

Transport and Environment Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 16 May 2019

George Street and First New Town – Consultation and Design Development

Item number	
Executive/routine	Executive
Wards	11
Council Commitments	C16 , C17 , C19

1. Recommendations

1.1 Committee is asked to:

- 1.1.1 note the outcomes of consultation on the George Street and First New Town (GNT) Concept Design, as presented within the report and appendix 2;
- 1.1.2 approve the set of fundamental design elements within the draft preliminary design, outlined within paragraph 4.7, that require to be delivered together to achieve transformative change within the First New Town area;
- 1.1.3 agree the key principles of an operational plan proposed for the First New Town, as outlined in paragraph 4.8;
- 1.1.4 note that further, non-core elements of design, as outlined in paragraph 4.9, require further stakeholder engagement to resolve issues;
- 1.1.5 note the work underway through the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation project, to ensure strong alignment between GNT and all city centre projects, to maximise benefit to the city of delivering a coordinated package of interventions, as outlined in paragraph 4.10;
- 1.1.6 note that phasing of a delivery programme for the GNT project will be integrated within the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Delivery Plan as outlined in paragraph 4.11;
- 1.1.7 note that the development of design for Hanover Street south is being developed through the adjacent Meadows to George Street project, with GNT designers working in tandem as outlined in paragraph 4.12; and

1.1.8 note the submission, in April, of a match funding bid to Sustrans Scotland towards the next design development steps, and towards future delivery as outlined in paragraphs 6.7 to 6.8.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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George Street and First New Town – Consultation and Design Development

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 GNT is a public realm project which is aligned to the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation project. It seeks to deliver an exceptional street environment that is welcoming and accessible for all users. Following extensive consultation on an initial concept design for the GNT area, the project is now at preliminary design stage.
- 2.2 The core elements of the proposed preliminary design are presented in this report for approval, alongside a set of principles for the future operation of the First New Town streets. The proposals reflect those areas with strong support from a wide range of users, and alignment to strategic priorities. The design elements where further stakeholder input is required to develop appropriate solutions are set out for noting. Finally, initial cost estimates are presented, alongside the next steps to develop this project.

3. Background

- 3.1 In 2014 and 2015, the Council trialled new layout and operating arrangements on George Street. Independently run surveys were conducted throughout the trial period, and evidenced strong public appetite for changes to the street. From this study, initial design principles were developed for George Street with the input of local stakeholders. These were approved at Transport and Environment Committee on [7 June 2016](#), and form the basis of current design development work. Also reported in June 2016 was an indicative cost estimate for George Street, of £28m.
- 3.2 As reported to Transport and Environment Committee on [5 October 2017](#), the expansion to a larger GNT study area including Castle, Frederick, Hanover Streets and the junctions with Charlotte and St Andrew Squares, recognised the operational interrelationship between the First New Town streets, and the need to address critical design interdependencies with other projects in the surrounding city centre. Committee agreed to the development of a 'blueprint' for the GNT area, which was capable of both withstanding future operational changes, and that could be delivered in phases as resources became available.

- 3.3 At a strategic level, the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Strategy being reported to this Committee has developed a unifying vision for existing city centre projects. GNT will be incorporated within the proposed Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Delivery Plan, alongside a number of other projects being progressed.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Edinburgh's 'First New Town' is of significant, and unique value within the Unesco World Heritage Site. George Street, which forms the core of the First New Town, is arguably the city's premier shopping street, and carries a strong appeal as a civic space and unique shopping and visiting destination.
- 4.2 GNT is a major public realm project that aims to reconfigure the use of space in George Street and reconsider how its junctions work with intersecting streets and squares, to create an exceptionally high-quality street environment. The proposal will make it attractive for people of all ages to visit, shop, rest, and make active and sustainable travel choices within the area.
- 4.3 Ensuring people in the city have had the opportunity to influence and shape the future of the city centre is absolutely essential to achieving a robust and long-lasting design for the area. In addition to observing relevant strategic consultation exercises in the city, such as [Connecting Our City, Transforming Our Places](#), distinct consultation approaches for the GNT project have ensured appropriate, and wide input at key stages:
- 4.3.1 Design Objectives Setting stage (December 2017 – January 2018) (see report at Appendix 1);
 - 4.3.2 Technical and Concept Development stage (February - August 2018);
 - 4.3.3 Concept Design Testing stage (November 2018 – January 2019) (see report at Appendix 2);
 - 4.3.4 Operational Plan Development stage (February 2019 – ongoing).

Core elements of GNT draft preliminary design

- 4.4 The core elements of the preliminary design act together to reallocate and reprioritise space within the public realm to improve accessibility and active travel, make the spaces and streets more welcoming, whilst celebrating the unique heritage environment of the area.
- 4.5 Consultation on the concept design elicited broad public support for a very high quality public realm and a safe walking and cycling environment, with a focus on delivering inclusive access for all. This includes maintaining the existing bus routes in the scheme area, and minimising impacts on residential communities. These findings are consistent with the findings of large scale 'Connecting our City; Transforming our Places' engagement process reported to Transport and Environment Committee, on [28 February 2019](#).

- 4.6 Delivering a robust design proposal that is operationally sound and deliverable in the short term and that will respond to wider operational changes in the future, was a key strand of the Preliminary Design commission. Consultation and engagement have therefore been backed up by desktop research on heritage, relevant technical studies (such as radar surveys, a parking survey, a street life assessment study, a business operations survey) and traffic modelling, and work to integrate the project with adjacent schemes and with Edinburgh City Centre Transformation.
- 4.7 The analysis of consultation findings and responses to the concept design, combined with the above technical assessments, concludes this stage of the process. The following core elements are proposed, which combine to underpin the finalised preliminary design:
- 4.7.1 Wider pavements on both sides of George Street along the entire street length, will increase circulation space and accessibility for all pedestrians. This is primarily achieved by the reduction in the road width, obtained from the removal of parking bays (see below, paragraph 4.7.4). Wider pavements and narrower road space mean pedestrian crossing in all directions will be prioritised, and will be more direct, safer and easier at all junctions. A designated limit for café seating areas ensures that the pavement width remains consistent.
- 4.7.2 Seating areas on the north side of George Street will provide designated areas where people can relax or rest in comfort and safety, within the street environment, without the need to buy something at café seating areas. These additions make the street more welcoming for people of any age, and the potential to include some informal play elements within these spaces.
- 4.7.3 A two-way cycleway on the south side of George Street will provide a consistent approach to cycling in the first new town area, from Charlotte Square right through to Picardy Place and Elm Row. To accommodate a two-way cycleway, the junctions of George Street will be redesigned, which will also improve the visual setting around the central statues, help slow down vehicle movements in the street, and reduce potential for cycle / vehicle conflict. The detail of how the two-way cycleway will be segregated from both pedestrian areas and cars is to be developed with stakeholders at the next stage of design.
- 4.7.4 The removal of parking bays from George Street, to free up space for other uses is a principle that is already established for the city centre. During consultation, the removal of central parking elicited general support from a wide range of consultees, albeit at a slightly lower level than other design elements. Concerns were clustered around providing access for people with lower levels of mobility, who are not blue badge holders (including church goers) and discouraging spread of parking activity into the New Town.

Principles for a First New Town ‘operational plan’

- 4.8 A number of operational changes will be required to support the transformation of the First New Town into an area that people can enjoy for its exceptional quality of place. Although a number of the changes below are due to be explored further with stakeholders, and will be subject to future, detailed statutory processes, they may be introduced over time. The fundamental principles of an operational will include:
- 4.8.1 delivering pedestrian priority, possibly through set periods of the day where the streets operate without non-essential vehicle access but permitting limited bus services or blue badge access where appropriate;
 - 4.8.2 preserving the use of cycling infrastructure year-round;
 - 4.8.3 maintaining the current local bus passenger services within the area; with limited bus stop realignment, in keeping with wider bus stop rationalisation plans;
 - 4.8.4 prioritising blue-badge parking in within the GNT area, and essential resident parking within the scheme area, to support close access for those who most need it, and reallocating some bays from George Street within the First New Town, where this may be possible; and
 - 4.8.5 reducing vehicle traffic movements at the junction of George and Hanover Streets to support essential access requirements through the First New Town.

Non-core design elements for further development

- 4.9 Consultation and engagement on the GNT concept design, identified a set of design elements which require further detailed design, irrespective of levels of support. Further consideration will be given to these elements, each with input from appropriate potentially affected stakeholders. These ‘non-core’ design elements have the capability to enhance the area, if designed sensitively:
- 4.9.1 including appropriate levels, types and placement of greening elements. There is a need to address strong interest in using green elements to introduce some human scale and comfort, and enhance new aspects of the street layout such as seating areas, without detracting from the historic built form of George Street;
 - 4.9.2 the way the two-way cycleway will be physically and visually separated from pedestrian and car overrun needs to be resolved. There is an important equalities dimension to this, to ensure that users of the street who are blind or visually impaired are able to discern distinct areas, whilst people using walking aids, wheelchairs or pushing buggies are able to easily cross the street where desired;
 - 4.9.3 the design options that relate to the James Clerk Maxwell statue requires further thought and a detailed options appraisal of designs to both accommodate the statue at its exact current location, or explore options to improve its siting within the immediate First New Town area, without

detriment to its significance or overall placement. The statue is not listed, nor specified within the Unesco World Heritage site designation, as it is a newer feature, yet as an existing feature of specific local significance the design solution must be appropriate;

- 4.9.4 the height, appearance and impact of the plaza areas proposed in the Concept Design requires further detailed design development in order to resolve the issues of clear separation between users of the street. Greater clarity is required to ensure the plaza areas' intended multi-function role in the street environment, will, in practice, help to reinforce pedestrian priority.
- 4.9.5 The multi-functional role of the plazas seeks to support pedestrians to cross the street more informally between junctions, whilst reinforcing the grandeur of the street and its unique built form. Their scale is intended to support event activation at a smaller scale, at times when this is sought, with a lower level of impact on the remaining street. (The introduction of plaza areas would not preclude occasional larger events within the street, where this is appropriate and agreed).

Alignment of GNT to City Centre Transformation and surrounding projects

- 4.10 The Edinburgh City Centre Transformation Strategy, reported to this committee, provides the bold strategic vision and context for the ongoing development of the GNT design. It identifies key pedestrian priority zones in the city centre where people will have priority, with vehicles given access as 'guests'. George Street is identified as one of these areas, where significant public realm improvements and pedestrian priority will be delivered. The strong synergy between GNT, surrounding city centre projects and Edinburgh City Centre Transformation will help to deliver a city centre that promotes better quality public realm, safe and accessible active travel options, with a strong role for public transport.
- 4.12 Alongside Edinburgh City Centre Transformation, development and testing of a design for the Meadows to George Street must align with GNT, and therefore both project teams are working in tandem.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The next stage of the GNT project is to complete the development of the preliminary design (to a Royal Institute of British Architects, or RIBA, Stage 3 Design). As reported above, this will involve development and assessment of 'non-core' design elements, development of the operational plan proposal, and completion of a Heritage Impact Assessment. The conclusions of the Preliminary Design stage and an Outline Business Case will be reported to Transport and Environment Committee in September 2019.
- 5.2 Following this, GNT can commence the development of a detailed design, to allow statutory processes for the area to commence. The completion of the relevant

statutory processes, which would enable the GNT to progress to construction, is not expected before May 2021.

- 5.3 A notional procurement and construction timescale for GNT is being refined as part of the development of the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation delivery plan. It is currently expected that construction would be delivered in phases that are coordinated with the delivery of adjacent projects, to maximise efficiencies and achieve early positive impacts.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 GNT will make a strong early contribution to way the city functions, during a period of rapid population expansion, and represents a significant and positive capital investment in the city, and the transformation of the city centre.
- 6.2 The current GNT preliminary design project is being delivered using £220,000 of funding approved in the Roads, Footway and Bridges Additional Investment report on [21 March 2017](#), and Sustrans Scotland Community Links funding of £120,000. This was further augmented with £60,000 from Sustrans, ringfenced within the Community Links Plus funding package for Edinburgh City Centre Transformation, This allowed GNT to carry out detailed alignment work and testing to ensure strong links with the other city centre programmes' approaches and proposals. The design project work by WYG, which is due for completion in 2019, with all projected project costs are expected to be completed within the overall, identified budget.
- 6.3 The initial cost estimate of up to £28m (for the construction costs for George Street) was included in Design Principles report (reported on 7 June 2016).
- 6.4 An independent costing exercise was undertaken in April 2019 to provide an updated estimate of the cost for delivering GNT including construction, project management and contingency costs. This estimates the cost at £32.5m. The detail of this will be included in the Outline Business Case, although final costs will depend on when construction begins.
- 6.5 As noted above, the GNT project is likely to be delivered in phases, however the exact split of costs and the phasing of delivery between years is yet to be confirmed.
- 6.6 The financial requirements for GNT will be set out in the Outline Business Case report to Committee in September 2019.
- 6.7 An application for match funding for GNT was submitted to Sustrans Scotland's Community Links Plus 'Stage 2' 2019 round. GNT, alongside the 'Leith Connection' project between the Foot of the Walk and the Shore, seeks to secure full funding towards the further development of both projects, and, hopefully match funding towards their delivery. If awarded, the Council will require match funding to be designated against delivery of the project. The outcome will be reported in September 2019.

- 6.8 Whilst removal of parking from George Street represents a loss of future Council parking income from the bays at this specific location, a clearer understanding of the net implications of this will be detailed within the GNT Outline Business Case.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 The input of stakeholders, including local residents and groups, businesses, interest groups, people with protected characteristics and the general public, has been gathered at each stage of the development of the project. The project seeks to ensure that the First New Town streets are of exceptionally high quality, and accessible to all.
- 7.2 The principle of reallocating space away from cars to create more pedestrian space, allows for more versatile, accessible and welcoming public realm areas, and prioritises walking. Space also provided for cycling and public transport, are all elements of a high quality public realm that is an attractive place for businesses to operate, and are entirely consistent with the core principles of the Edinburgh City Centre Transformation.
- 7.3 An Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process is underway throughout the GNT project and an up to date copy is available online. This identifies a majority of positive impacts for people with protected characteristics, and notes where some potential negative impacts require further detailed development. Two issues identified in consultation are under further study – finding ways to provide limited parking, or car drop-off access within the area for people with low levels of mobility but who are not blue badge holders, and options to discourage any traffic displacement into the Second New Town. The IIA will be updated throughout the design process.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [George Street and First New Town Design Project Update](#) Report to 5 October 2017 Transport and Environment Committee.
- 8.2 [George Street Experimental Traffic Regulation Order, Concluding Report and Design Principles](#) report to 7 June 2016 Transport and Environment Committee.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 - GNT Design Objectives Consultation Report

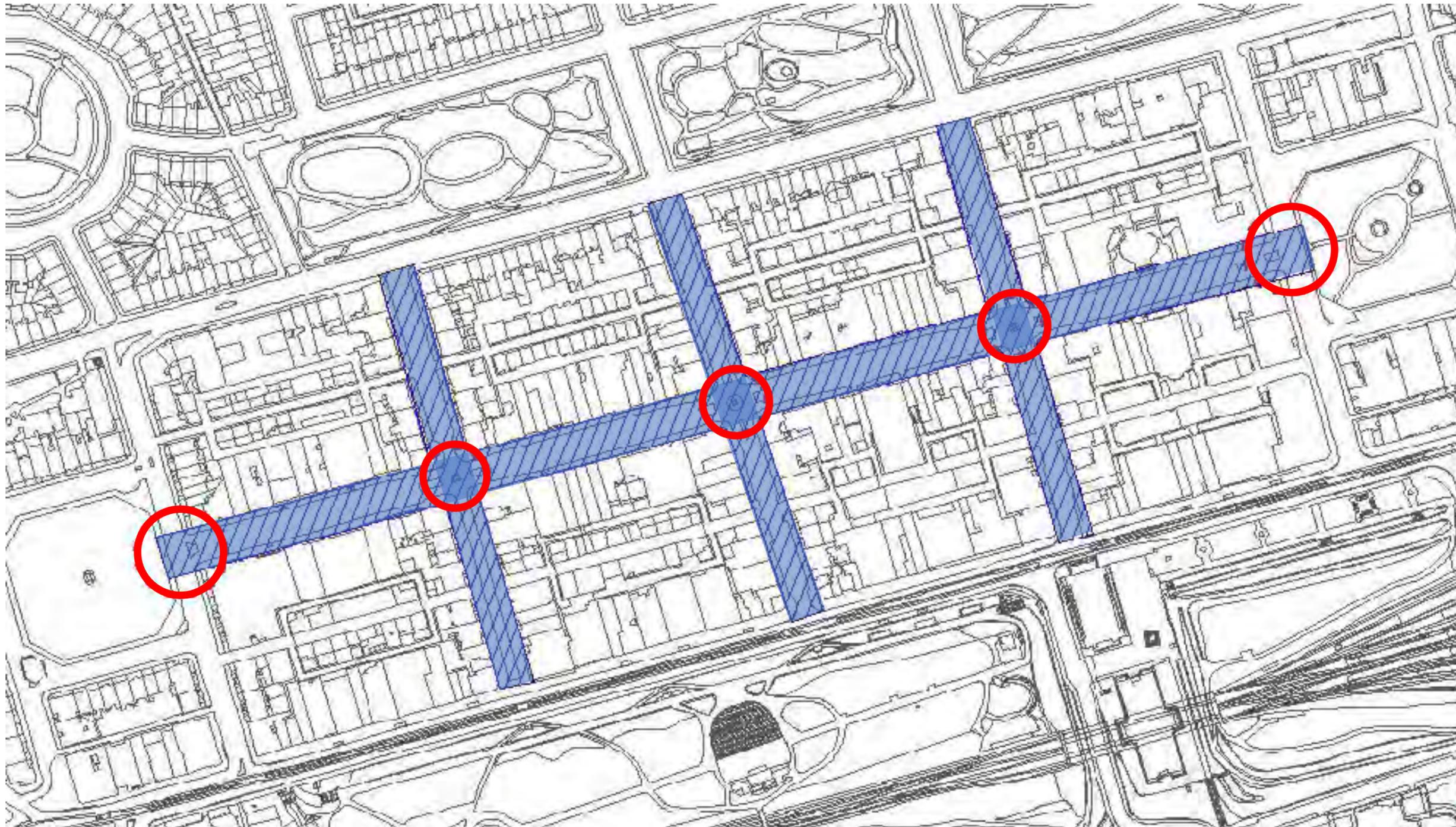
Appendix 2 - Concept Design Consultation Findings Report

George Street and First New Town Public Realm Design Project

GNT

GNT Objectives Setting for Preliminary Design Outcomes of Stage 1 Consultation

Study Area



Geographical design area (blue hatching) and location of key junctions (red circles).

Stage 1 Engagement Overview



PRINCIPAL
BUILDING
GEORGE STREET

mmsoundandlighting
Tel: 01324 62455

SL67 DZB

CADDY
MAXI 7DI

LOADING ONLY
NO CHANGING

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Permitted
Time
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Days
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Introduction

This summary document is to advise Transport and Environment Committee Members on Stage 1 of the residents/public and stakeholder engagement process for George Street and the New Town Public Realm Design Project and key outcomes to date.

The project builds upon the previous study undertaken by Ironside Farrar which had concluded in an agreed set of 'Design Principles' for George Street. It is recognised that fundamental change is required if the city is to deliver a significantly improved pedestrian experience within its centre and that the design and quality of the public space of George Street and its interconnected streets is critical to achieving and driving forward this agenda. As such, the scope of the project has expanded from the original Ironside Farrar report to look not just at George Street, but at the adjoining Streets; Castle Street, Frederick Street and Hanover Street.

In developing a design for these streets, it is important that the views of a wide range of citizens, businesses and special interest groups are gathered. Therefore, throughout the design development process the team is undertaking a series of significant consultation and engagement events to guide the development of a design for the long term layout of the street.

The outputs of the Ironside Farrar 'Design Principles Study' were developed through prior engagement with a defined Stakeholder Reference Group. These 'Design Principles' have provided the blueprint which the current team have taken forward. The original Stakeholder Reference Group has been expanded to broaden the engagement process to include a wider group of stakeholders and public consultees. The feedback from both the stakeholder and public engagement will inform the concept design and final outputs of the study.

The following pages provide:

- An overview of the residents/public and stakeholder engagement process undertaken to date
- An overview of the questionnaire feedback from the residents/public engagement
- The evolution of the final 'Project Design Objectives' and key design considerations derived from the residents/public engagement
- The next steps in the engagement and design development process

Overview

Draft Objectives for Engagement

Prior to the engagement events, the consultant team worked with City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) to develop a set of 'Draft Objectives' as a focus for the public and stakeholder engagement discussions. The purpose of the Draft Objectives was for these to be tested, developed and refined through the engagement events in order to conclude a final set of agreed objectives for the project that would inform the subsequent development of the concept design. The events were also used to tease out the key design considerations which sit alongside these.

Stakeholder Engagement Event 1

The first stakeholder engagement event was held in the Assembly Rooms on George Street on 7th December 2017. A wide range of stakeholders were invited, with 55 attending on the day. Following a presentation by the consultant team, the stakeholders divided into groups to review the Draft Objectives in a discussion facilitated by the consultant team. In addition, questionnaires were used to gauge the appetite for possible operational changes including reduction in vehicles, re-prioritisation of buses, reduction in taxis and the extent to which pedestrianisation would be supported.

Residents/Public Engagement Event 1

The first public engagement event was held in the City Art Centre on Monday 15th January 1pm-6pm and Tuesday 16th January 1pm-8pm. The event focussed on residents within the GNT study area, with invitation letters sent to circa 1,200 residents and businesses. In addition a press release was issued on the day of the event to notify members of the wider public. The event was attended by over 100 members of the public over the 2 days.

The purpose of the event was to gain feedback on the Draft Objectives, shaped by the initial stakeholder event, and to gauge the appetite for possible operational changes. As well as leaving 'Post-It' comments on the draft objectives questionnaires were used to gauge the appetite for possible operational changes and more general views on the project.

Engagement Conclusions

The following pages summarise the outcomes from the public/residents and stakeholder questionnaires, demonstrating the degree of support for different forms of operational change. Following from this, a summary of the evolution of the objectives, as developed through both the public/residents and stakeholder engagement is provided. This concludes with the Final Design Objectives and associated Design Considerations.

Stakeholder Consultation_Feedback Sheet

We value your feedback to help us improve what we do in the future.

Which organisation are you representing today?

Please specify:

Do you feel the Design Objectives discussed today would help guide a design to improve the quality of George Street and the First New Town (GNT)?

- Yes
- No

Please provide comments:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	UNKNOWN
As part of a new design I would support a reduction in car movement on George Street						
As part of a new design I would support operational changes and prioritisation of bus movement in the GNT area						
As part of a new design I would support operational changes and prioritisation of taxi movement in the GNT area						
As part of a new design I would support some pedestrianisation of George Street						

Please Turn Over

Stakeholder Consultation_Feedback Sheet

Continued.....

If there is anything else you would like to tell us about George Street and the First New Town (GNT)? Please provide comment **here**:

Thinking beyond the GNT project, and the context that was described at the beginning of the event, if there is anything you would change about Edinburgh's city centre, what would it be?

Please give any other feedback on today's event, including ideas that would help us improve future events. Please provide your feedback **here**:

Thank you for your time. Please hand the completed form to event staff.

Questionnaire Results (Stakeholder & Residents/ Public engagement)

Questionnaires - Summary of Outcomes

Objectives

Attendees were asked whether they believed the objectives would help guide a design to improve the quality of George Street and the First New Town. Overall, the objectives were received positively and a significant majority of consultees felt the draft objectives tabled would help improve the quality of the GNT.

Reduction in Car Movement

Both the public and stakeholders showed a clear preference for a reduction in car movement on George Street.

Prioritisation of Bus Movement

The majority of stakeholders and public respondents supported buses being given priority over general traffic in the GNT area.

Prioritisation of Taxi Movement

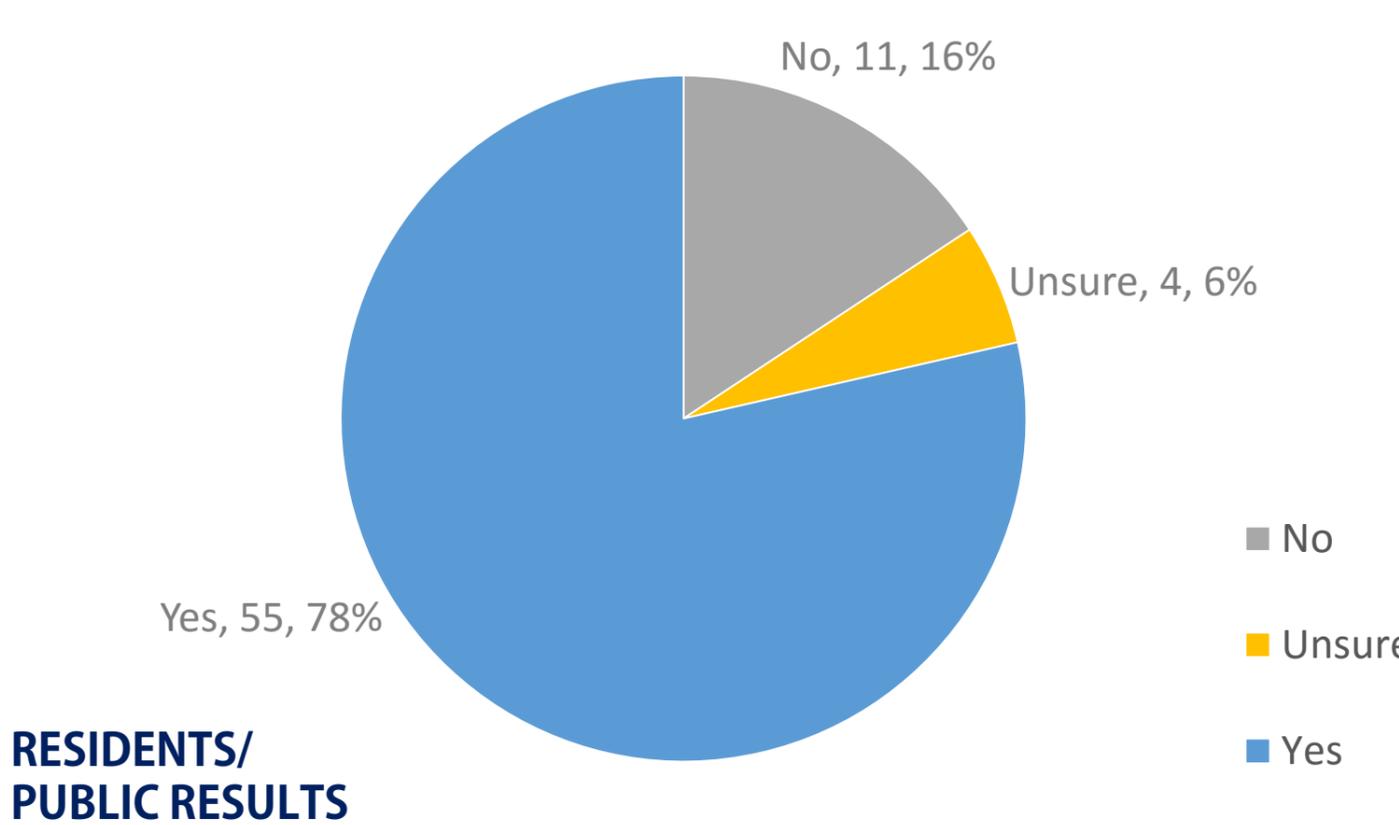
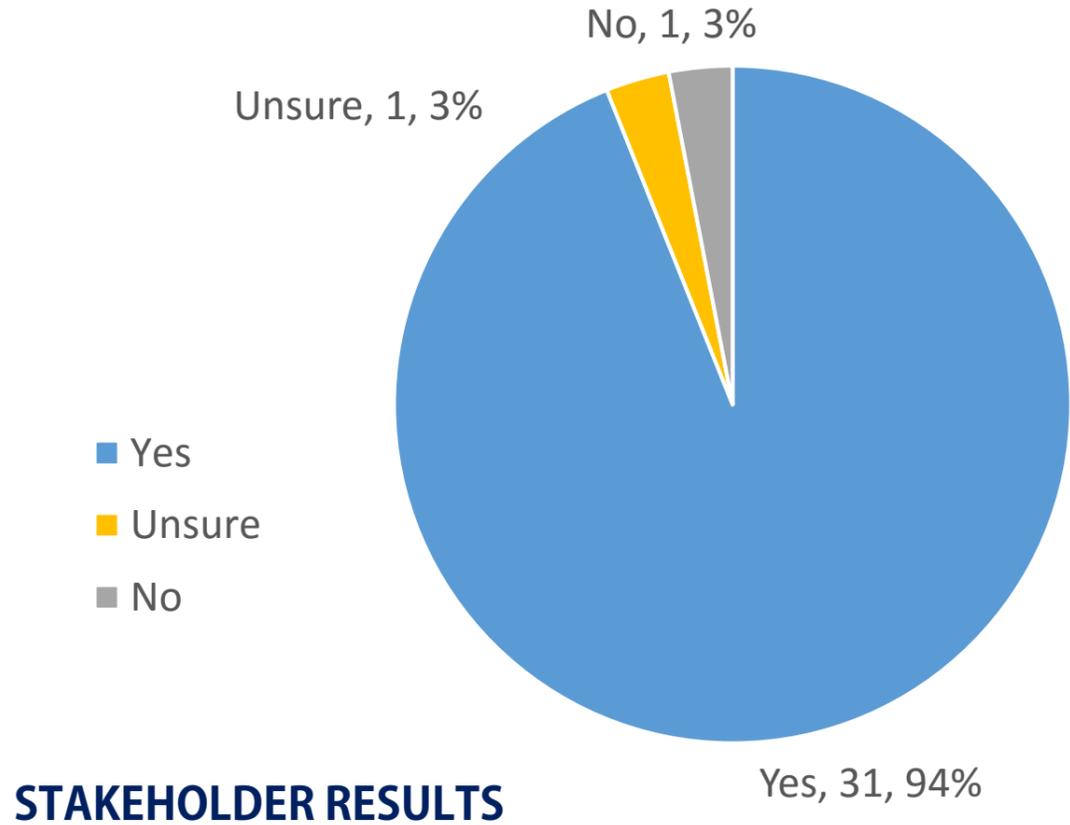
Responses to this question were much more evenly distributed than for the others, however the majority of stakeholders and public respondents supported taxis being given priority over general traffic in the GNT area.

Support for Pedestrianisation

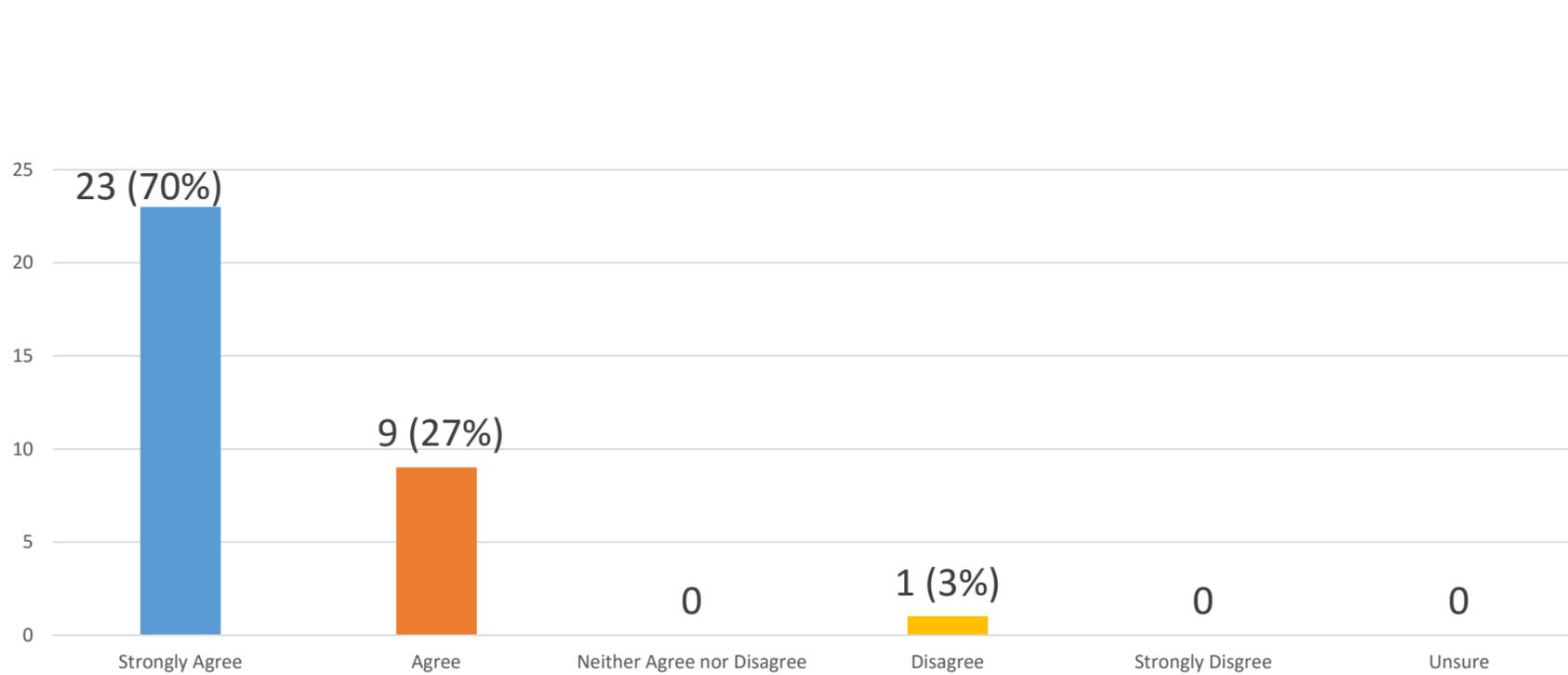
There is a strong consensus between stakeholders and the general public in regard to support for some degree of pedestrianisation to George Street.

[Graphs on the following pages provide the full results from both the stakeholder and residents/public questionnaires completed.](#)

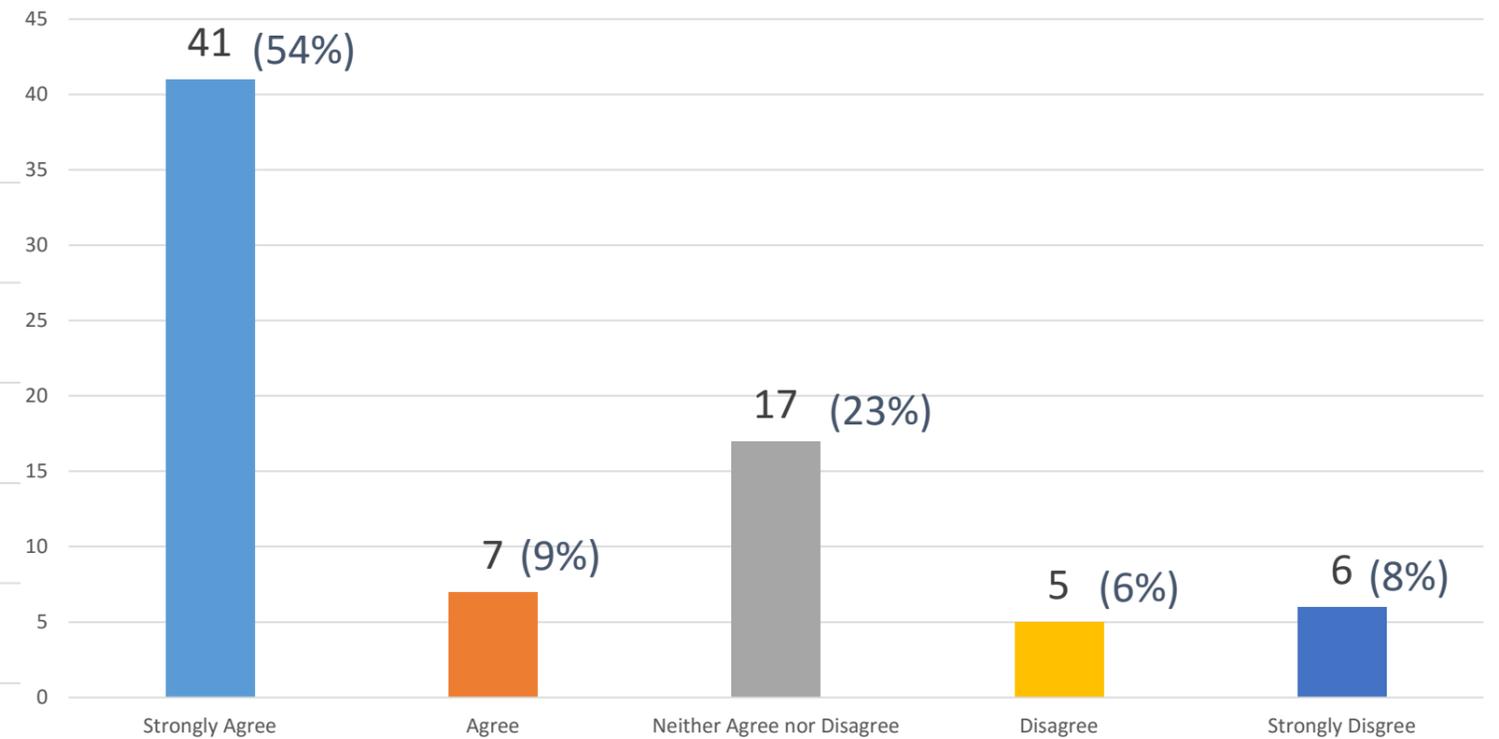
Will the objectives help guide a design to improve the quality of George Street and the First New Town?



The appetite for reduction of private cars on George Street

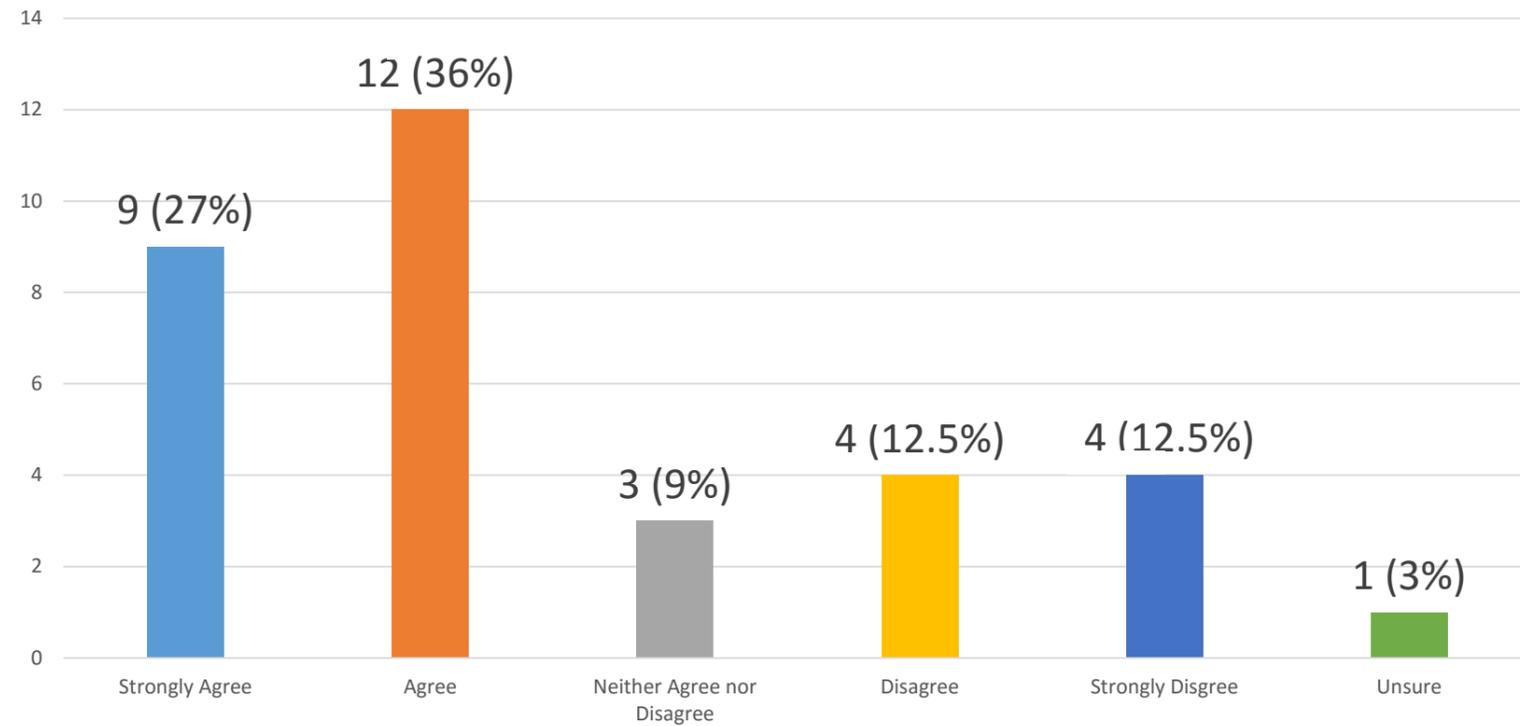


STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

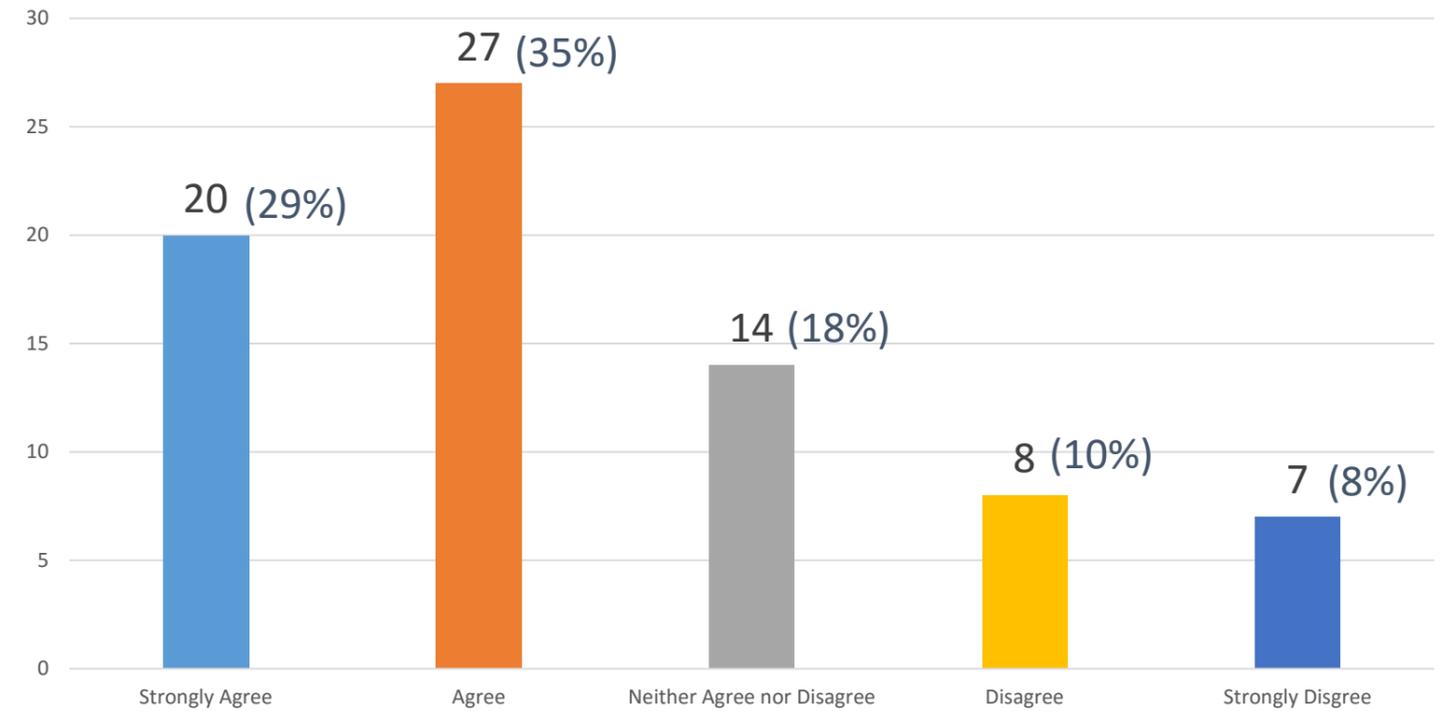


RESIDENTS/ PUBLIC RESULTS

The prioritisation of buses

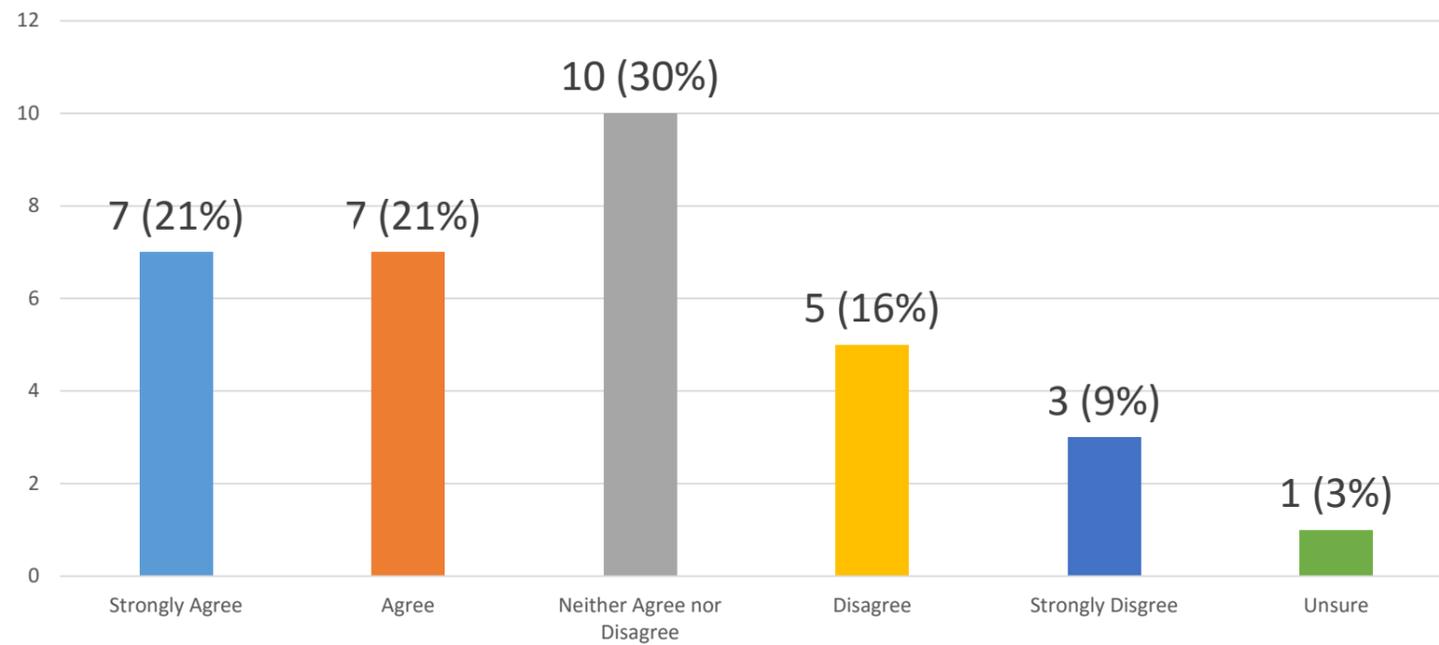


STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

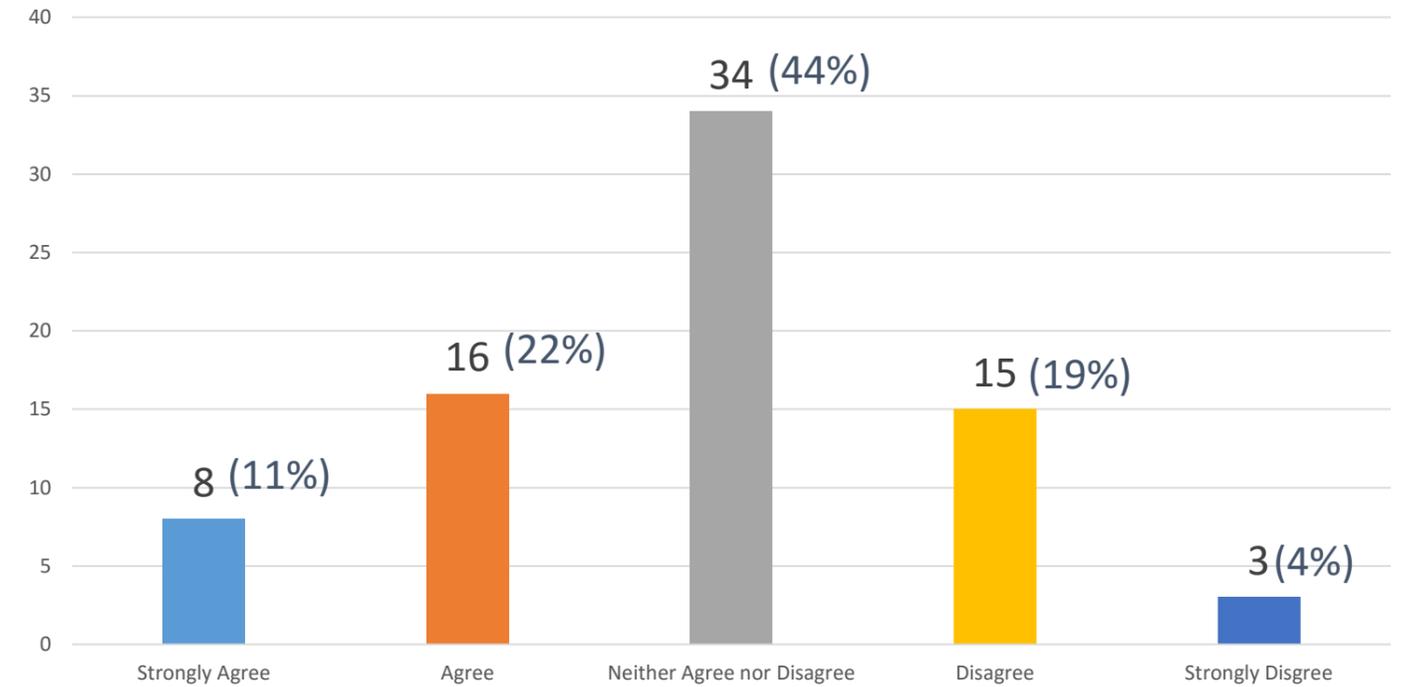


RESIDENTS/ PUBLIC RESULTS

The prioritisation of taxis

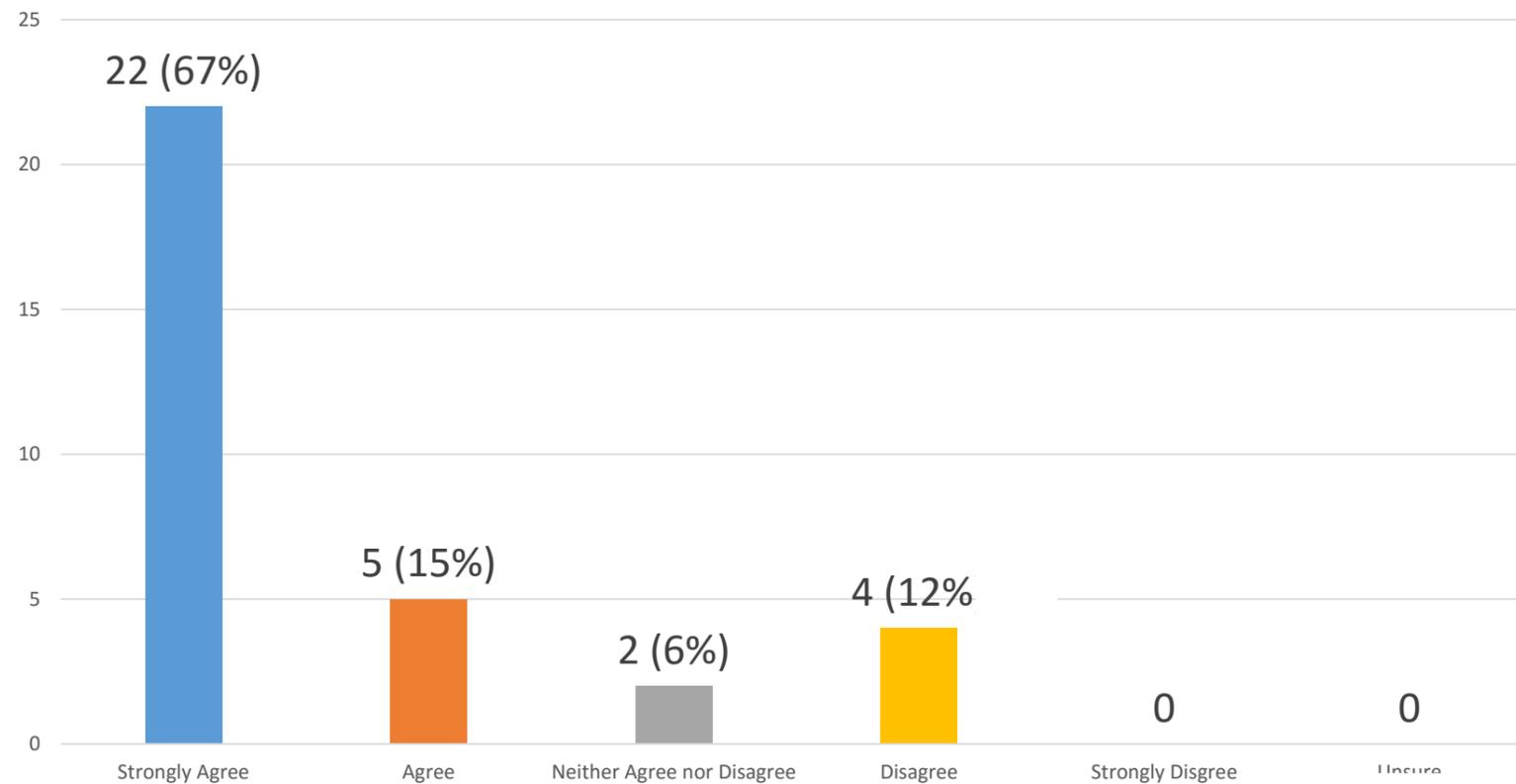


STAKEHOLDER RESULTS

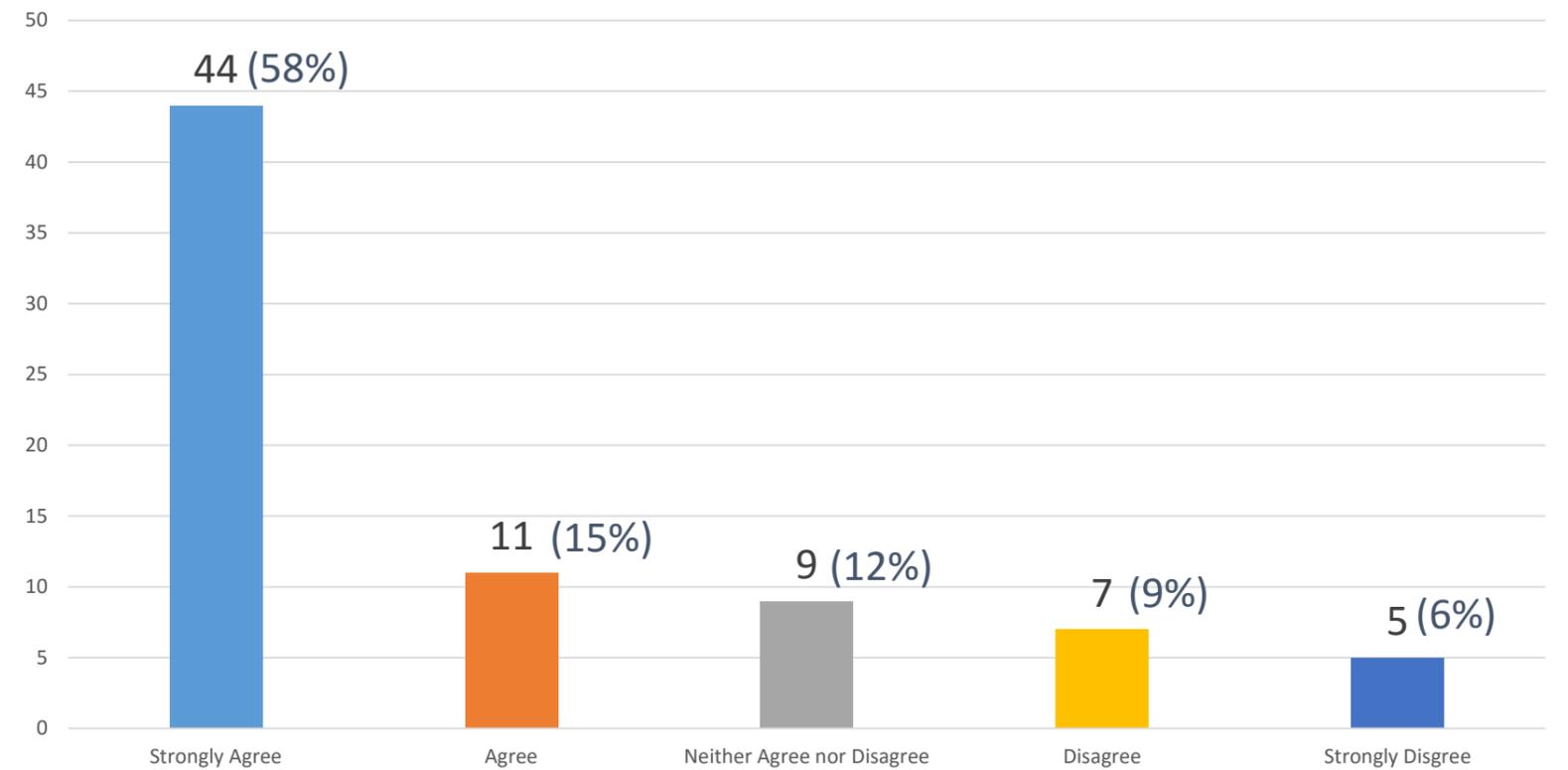


RESIDENTS/ PUBLIC RESULTS

The appetite for some pedestrianisation George Street



STAKEHOLDER RESULTS



RESIDENTS/ PUBLIC RESULTS

A photograph of a busy city street at dusk or dawn. The street is filled with cars, including a white van in the center and a silver car in the foreground. Buildings line both sides of the street, and a tall monument is visible in the distance. The text "Final Project Objectives & Key Design Considerations" is overlaid in a large, dark blue font across the center of the image.

Final Project Objectives & Key Design Considerations

Evolution of the Objectives

	Theme	Original Draft Objective	Suggested Changes - Stakeholder Feedback	Suggested Changes - Public Feedback	Final Objectives
1	World Class Place	Creation of a world class scheme that enhances the unique heritage and quality of the First New Town	Creation of a world class place that respects, preserves and enhances the World Heritage Status of the First New Town	Creation of a world class place that respects and enhances the World Heritage Status of the First New Town	Create a world class place that respects and enhances the World Heritage Site
2	Pedestrian Experience	Maximise and enhance pedestrian space to create a vibrant space for all	Learn from the experience of other cities to enlarge and enhance pedestrian space, creating a vibrant and accessible place where all people feel safe	Enlarge and enhance pedestrian space, creating a vibrant place with a street environment that is safe for all users, and enabling informal uses like lingering as well as appropriate events	Enlarge and enhance pedestrian space, creating a safe vibrant place for all
3	Sustainable Transport	Prioritise cyclists, then taxis and buses above private cars, with public parking on George Street as a low priority	Prioritise active travel and disabled access, then public transport, then private transport, with general public parking on George Street seen as lowest priority	Prioritise active travel for people of all abilities, followed by public transport users, private vehicle users in the First New Town Area, with general public parking on George Street seen as low priority	Prioritise active travel and access for people with a disability or impairment, with public parking on George Street seen as lowest priority
4	Flexible Space	Develop an adaptable street design, in particular enabling use for seasonal and civic events	Develop an adaptable street design, in particular enabling use for appropriate events	Be adaptable and 'future-proofed, so that in the short term streets may be used for different activities if required, and over time, the streets accommodate changes to operation	Develop an adaptable street design, in particular enabling use for appropriate events
5	Vibrant for the Economy	Maximise user experience to enhance the unique offer of George Street, contributing to its sustainable future	Encourage the environmental and economic sustainability of the First New Town through provision of an appealing public realm	Enhance the First New Town Offer as a location where businesses can thrive	Enhance the First New Town Offer as a place where businesses can thrive

Final Objectives

	Theme	Objective
1	World Class Place	Create a world class place that respects and enhances the World Heritage Site
2	Pedestrian Experience	Enlarge and enhance pedestrian space, creating a safe, vibrant space for all
3	Sustainable Transport	Prioritise active travel and access for people with a disability or impairment, with public parking on George Street seen as lowest priority
4	Flexible space	Develop an adaptable street design, in particular enabling use for appropriate events
5	Vibrant for the Economy	Enhance the First New Town as a place where businesses can thrive

Final Objective 1

“Create a world class place that respects and enhances the World Heritage Site”

Key Design Considerations:

- Retaining a sense of symmetry to George Street
- Introducing public seating with careful consideration of the specific location
- Eliminating street clutter
- Protecting key views and vistas
- Removing median parking to reduce the current dominance of vehicles
- Considering limited greening and tree planting with careful consideration of the specific location
- Creating designated events space for an ‘appropriate scale’ of events
- Using high quality materials e.g. natural stone
- Using appropriate lighting to enhance the heritage features and character of the street

**High Level Theme:
World Class Place**

Final Objective 2

“Enlarge and enhance pedestrian space, creating a safe, vibrant space for all”

Key Design Considerations:

- Learn from the experience of other successful cities
- The existing space available to pedestrians should be enlarged
- Accessibility should be maximised within the public realm environment
- Careful consideration of the integration of cycle routes is required - segregated cycle routes are a preference
- General parking on George Street should be reduced with consideration given to its relocation in adjoining streets or elsewhere in the city centre
- Blue badge, loading and residents parking should be retained on George Street
- The safety and ease of crossing the street and junctions should be improved for pedestrians and cyclists
- Public seating should be introduced with careful consideration of the specific location
- Seating associated with commercial spill out should be restricted from encroaching on pedestrian space

High Level Theme 2
Pedestrian Experience

Final Objective 3

“Prioritise active travel and access for people with a disability or impairment, with public parking on George Street seen as lowest priority”

Key Design Considerations:

- Accessibility should be maximised within the public realm environment
- Careful consideration should be given to access requirements for people of all abilities including people with sensory and mobility impairments
- Careful consideration should be given to bus access needs in the First New Town
- General parking on George St should be reduced with consideration given to availability elsewhere in the city centre
- Blue badge and loading should be retained on George Street
- Careful consideration should be given to arrangement for residents parking in the First New Town
- Careful consideration should be given to the integration of cycle routes, acknowledging that not everyone is comfortable with ‘shared spaces’ - with segregated cycle routes seen as a preference

High Level Theme 3
Sustainable Transport

Final Objective 4

“Develop an adaptable street design, in particular enabling use for appropriate events”

Key Design Considerations:

- Consider the creation of specific ‘zones’ within the street for events, so they can be accommodated without impacting pedestrian and cycle routes to minimise disruption within the street
- Give careful consideration to appropriate scale of space for events
- Ensure the designated zones for events are adaptable spaces which can accommodate a variety of events
- Design events infrastructure e.g. power, water and lighting into the streetscape
- Consider lighting in tandem with events
- Ensure the design is adaptable over time

High Level Theme 4
Flexible space

Final Objective 5

“Enhance the First New Town as a place where businesses can thrive”

Key Design Considerations:

High Level Theme 5
Vibrant for the Economy

- Enhance the unique identity of George Street and the First New Town
- Ensure that the First New Town remains accessible by public transport
- Help integrate the First New Town within the role of the wider city centre
- Improve attractiveness of George Street and the First New Town as a place to spend time
- Introduce seating at key locations
- Improve cycle parking
- Careful consideration of arrangement for loading and servicing
- Careful consideration of light and climatic conditions to maximise attractiveness of streets
- Utilise lighting to transform and animate the street after dark and throughout the winter



George Street and First New Town – Consultation and Engagement

Concept design stage (November 2018 – January 2019)

On 8 November 2018, a ten week long consultation period started on the draft concept design for George Street and the First New Town.

Methodology

The approach to consultation and engagement included:

- A 10 week online survey hosted on the Council’s consultation hub, accompanied by hard copy surveys available at consultation events and activities
- Stakeholder workshop and 4 staffed public drop-in sessions
- Exhibition of the proposals in the Central Library, George IV Bridge
- Outreach sessions with school geography classes
- Engagement activity was promoted through print media, the Council’s Consultation Hub, Orb, Leader’s Report, GNT pages of Council website, social media and paid social media
- Email flyer with web link to fly through video of draft concept design on Council website sent to over 500 individuals and groups including businesses, libraries, Edinburgh Transport Forum, equalities and community groups, MPs, MSPs, Councillors, Council staff, transport, road and freight operators and public service providers.

Additionally, engagement about the draft concept design was supported through meetings and discussion with representatives from community groups, heritage groups, Essential Edinburgh, Sustrans, Lothian Buses, Mobility Access Scotland Committee and the Council’s Active Travel Forum.

Further details of the public engagement plan and a list of organisations that responded to the consultation are included as an appendix.

Level of response

More than 1,900 people contributed their views, either through the on line survey (1,300) returns, by attending a workshop event (50), drop in events (546) organisations submitting written responses (16) and email comments (17).

99% of survey respondents gave their postcode details, of which 23% were residents in the First New Town/City Centre. Responses were slightly higher for males (51.6%) than females (39%) and broadly representative of adults of working age. Around 8% of respondents considered themselves to have a disability.

'World Class' Street Setting

Plaza areas

As part of the concept design 'plaza' areas are proposed in the middle of each block of George Street to reinforce the views of key buildings, slow traffic down and allow for informal crossing of the street mid-block. The concept of 'plaza' areas was strongly supported (38%) or supported (30%) by survey respondents. Younger people were more likely to support the idea of plaza areas for events. 23% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the concept of plaza areas. Many respondents commented that more information was needed on what the plazas areas would be used for and if they would be geared towards visitor rather than resident needs. RNIB commented that it would be important to ensure that there is clear physical delineation between the plaza areas and the road so that people with sight loss can tell when they have walked onto the road.

Junctions

Proposals to change the layout of junctions to enhance the setting of statues and improve key views were supported by 63% of respondents. Some concerns were raised that narrowing the junctions could result in congestion and more space may be required for buses turning right at the statues. Respondents commented that more information is required on how a two way directional cycleway would integrate with junctions. It was noted that public safety in the event of a terrorist attack and emergency access must also be considered as part of the design process.

Strong concern was expressed by a number of groups and individuals regarding the relocation of the James Clerk Maxwell statue. The statue is currently located at the St Andrew's Square end of George Street and is owned by the Royal Society of Edinburgh. Those commenting stressed that any consideration of an alternative location should be made in close consultation with the RSE.

Seating, small scale planting

One of the new elements proposed in the concept design is the introduction of a seating area, set within small scale planted borders and hedges. These 'dwell zones' could also include some informal play elements. The introduction of additional seating and small scale planting was well received by the majority of people who welcomed the inclusion of seating for people of all ages and abilities to sit and relax and enjoy the views. They commented that there is currently a lack of seating on George Street and the dwell zones could help to create a more people friendly environment. Some respondents put forward their own ideas for the dwell zones such as e-bike charging points, places for people to refill water bottles and recharge phones. Others were doubtful that the weather in Edinburgh is conducive to sitting outdoors. They expressed concerns that the dwell zones would attract vandalism and anti social behaviour and a maintenance programme would be required. Making more use of the gardens nearby and at Charlotte Square was frequently raised as an alternative.

Trees

One aspect of the design that generated diverging views is the inclusion of tree planting in George Street. There was strong support from survey respondents with 56 % strongly agreeing and 21% agreeing to the introduction of trees. Those in favour commented that trees would add interest and have a positive impact on the street. They would improve air quality by reducing carbon emissions, provide shelter and shade and are good for health and well-being. The addition of trees would be beneficial for wildlife and biodiversity and could help to separate cycle and pedestrian routes.

Heritage groups commented that the trees were not a feature of James Craig's original design for George Street and are not in the spirit or character of the street. New Town Broughton and Pilrig Community Council share the view extended by the Cockburn Association that it is important that any plan for George Street should be part of a wider plan for the First New Town; including consideration of the context of any proposal with the principles of the Edinburgh World Heritage site (consistent with the stated GNT objective 'Create a World Class Place that Respects and Enhances the World Heritage Site).

Those opposed to the introduction of trees commented that trees would block views, interfere with sightlines, produce too much shade, create a slip hazard when the leaves fall and would require a maintenance programme.

Other considerations frequently highlighted include the importance of ensuring the correct species of tree, moveable planting and the impact of tree roots on the location of services below the ground.

Walking

There was strong support for increasing pavement widths and improved crossing facilities for pedestrians at junctions and mid-block with 75% strongly agreeing or agreeing with improved crossing facilities for pedestrians. It was noted that the absence of street clutter will make it more pleasant and easier for people of all ages and abilities to navigate the street. Living Streets commented that all proposals and designs should explicitly conform to the Edinburgh Street Design Guidance and highlighted the importance of ensuring that the crossing provisions within the design cater for the needs of people with visual impairments.

The George Street Association commented that the current state of the public realm in George Street is seen by members to be the single greatest challenge to the area's sustainability, requiring urgent action and investment.

Access by bicycle

The cycleway along George Street will link to the City Centre East to West Link (CCWEL) route via junctions at Charlotte Square and St Andrew Square. The draft concept design envisages a two way directional cycleway on the south side of George Street. This proposal attracted a high level of comment with 63% of survey respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that the introduction of a two way directional cycleway adequately meets the needs of people on bikes.

Cycling organisations, Spokes and Cycling UK Scotland, indicated that they would prefer a one-way cycleway on each side of the road as this would facilitate easier linking for cyclists joining the route at junctions and at each end of the street and would lead to less conflict with pedestrians.

An alternative view was expressed by Living Streets that if general traffic is restricted, this would remove the need for a separate cycleway at all, as cycling on the carriageway would be attractive and safe.

Safety of pedestrians and cyclists

The safety of pedestrians and cyclists and those with mobility issues attracted a high level of response from a wide range of respondents.

RNIB commented that the cyclepath must be clearly delineated and clear signalised pedestrian crossing points should be included in the cycleway design.

Spokes and Cycling UK Scotland expressed concern that the cycleway in the concept design is level with the footway and separated by a tactile surface. They would recommend that the cycleway is separated by an intermediate level kerb as indicated in Edinburgh Street Design Guidance C:4 Hard Segregation to prevent cycle-pedestrian conflict.

The provision of secure, cycle parking along George Street was widely supported.

Cycling provision on George Street provoked a mixed reaction from survey respondents and people who attended the drop-in events. Many people were enthusiastic about the provision of a dedicated, two way directional cycleway and how it would be good for non-confident cyclists as well as encouraging safe, connected cycleways and city centre family trips. However, others were less supportive and expressed safety concerns about shared space and cyclists not adhering to the speed limits or rules of the road.

Access, Parking and Servicing

When asked to consider the principle of prioritising blue badge parking in George Street, with resident and pay and display parking located in side streets, 60% agreed or strongly agreed, 15% neither agreed or disagreed, 10% disagreed and 14% strongly disagreed and 1% didn't know. Some concern was expressed that blue badge parking can be abused

The removal of central parking on George Street attracted general support. 66% of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the removal of central parking on George Street to allocate more space for pedestrians within the street. 24% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and 7% were unsure.

Support for the removal of central parking on George Street was often combined with support for pedestrianising George Street. Responses received from businesses tended to be less supportive. Typical comments for and against the removal of central parking are outlined below:

Statements of support for removal of central parking

- ‘Given the vast number of parking spaces to be added at the St James Centre, a reduction of street parking in the New Town (which is ugly and encourages congestion and pollution) is essential.’
- ‘Removal of parking is a good thing. What about complete pedestrianisation of George Street, this would create a much nicer environment and the cross streets may be close enough to provide blue badge access/loading facilities?’
- ‘Remove parking on the street altogether and remove access to private cars. With public transportation being available, there is no need for private cars to be there
- ‘Parked cars as presently we have, totally destroy our enjoyment of the built environment. This is the number one change I would do – get rid of general parking!’

Statements against removal of central parking

- ‘Maintain parking, avoiding pushing the problem of parking further into surrounding areas.’
- ‘It’s hard enough as it is to come into town by car, not forgetting the extortionate parking charges and by taking spaces away, people are going to drive to out of town shopping centres instead of heading into town.’
- ‘If only residents parking is in the side streets, coming to Church is going to be extremely difficult. Not everyone wants to climb up the hill of Hanover Street after parking in Howard Place or similar as we approach our eighth decade of life.’

Displacement of parking was raised as a concern particularly by residents living near George Street. Support for more park and ride in reasonably close areas and underground parking were identified as ideas for further consideration.

High support was received to retain the bus stops in approximately their current positions on George Street.

Servicing and loading

A range of opinions were expressed regarding which side of the road deliveries should take place, when loading restrictions should apply, the size and type of delivery vehicles, emergency access arrangements and enforcement. It was suggested by respondents that it would be useful to discuss these issues in more detail with the businesses affected and to look at examples of best practice from other cities to help address these issues.

Impact on Fairness and Equality

Overall respondents identified more positive than negative impacts. Respondents commented that wider, smoother pavements would be safer for pedestrians and people with disabilities. Provision of disabled parking and more seating received high levels of support. Respondents welcomed the removal of street clutter and commented that it was good to create a space that is welcoming for buggies, prams and wheelchairs.

However, there were some concerns that older people who do not have a blue badge and struggle to use public transports may find it more difficult to access George Street. Other people commented that it is too early to say what the impact will be as technical details of the design are not available yet.

Consideration must also be taken into account of the needs of people with visual, sensory and mobility impairments to ensure that they are able to navigate the street safely.

Summary of approach to public engagement

The [initial concept design](#) builds on input from residents, businesses and stakeholders.

Pre-public engagement awareness raising

In advance of the public engagement period, the Council undertook a proactive communications campaign to raise public awareness of the aims and key elements of the draft concept design. The Council's social media was used to promote the engagement activities and encourage people to take part.

Audience	Content of engagement	Channel of engagement
Public Engagement		
Members of the public	Engagement on initial ideas for draft design concept using visuals, information boards and text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Media and social media • Invitation to drop in events held in November and January • online consultation • Exhibition of draft proposals at Central Library • Fly through video sent to all libraries with details of consultation • Information on Council website
Stakeholder Groups		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young people 	Engagement on plans for city centre and initial ideas for GNT draft concept design	Place standard used to elicit views from geography pupils at two Edinburgh high schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Older people • Equalities representatives • Walking and cycling • Heritage 	Presentation and workshop discussion on key aspects of draft design concept	Invite to attend stakeholder seminar and staffed drop in events

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community groups • Edinburgh business • Transport, Road and Freight operators • Environmental groups • Statutory bodies • Emergency services • Community planning partners • Localities • Voluntary groups 		<p>Encouraged to complete online consultation</p> <p>Presentations given to Active Travel Forum and City Centre Neighbourhood Partnership Meeting</p>
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Responses to the online survey from businesses and organisations

1. AXL UK Ltd
2. Transition Edinburgh
3. Centotre Ltd
4. Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society
5. Greening our Street
6. Edinburgh Access Panel
7. Drumbrae Community Council
8. Tenant Group
9. Attacat
10. Edinburgh UNESCO City of Literature Trust and Edinburgh's Netherbow
11. Strathmore Business Centres
12. Arterre Landscapes
13. City Partnership UK Limited
14. LEAP
15. Interactive Theatre International
16. Living Streets (individual response)
17. Royal College of Physicians
18. Police Scotland
19. Sustrans (individual responses)
20. India Street Residents Association
21. Transport Edinburgh
22. SSVP, The Society of St Vincent de Paul
23. Edinburgh World Heritage
24. Tollcross Community Council
25. Fountainbridge Canalside Initiative
26. Signature Pubs
27. Great King Street Assoc
28. CEC public safety
29. Edinburgh College
30. The melting pot
31. Edinburgh International Conference Centre
32. RNIB
33. West Port Business Group
34. NEC
35. Edinburgh Access Panel
36. SPM Window Cleaning
37. Paths for All
38. Victor Hugo George Street
39. Land and Property Holdings
40. Boroughmuir High School (geography pupils)
41. Heriot Row East Assoc
42. Hamilton & Inches Ltd
43. Guide Dogs
44. Craiglockhart Community Council
45. Guthrie Group Ltd

46. Sestran
47. Transport for Edinburgh (individual)
48. National Galleries Scotland
49. Causey Development Trust
50. Motorcycle Action Group
51. City of Edinburgh Council Forestry Service
52. NHS health Facilities Scotland
53. BMO Real Estate Partners
54. JD Wetherspoon
55. Edinburgh International Book Festival
56. Road Haulage Association
57. Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland, Forth & Borders Cases Panel
58. Fairhurst

Written submissions

1. Lothian Buses
2. Edinburgh Bus Users Group
3. Spokes
4. Cycling UK
5. Living Streets
6. RNIB
7. The George Street Association
8. Historic Environment Scotland
9. AHSS Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland
10. Royal Society of Edinburgh – specific comment regarding James Clerk Maxwell Statue
11. St Andrew's & St George's West Church
12. People Places
13. New Town, Broughton & Pilrig Community Council
14. 3 residents