent visiting the town centre.

3.3 As shown in Figure 1, shopping and accessing the station are main purposes for visiting the town centre for the majority of respondents: 77% are shoppers and 69% access the rail station. Only 17% of respondents visit the

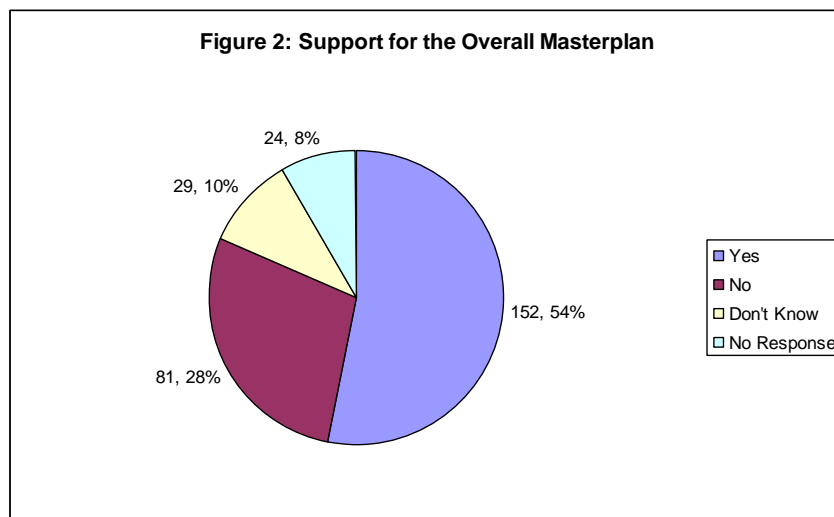
town centre for work/business reasons and just 3% for recreational purposes.



3.4 In addition to the comments cards, email or written feedback was submitted by 17 individuals, along with one from the Kingston Cycling Campaign and one from RBK's former Access Officer (Jane Young). A summary of the additional comments is provided below.

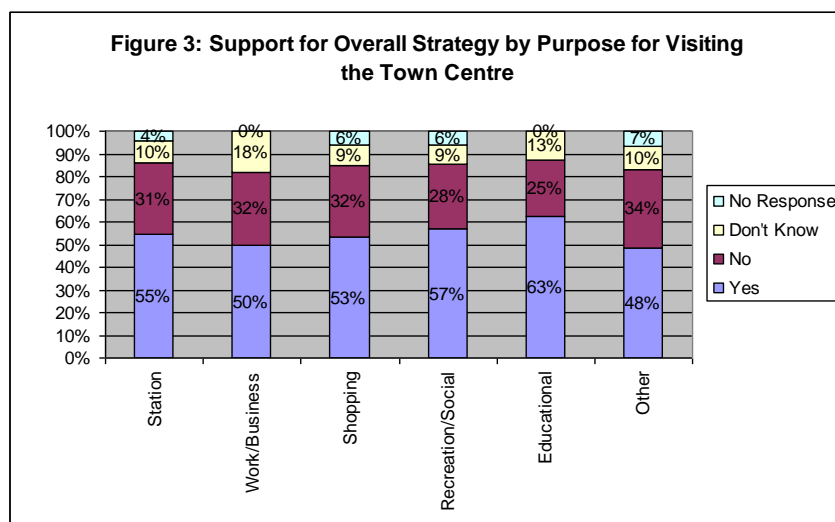
4 *Support for the Overall Masterplan*

4.1 Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents support the overall masterplan, with nearly twice as many (54%) responding positively than negatively (28%). 10% don't know and the remaining 8% did not respond to this question.



4.2

The response varied slightly in relation to the main purpose(s) for visiting the town centre, as demonstrated in Figure 3. Support for the masterplan ranged from 50% for “work/business” users to 63% for “education”. 18% of “work/business” users answered “Don’t know” to the question, compared to the average 10%.



5

Support for the Masterplan Proposals by Location

5.1

Figure 4 shows that highest levels of support were received for the Victoria Road and Brighton Road proposals, with 60% and 59% of respondents respectively. For both of these, there were four persons in support for each person against. The lowest level of support (46%) was received for the Newmans Lane proposals, although this is considerably higher than the 13% against. The highest proportions of objections were for the station forecourt (24%) and the station southern entrance (20%).

5.2

The significant level of objection to the station forecourt proposals may part be in response to a letter published in the local press regarding the proposals, which was factually incorrect.

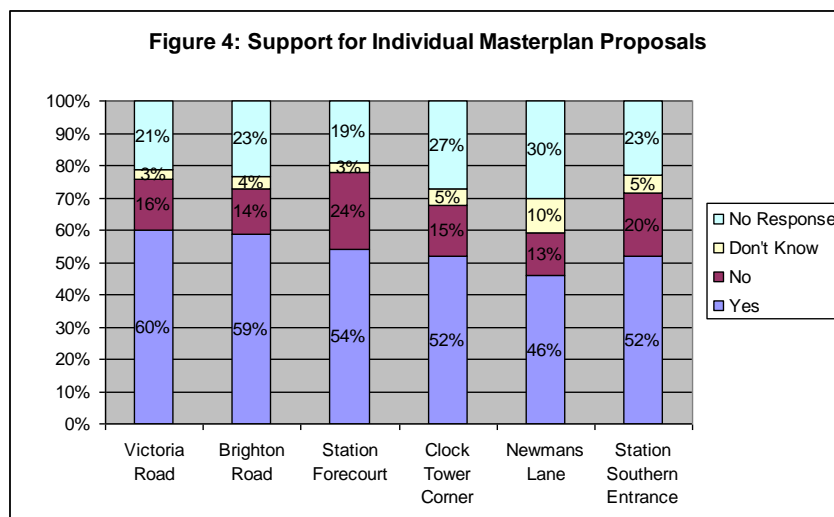
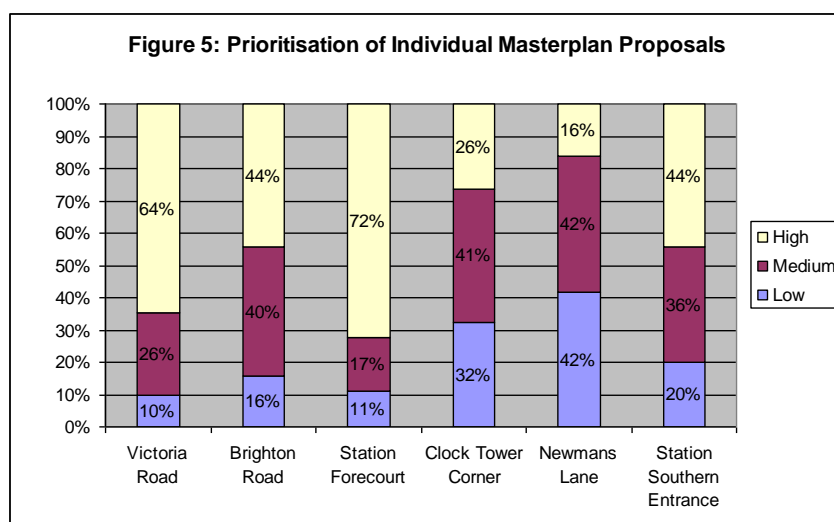


Figure 5 indicates the prioritisation of individual masterplan proposals by those who supported them. The station forecourt is afforded the highest priority (72%) followed by Victoria Road (64%). In contrast, 42% and 32% of respondents thought that the Newmans Lane and the Clock Tower Corner improvements should be given a low priority.



6

6.1

Additional Comments

The additional comments submitted via either the comments card or email/letter were classified into a long list of key topics. The most common topics are highlighted below:

- **Station forecourt – parking and taxis:** 50 comments. 21 highlighted the need for adequate/more provision for taxis and

drop-off/pick-up, 15 generally supported the better use of space, whilst 9 said that an improvement was not required;

- **Parking:** 41 comments, including support for more parking generally (13 persons), station parking (10) and cycle parking (9);
- **Pavements:** 38 comments, including 14 persons supporting wider pavements and 11 persons against;
- **Unnecessary expenditure:** 34 comments. This was a combination of people thinking the proposals are a waste of money and / or concerns regarding unnecessary RBK expenditure during the recession and related cutbacks;
- **Cycling:** 21 comments, including the need to more cycle parking and cycle lanes/paths;
- **Accessibility:** 18 comments relating to improved provision for persons with mobility difficulties, including 9 requests for a lift at the rail station southside;
- **Pedestrian safety:** 18 comments including 14 stating the need for more traffic calming;
- **Pedestrian crossings:** 17 comments split between the location, requirement for more and better designs.

6.2 The complete tally of comments by topic is provided in Appendix 1 and a summary of comments from the Kingston Cycling Campaign and RBK's former Access Officer (Jane Young) are provided in Appendix 2.

7 *Summary and Recommendations*

7.1 The following is a summary of the outcome of the final stage of stakeholder engagement:

- The majority of respondents use the town centre mainly for shopping and/or accessing the rail station;
- The majority (54%) of respondents support the overall strategy, nearly twice the proportion (28%) against;
- Highest levels of support was received for the Victoria Road (60%) and Brighton Road (59%) proposals;
- The highest level of objection (24%) was received for the station forecourt, although this was still less than half the level of support;
- The station forecourt is afforded the highest priority followed by Victoria Road;
- Respondents main reason(s) for using the town centre had a limited impact on the outcome; and,

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- The station forecourt attracted the highest number of additional comments, following by parking, pavements and unnecessary expenditure.

7.2

It is recommended that the proposals contained in the draft strategy document are taken forward by RBK, taking note of the above. It is suggested that the detailed design stage will need to address particularly the following:

- Suitable provision for taxis and drop-off / pick-up facilities in the rail station forecourt;
- At least maintain existing levels of cycle parking and provision of cycle priority measures where possible; and,
- Maximise opportunities to make the town centre more accessible to those with mobility difficulties.

Appendix 1 – Summary of Additional Comments

TOPIC	TALLY
Bollard/railings - removal	1
Building preservation	8
Bus stops - location	9
Business impact - negative	3
Character/conservation/enhancement	18
Clutter - pavements	4
Congestion - south side of station	2
Crossings - design/type	5
Crossings - location	5
Crossings - more	5
Cycle lanes/paths - need	4
Cycling	9
Drainage	3
Electric points	1
Forecourt - pick-up/drop-off need	9
Forecourt - taxi access need	12
Forecourt - better use of space	15
Forecourt - no need to improve	9
Forecourt - remove single storey buildings in front of station	5
Improved accessibility	7
Lamp posts - retain existing	10
Litter	7
Housing issues (not enough)	2
Housing issues (no need for more flats)	1
Parking - more cycle	8
Parking - more disabled	2
Parking - more general	13
Parking - more motorcycle	2
Parking - more station	10
Parking on residential streets	6
Pavements - general	8
Pedestrianisation need	9
Public Information Boards	1
Public toilets - need	4
Public toilets - refurbishment	2
Public/green space - need	2
Rail bridge lighting - support	3
Recycling bins - location	6
Roundabout - ped safety	2
Safety - poor driving	4
Seating - more	1
Shops - variety	8
Signage - more/better	4
Signage - less	4
Station buildings - better care/use	9
Station lift at rear - need	9
Street Furniture - keep existing	2
Telephones - need in front of station	2
Traffic calming measures - more	14
Traffic lights - less	2
Trees - fewer	5
Tress - more	1
Visitor centre - need	1
Waste money/recession	34
Wider pavements - against	11
Wider pavements - support	14

Appendix 2 – Summary of Key Stakeholder Comments

Kingston Cycling Campaign

- Disappointed in plans for continued 24hr two-way traffic
- Concerned about the impact of the removal of 5 parking bays on local business
- Pleased with plans for Victoria Road, more pedestrian and cyclist friendly
- Disappointed with continued prioritisation of motorised personal transport in light of other council and Government policies on climate change / peak oil
- Welcome plans for station approach and support changes to rear of the station. Propose all taxis queue at rear of the station to eliminate queues on forecourt
- Opening up access road on north side of station will prevent rat run and restrict use of cycle racks - considered dangerous for cyclists.
- Want access road to north of station to become a designated cycle route through to improved cycle storage and parking facilities. "If this road joined Victoria Road near Sainsbury's and had traffic signals to link across to St Andrew's Road and Cottage Grove beyond and through to Brighton and Maple Road then a useful and safe cycle route would be opened up".
- Much more could be made of car park in St Phillip's Road. Believe this would relieve Victoria Road of traffic.
- Key priorities: Safer routes for cyclists and safe parking for cyclists
- Clear and separate provision for cyclists, keeping them apart from motor vehicles and pedestrians.
- Propose cycle lane in Brighton Road, instead of widening footpaths
- Not widening pavements while maintaining two-way car traffic - particularly Victoria Road and Brighton Road railway bridge. Current pinch points need to be reviewed.
- More cycle parking for shoppers in Victoria Road and Brighton Road
- Cycle parking to be at right angles to the road, not in line with it
- More secure cycle storage for commuters on both sides of the station. One option proposed reduction in number of racks. Strongly against this.
- Want to restrict car use, particularly in Victoria Road, improving atmosphere, pollution and ambiance, and attracting more visitors
- Ensure that Victoria Road and the station forecourt remain permeable for cycling
- Make sure there is an increase (to meet obvious demand-see current usage) in cycle racks near the shops and secure cycle storage near the station
- Ensure the later potential development of the delivery access road includes a counterflow access for cyclists (to be developed ideally as an exclusive safe route for cyclists)
- Consider that pinch points and narrower roads in general actually reduce safety for cyclists
- Consider introducing cycle lanes in Victoria Road

Former Council Access Officer

- Concerned that distance between blue badge parking and station will increase
- Need designated disabled parking spaces spaced evenly along Victoria Road to enable access to the greatest number of shops within limited walking distance
- Asks if plans for Victoria Road includes more or less disabled parking spaces
- Disabled bays should be at the beginning of a line of recessed bays, not at the end, to make them easier to manoeuvre into by people who find it difficult to turn their bodies to reverse
- Demand for disabled bays is greater during retail opening hours. Non-disabled people can walk from a car park.
- Encourages identification of shops where the levelling of the new footway can eliminate or reduce stepped access. This is a common complaint from many wheelchair users in Surbiton.
- Wants feedback from the Kingston Association for the Blind, and professional advice to be sought from RBK's Sensory Impairment team (Carol Barnshaw)
- Will the new design include the provision of standard tried and tested tactile paving where it would be normally installed?
- Will normal kerbs be retained along Victoria Road and, where necessary, within the station cartilage?