

Folkestone – A Brighter Future (FABF) phase two feedback

Thank you for engaging with us

Thanks to everyone who engaged with us back in November 2023, either online or at the public engagement event at Bouverie House Business Centre. Your views and comments help us understand if the original design principles are being met and if not what needs to change. Your feedback so far has been essential in refining the scheme to make it work better for the community.

Changes to phase one of the scheme have already been made thanks to your comments, such as the removal of the proposed new roundabout at the junction of Cheriton Road and Gardens. Further changes will also be made as a result of phase two feedback we received.

We have responded to the main themes of your feedback below. We've also included the detailed metrics from your feedback, for you to see how the wider community responded.

Overview

The FABF project facilitated its second public engagement window from 12 November to 4 December, with the public able to view plans, immerse themselves in the project area in virtual reality (VR) and watch fly-through videos of the proposals. The associated surveys for phase two could be completed online or by hard copy during this time. A total of 151 surveys have been completed both in hard-copy and online during this engagement window.

A face-to-face public engagement event was held at Folkestone Quarterhouse and Bouverie House Business Centre from Thursday 16 November to Saturday 18 November. Over the three days, a total of 405 visitors attended the event.

A further 40 comments were provided in relation to phase two of the scheme at face-to-face facilitated sessions for secondary school students (see appendix A). Primary school students were also asked to design their ideal town square and their comments can be seen in appendix B (60 responses). Design ideas for the square from all students can be seen in appendix C.

Demographic data on those who responded via survey (both online and hard copy) can be found in appendix D. Comparisons in demographics between the July and November engagement events can be found in appendix E.

Concerns about anti-social behaviour should Bouverie Square be reverted back to a garden square for the community.

Your comments

“This will only encourage the undesirables, already hanging around Folkestone town centre to gather in a new meeting place. Parents will not be happy using the play areas if it houses drunks/druggies and the homeless. We have already lost any police presence in the area, so graffiti, anti-social behaviour and wanton damage will rapidly make the area look disgusting.”

“There’s a strong chance of anti-social behaviour unless it feels like a proper community space where people want to go and spend time and look after it so it needs to feel like a proper year round amenity and not just a hanging out space for summer and for young people. I’d have as much quality but affordable amenities including community space, to make sure it’s busy.”

“The proposed idea for it to be turned back into the green space as it was before is asking for trouble with rough sleepers drug addicts etc moving in.”

“I do want this but fear the anti social behaviour there so it’ll need proper care taking of it.”

“It is not clear how the proposed design will avoid (a) attracting antisocial behaviour outside peak shopping hours (b) introducing a level of noise which detracts from residential amenity if/when the Middleburg Square office block is converted to flats.”

“Significant cost impact on the Council to maintain it in a proper state. Risk it will become misused by alcoholics/ drug users / vandals etc. Potential for it to become a no go area for many.”

“...this will be filled with the kids that already sit on the stairs blocking the way from Asda to the bus station...you won't be able to enjoy it because it will be full of kids playing football or riding pushbikes fast through it...it will be vandalised regularly just like the toilets in the bus station.”

“It would need policing signs to discourage large crowds of teenagers 'looking for trouble' and making other inhabitants nervous of fights and gangs forming.”

Our response

The project and design team will be consulting with Kent Police, the Design Out Crime team and other stakeholders to ensure risks of anti-social behaviour are minimised, through the use of effective design, lighting and where appropriate use of CCTV. The detailed design will consider how to maximise passive and natural surveillance as the intention is to create a space that has sufficient level of footfall and dwell time by members of the public.

Concerns that standard bus shelters will be insufficient for the needs of bus users, particularly on Middelburg Square to the north of Bouverie Place shopping centre as the conditions can be cold, wet and windy during winter months.

Your comments

“Not large enough bus shelters. At the moment we have the whole of the veranda outside the offices of the former bus station. The bus stops on the Lidl side are in the cold and shady side, with not enough shelter for people. Need electronic real time readouts especially as the app is so unreliable.”

“On an incline, difficult for elderly to access. Need better bus shelters, with far greater protection from the elements, on 3-sides. Given the age profile of Folkestone's resident, aging population and greater dependency on public transport, emphasis on using public transport to limit carbon emissions, shelters need to be much more attractive and effective. Better experience of travelling by bus in all weathers.”

“The facilities for bus passengers in this plan are appalling. The pavement alongside Middleburg Sq is the most inhospitable place in town to wait for a bus. In the winter months it is windswept, rainy and cold, and the ice on the pavement never melts as it is north facing. There are no benefits at all in the scheme for the users of public transport. I'm sure that any shelters provided would be of the cheapest type available offering little protection.”

“It would be good to see a modern facility with CLEAR information about which stop to wait at for which bus, and ACCURATE time until the next buses (like many other towns and cities have).”

“But improve bus shelters - bus station offers some protection from the elements. The ones shown in the model won't do enough to protect users against the elements in the winter.”

“Would like better bus shelter provision along Middelburg Sq as the proposed bus stops are in a shady, windy and icy spot in the winter.”

Our response

The project team are working with KCC's Public Transport team to ensure that Real Time Information (electronic) display boards can be installed with the new bus shelters on Middleburg Square. They will be funded from the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) funding which KCC were awarded from Government.

Your feedback has been provided to the third party responsible for the installation and maintenance of our bus shelters and the project team are working with them to ensure appropriate levels of shelter are provided within the scheme.

Concerns for those with additional accessibility needs in terms of making bus connections and walking up the hill on Shellons St/Middelburg Sq

Your comments

“The proposed linear design for the bus station is totally unsuitable for people with mobility and/or lung capacity issues.”

“I am not convinced the proposed plan will work for ease of bus changes especially for the elderly and infirm using wheelchairs and parents with buggies.”

“Not suitable for people with mobility issues who need the distance between bus stops to be much closer than are proposed. It is difficult to see how the current proposal was not rejected by an equalities impact assessment. For example, the interchange between the 102 and 16 to travel from Hythe to Canterbury (possible without changing buses prior to Sept 2023) requires - on a rough calculation - walking about five times the minimum distance as the crow flies between the two stops now. (The comparator should be the distance between these bus stops now if the reasonable adaptations required to minimise walking between the two in the current design had been put in place. The fact that Stagecoach and KCC have not made these reasonable adaptations and therefore the distance to be walked is currently very difficult for people with significant mobility issues should not be regarded as a reasonable comparator.)”

“The current bus station is all on one level, and you can get from any stop to another with a maximum walk of 250 feet or so. The VR illustrated the stop for the 10 and 74 up near the Cheriton Road Junction, and the stop for the 71 and 17 where the current coach stop is. This is approximately 450 feet - nearly double the current maximum walk. Not only that, but it is on a rather severe gradient - a hill that many elderly and disabled people currently avoid because it is too steep a climb.”

Our response

Thorough Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs) have been conducted for the different phases of the FABF scheme which consider the impacts on various potential users of the area. These have now been published and you can read them here <https://www.folkestone-hythe.gov.uk/folkestone-levelling-up/equality>.

Concerns over cyclists, congestion and further requests for 20mph speed limits (which was also fed back in the phase one community feedback)

Your comments

“Of course, with the ludicrous idea of two-way traffic on Middelburg Square, cars will be able to approach the junction to get into the shopping centre from both directions, which will cause chaos!”

“...improvements need to include pelican crossings and slow traffic down to 20mph where possible.”

“Crossings should be pelican crossings and 20mph zones should be prioritised where possible to slow traffic down and encourage walking.”

“Cyclists seem to be forgotten about in this part of the scheme. There doesn't seem to be a benefit in making the northern side of Middleburg square two way - this additional space could mean the scheme could be even better for pedestrians and cyclists. The junction by the motorcycle store corner is also extremely long with a large space between traffic signals where vehicles could easily get trapped and is confusing with the new movement allowing westbound traffic to go along the northern side of Middleburg Square. This junction could be improved by removing that movement as well.”

“Slightly concerned that there might be a bottleneck of traffic coming up past the library ,past Lidl”

“There is no consideration regarding displaced car movements and whether traffic will become clogged up in the epicentre of the town.”

“Making Bouverie Sq North side two way will increase traffic congestion at the new traffic signals at Cheriton Road. 2. making all traffic coming from Cheriton /Sandgate Rd, heading for ASDA car park, go all the way down Shellons St to the Library roundabout and reverse course (back up Shellons St), will increase congestion, fuel usage and /Co2 emissions”

“Pedestrians and cyclists should always be designed for over motorists in these kinds of schemes. The second lane on the northern side of Middleburg Square and removing a lane on part of the gyratory by the motorcycle corner could be used for cyclists instead - as this part of the scheme hasn't really addressed cyclists who are catered for in phase 1 but then forgotten about in phase two.”

Our response

The proposed infrastructure improvements across the FABF scheme aim to make local journeys easier for all those that live in and visit the town. This is achieved by upgrading, improving and making safer connections around the town. This aids easier, safer movement to and between key locations such as the town centre, Bouverie Square & Folkestone Central train station.

The proposed carriageway and footway improvements aim to improve the experience of all users. The scheme will help encourage residents and visitors to

walk, cycle and use public transport throughout the improved connections around the town.

The proposed measures emphasise priority for pedestrians, and cyclists across the scheme, but also minimise the impact to vehicle traffic. This is achieved by introducing measures like strategically positioned crossing points, both controlled (toucan crossings) and uncontrolled (zebra/parallel crossings), raised tables across junctions that help to maintain a constant walk way for pedestrians but also provide a measure to decrease vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety. Narrowing carriageway widths by installing rain gardens will also help to enforce lower speed limits and create a safer environment.

As a result of your feedback, the project team are proposing a 20mph speed limit for Cheriton Road, Cheriton Gardens and the roads within the 'triangle' between them, along with Middelburg Square and Shellons Street. This is subject to further investigation, and if approved, will need to go through the formal process to introduce a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). This legal process includes a consultation period whereby interested parties and stakeholders can support or object to the proposals.

Consider widening the pavement on the corner of Middleburg Square and Foresters Way to alleviate the pedestrian bottle neck cited by respondents. LS

Your comments

“I would widen the footway on Cheriton Road by the motorcycle shop. It is a major pinch point...”

“Has this scheme had an access audit done? As I am concerned about that pinch point corner and Cheriton Road south of Victoria Grove in particular for those in wheelchairs or visually impaired. However, it also needs to be addressed for all pedestrians anyway due to the large volume of pedestrians who walk this way.”

“I was really disappointed to see that the corner by the motorcycle shop on Cheriton Road / A2033 (Alford Bros) hasn't been widened at all. This corner was even mentioned in the media when the funding was applied for as one of the worst areas on the journey by foot between the train station and the town centre so I thought it would have been one of the main areas addressed. The top reason for the levelling up funding as quoted in the application was to improve the walking and cycling experience between the station and the town centre so by leaving this pinch point on that journey doesn't address the overall goal.”

“Pedestrians and cyclists should always be designed for over motorists in these kinds of schemes. The second lane on the northern side of Middleburg Square and removing a lane on part of the gyratory by the motorcycle corner could be used for cyclists instead - as this part of the scheme hasn't really addressed cyclists who are catered for in phase 1 but then forgotten about in phase two.”

Our response

To ease the known pedestrian and vehicle challenges on the corner of Middleburg Square and Forester's Way by the motorcycle shop, the new highway design introduces a formal loading bay. This will prevent vehicles parking directly outside the shop thereby restricting pedestrian visibility and impacting the pavement width. The introduction of a controlled crossing will also slow down traffic at this point.

Consider making better use of the Bus Station building

Your comments

“Would be good to use the bus station building as a community space.”

“What will the existing bus station building be used for?”

“Will the bus station building be used?”

“If the current bus station building would be used for some sort of cafe or selling space that would be incredible.”

“Use the building as an Information Hub for locals & visitors alike.”

“[would like the] Bus station building retained.”

“Making sure the current bus station building turns into some exciting venue.”

“...using the bus station building for some sort of cafe or even pop up shops or something would be brilliant.”

“It would be good if current Stagecoach building on Bouverie Sq could be incorporated and maybe made into a cafe/cakeshop/restaurant.”

Our response

The Bus Station building will be retained and detailed discussions are underway with the current leaseholders on future use. Part of the scope for the consultants commissioned to develop a town centre activation strategy includes how Bouverie Square and the Bus Station building could be used to meet the objectives of ‘a place for all’. As this part of the project progresses, more information will be made available.

Retain current trees on Shellons St, particularly the mature ones

Your comments

“It would be good if you could find a way to retain the mature tree on Shellons St rather than cutting it down.”

“Not sure changes are needed at all and they detract from the overall objectives of the scheme. Current mature trees ensure appropriate shade and accommodate for climate change and drainage to avoid flooding.”

“£19.6m seems a lot of money to replace the trees that were there originally.”

“There is absolutely nothing wrong with the road layout at present. It could do with some tidying up and remodelling in places but a complete change as is being planned. Also the loss of the trees there would be a shame.”

“Folkestone is lucky having a number of excellent green spaces already. This feels unnecessary and unambitious.”

Our response

Following on from recent feedback after the public consultation event, the original Shellons Street design has now been updated following concerns over the removal of the existing mature tree(s).

The current design iteration has now been amended to retain many of the mature trees which had previously been shown as being removed. Of particular concern to those that attended the consultation event was the removal of the large mature tree opposite the entrance to Gloucester place. Following this feedback, the proposals have been amended to allow the tree to remain.

The updated design uses the existing carriageway infrastructure as much as possible to reduce tree removals. The new design works for both traffic and pedestrians with the additional benefit of providing increased opportunities for planted areas. These areas include opportunities where sustainable urban drainage and further planting can be provided whilst still providing the pedestrian bridge connection from Guildhall Street North to Guildhall Street.

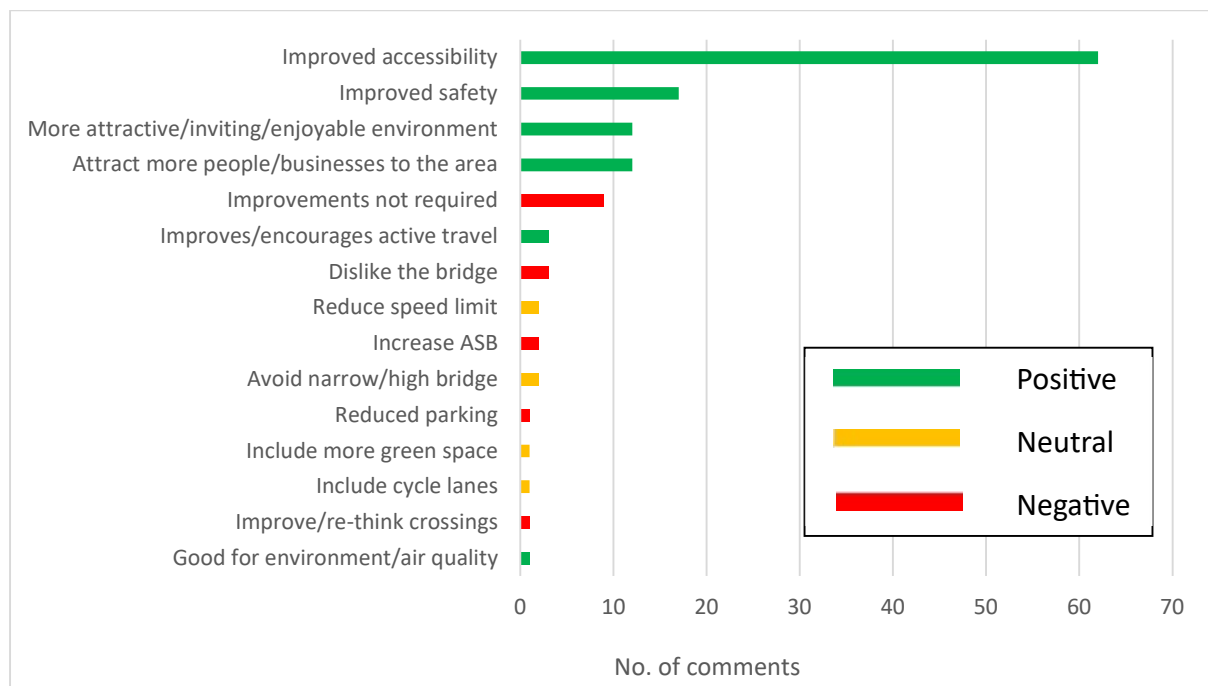
Detailed feedback

The online survey posed five Likert scale questions, asking respondents to what extent they agreed with elements of the scheme, as well as the scheme overall.

Q1. I am in favour linking Guildhall Street North and Guildhall Street, to allow better access into town, across Shellons Street



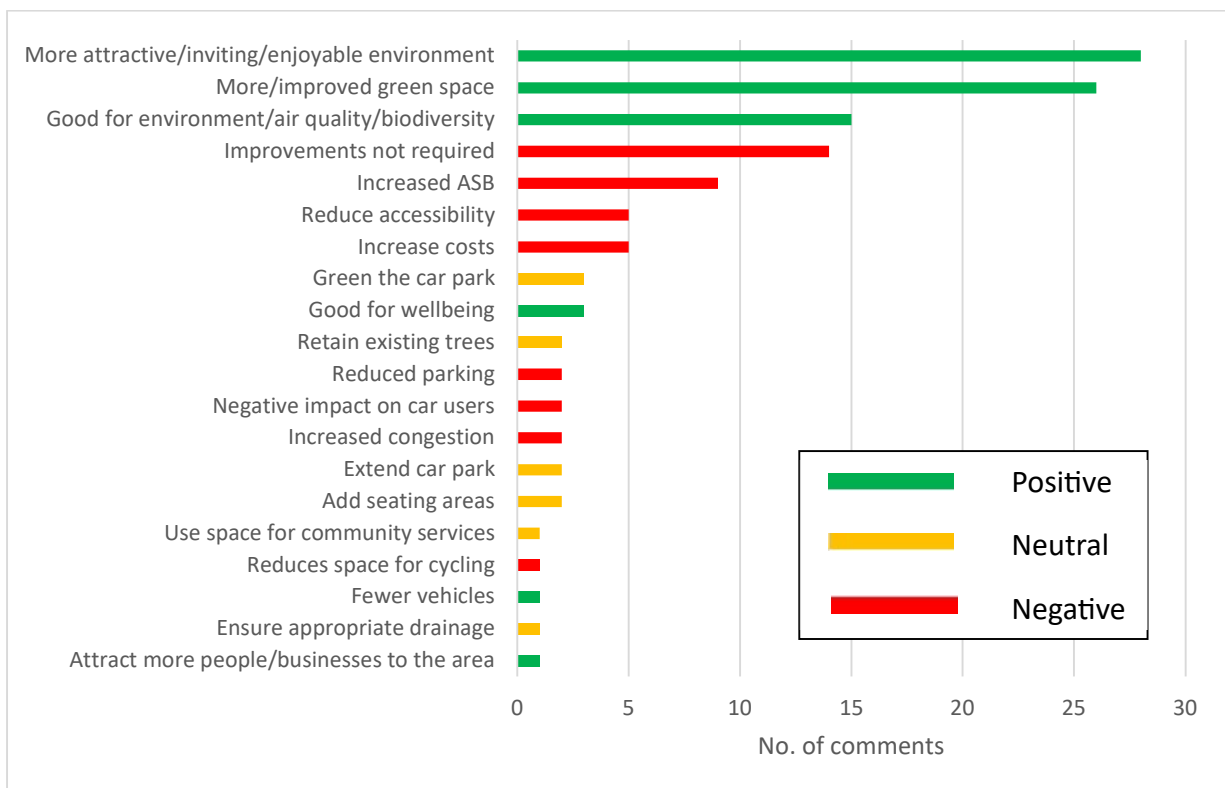
Q1 – tell us why you agree/disagree, categorised



Q2. I am in favour of the proposals to create a green, landscaped area on Foresters Way, alongside Shellons Street



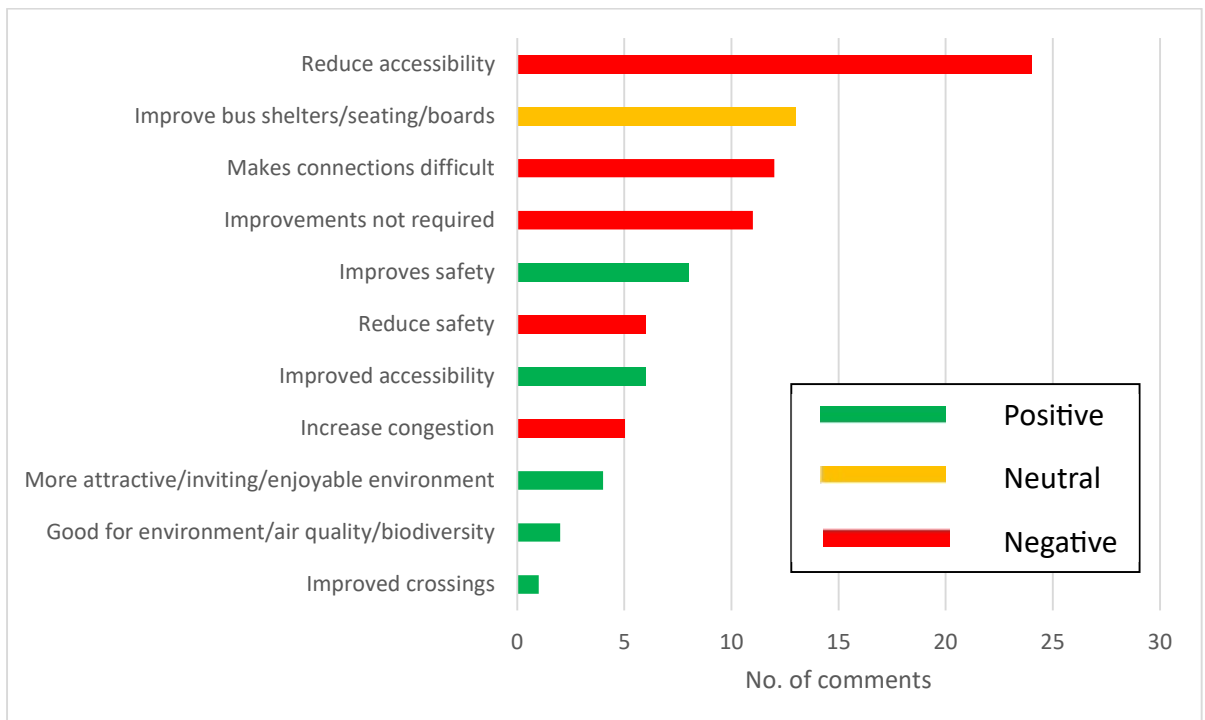
Q2 – tell us why you agree/disagree, categorised



Q3. The proposed bus station alignment along Middelburg Square North and South will appropriately cater for my travel needs.



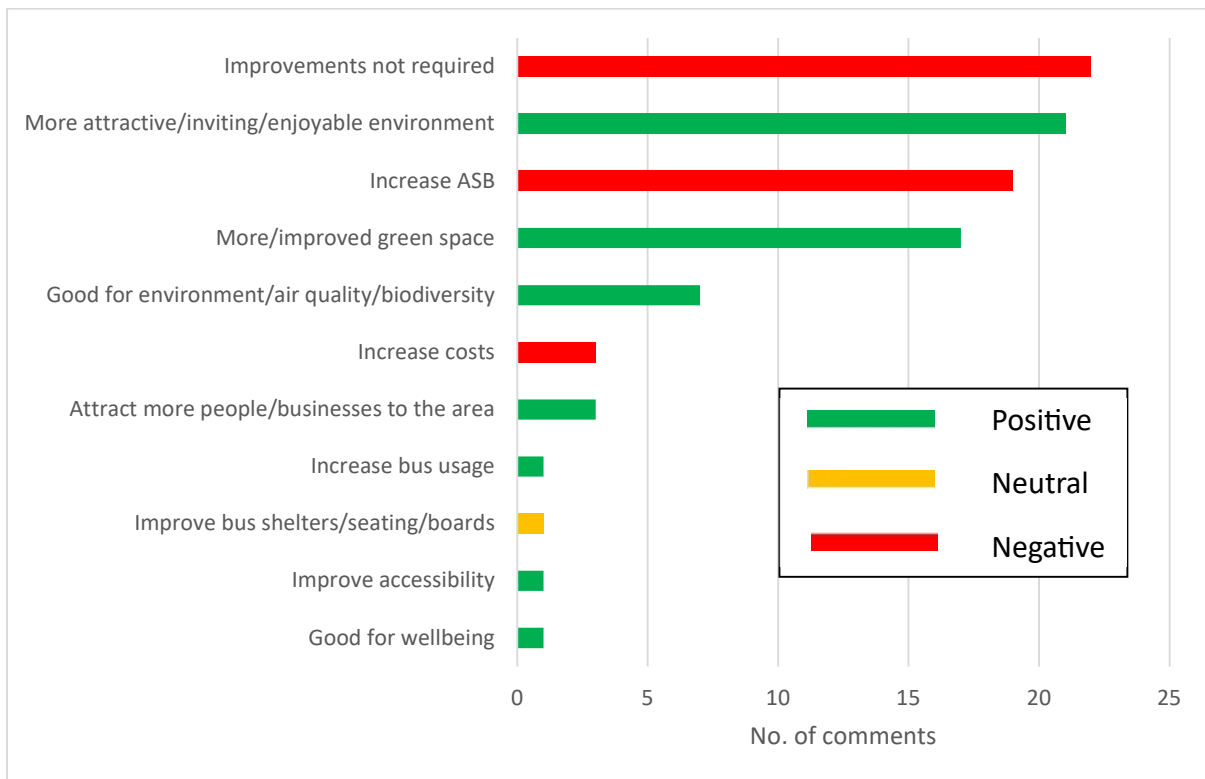
Q3 – tell us why you agree/disagree, categorised



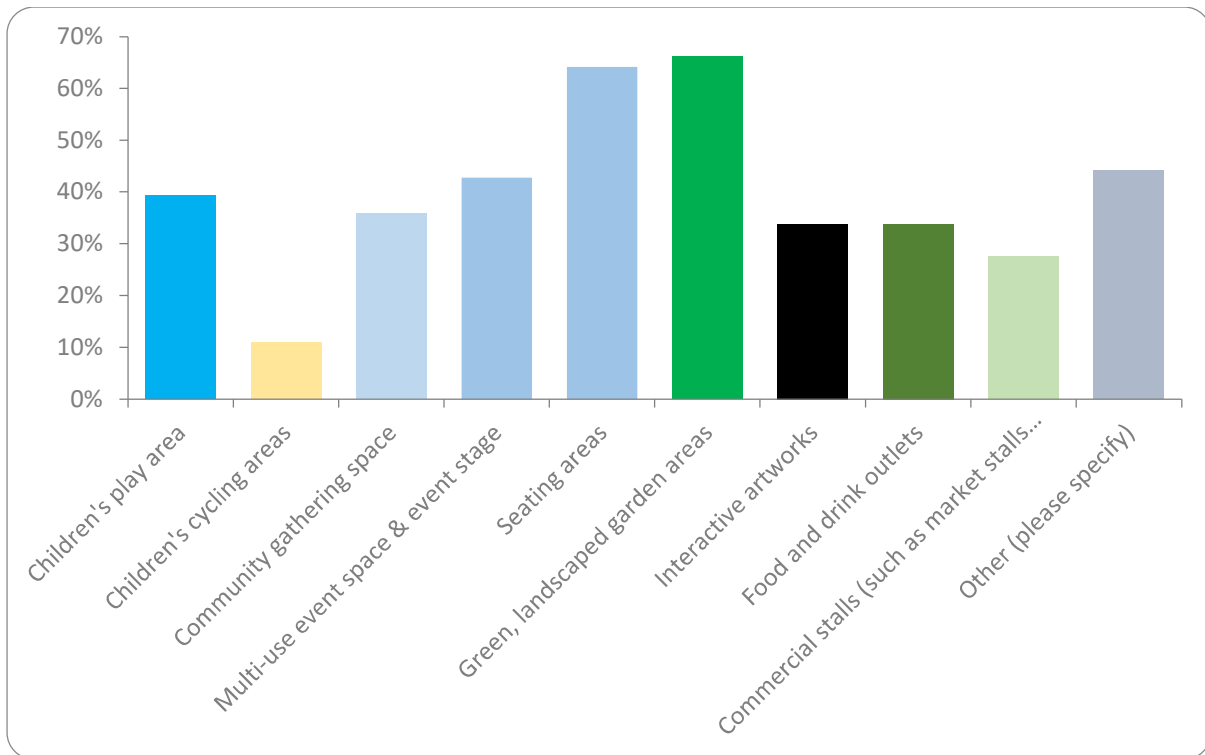
Q4. I am in favour of reverting the bus station back to a green space, including play and leisure facilities.



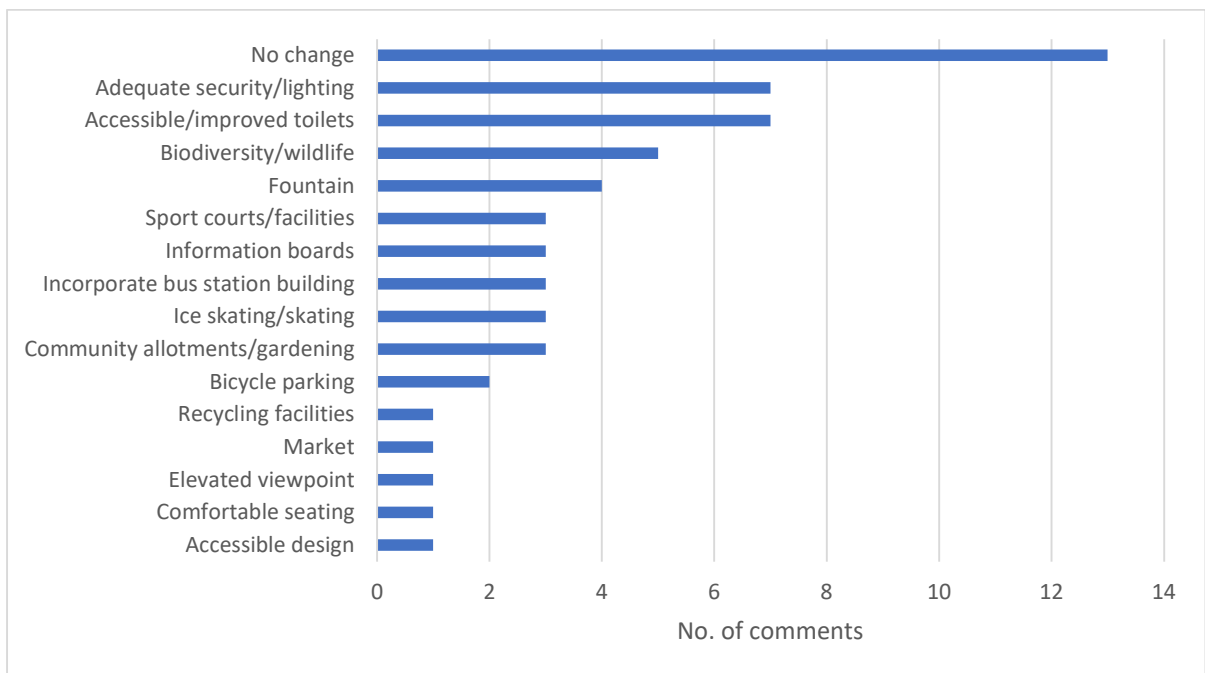
Q4 – tell us why you agree/disagree, categorised



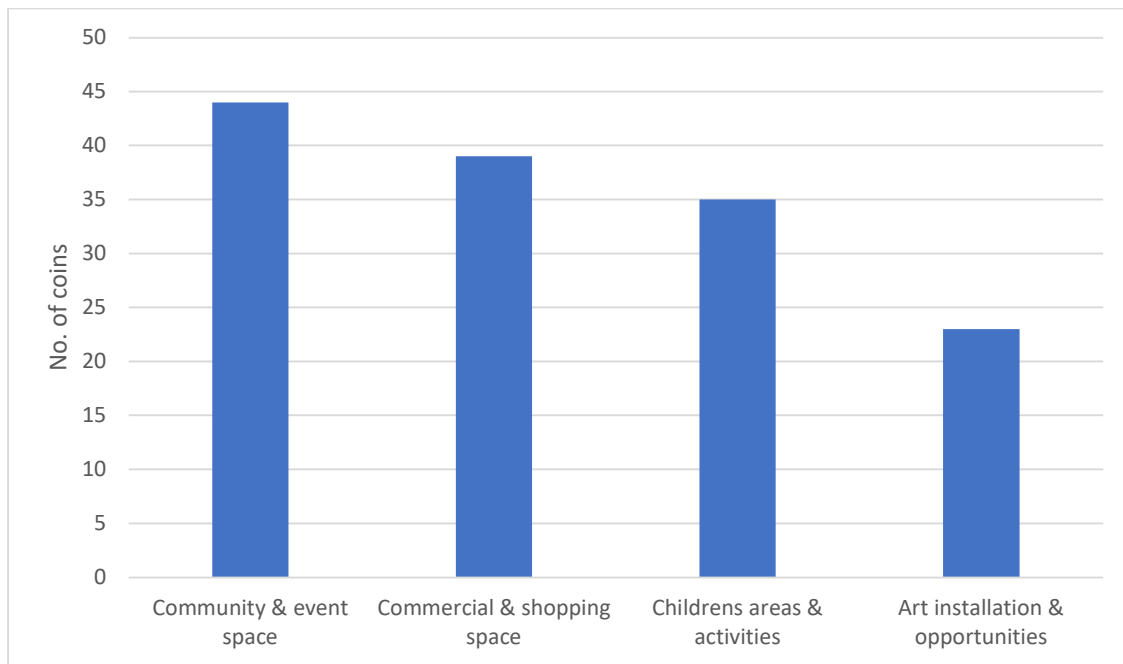
Q5. What would you like included in a new 'garden square' that is proposed for Bouverie Square (current bus station)?



Q5 – other suggestions



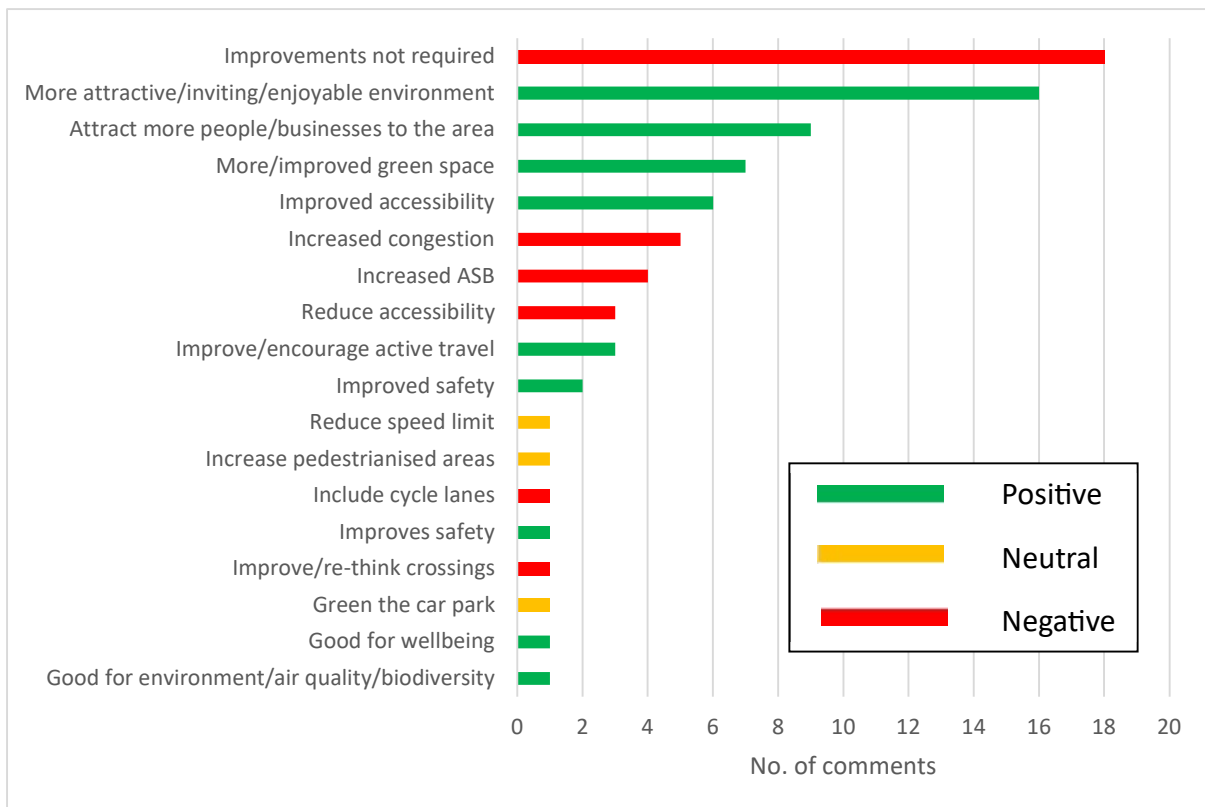
Count of coins added to vessels after VR experience



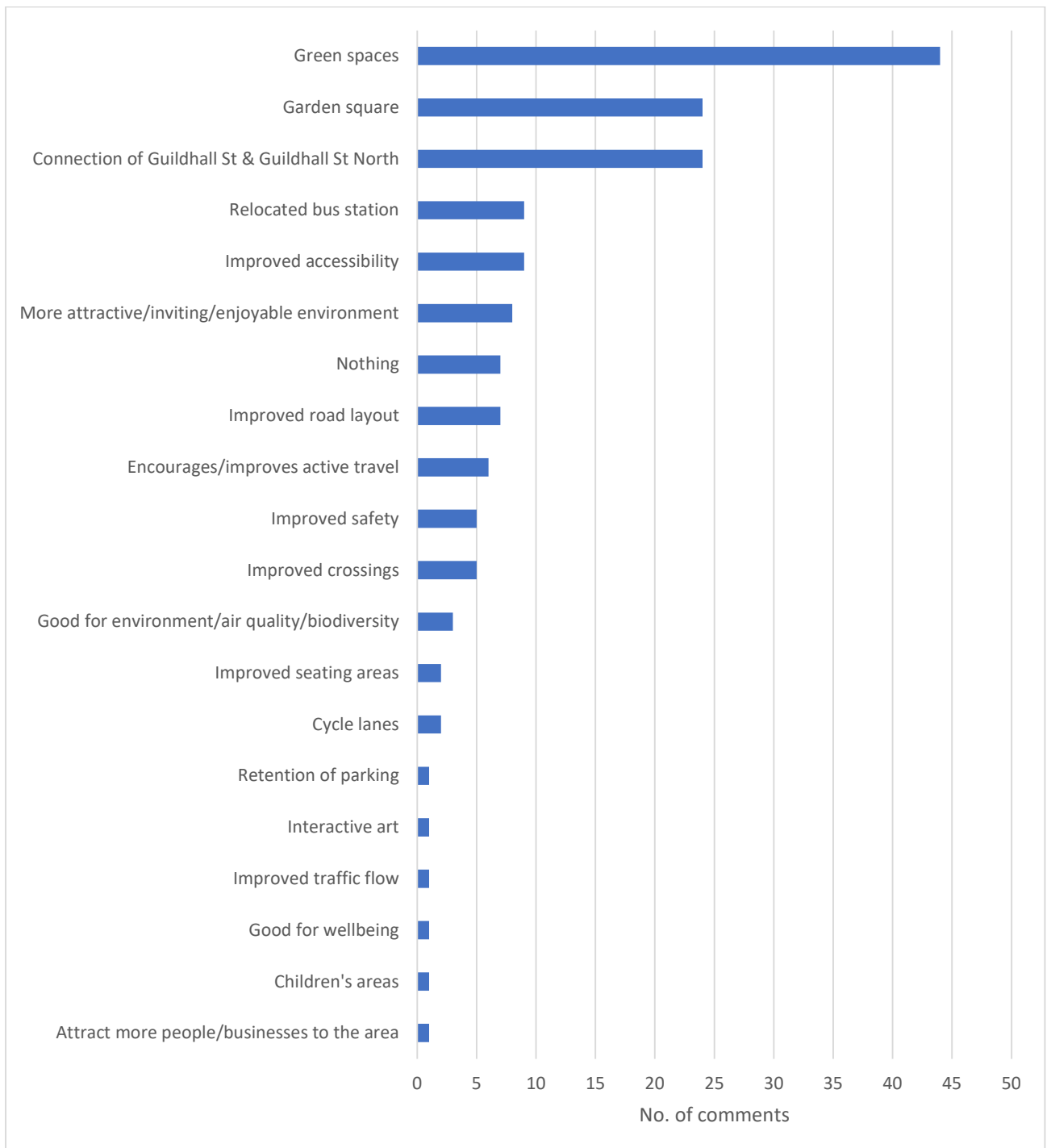
Q6. Overall, I am in favour of the proposals of phase two of the project



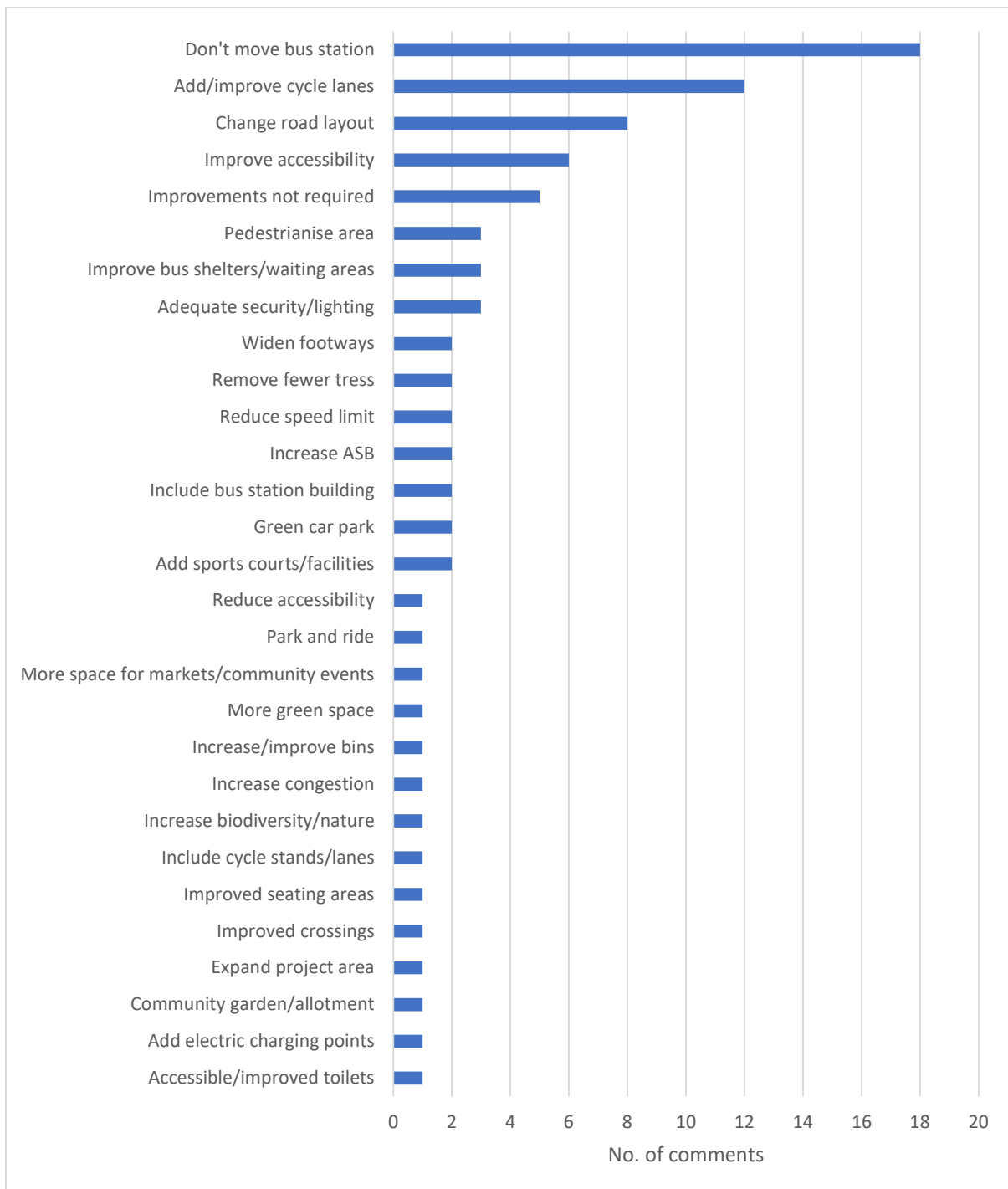
Q6 - tell us why you agree/disagree, categorised



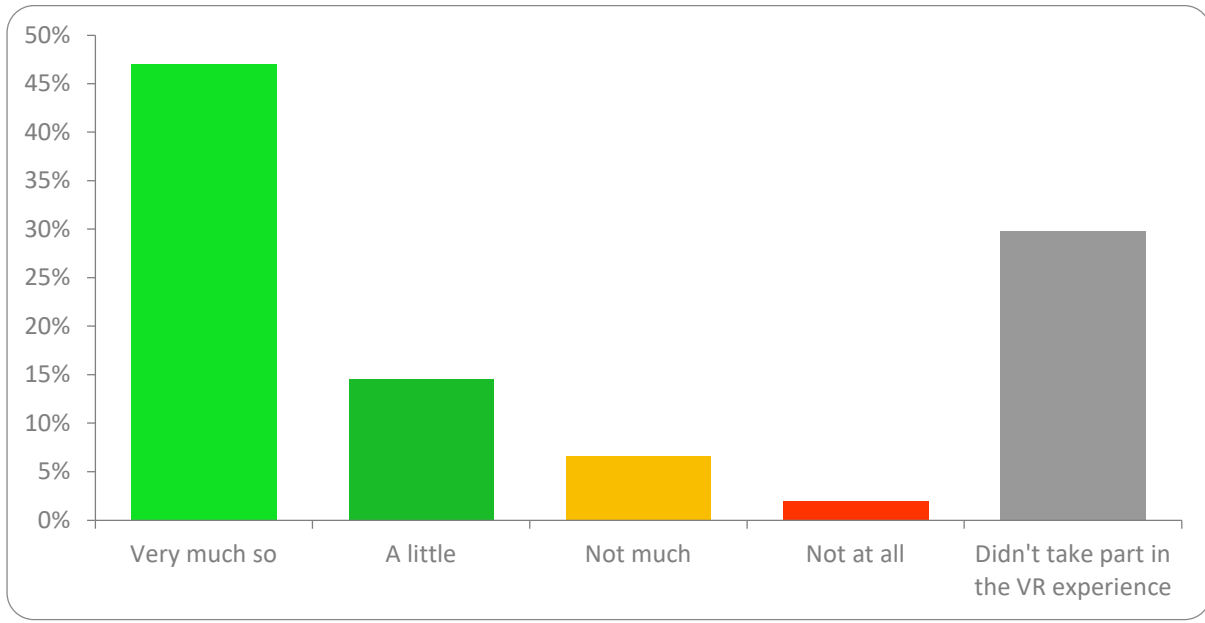
Q7. What proposed element(s) do you most like about phase two of the project?



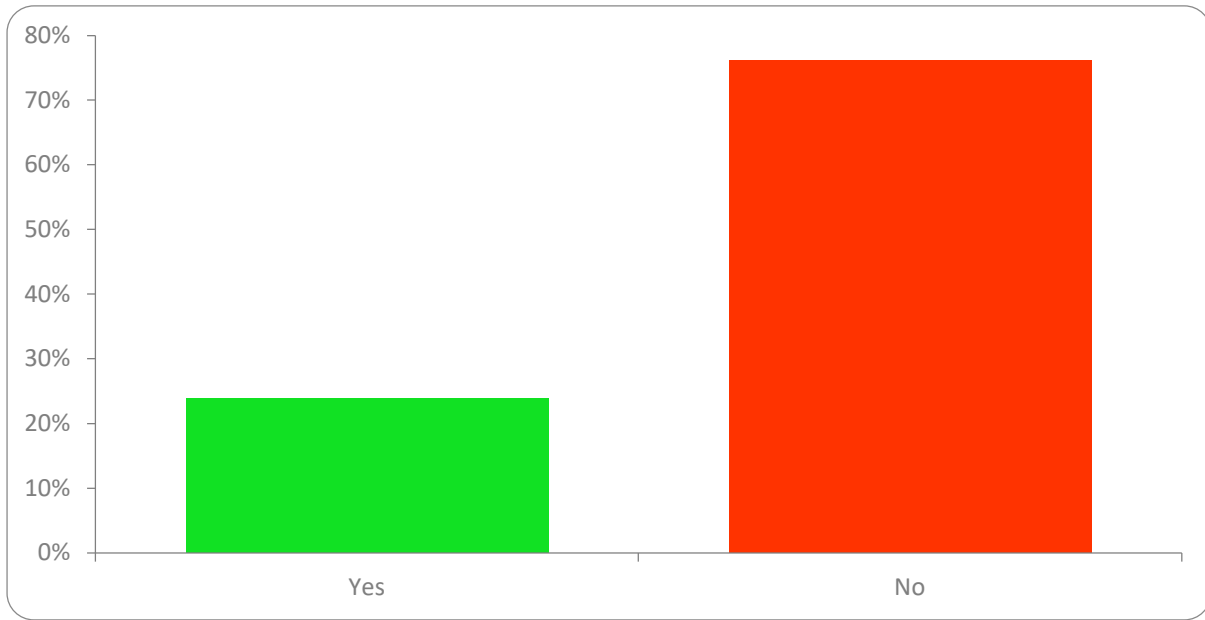
Q8. What proposed element(s) would you change about phase two of the project?



Q10. If you took a ride on our virtual reality (VR) magic carpet, to what extent has the experience helped you better understand the proposed changes to Folkestone town centre?



Q11. Did you attend the previous phase one engagement event in July 2023, or give feedback on the draft phase one proposals?



Appendix A: Secondary school students' feedback

Students were asked what they liked about the scheme, what they would change and if they had any further comments. Students generally favoured the scheme and liked the additional green spaces the most. However, they would like to see more in the park such as play areas, water fountains and shops, and additional greenery such as living walls and roofs.

What proposed elements do you like about the scheme?

- How many trees there are, how they make a bridge to make it easier to cross.
More bike racks
- The new bus station and the new inside of the town and the bus stations
- Bridge is needed to improve safety
- Improve business in town. Bridge is necessary
- The bus station moving. The extra green spaces
- The bus station and the traffic lights
- The trees. The buildings. The bus station. The bridge
- I liked the wooden bridge which joined the paths. Green space. The old bus station being changed into a green space
- We like the idea of changing the bus station to a park. There were lots of green spaces everywhere
- We believed that the park was an improvement.
- I liked that they converted the bus station to a friendly green area
- The parks, the plants
- I like the transition between old and new Folkestone
- The green area
- I liked all the trees in the bus station. I liked the changes made to the pathways - trees either side
- The park is good but needed a little more to it and the green spaces were good.
- More use of greenery
- I liked the substantial amount of trees and green space. Also the eco-friendly one easier transport. Also, how the bus station was replaced with eco-friendly thngs.
- We liked that the bus station was turned into a green space where people can go and be outside.

What proposed elements would you change?

- More trees along with more zebra crossings to make it easier to cross
- Outside mini shops. Picnic area or mini gym at bus station
- Green wall and roads
- Water fountains, the town hasn't really changed and I would like all the town to look more friendly.
- More parks. Disabled friendly.
- Plants on the roofs.
- We would change the narrow roads into a wider more compatible road for all vehicles to fit on and not cause traffic.
- We think that we should increase the size of the roads
- I would add a play area for children.
- The shops should be replaced with a park
- Make there more immersive features
- I would keep the bus stop and improve Radnor
- I think it would be nice to see more water features - ponds, fountains and small artificial rivers
- The park and change a little bit of the green spaces by putting more
- Add more features to the park
- That the green area be explained so there is more room for people to go around
- Add fountains and possibly bird bath. Add more parking areas ofr bikes and more roads for bike safety
- Fix roads, crossing guards
- A park would be nice so parents can shop then play to reward and save money.
- We believe that there hasn't been as much changes but it is still a huge improvement
- Add more stuff to park and more green spaces further down the road. Add gaming centre, football pitch, outdoor areas

Appendix B: Likes and wishes from primary school students

Students were asked to name two things that they liked and also make a wish of what they would want in a new garden square. The most popular likes and wishes were green spaces, the bridge connecting Guildhall St North & Guildhall St, places to play and more shops. The 60 responses are listed below.

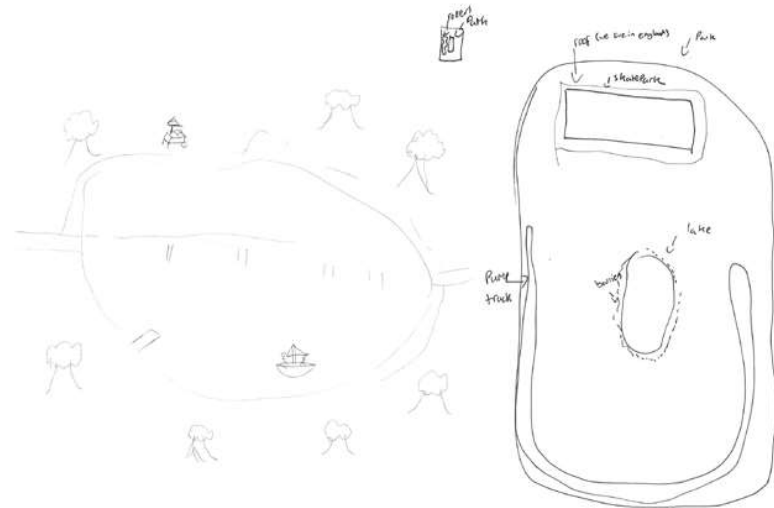
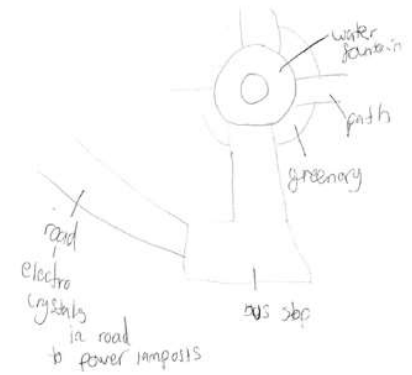
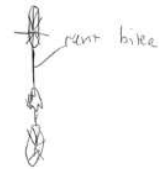
I like	I like	My wish is ...
The bridge	All the eco-friendly greenery	More space for animals and pets
I wish for more trees	I wish for more shops	I liked the cars
The bridge		More jewellery shops
It is so cool	There is so much space	I love it
I like the green space	I like the bus disappearing	More dogs
More flowers	More chairs	It could be better if more trees for the environment
I think the deck near Lidl is amazing	The masses of trees and greenery	More leisure areas
I really liked the bridge	The roads were there still	I wish that there would be trains coming from the sky
Shops	The nature	More kid-friendly places (parks/play areas)
To aim to play	More trees	More trees
Lots of trees	Lots of cars	More flowers
We say a new park at the bus station	There was a new walking path by the traffic lights	next time can we see a rainbow centre in the middle
Room to play	Nature	Nothing
I wish there were more people	and the magic carpet	and money and a monster dancing
I like the bridge	I liked new car park	I wish there was an arena in the town centre

The bus station I liked because it changed		I wish there was more buildings
Trees	Buses	More trees
I liked the blue spark		I want more greenery
We saw a park there	Was a new bridge	I would like to see a rainbow. Next time can we see a school
Lots of trees	I liked the park	More entertainment
	Very nice green area	Pokemon and shop
I saw Lidl	I saw Asda	I wish the bus station was a picnic area
The new bridge	I liked the new car park	There to be a horse centre in Folkestone
I like the bridge	How clean it was	I wish that prices drop by 50%
The colours of the building	The buses	More flowers
Gaming room	Solar power features	More greenery
I really liked having some changes	I liked having flowers	I wish there was more trampolines
I like the shops, car parks and trees		
I wish there was more flowers		I wish that everything is cheap
		A safe play area for kids
I liked all the trees	I like the view	I wish the houses were real
I saw pots of gold	I saw the car park	I wish that there was a park
A new car park	A new bridge	To have a Disney with a water park
I liked the amount of trees	The amount of flowers	More sweet shops
Lots of trees	and grass	
Lots of greenery	Very advanced	More parks
A cool bridge	That new park	A massive football field

I liked when I saw less cars		I wish for ASDA changed to a game shop
The new bridge was amazing	I love the bus it	
The town		Football stadium
Random trees growing	The bridge	More Primark's
The bridge	The park	Have more parks
Good flying	Bus station	Bus station for pedestrians
Greenery	Benches	kiosk
I liked the park	More shops	A sweet shop
		More princesses, more parks
Like the house	Likes the buses	I wish there pedestrian bit
The blue thing	The money	Football stadium
Throwing coins in the VR		
Really cool park	I like Folkestone	Next time show the school please
		People on hover boards
More mokey bars		
I like ASDA	I liked buses	I wish for some more shops
I like shop	I like bus	I wish for car
		Park
		More parks
Money		Cakes and shop
There's a nice bridge	Park	More shops
I loved having lots of money	I wish to have more trees	I wish to have more trampolines
Having so much money	Being able to take peoples money	I wish to more trampolines

Appendix C: Garden square ideas from students

Key stage 1 (ages 5-7)



Key stage 2 (ages 7-11)

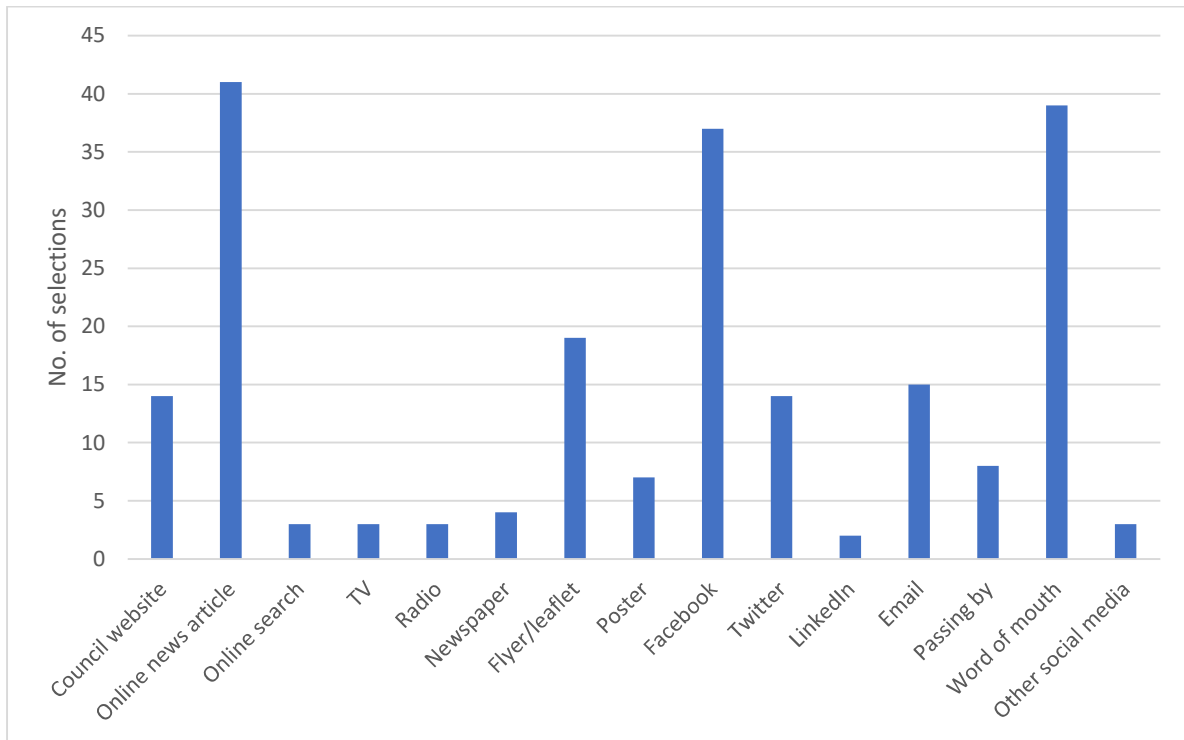


Key stage 3 (ages 11-14)

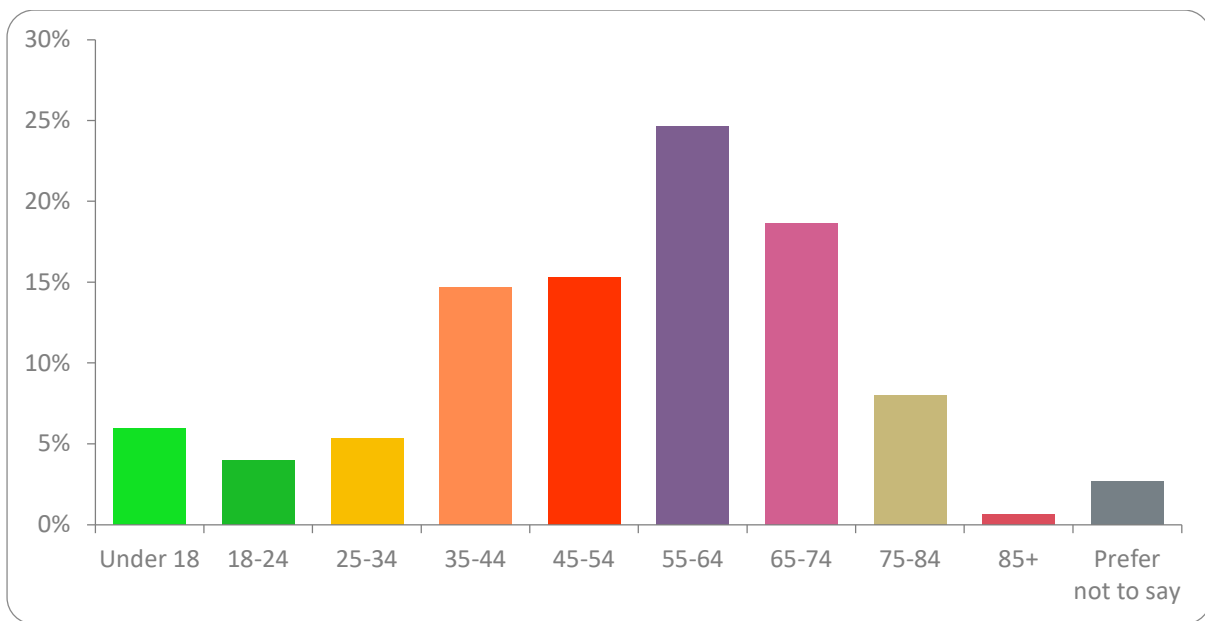


Appendix D

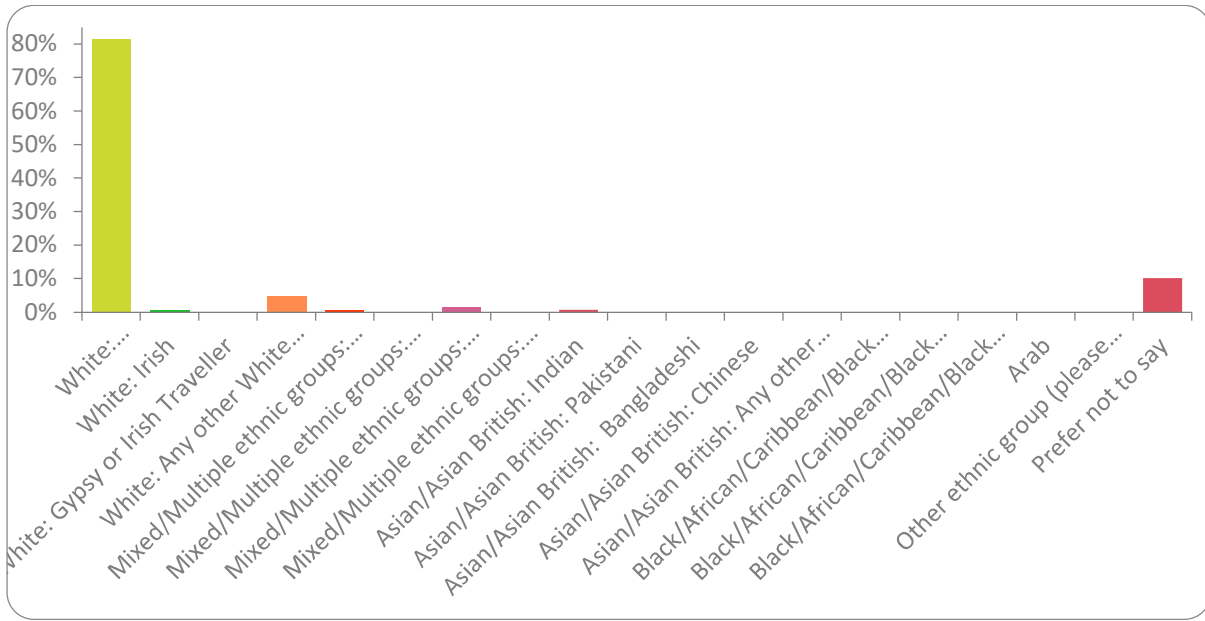
Q12. How did you hear about the phase two community engagement for the project?



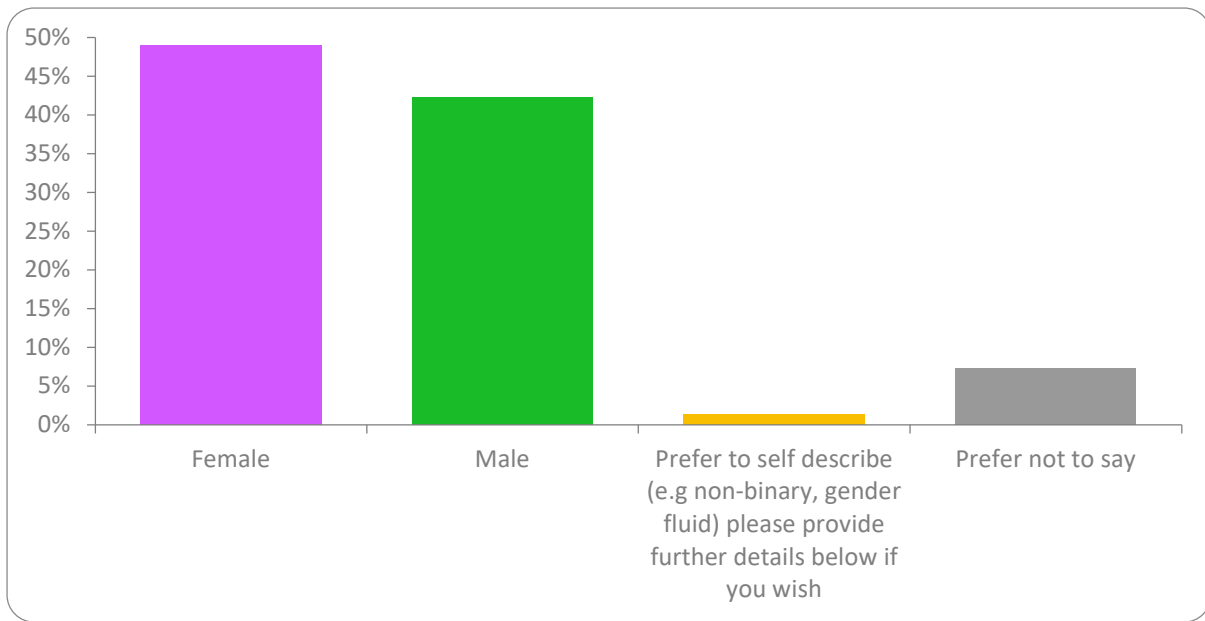
Q13. How old are you?



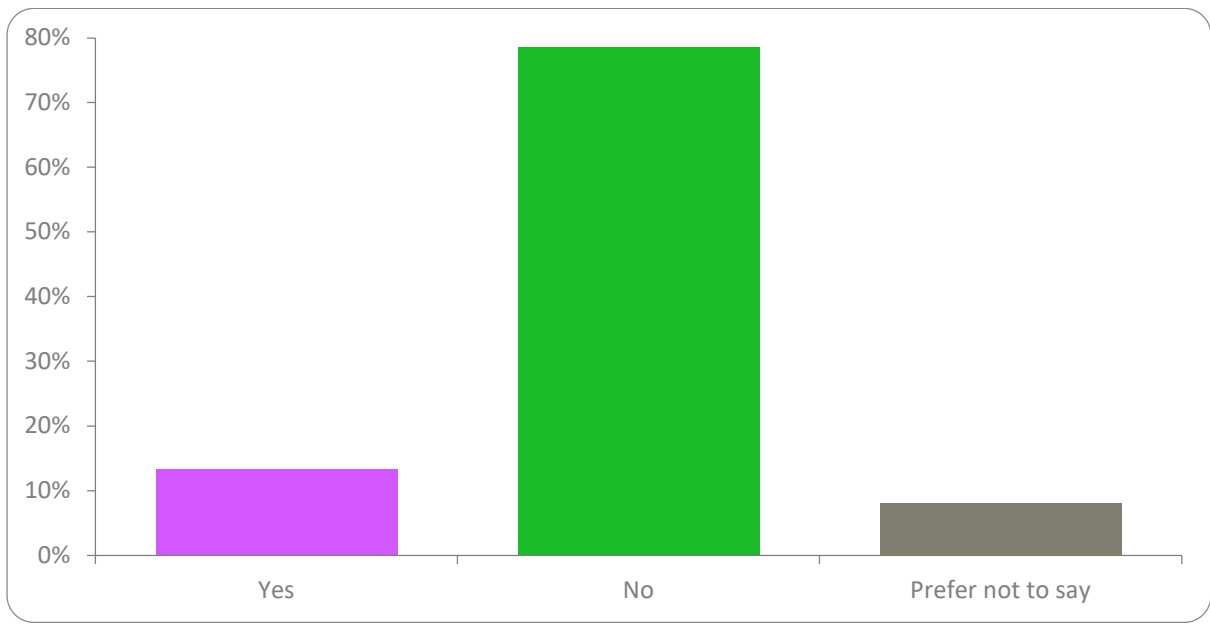
Q14: What is your ethnicity?



Q15. What is your gender?

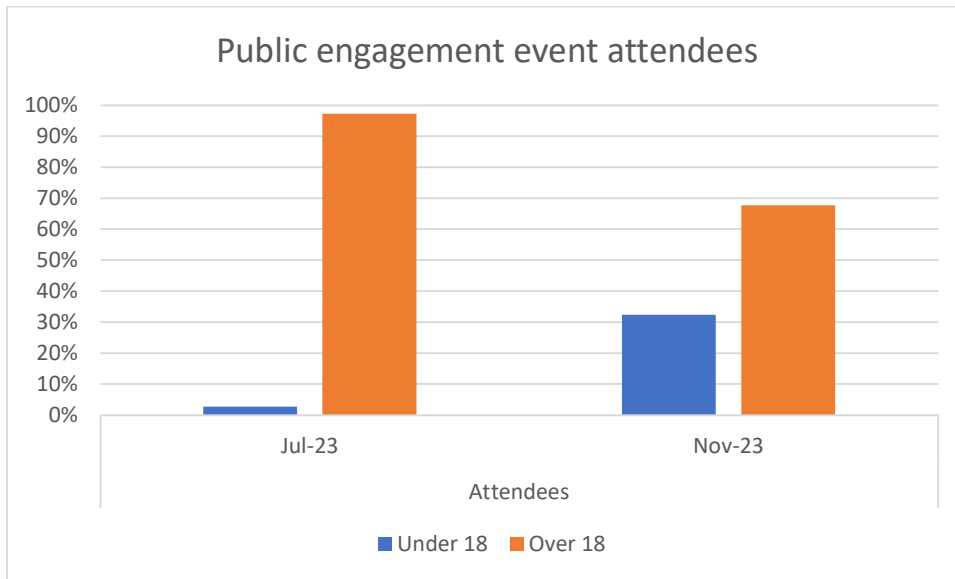


Q16: Do you consider yourself to be disabled?



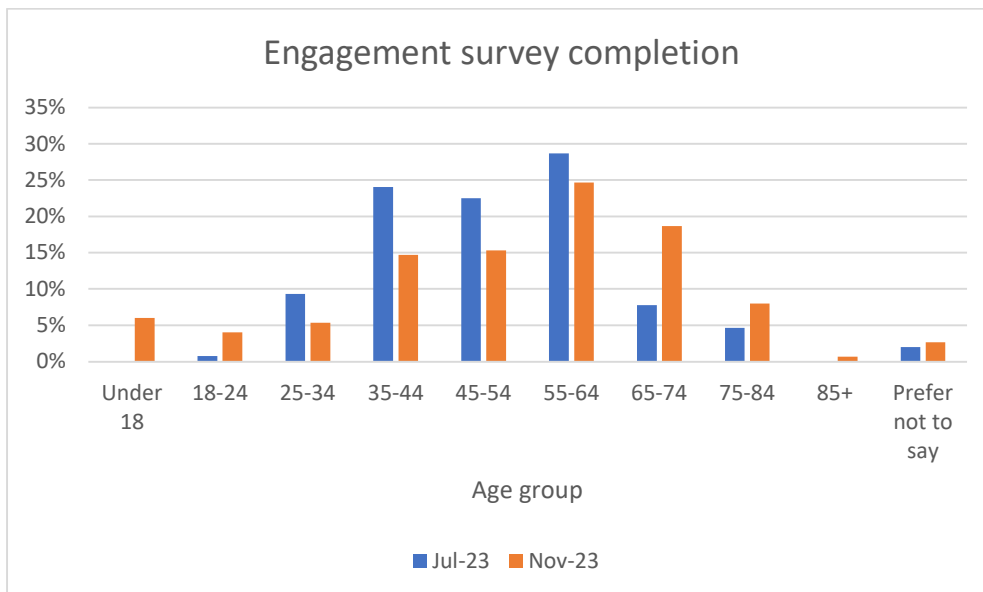
Appendix E: Demographic comparisons between engagement events

Event attendees – under 18s and over 18s



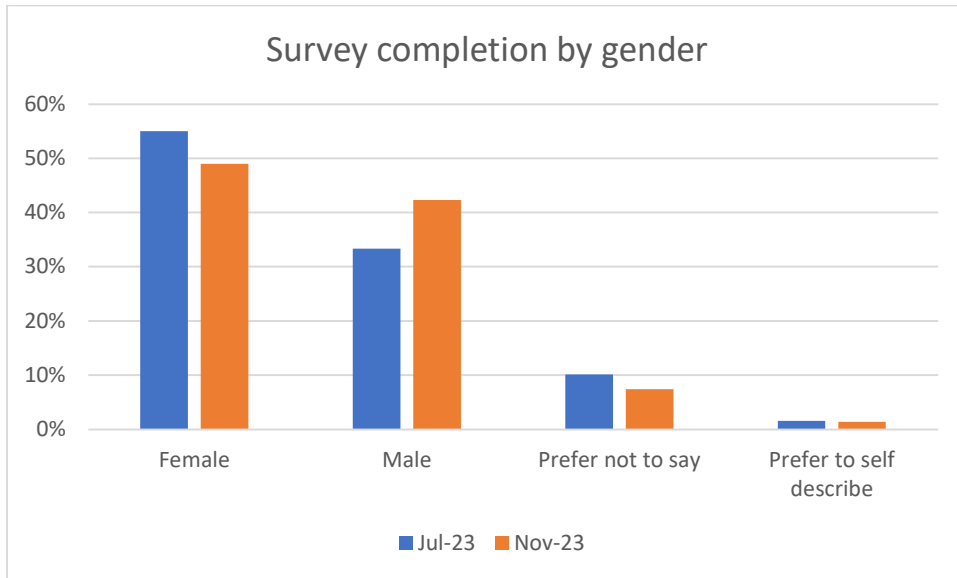
32% of attendees were under 18 in the November event compared to 3% in the July 2023 event. However, 27% of the under 18s at the November event were school children invited to take part, which didn't happen in July 2023.

Survey completions by age group



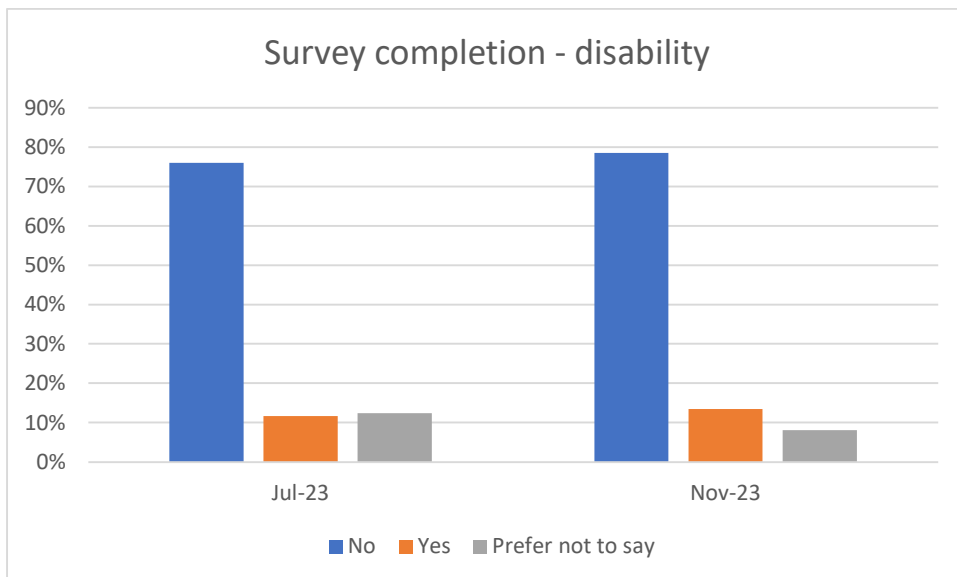
10% of survey respondents were under 24 in the November engagement window (6% under 18), compared to 1% in July 2023 (0% under 18).

Survey completions by gender



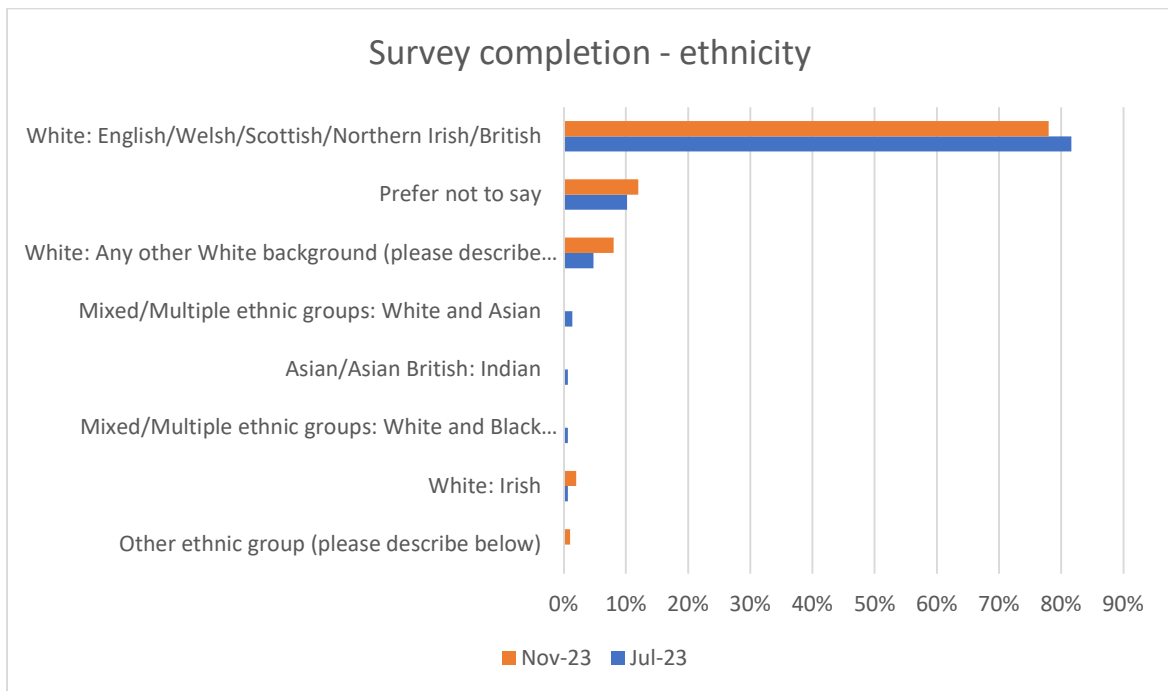
The November event encouraged more male participants (42%) compared to the 33% from the July event.

Survey completions by disability



The survey from the November event had a similar percentage of respondents in terms of those with disabilities (13%) compared to the July responses (12%).

Survey completions by ethnicity



The survey completions from the November event had a slightly wider spread in terms of ethnicity than the July engagement survey.