

# Aberdeen - Broad Street

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## Post construction monitoring report

April 2019



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### About Sustrans

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# 1 Introduction

Sustrans' Research and Monitoring Unit (RMU) undertook post construction monitoring in March/April 2019 to evaluate the new developments on Broad Street, Aberdeen. This report provides a short overview of the project, outlines the monitoring conducted, and presents initial findings. The report should be read in conjunction with 'Sustrans Review CL Project Broad St Aberdeen 2019 Apr' produced by Sustrans' Community Links project team.

## 1.1 Broad Street

The part-pedestrianisation of Broad Street was one of the first projects from Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan<sup>1</sup> (2015) which sought to create a more pedestrian and cycle-friendly environment in the city centre. The project's main aim was to make Broad Street open to buses, cycles and pedestrians only. The project has seen the removal of general traffic from Broad Street and the creation of shared space for pedestrians, cyclists and buses. In addition to a reprioritisation of the transport hierarchy<sup>2</sup>, public realm improvements to Broad Street have included a roundel to replace the existing traffic lights at the Gallowgate / Broad Street / Upperkirkgate junction, raised grass planter, a water fountain and trees. A redetermination order has been approved to allow cyclists to use the entire area. The space is now also utilised for events.

### Before



### After



## 1.2 Community Links

The Broad Street developments are part of the Community Links programme, which has the following objectives<sup>3</sup>:

- Create infrastructure that encourages people to cycle, walk or use another **active travel** mode as their preferred mode of travel for everyday journeys
- Meet the needs of **communities**: provide communities with the opportunity to shape their local environment and link the places people live in with the places they want to get to
- Encourage **innovation**: support partner organisations in raising the standard of infrastructure for walking and cycling in Scotland

<sup>1</sup> <https://aberdeencitycentremasterplan.com/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/active-travel/walking-and-cycling-developing-an-active-nation/sustainable-travel-and-the-national-transport-strategy/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file\\_content\\_type/community\\_links\\_guidance\\_2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.sustrans.org.uk/sites/default/files/file_content_type/community_links_guidance_2018_0.pdf)

- Encourage **placemaking** which facilitates greater use of public space and higher levels of active travel
- Create an **enabling** environment for active travel that limits the speed and volume of motorised vehicles while improving the walking and cycling experience, such as traffic calming measures and implementing filtered permeability

To complement the objectives of Community Links, Aberdeen City Council had the following specific aims for the Broad Street project:

- Greater footfall leading to an increase business sales
- Increase in visitor numbers
- Health benefits as a result of increasing number of journeys made on foot or bike
- Increase in journeys made on foot or by bicycle
- Makes active travel more attractive resulting in more people cycling and walking
- Promotes healthy living across the city
- Changes in perception amongst local people and visitors
- Increased civic pride
- Improved community safety
- Increased number of green space and trees within the city centre
- Increased street cleanliness
- Opportunity for innovative and entertaining landscape feature, art and lighting
- Helps deliver the agreed vision of the masterplan
- Improved perception amongst investors
- Increased investor confidence
- Increase in visitor spend
- Increased sense of community through gathering in new civic spaces
- Significantly improving the setting of Marischal College
- Setting an entrance to the City Centre Masterplan Queen Square area
- Reduction in car use and associated drop in carbon emissions
- Improved environment from reduced traffic and an attractive route for cyclists
- Access to public transport enhanced
- Opportunity to close Broad Street for larger temporary events
- Can control how long buses wait in the area
- Supports aim to reduce cross city centre journeys
- Likely to contribute to localised air quality improvements
- Improved bus journey times and reliability

### 1.3 Monitoring

In order to evaluate the project a mixed method approach was used to gauge both usage and stakeholder's evaluation of the project area. The three monitoring tools outlined below used a combination of observation and surveying stakeholders through closed questionnaires with some free texts questions.

- A video manual count of active travel movements
- An on-street survey about travel behaviour and usage of the project area
- A retailer survey about customer/employee travel behaviour and usage of the project area

This report presents the findings from the three monitoring tools, highlighting how the street is being used, who by, people’s perceptions of the changes, and their thoughts on those changes.

The monitoring is post construction only, as such a direct comparison from before the project cannot be made, however both surveys asked retrospective questions and is useful for understanding current usage and users views of the project area.

## 2 Video Manual Count

Counts of active travel users were undertaken over four days at the north end of Broad Street. The counts took place from 7am-7pm on three weekdays (26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March) and one weekend day (30<sup>th</sup> of March) during term time, providing 48 hours coverage over the period.

Due to the width of the project area, a screen line count was used and capture movements by video camera. The counts recorded mode of travel (pedestrian, cyclist, wheelchair, jogger, pram or other) and direction of travel (northbound or southbound). As this is a screen line count, values are reported as movements instead of journeys, trips or people, as it is unclear how many times a person may cross the line during any given journey. The weather during the count was predominantly cold and mostly dry, though some rain was observed on Saturday between 7am-10am. No large scale events were observed and usage is considered to be typical.

**Figure 2-1 – Screen line video manual count Broad Street**



**Table 2-1 – Daily average total of all active travel users between 7am-7pm**

	AVERAGE	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	SATURDAY
<b>DAILY usage</b>	5,485	5,475	6,223	6,230	4,013

As shown in Table 2-1, the average total number of movements made through Broad Street by active travel users between 7am and 7pm was 5,485.

Usage varied by 2,210 movements between the days, with weekdays providing higher footfall than the weekend. The reason for the variation is unclear as it could reflect how the space is used but also be related to the rain on Saturday morning.

Figure 2-2 shows the peak usage on an average weekday was between 12 midday and 1pm. This could be explained by lunchtime trips. There are also smaller peaks at 08:30 and 16:00, which could be explained by commuting. The weekend experiences a low count in the morning compared to weekdays and has a broad peak between 11:30 and 17:00.

In terms of directional flow, there was no significant difference between the numbers of northbound versus southbound movements when looking at all travel modes. However, when looking at just cyclists it is worth noting that 62% of movements were heading from south to north up Broad Street, compared to 38% heading north to south.

**Figure 2-2 – Usage by day type over time**

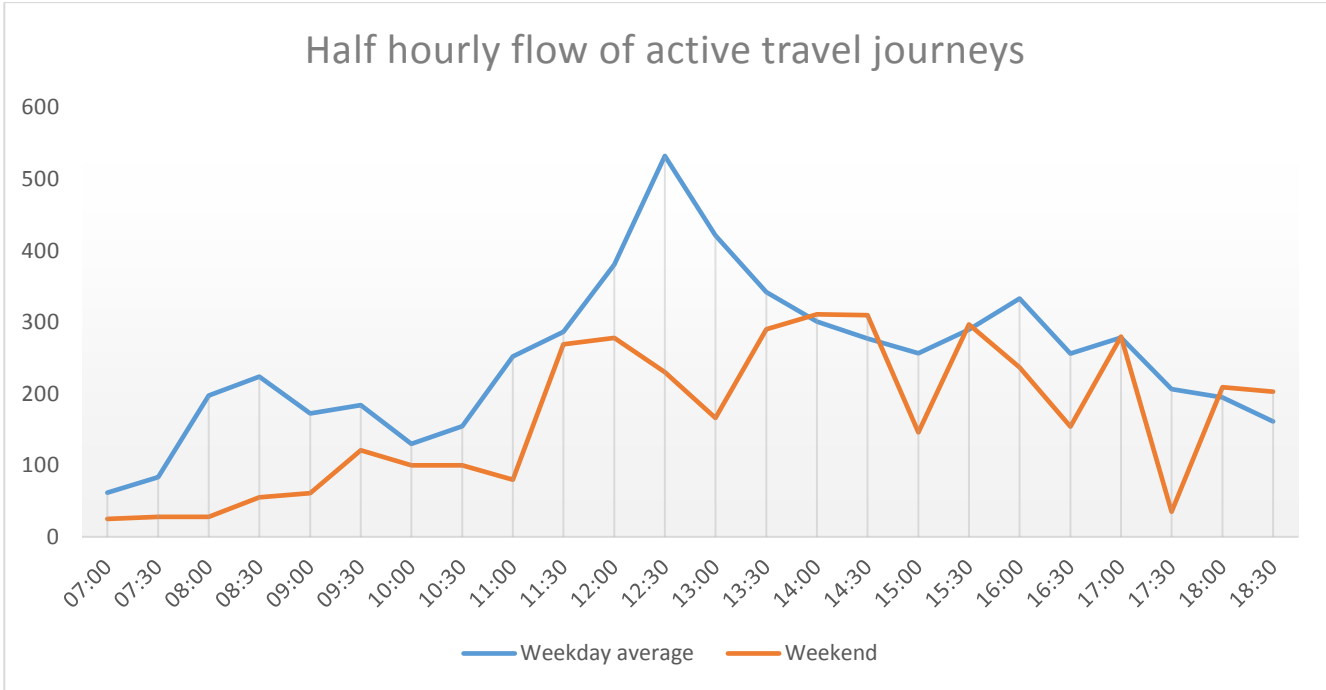
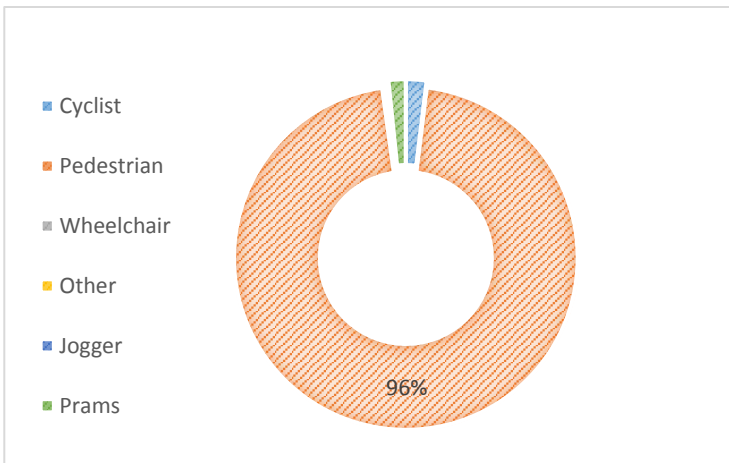


Figure 2-3 provides a breakdown of how people are travelling through the space by mode. Pedestrian movements dominates in terms of numbers, making up 96% of all movements over the four days. Cyclists represent 2% of the movements with an average of 107 per day, whilst wheelchairs (7) and joggers (16) make up less than 1% each.

**Figure 2-3 Usage by active travel mode**



### 3 On-street Survey

On-street surveys of people using the area were undertaken concurrently with the video manual count. The surveys took place from 7am-7pm on three weekdays (26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> of March) and one weekend day (30<sup>th</sup> of March) during term time, providing 48 hours coverage over the period. The survey sampling methodology is to ask the next available person if they are willing to take part in the survey.

Over the four days 154 people completed surveys. The activity being undertaken by the respondent reflects the findings from the count, with walking making up 94%, followed by smaller proportions for cycling, running, dog walking and wheelchair use.

#### 3.1 Demographics

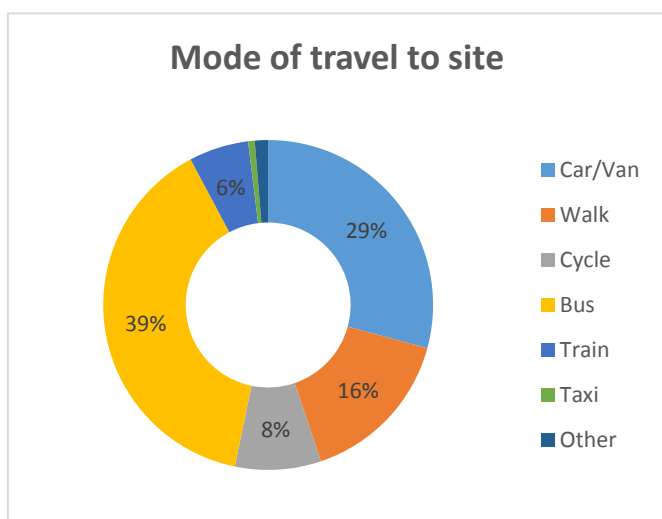
The sample of 154 people seems demographically representative of a wider population:

- Gender was split exactly 50-50 between male and female
- All age categories were represented; though over 65's were slightly overrepresented
- 27% of respondents reported themselves as having a health problem or disability
- The majority were in good health and had completed 30 minutes physical activity every day that week, but there were also respondents with fair/poor health and fewer days of exercise
- Nearly half were employed full-time, a quarter were retired, with 14% employed part-time, 9% unemployed, and a small number of carers, students and volunteers.
- 92% were White British in ethnic origin. Other ethnicities were White Irish, White Polish, White Eastern European, White other, Asian Indian, Black African, and Other ethnic group.
- The majority of respondents (64%) had been visiting Broad Street for over five years.

#### 3.2 Usage

Although respondents were either walking, cycling or wheeling when surveyed, it is important to consider their wider travel journeys to get to Broad Street. A relatively even mix of respondents used private vehicles (car/van/taxi), public transport (bus/train) and active travel (walk/cycle) as their main mode of travel, as shown in Figure 3-1.

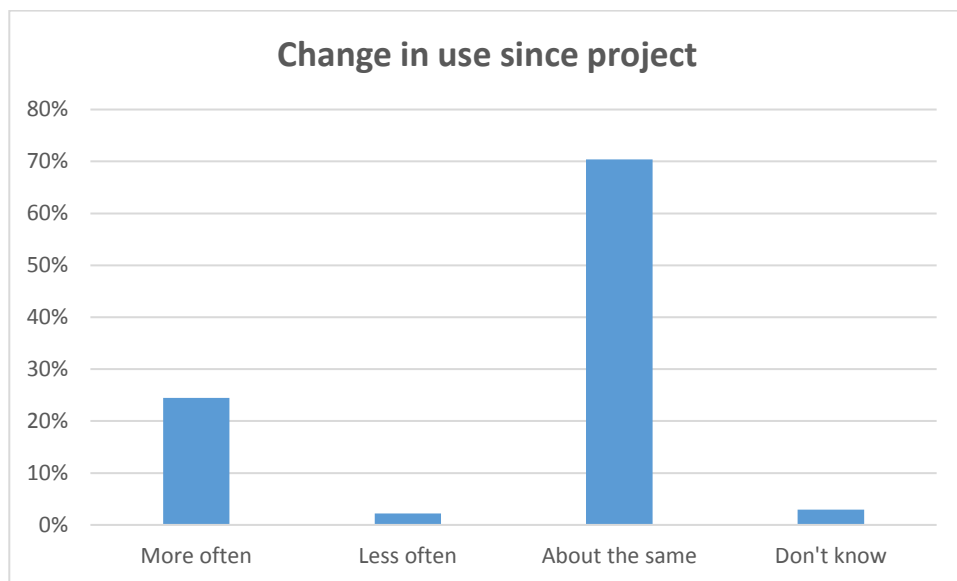
**Figure 3-1 – How people travel to Broad Street**



- Respondents were asked how far they had travelled before reaching Broad Street. Three quarters of people had travelled five miles or less, including one fifth of people having travelled one mile or less.



**Figure 3-2 – Self-reported change in usage since the project**

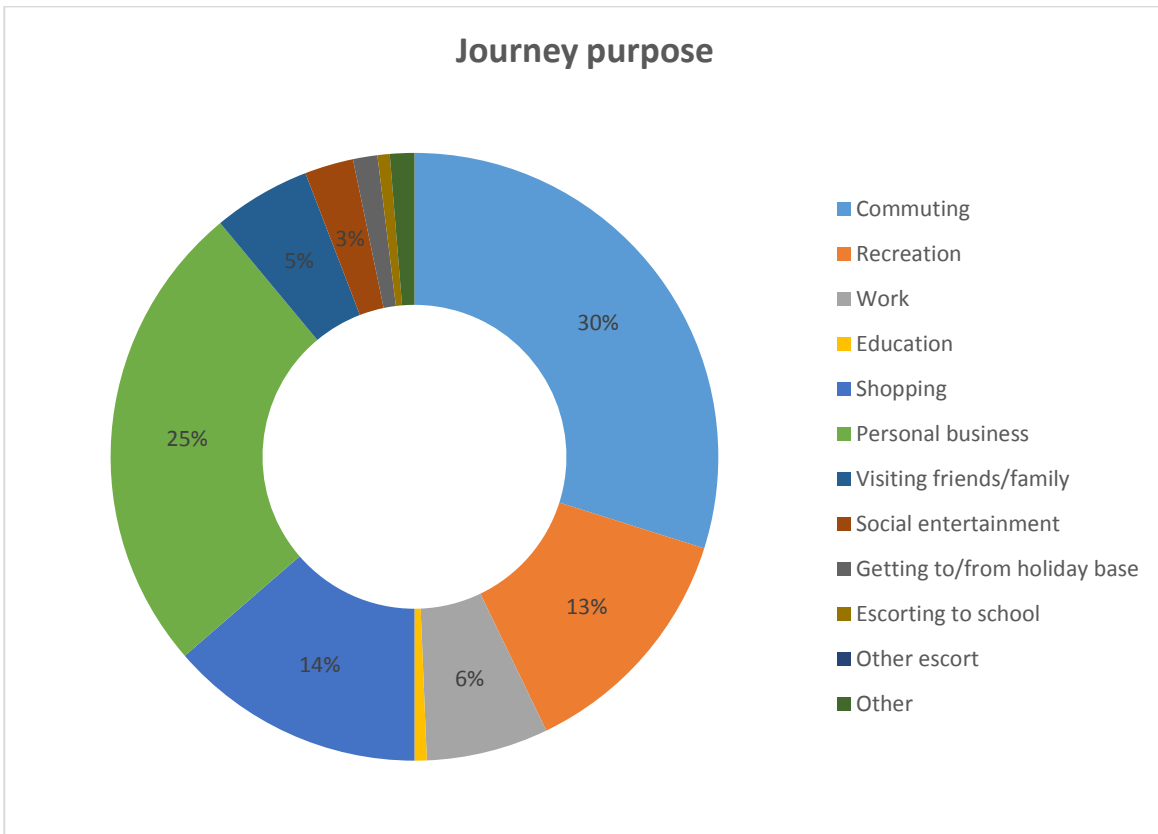


- Figure 3-2 shows the majority of people had not changed the amount they visit Broad Street as a result of the project (70%); but 24% stated they visited more often compared to 2% who stated they visited less often; giving a net gain of 22% of respondents visiting more often overall.
- Within those that had not used a car, 58% had done so simply because a car was not an option. However, 40% could have used a car but choose not to.
- 77% of respondents visit Broad Street at least once a week, with 42% stating the visit daily.

### **3.3 Journey purpose**

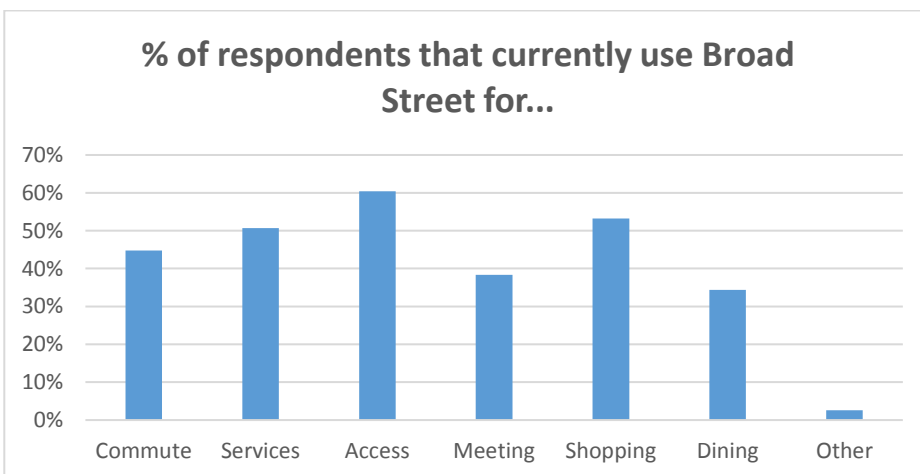
There was a wide range of trip generators and quite an even spread between the most popular ones, as shown in Figure 3-3. The two most common journey purposes were commuting (30%) and personal business (25%). As commuters are typically less likely to stop and be surveyed due to time constraints, this figure could be higher in reality. After those two journey purposes, recreation and shopping make up 13% and 14% respectively. Carrying out work and visiting friends/family contribute a further 6% and 5%. Education, social entertainment, holiday, and escorting to school were the purposes for no more than four trips each over the four days.

**Figure 3-3 – Purpose of trip when surveyed**



Respondents were also asked what activities they used Broad Street for. Figure 3-4 shows people use Broad Street for more than a single purpose, with the average number of activities per respondent being 2.8.

**Figure 3-4 – Proportion of users by activity**



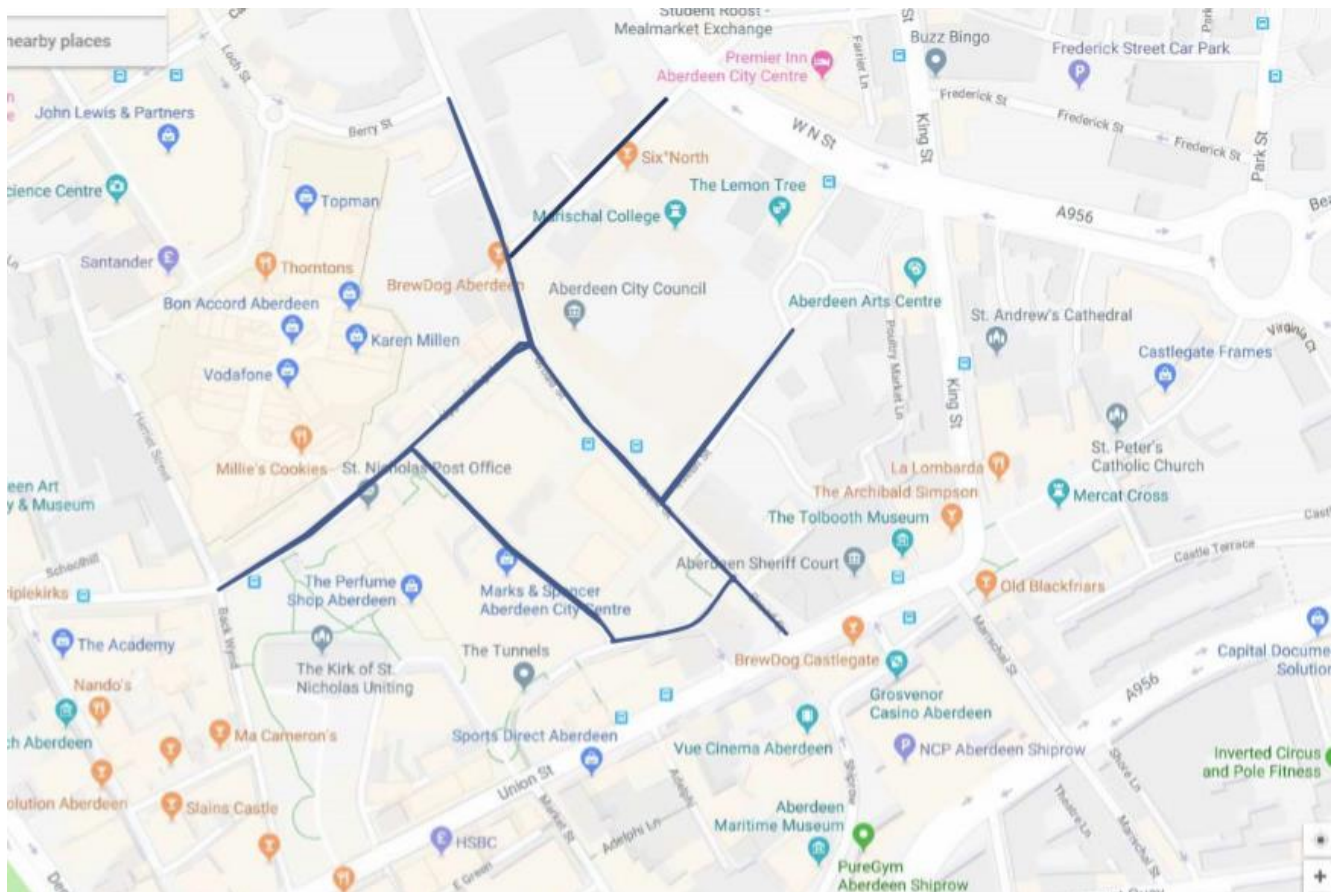
### 3.4 Impact of project

- The vast majority of respondents were aware of the project (88%).
- 71% of respondents that were aware of the project felt the changes were either positive or somewhat positive. Comparatively, 11 respondents felt the changes were somewhat negative (8%) or negative (1%). As such the overall net view of the changes were 62% positive.
- As stated in the usage section, 22% of respondents overall stated they used Broad Street more as result of the changes.

## 4 Retail Survey

Surveys with retailers on Broad Street and the surrounding area (parts of Queen Street, Littlejohn Street, Upperkirkgate and Flour Mill Lane) were undertaken on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March and 3<sup>rd</sup> of April. Figure 4-1 highlights the area covered by the survey.

Figure 4-1 – Area of coverage for retail survey



### 4.1 Business demographics

A total of 21 businesses completed the survey. Of the respondents there was a mixture of business types with coverage of professional services, retail and leisure. The majority of the businesses (76%) were established over five years ago and therefore had been in operation both before and after the project to redesign Broad Street. Only one respondent stated they were unaware of the project having taken place.

## **4.2 Impact of project**

As stated, only one of the twenty business was unaware of the project on Broad Street. Overall the respondents were neutral about the changes made, with 38% stating they felt neutral; whereas there was a small net positive in eight respondents stating they believed the changes to be either positive or somewhat positive compared to five that felt the opposite.

Of the features that were deemed to be positive, the two that received the most support were the area's appearance (86%) and that there was space to socialise (76%). Whilst none of the features were deemed to be negative overall, 38% felt the area was not safe for children to play in.

## **4.3 Further recommendations**

In addition to asking about the current features of the project area, the businesses were also asked to comment on what improvements could be made to the area. The most consistent recommendation of the options was to enhance the area with greenery/artwork/signage, with 95% agreeing this would improve the area. Improving pavements, reducing litter and deterring vandalism all received a slight majority agreement. A reduction in traffic was met with the most scepticism with 7 of the business suggesting this would not improve the area.