

Town Centre Consultation Phase Two Analysis 06/12/2021-24/01/2022

To be presented to
Assets and Services Committee meeting
28/02/2022 (Agenda Item 5)

Author: Georgia Arnold
Office Administrator & Committee Clerk



SAFFRON
WALDEN
WE NEED
YOU!



SCAN ME



THE FUTURE OF OUR TOWN CENTRE



Saffron Walden Town Council
have launched Phase Two of the
Town Centre Consultation!

Now is your chance to tell us your preferred option
regarding road closures in the Town Centre

To have your say please follow the QR code
to our Online survey or visit
safronwaldentowncentre.commonplace.is/

Consultation closes 24.01.2022

Paper copies will be available from Tourist Information.

Visit our social media channels to keep up to date with the latest news!

[f safronwaldentowncouncil](#) [safronwaldentc](#) [safronwaldentc](#)

Presentation Covers:

Purpose of Research

Ethics & Bias

Demographic

Proposals

Results

Data Evaluation

Recommendation

Saffron Walden - Purpose of the Research

Phase one focused on how the town centre could be improved and what respondents liked and disliked.

Phase two of the consultation aimed to ascertain if there is a favored option regarding road closures.

- The consultation ran for seven weeks
- There was an extensive advertising and promotional campaign, through a variety of forums – online and in print
- It is worth noting that the temporary road closures of the Market Square closed 27 January 2022

During phase one we wanted to understand what respondents liked and disliked in the town centre and how it could be improved.

Whereas the aim of Phase Two was to ascertain if there was a different favoured proposal.

Research Methods

- The questionnaire was carried out online and paper copies were available in the Tourist Information.
- The primary consultation platform was online but this was supplemented with paper copies (distributed throughout the community) and consultation days on the market.
- The two 'Consultation days' were held on Tuesday's before and after Christmas to speak to the public directly and advertise the consultation.
- Advertising was carried out online with various social media posts; in the local newspapers; emails out to community groups, care homes, schools and clubs; posters in the town centre; a window display in The Tourist Information Centre and giving leaflets to local cafes and shops.
- The BID also supported the advertising and reminded businesses to have their say.

Research Ethics

The research was ethical, using practices as defined by Denscombe M (2005)*

1. Data only used for the purpose collected
2. Ethical participation
3. Avoid harm to participants
4. Informed consent
5. Confidentiality and anonymity
6. Research should robustly stand up to scrutiny

“Where research involves human beings - as subjects, participants or collaborators - their dignity and their rights must always be respected by those undertaking the investigation”
Denscombe, M (2005)

- Denscombe, Martyn (2005) *Research Ethics and the Governance of Research Projects: the Potential of Internet Home Pages*. Available online at: <https://www.socresonline.org.uk/10/3/denscombe.html> (accessed 03.02.2022)

Bias in Research

Bias is where there is a deviation in the truth, and it is easy for any research to be biased (or influenced) even unintentionally. Unintentional bias may occur where a researcher's own personal experiences and preconceptions may influence the process. Intentional bias is where there is a deliberate attempt to shape, change or massage the research data.

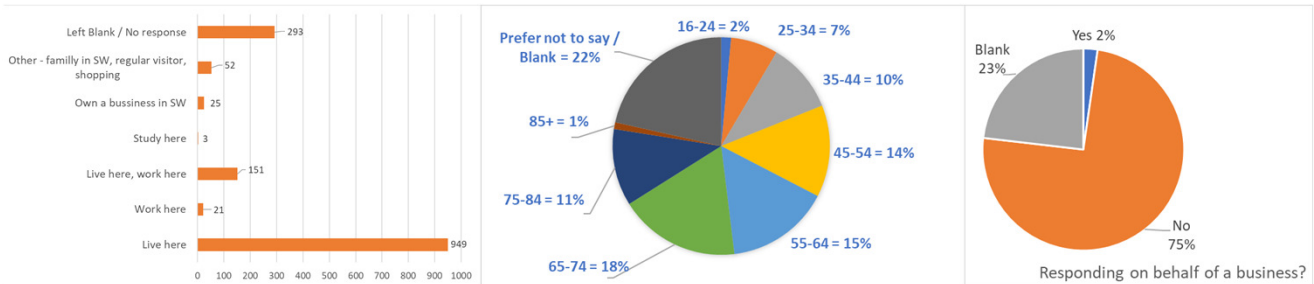
To avoid bias, research was:

- Verified with participants to ensure correct interpretation of responses*
- Data was anonymised
- Questions met requirements of the Equality Act (2010)
- Questionnaire was compiled with support from Common Place, experts in their field
- Participants were not selected; all were free to participate on a voluntary basis – there was no prejudice in participation

*Where the data collection was face-to-face

Demographic

- In total we received 1494 responses
- 949 of these responses were made by residents



This slide shows the demographics of respondents.

Similarly to phase one of our consultation, respondents were mostly residents or people who work in Saffron Walden.

949 residents responded, which represents just over 6% of the population of Saffron Walden (data from 2011 census, which lists the SW population at 15,504).

During phase one, we received responses from 749 residents, so it is positive that more residents have engaged.

With 240* businesses in Saffron Walden Centre, 14% of these responded to the consultation, however, during phase one 17% of businesses responded, so it is disappointing this decreased.

Any changes to the Market Square would primarily affect residents and businesses, so it is reassuring that over 75% of respondents live or work in Saffron Walden.

*Total number of businesses obtained from the BID.



Proposals

Proposals

The following proposals were presented to the public for consideration:

1. All roads closed (Pedestrianisation)
2. Partially open/closed - This would retain the pedestrian area of Market Square but re-open King Street / part of Market Street for cars
3. All roads open to traffic, all year

Options 1 and 2 could take place:

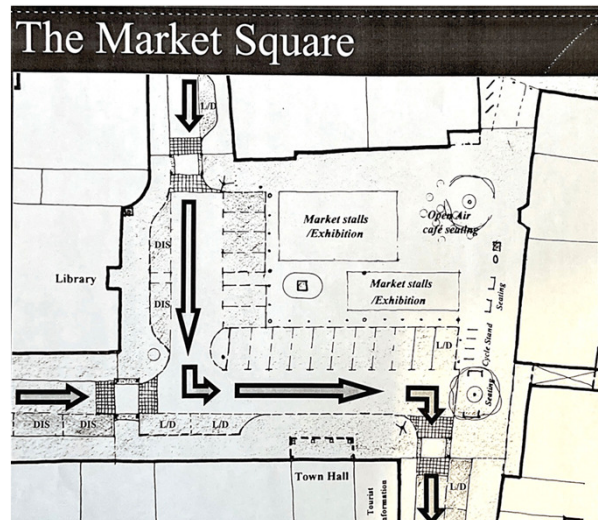
All of the time	08.00-16.00 Only
April-October Only	Three days a week Only



As agreed in our Assets & Services Committee meeting (minute reference A&S 104-21) the above proposals were presented to the public for consideration. These options were based from the results of our first phase of consultation.

Previous Partial Open/Closure Proposal

- In 2004/2005 a previous proposal was brought forward for consideration - to implement a partial open/closure, as illustrated to the right
- This partial closure keeps both King Street and Market Hill open to cars, with additional parking spaces in the square
- Whereas our option only keeps King street open to cars with disabled parking along King Street
- This option was not brought forward for this consultation as it was received too late and did not meet the primary objectives of the consultation



The option above still has cars parking in the Market Square and traffic flowing from both Market Hill and King Street.

Our partial closure option would only allow parking in King Street for the disabled and Market Hill would stay closed – keeping the Market Square closed for pedestrians.

Demonstrated in the results of our first phase of consultation, respondents preferred the relaxed car free environment – without drivers 'chasing' for a space. Keeping the car parking spaces away from the pedestrianised area therefore would keep the pedestrianised Square much more relaxed.

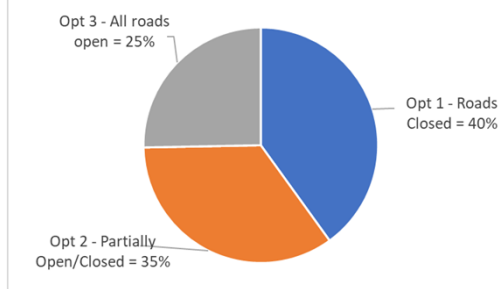
Therefore, we proposed our partial closure in light of the responses received in phase one – where a safe car free environment was wanted.

Results



Which option is preferred?

- We firstly asked which of the three proposals is preferred
- **Only 25% of respondents preferred reverting to all roads being open all of the time**
- **With 75% asking for some sort of closure in the Market Square and adjoining roads**
- Those who chose options one and two answered follow up questions asking if this should be limited to certain periods
- The least favoured option being all roads open all of the time



The *Profile of people living in Uttlesford* prepared by Essex County Council in 2016* details that Uttlesford has an ageing population and most of our respondents were aged 65-74, per slide five.

With an ageing population there is a demand on public services and accessibility, however, only 25% of respondents asked for the roads to be open to cars all of the time with 45% of our respondents aged 55-85+.

With 40% of respondents choosing option one, all roads closed, it is clear this is the preferred option - closely followed by 35% asking for a partial closure by keeping King Street open to cars and the Square for pedestrians.

These two options were followed by additional questions asking to whether a possible closure is all the time or limited to certain periods.

* Found here https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/6620/A-profile-of-people-living-in-Uttlesford-April-2016-Organisational-Intelligence/pdf/Local_Authority_Portrait_Uttlesford_2016_1.pdf?m=63622686970037000

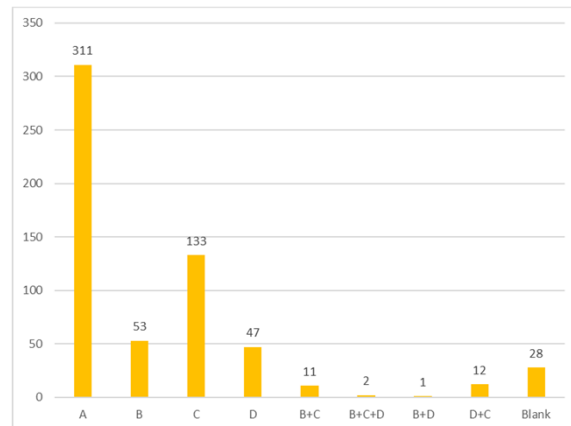
Option 1 – All roads closed - Variables



The follow up options were:

- A. All of the time
- B. April-October only
- C. 08.00-16.00 only
- D. Three days a week

Noting that options b, c and d could be chosen together

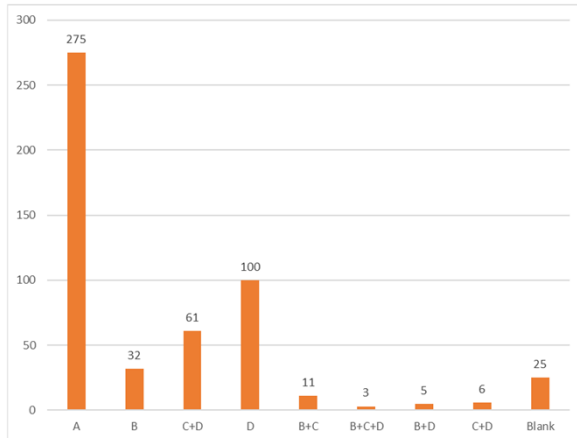


Those who chose option one as their preference were asked as a follow up question if they'd like the roads closed all the time or limited to certain periods.

Over 50% chose option A, asking for the roads to be closed all of the time.

The second favoured option was C, 08.00-16.00 only. With 9% choosing option B, where the roads would be closed seasonally.

Option 2 – Partial open/closed – Variables



The follow up options were the same again:

- A. All of the time
- B. April-October only
- C. 08.00-16.00 only
- D. Three days a week

Noting that options b, c and d could be chosen together

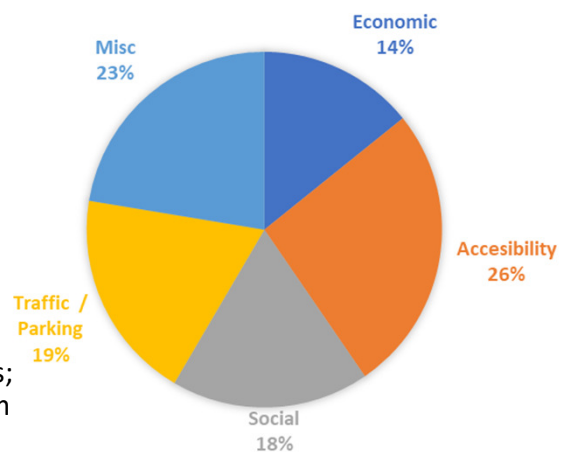
Again, those who chose option two as their preference were asked as a follow up question if they'd like the roads closed all the time or limited to certain periods.

Option A was the favoured option, with over 50% preferring to have a partial closure in place all of the time. With the second favoured being option D, asking for the roads to be partially closed three days a week.

The third most favoured was a combination of options C and D – therefore, having the roads partially closed 08.00-16.00 for only three days a week.

Open Comments

- As a closing question we asked respondents if they had any other comments to add
- This was an open question where no options were available
- From the 1494 respondents - over 700 comments were made
- The comments were analysed and split into categories to gain an understanding of the type of topics discussed
- These being: Economic, business concerns; accessibility for the less mobile and deliveries; socially having a calm 'hub' or area away from traffic; and concerns regarding parking and traffic in Saffron Walden



The open comments were varied and therefore analysed and split into the following categories:

Economic: 14% of comments included concerns for businesses and if the road closures have an impact on sales as people would not be able to easily 'pop in'.

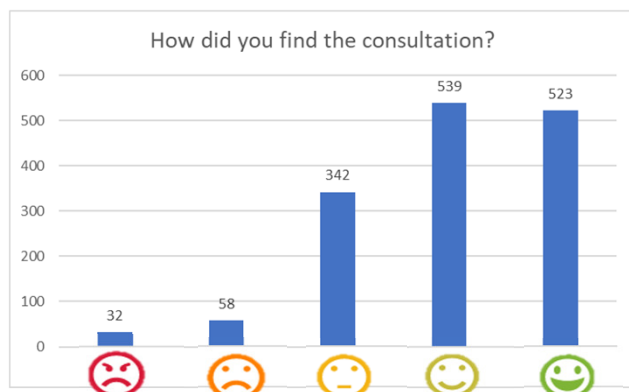
Accessibility: 26% of comments discussed the accessibility of the town for visitors, deliveries and the less mobile/disabled.

Traffic/Parking: 19% of comments made related to car parking and traffic congestion in Saffron Walden.

Social: 18% commented on the social aspect of having the Square closed, asking for more events and tables and chairs – which reiterates the conclusions made in phase one, that people like a place to stop and socialise.

Misc.: A final 23% of comments were unrelated to this consultation or made comments relating to the options presented or repeated their option choices in questions one and two.

How did you find this consultation?



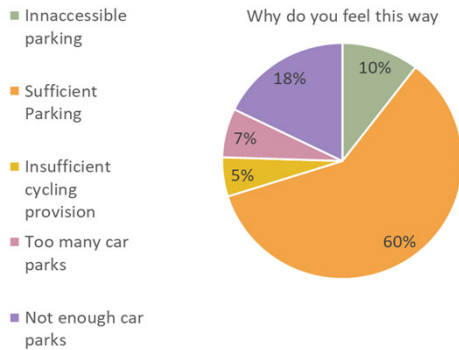
- We finally asked how respondents found the consultation – using emojis as an indicator
- Showing that over 70% of people 'like' or 'loved' the consultation process

It is positive to see that the consultation process was liked by respondents – it gives further validity to the responses received as people understood the process.

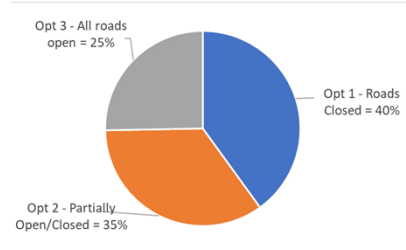
Data Evaluation

Summary of Data – Car Parking

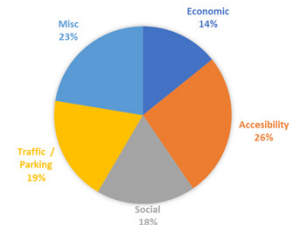
- Below are statistics from phase one, showing 60% felt there is sufficient car parking in Saffron Walden



- Statistics from Slide 10



- Statistics from Slide 13



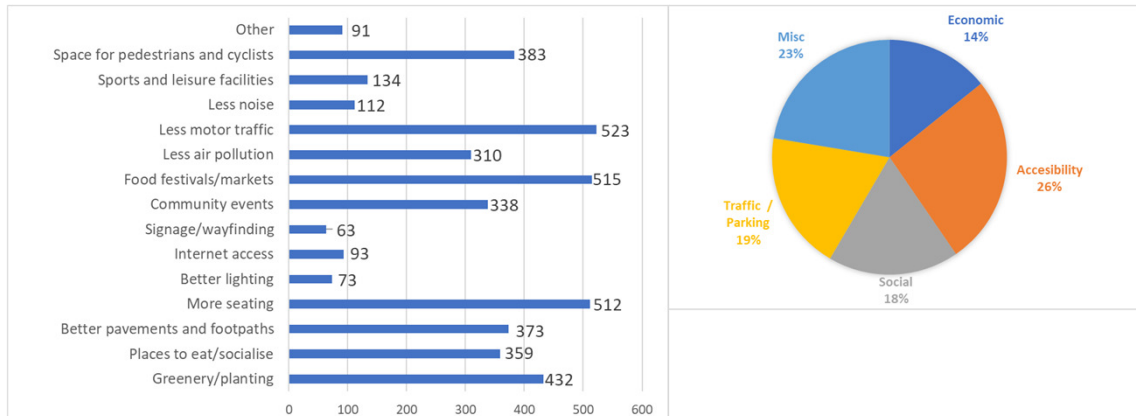
Reflecting back on key statistics in phase one, 60% of the respondents felt there was sufficient car parking in Saffron Walden.

This is reiterated in the fact that only 25% of respondents during phase two asked for all roads to be left open in the Market Square.

Car parking and traffic is obviously a major concern as any closure would have an effect, which would be why 19% of comments made related to this.

Summary of data – Social

- Below are statistics from phase one showing the options chosen to improve the town centre
- Statistics from slide 13, showing 18% of comments made related to the social aspect of the town



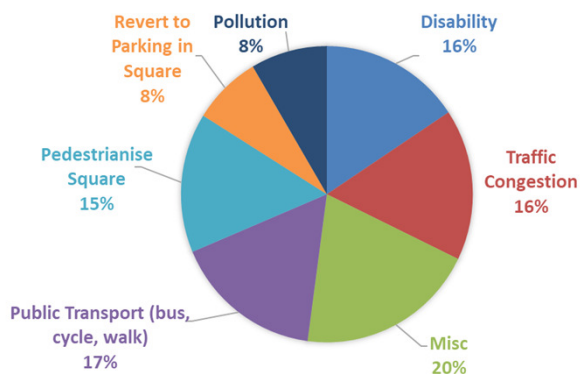
Similarly, looking back on phase one over 1,000 people said that Saffron Walden Town Centre could be improved with more community events, markets and places to socialise.

This is reiterated during the second phase with 18% of comments made relating to the social aspect of the Market Square.

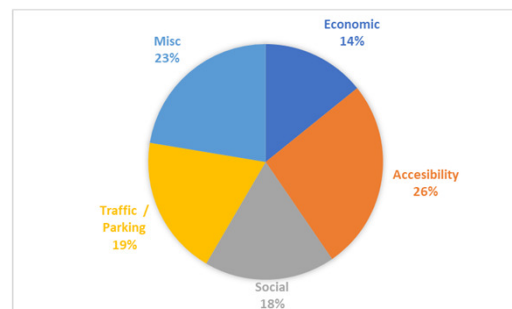
These figures show that the social side is just as important as the comments made regarding traffic movement and car parking arrangements.

Summary of data – Accessibility

- Statistics from phase one where 16% of comments made raised concern for those who are disabled



- Similarly, the statistics in slide 12 show that accessibility for the less mobile and for deliveries is a concern

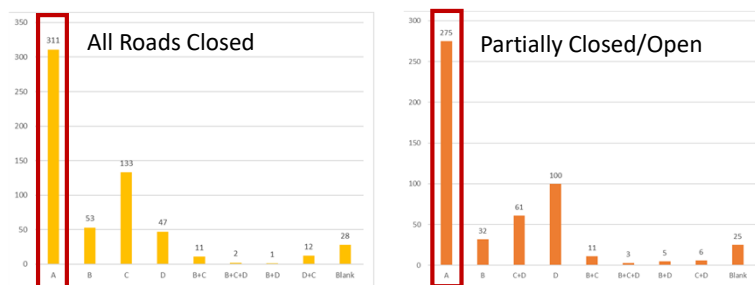
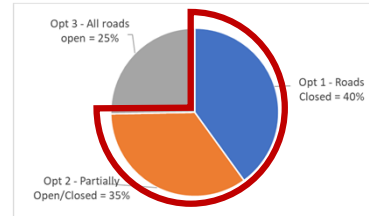


In both phases of consultation concerns have been raised regarding the accessibility of the Market Square for those with deliveries and the less mobile.

As detailed in slide nine, Saffron Walden is in an ageing community and their needs must be taken into account when making any decisions.

Summary of data – Favoured Options

- 75% of respondents asked for some sort of closure in the Market Square
- When asked if a full or partial closure should be limited to certain periods or not – most chose option A, all of the time



Follow up options:

- All of the time
- April-October only
- 08.00-16.00 only
- Three days a week

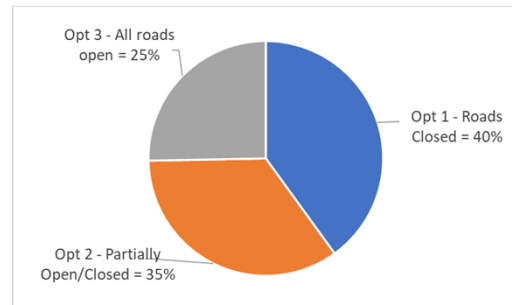
The aim of the second phase of consultation was to ascertain if there was a clear favoured option regarding any road closures in The Market Square.

With 40% asking for all roads to be closed, closely followed by 35% asking for the roads to be partially closed – showing that some sort of closure is favoured.

When asked as a follow up question as to whether the full or partial closures should be in place all of the time or limited to certain periods, over 50% asked for it to be in place all of the time. Having any road closure in place all the time however, does mean that consideration should be thought for residents who live in the town centre and those dropping in of an evening.

Conclusions

- **All roads closed all of the time was the favoured option**
- With 75% favouring some sort of closure to be in place
- Over 40% of open comments made related to accessibility and traffic concerns (per slide 13)
- It is clear that a compromise needs to be met to suit all needs and desires
- A partial closure, which is a favoured option, would meet the needs of the disabled and less mobile and it would allow deliveries, as there would be parking and vehicular access along King Street with a separate pedestrian area



75% of respondents asked for some sort of closure and most respondents asked for it to be in place all of the time.

It can not be forgotten that over 40% of open comments related to the car parking and accessibility of the Market Square.

It is clear that a compromise needs to be reached, which seems to be the partial road closure. This would allow car parking along King Street and access for deliveries with a pedestrian area.

Recommendations

- To formally request Essex Highways consider **partially closing the roads** (with the exception on Tuesday and Saturdays for the Market, which would remain unchanged)
- Respondents favoured the partial closure to be in place all of the time, i.e. all day, everyday
- This partial closure would allow cars along King Street and down Market Street (illustrated in yellow)
- Market Hill would be closed to traffic (illustrated in red)
- And this would leave the Market Square pedestrianised
- Suitable signage and safety barriers will be required and will need to be agreed and ordered



Noting that the above recommendation will have to be requested to Essex Highways and they too will need to undergo their own consultation. Meaning that any changes may not come into effect for up to 12 to 18 months.

Pedestrianisation, albeit partially is one of the Council's priorities*, as adopted by Full Council, minute Reference FC075-19.

This partial closure would allow access for deliveries and car parking on King Street alongside the library and shops.

Committee should consider whether the partial closure is in place all day, everyday – this is the favoured option however, thought should be made for residents who live in the Town Centre.

*Priorities are found here - <https://saffronwalden.gov.uk/news/councils-action-plan-and-priorities-as-at-september-2021/>