

**Aberdeen City Council
City Centre & Beach Masterplan
City Centre Streetscape Interventions
Public Consultation Report
October 2022**

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Summary

This document summarises the outcomes of the public consultation undertaken in relation to the City Centre Masterplan Streetscape Interventions over the period 3rd – 17th October 2022. It also provides an update on the ongoing engagement undertaken with stakeholders, children and young people.

Consultation Findings

A total of 219 responses were received. The consultation asked people to comment on specific elements of proposed streetscape interventions and then give more general feedback.

- 93% of respondents agreed with the proposals for greening and planting.
- 89% agreed that holding events would attract more people into the city centre.
- 85% liked the idea of introducing art installations.
- 80% agreed with the inclusion of play spaces within public realm.

Wider feedback indicated that the following themes were most popular:

- Trees and greening – 62 comments
- Improved pedestrian accessibility – 46 comments
- Less cars and better air quality – 37 comments
- The plans would improve vibrancy and attract footfall – 36 comments
- More attractive for cycling – 19 comments
- Outdoor café culture – 15 comments

Matters raised can be grouped into the following themes:

- Active travel infrastructure proposed not safe/inadequate segregation – 98 comments
- Inadequate public transport to encourage modal shift/behaviour change – 40 comments
- Funding & deliverability – 25 comments
- Maintenance – 17 comments
- Impact of city transport changes on business and work access – 14 comments
- Retail over capacity – 13 comments
- Antisocial behaviour – 7 comments

Responses to key issues raised can be summarised as:

- Active travel infrastructure has been accommodated where possible. Its provision is constrained by available space.
- Public transport provision – is not directly related to this project but is being tackled under the Bus Partnership Fund and Aberdeen Rapid Transport.
- Funding, deliverability and maintenance – are all matters that the Council will manage.
- Impact of city transport changes on business and work access – Separate Experimental Traffic Regulation Orders are being promoted and will be consulted on.

- Retail over capacity – A separate Empty Shops and Vacant Premised Action Plan is being prepared by the Council.
- Antisocial behaviour –The fall in footfall in the city centre means that anti social behaviour both appears and is more prevalent. The Council and its partners are considering how best to ensure a more coordinated response.

Public Consultation

A focused period of public consultation was undertaken from 3rd – 17th October. This is part of an ongoing programme of engagement activity and builds on previous public consultation undertaken in 2021.

In June 2022, Council took the decision on future transport priorities for Union Street permitting buses, taxis, cycles and delivery traffic on the central section of the street. This decision enabled designs to be progressed for Union Street in its entirety and adjoining streets.

The October consultation allowed members of the public and businesses to comment on updated concept designs.

Consultation material was on display at the Bon Accord Centre for the duration of this period with a member of staff being on hand every day. In addition:

- Business Briefings were offered with the design team and transport consultants being available on 6th and 7th October. Businesses were offered the opportunity to book an appointment to meet the team and discuss specific issues. This was promoted by the Council and Aberdeen Inspired.
- The design team was available on 6th, 7th and 8th October to meet the public in the Bon Accord Centre.
- A live online engagement event was held on the evening of 12th October.
- Material was available to **view and comment on online**. Feedback was able to be submitted in written form or online.
- A bespoke event was held for service users of North East Sensory Services (NESS) which was supported by an interpreter.

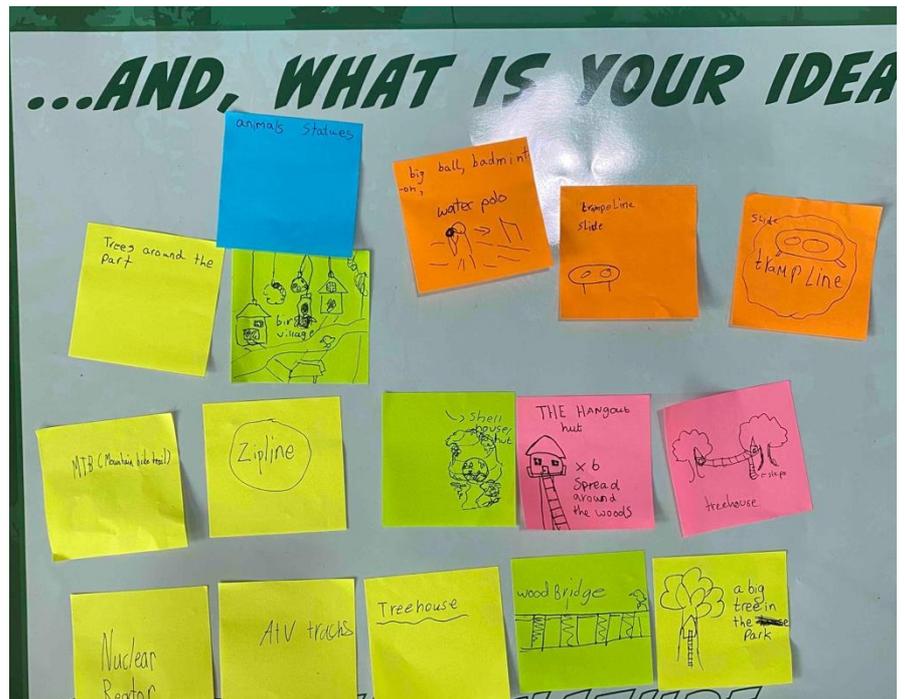
Stakeholder Engagement

Ongoing stakeholder engagement has enabled stakeholders to continue to influence the Development Framework. Meetings have taken place with:

- Aberdeen Community Council Forum
- Aberdeen Council's Citywide Tenants Association
- Aberdeen Civic Society
- Aberdeen Inspired
- ACTUP (The Council's forum for involving transport stakeholders)
- City Centre Community Council
- City Centre & Beach Masterplan Stakeholder Forum
- Disability Equity Partnership (DEP)
- George St Community Council
- North East Sensory Services (NESS)

Children and Young Persons (CYP) Engagement

CYP engagement in relation to the CCMP is ongoing. A local artist was commissioned to prepare a child friendly map of the city centre, with streetscape intervention areas and historic buildings and significant spaces highlighted. Key areas where childrens' play can be accommodated were extracted from the plan and young people given the opportunity to draw ideas for play in these locations. The design team will follow up with the schools involved in the next stage of design.



Publicising the Consultation

Aberdeen City Council's communications team led the public relations activity for the consultation.

The first press releases and social media posts were run from 3rd October. These were picked up by the Press & Journal and other local media and shared by stakeholders.

In addition to media publicity, direct contact was made with stakeholders and Aberdeen Inspired publicised the consultation and specific business engagement.

New images of reimagined Aberdeen city centre as consultation reveals plans to drastically reduce traffic on Union Street

By Alastair Gossip and Kieran Beattie | October 3, 2022, 2:26 pm



The western end of Union Street, showing vastly reduced traffic. A new consultation has been launched on plans for Aberdeen city centre. Image: Aberdeen City Council.

Aberdeen City Council
11 October

We are holding two separate public consultations for potential designs for streetscaping in the city centre and beach masterplan improvements.

The designs for the city centre streetscaping include play areas, public art, events spaces, and greening the area with trees, planters and rain gardens aiming to create a city centre which respects and enhances Aberdeen's unique qualities and characteristics while putting people at its heart.

For the consultation, the city centre has been split into eight areas with detailed plans for each. The areas are Union Street West, Belmont Quarter, Schoolhill and Upperkirkgate, Union Street East, West End, Union Street Central, Aberdeen Market, and Castlegate. The detailed plans have been shaped by the results of a public consultation held last year as well as extensive stakeholder engagement sessions over the last few months.

For the beach, the consultation on the Beachfront Development Framework and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment shows the various proposals, including a pier, an urban park consisting of a playpark, sports area and a pump track, attractive streetscaping, increased usability for the Beach Ballroom, and new sports facilities.

✔ The city centre consultation is available at <https://orlo.uk/BsezU> until Monday 17 October
✔ The beach consultation is available at <https://orlo.uk/llqw2> until Monday 24 October.

The city centre streetscape proposed designs are also available to view in a mini exhibition in the lower mall in the Bon Accord Shopping Centre.

Thank you!



Potential designs for city centre streetscaping unveiled today

Monday 3 October 2022

Consultation Feedback

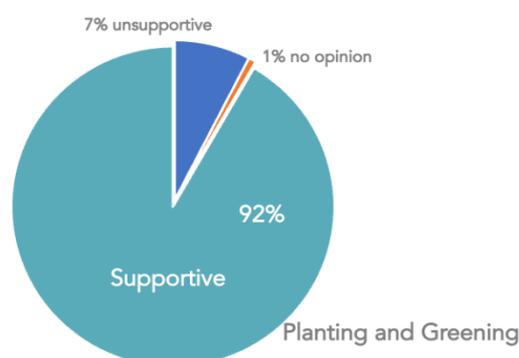
The October consultation allowed members of the public and businesses to comment on updated concept designs that reflected the June 2022 Council decision to permit buses, taxis, cycles and delivery traffic on the central section of Union Street. This decision enabled designs to be progressed for Union Street in its entirety and adjoining streets.

Consultation questions were based on key elements of the streetscape proposals namely:

- The introduction of planting and greening
- The inclusion of play features
- The introduction of art installations
- The creation of spaces suitable for staging a range of events

These elements are all important features in creating vibrant and attractive town and city centres. In addition, respondents were asked to provide further thoughts on each of these elements as well as open text questions on what they like about the proposals, if they had concerns and if there were elements that have been missed.

Question 1 - What do you think of the proposals for more planting and greening in the city centre?



“The recent covid pandemic demonstrated the importance and appreciation of green space in all environments, providing abundant benefits towards mental health, environmental, and visual appearance. The city rightfully should be proud of its granite buildings, but the "silver city" can be hard to see amongst all the grey. Greenery would contrast this, to fully allow the buildings around our city to stand out and receive the recognition they deserve”

92% of respondents advised they were supportive of the proposals for planting and greening.

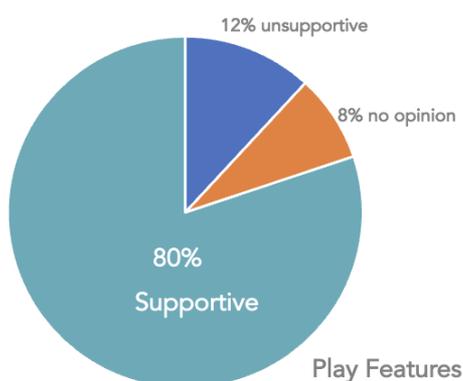
102 supportive comments were made with the largest category (44 comments) feel that providing green spaces will make the City more welcoming and vibrant, have positive effects on health & wellbeing, belonging and overall enjoyment of the City.

Other comments acknowledge the need for greening to help mitigate the impacts of climate change, requests that native species be used and that planting should complement and enhance heritage buildings and places.

Concerns about planting and greening totalled 63 comments with the largest theme being in relation to ongoing maintenance concerns followed by a plea that planting and greening should not be at the detriment of allowing people to move around the city in an inclusive way. The city centre needs shops to return, a tall order. I am fed up seeing all these airy fairy plans, do the guys who draw them up actually come to the city in winter which let's face it lasts about seven months . What is café culture there are plenty of coffee shops in the city very few with outdoor seating which tells its own story .

“The city centre needs shops to return, a tall order. I am fed up seeing all these airy fairy plans, do the guys who draw them up actually come to the city in winter which let's face it lasts about seven months . What is café culture there are plenty of coffee shops in the city very few with outdoor seating which tells its own story”

Question 2 - What do you think of the inclusion of play features within the public spaces?



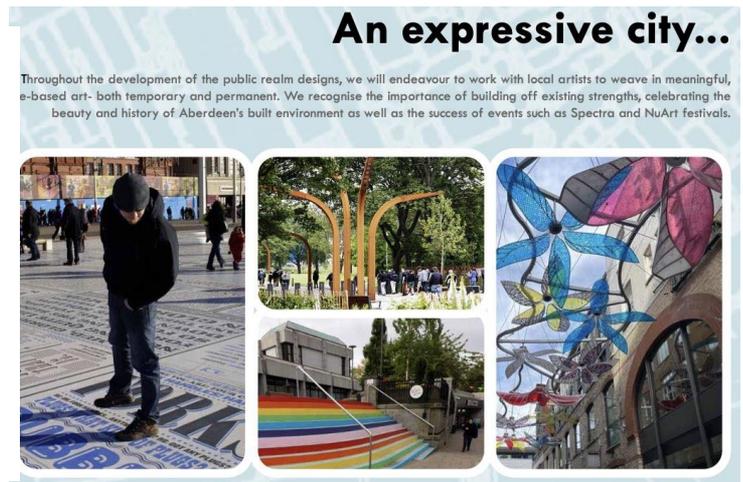
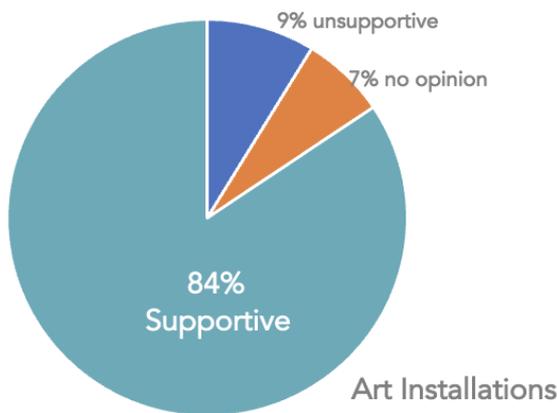
“Again, love it. We take our kids to parks most weekends and if there were some available in city centre it would definitely encourage us to come in more often. One parent could be at the play park with the kids while the other could be at the shops, etc. One thing I'd asked to be considered is how to prevent kids wandering off from the play areas to potentially unsafe places (such as onto cycle paths or bus routes, or even just wandering off altogether). Obviously parents need to take that responsibility, but when you have more than one kid, any help that the layout of the play features can provide is very welcome!”

80% of respondents are positive about introducing more play features into the city centre and creating an environment that is more attractive for young people and families.

Of the 94 positive comments made the majority notes such interventions would appeal to families and give a reason to visit the city centre and spend some quality time there - e.g the water display at Marischal College.

Of the 57 comments raising concerns, the largest concern was in relation to ongoing maintenance of such installations, ensuring safety and the correct locations chosen and the potential that they would increase anti social behaviour.

Q3 What do you think of the idea to introduce art installations into the city centre?



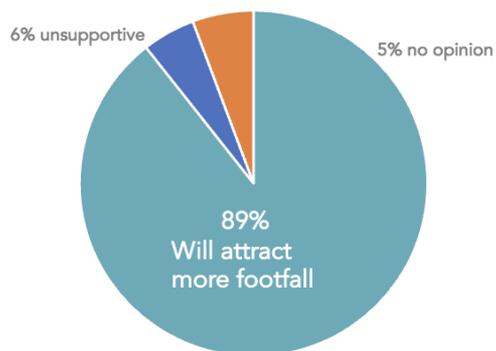
84% of respondents like the idea of introducing more public art into the city centre on both a temporary and permanent basis, giving local artists the opportunity to showcase work and adding interest. Of the 101 comments on art, the most popular sentiment, with 50 statements, is that this would create a refreshing & positive look to the city - providing creative and visual stimulation and adding to culture, making City more attractive to all generations

“If done well and a mix of sculpture / light installation / water features plus interactive where possible. this is the sort of thing that when I visit a city I want to see the art available on the streets.”

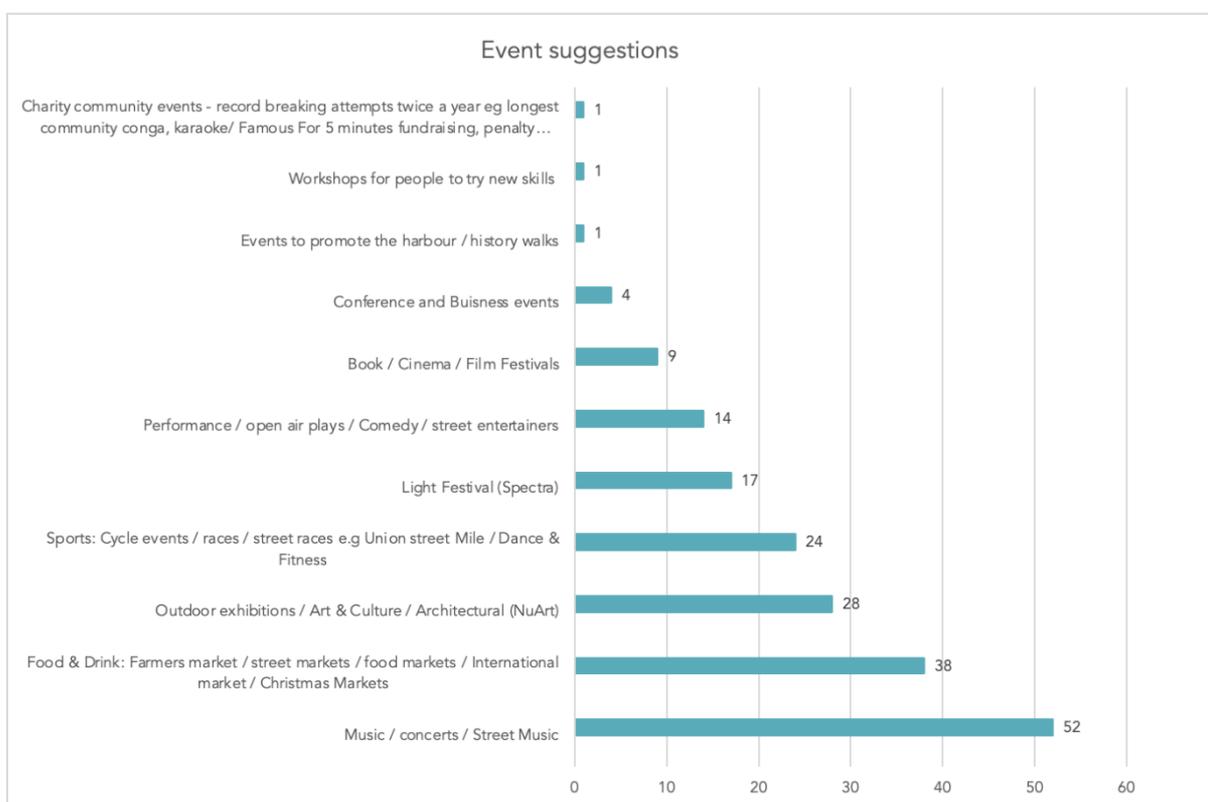
However, there were also 41 negative comments about the concept of art with concerns about inclusive design, maintenance and budget.

“This increases street clutter in a way which is actively hostile towards the disabled community within and visiting Aberdeen City, it is clear that either a detailed Equalities Impact Assessment has not been completed or that such a document was completed as a mere box-ticking exercise by officers who have no lived experience of disabilities or the impact their irrational and ill conceived ideas will have on those people.”

Q4 Do you think holding events in the city centre would attract people to use the city centre more often?



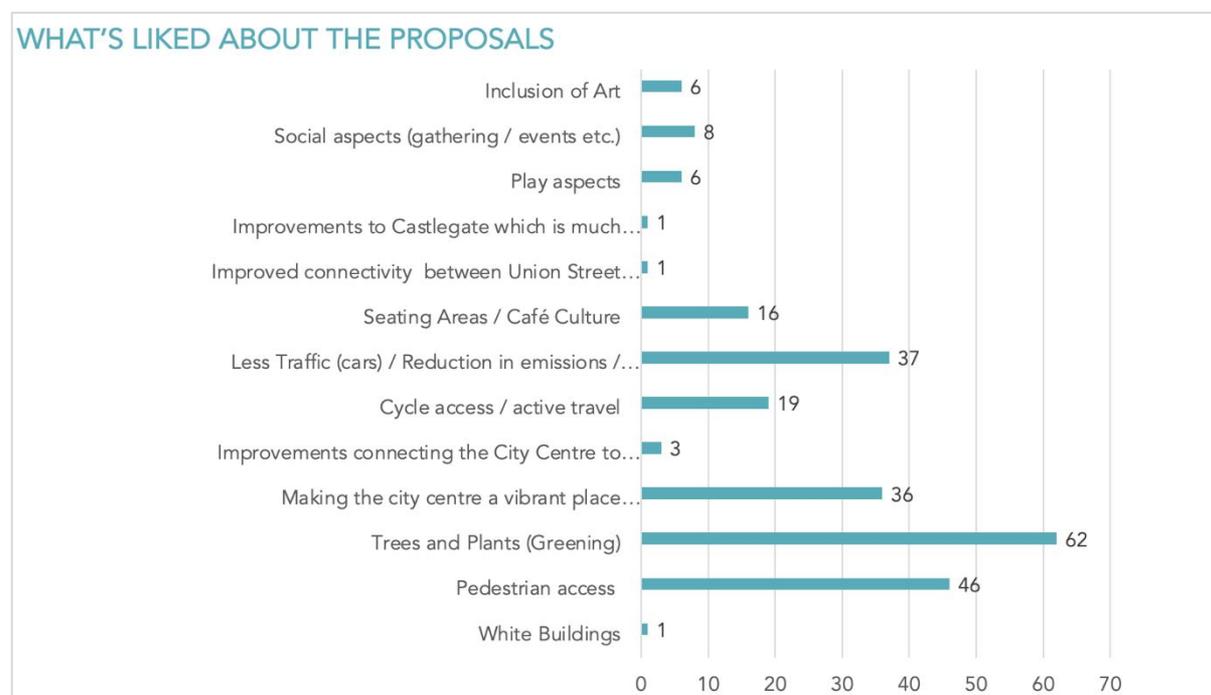
The final specific question gauged public opinion on the attractiveness of holding more events and ensuring the proposed streetscape designs are flexible enough to accommodate events of differing scales and activities. 89% believe events are an attractor for city centres with over 200 positive comments and suggestions for events such as music and street music, farmers markets and food & drink related events, cultural and sporting events.



“There needs to be a range of events within the city along with ease of access to those events. The Castlegate and Union Terrace Gardens could be made suitable for concerts and outdoor events but this may cause problems for those living in the vicinity. Providing fun and entertaining activities for children would be good. I think the Christmas village on Broad Street has worked reasonably well in winter. Use of the spaces for outdoor markets and exchanges would be a good use as well as places for people to congregate and participate in cycling and walking events. I think adding events is the most important part of the proposals as that has the opportunity to generate income and interest in the city centre. This should be done first before considering laying a brick on a capital expenditure.”

Q5 Please use the box below to tell us what you like about the proposals.

241 comments were received stating a range of points that people like about the city centre streetscape interventions. These have all been reviews and a number of themes identified. The most popular as part of the proposals is the greening and planting followed by a desire for a pedestrian friendly city and a reduction in cars and emissions.



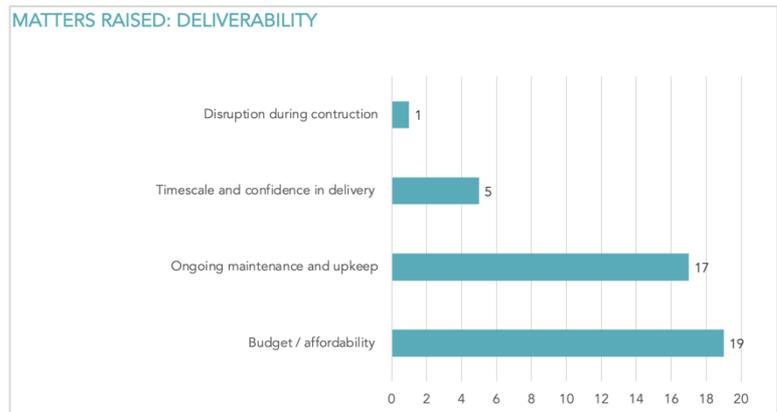
“I like the modernisation of the city (as long as the history stays as it is). Having more trees in the city especially on union street will bring more colour and honestly make the city look a lot less boring. Linking the centre to the beach is a great idea, we are incredibly lucky that we have a beach so close to a city centre and that needs to be used to its full potential. “

“Pedestrian friendly, green, opportunity to put on more events & improve visitor numbers”

“The proposals make a large part of the city centre feel like a place for people to spend time rather than a 'through route'. The climate in Aberdeen is actually a lot better than people think, and the summers are only going to get warmer and drier, so I really like the way that these proposals celebrate the outside spaces. I also like the way that cycling is integrated with pedestrianisation.”

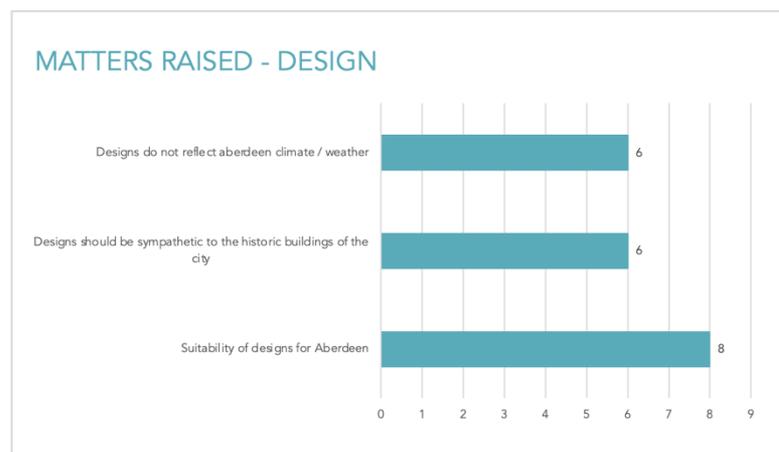
Q6 Please use the box below to tell if you have any concerns about the proposals.

271 respondents raised concerns about the proposals which can be broadly split into three thematic areas:
 Project deliverability -42 comments
 Streetscape designs - 55
 Travel Infrastructure -166 comments

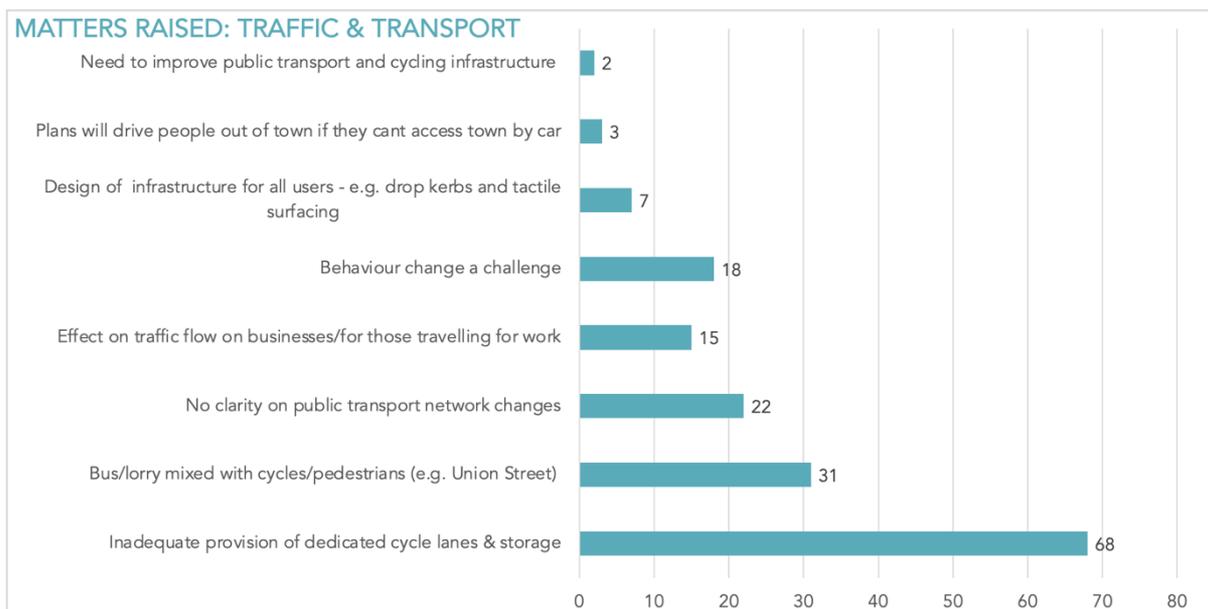


The comments relating to project deliverability relate to budget, concerns over ongoing maintenance, timescales and concerns over construction.

The second largest grouping of comments has been categorised as “streetscape and design” with concerns raised about retail overcapacity , anti social behaviour, use of materials and lighting designs with a plea that designs need to be sympathetic to the city’s heritage buildings and be suitable for Aberdeen.

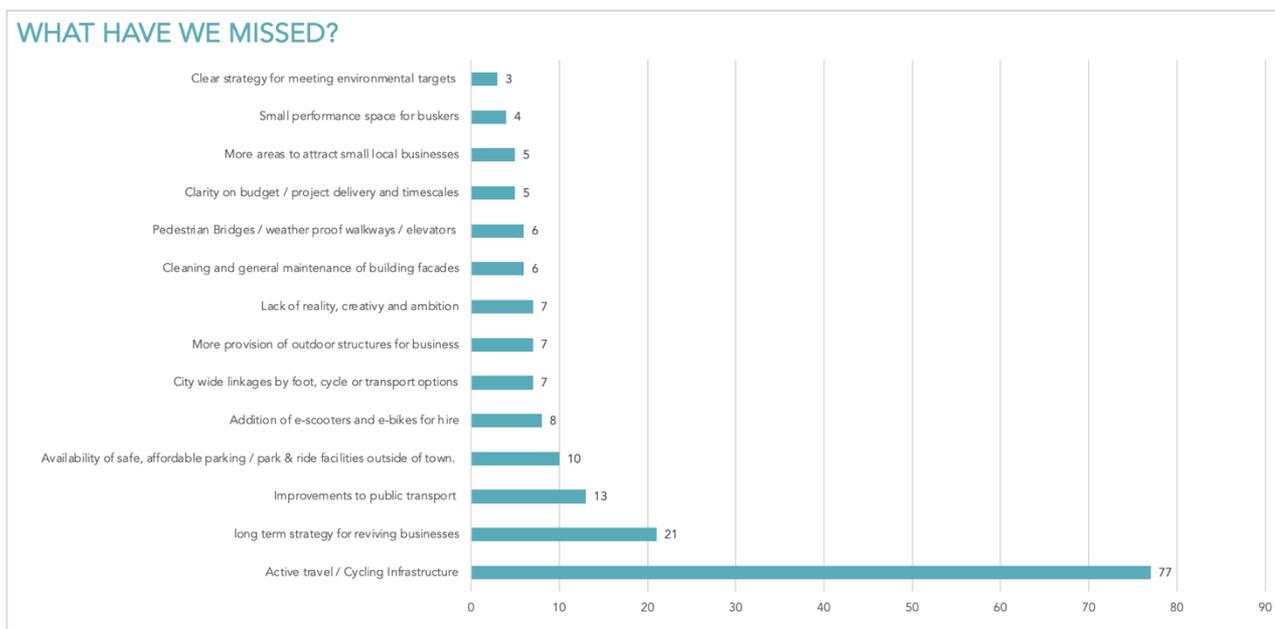


The most significant area of concern raised can be categorised as traffic and transport with most comments relating to proposals for active travel infrastructure within the city centre and concerns over the lack of a segregated cycle track on Union Streets and a request that public transport plans be clarified.



Q7 Please use the box below to tell us if there's anything you think we've missed from the proposals?

The final question allowed respondents to suggest areas missed from the plans.

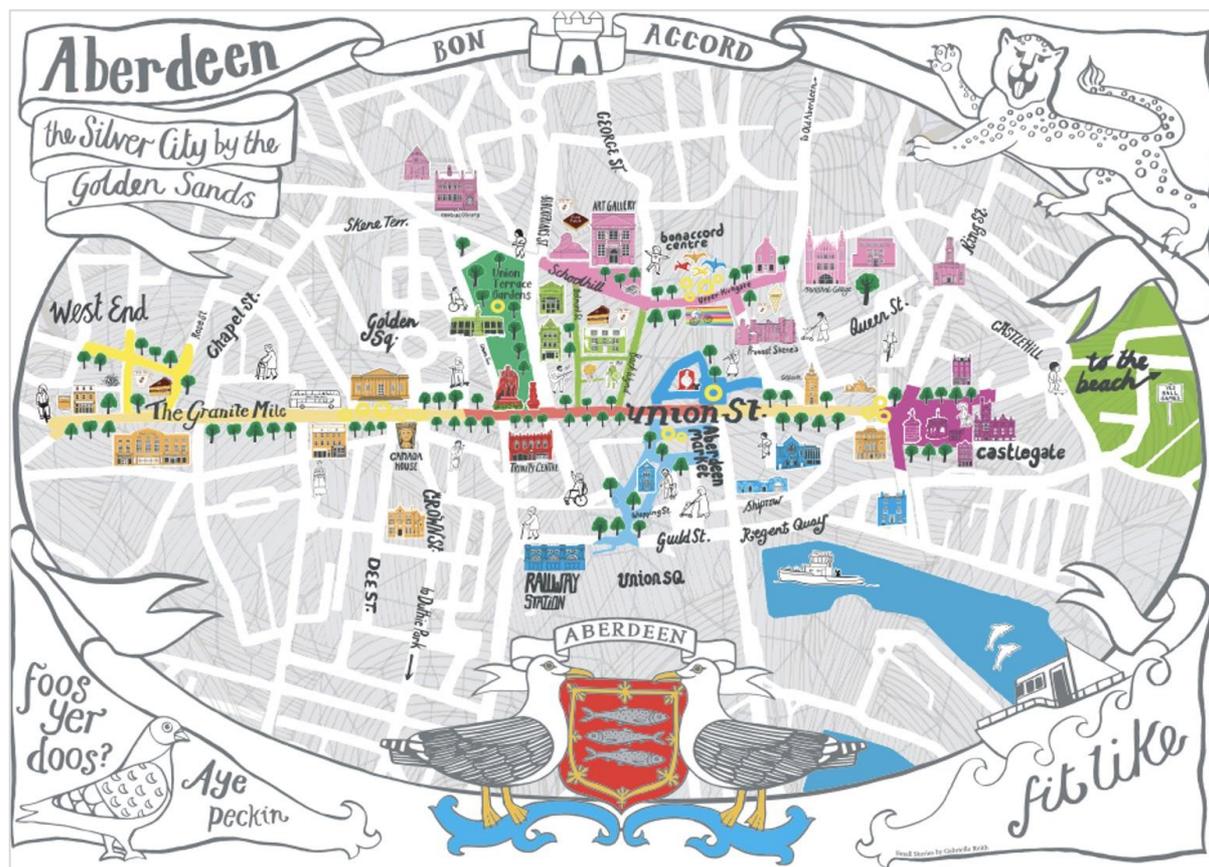


Of the 191 suggestions, the largest grouping is in relation to a perceived lack of suitable active travel infrastructure contained in the proposals with additional transport themes of improved public transport, improved park & ride, provision of e

bikes and scooters and parking affordability. Other areas raised include the need for a long term strategy to revive businesses, provision of outdoor structures for business, façade cleaning, and waterproof walkways.

Children and Young Persons (CYP) Engagement

CYP engagement in relation to the CCMP is ongoing. A local artist has been commissioned to prepare a child friendly map of the city centre, with streetscape intervention areas and historic buildings and significant spaces highlighted.



Key areas where childrens' play can be accommodated were extracted from the plan and young people asked to draw ideas for play in these locations. The design team will follow up with the schools involved in the next stage of design.

Two further activities engaging children and young people around the city centre streetscape proposals are taking place over coming weeks. An urban studies design workshop and walking tour of Castlegate and Union Street with P5 classes from Gilcomstoun and Hanover Street primary schools is happening on 14th and 15th of November. They will be exploring the many historic buildings and using a 'Past and Present' worksheet from the Aberdeen Urban Studies Trust and the hand drawn City Centre Masterplan to consider how the City can both respect its past and look to the future in an urban context.

In addition, Creative Learning will be attending Ashley Road and Ferryhill primary schools over coming weeks and working with the P6/7s to understand the City Centre streetscape proposals and then use the map print outs and model building to explore and develop ideas around what they would like for the intervention areas and the City Centre as a whole.

Longer term, it is proposed that the map becomes an interactive learning resource for schools

Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement has continued and a diary of engagement is included as Appendix A. Meetings have taken place with:

- Aberdeen Community Council Forum
- Aberdeen Council's Citywide Tenants Association
- Aberdeen Civic Society
- Aberdeen Inspired
- ACTUP (The Council's forum for involving transport stakeholders)
- City Centre Community Council
- City Centre & Beach Masterplan Stakeholder Forum
- Disability Equity Partnership (DEP)
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- North East Sensory Services (NESS)



Meetings with key stakeholder groups will continue, with other groups added as required and as the project progresses.

