

Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) and Active Travel Fund (ATF) Consultation Report 2021

Introduction

On 19 October 2020, Sandwell Council received grant funding from Historic England to deliver a four-year programme of physical improvements, community engagement and cultural activities to revive Wednesbury town centre.

Following project development including preliminary design of markets; methodology for the assessment of proposals and the distribution of grant support for building restoration; strategy for the cultural programme and highway redesign, a three-week consultation period was planned and carried out from 9 November to 30 November 2021 to ascertain resident and local stakeholder views on proposals to improve the public realm at Market Place.

The Council was also required to consult on producing cycling and walking facilities through the Active Travel Fund. Proposals were made for improvements in Wednesbury therefore, both consultation exercises were combined for efficiency.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

Rationale and Scope

To consult Sandwell residents and local stakeholders on the Council's proposals to improve the public realm at Market Place; specifically, to create a vibrant and welcoming space and ensure a community focused space. Additionally, to consult on transport and highway proposals to reduce traffic and improve pedestrian and cycle facilities within the town centre.

The consultation results include the views of all respondents, irrespective of their home location.

Promotion of the Consultation Exercise

To ensure key stakeholders (i.e. local residents, business owners or work locally, market traders and community organisations) were given notice of the consultation Council officers hand delivered and advised promotion of leaflets advertising the consultation (Appendix 1) to key locations (the full list can be found in Appendix 2). General HSHAZ information flyers were also provided (Appendix 3) to some of these locations.

Consultation packs which included a flyer, consultation feedback form (Appendix 4), technical plan of the proposals (Appendix 5) and an artist impression of improvements to the public realm (Appendix 6) were also hand delivered to every property within the immediate vicinity of Wednesbury town centre (Appendix 7 shows the catchment area that was identified to receive letters) informing them of the

proposed consultation exercise. Additionally, the Council's Market Service Manager liaised and delivered consultation information (consultation form and further information about the proposals to move the markets which also asked for comments - Appendix 8) to the Wednesbury market traders to inform them of the consultation.

A press release (Appendix 9) was issued to the local media along with promotion of the consultation on the Council's Facebook and Twitter social media profiles and Sandwell Business Ambassadors webpage.

Online Consultation Feedback

The consultation feedback form was made available to complete online and was promoted via Council social media posts. Paper copies were made available at the face-to-face consultation events and attendees were actively encouraged to complete feedback forms to ensure their views were captured.

Face-to-face Consultation Events

The Council wanted to hold face-to-face sessions to specifically engage with the local community in the consultation process. In total, two sessions were held including one on a Saturday to ensure those who did not have access to the internet or who worked full time were able to express their views:

Session 1: Tuesday 16 November, 10am – 2pm near Wednesbury Clock Tower, Market Place

Session 2: Saturday 20 November, 10am – 2pm near William Archer pub, Union Street

Information was displayed at each of the sessions for attendees. This included general information about the HSHAZ project, a technical plan of the proposals, an artist impression of improvements to Market Place and the Wednesbury Conservation Area red line boundary (Appendix 10).

The Council encouraged and invited email enquiries. An email address was set up specifically for the consultation period; Wednesbury_Feedback@sandwell.gov.uk.

Consultation Analysis

Following the completion of the three-week consultation period, all feedback has been collated.

A total of 213 consultation forms were completed; 108 online, 105 handwritten. All responses have been tallied to provide overall totals and percentages for each question. A total of 182 written representations were received in the 'further comments or suggestions' section of the consultation forms and email enquiries. Each one of these comments has been logged and categorised. All handwritten and returned copies of the online consultation form have been manually inputted and included in the analysis.

Consultation Findings

Demographics

As displayed in Table 1 below, the majority of respondents were local residents (71%), while 21% of respondents were local business owners or work locally.

Table 1: Description of respondent

Local resident	152	71%
Local business owner, or work locally	45	21%
Responding on behalf of an organisation (community, sports club, education etc)	3	1%
Elected member	1	0%
Other (please state)	12	6%

A mixture of age groups took part in the consultation with the most prominent groups being 65 and over (28%), 55 to 64 (25%) and 45 to 54 (20%) as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Age

Under 25	10	5%
25 to 34	19	9%
35 to 44	25	12%
45 to 54	43	20%
55 to 64	54	25%
65 and over	59	28%
Prefer not to say	3	1%

Most respondents identified as 'White – British' (82%) as displayed in Table 3. This is slightly higher than the most recent census data for the town which is 78%.

Table 3: Ethnicity

White - British	175	82%
White - Irish	1	0%
Any other White background	5	2%
Mixed - White & Black Caribbean	2	1%
Mixed - White & Asian	4	2%
Indian	9	4%
Pakistani	3	1%
Bangladeshi	2	1%
Any other Asian background	1	0%
Black - Caribbean	1	0%
Any other background	2	1%
Prefer not to say	8	4%

81% of respondents were from Wednesbury wards; Wednesbury North (45%), Wednesbury South (19%), Friar Park (17%) as seen in Table 4.

Table 4: Ward

Abbey	1	0%
Birmingham	1	0%
Charlemont with Grove Vale	1	0%
Cradley Heath and Old Hill	1	0%
Dudley	1	0%
Friar Park	37	17%
Great Bridge	2	1%
Hateley Heath	7	3%
Soho and Victoria	1	0%
Stourbridge	1	0%
Tipton Green	6	3%
Walsall	5	2%
Wednesbury North	96	45%
Wednesbury South	40	19%
West Bromwich Central	1	0%
Wolverhampton	3	1%
Prefer not to say	9	4%

Responses to the proposals

Overall, feedback from respondents were very supportive or somewhat supportive of the proposals presented.

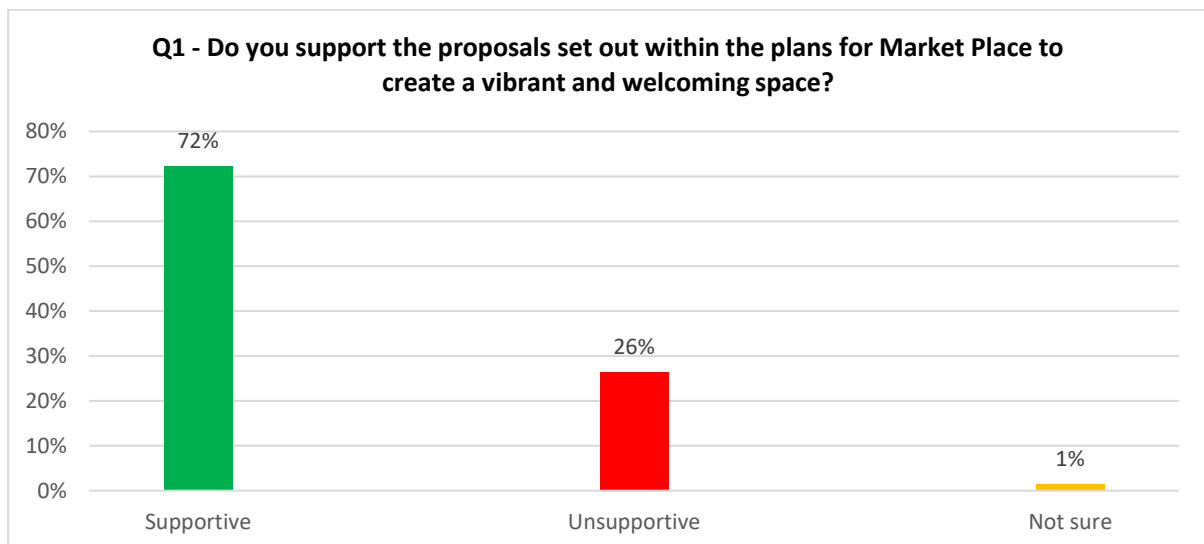


Figure 1: Respondents feedback to create Market Place into a vibrant and welcoming space

Figure 1 shows that most respondents support the proposals to create a vibrant and welcoming space at Market Place. Looking further into the data it is evident that 78% of local residents support the proposals while 51% of local business owners/workers are also supportive.

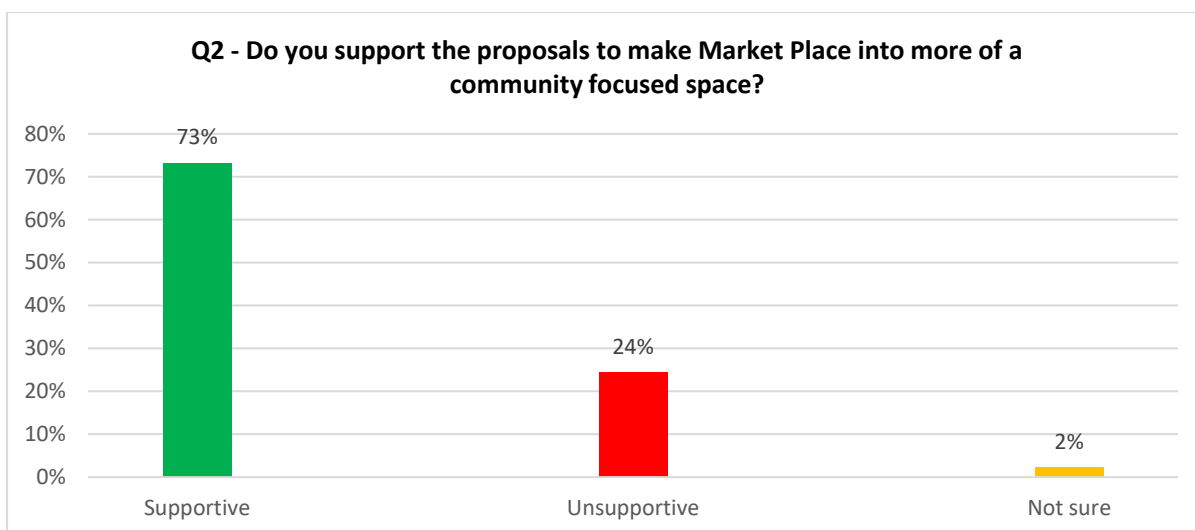


Figure 2. Respondents feedback to make Market Place into more a of community focused space

Figure 2 illustrates that 73% of respondents supported the proposals to make Market place into more a community focused space. 80% of local residents and 49% of local business owners/workers also expressed their support of this proposal.

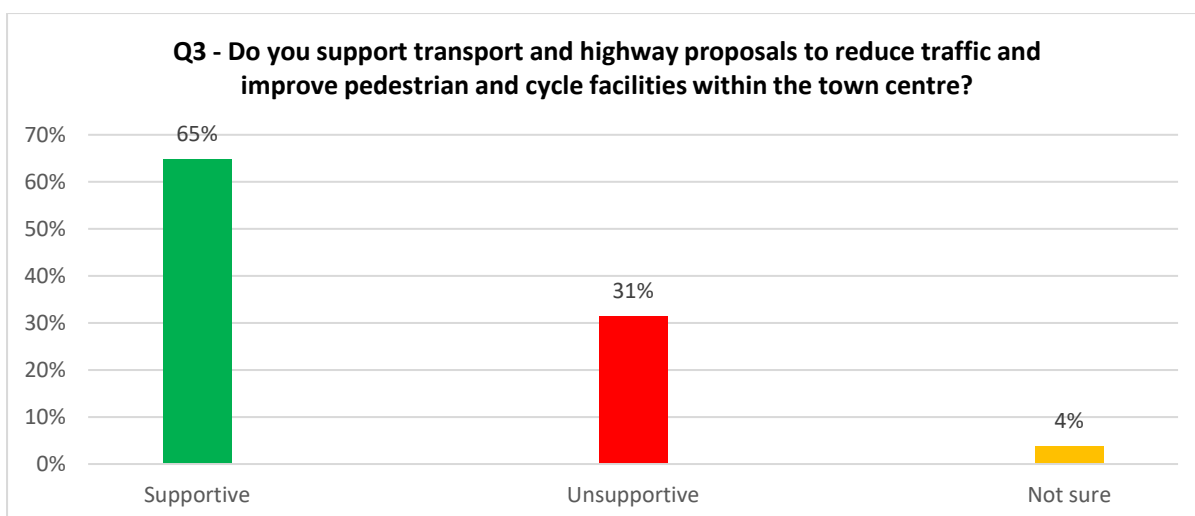


Figure 3. Respondents feedback to support transport and highway proposals to reduce traffic and improve pedestrian and cycle facilities within the town centre

The majority of respondents (65%) supported the transport and highway proposals to reduce traffic and improve pedestrian and cycle facilities within the town centre. 69% of local residents and 49% of local business owners/workers also supported these proposals.

Consultation respondents were offered the opportunity to provide any further comments or suggestions through the consultation feedback form or email. Table 5 below shows a summary of the comments made and a percentage of how many respondents made them. The most common comment (14% of all comments) was unsupportive of moving the markets back to Market Place, most of which were from market traders. It should be noted that a further 6% of comments supported the markets moving.

The second most popular comment was regarding parking in the town. Most of these comments addressed the convenience of parking bays near the clock tower particularly for residents with mobility issues.

Table 5: Further comments

Unsupportive comments - moving markets back to Market Place *(see below regarding positive comments)	14%
Parking e.g. more/free parking due to convenience for disabled and elderly	12%
Highway safety issues e.g. the need to reduce speeds	11%
Improve shop offer and more family activities in town centre	9%
More police/security/CCTV due to ASB	7%
Supportive comments - moving markets back to Market Place*	6%
Request for green infrastructure and street furniture	6%
Improve shop fronts and buildings	5%
Supportive comments - public realm	4%
Free business rates/reduce rents to encourage new business	3%
Request for public toilets in town centre	3%
Supportive comments - ATF proposals	3%
Restore footpaths/pavements	2%
Request for bins and cleaner environment	2%
Unsupportive comments - ATF proposals	2%
Not many cyclists in town centre	2%
Request for more details on the future of current market space	2%
Request for better market offer e.g. farmer's/season markets	2%
Clock tower refurbishment	1%
Unsupportive comments - general	1%

The main themes from the further comments or suggestions are described below:

Public realm – Most comments were supportive of the proposals and mentioned improving the appearance of shop fronts and buildings. Respondents also requested public toilets, more green infrastructure e.g. trees, planters and street furniture such as bins and benches for the elderly and families.

Markets – The majority of comments in this theme were unsupportive of the markets moving back to Market Place. Most of the unsupportive comments came from Market

Traders who stated the convenience of the current location near Morrisons free-stay car park and the bus shelter which increases footfall in comparison to Market Place. Several residents were also supportive of the market moving back to its traditional location to improve market goods e.g. farmer's markets and attract more residents.

Active Travel Fund – Comments were mixed in this theme however; most respondents were supportive of the proposals. General comments were also made regarding not seeing many cyclists in Wednesbury town centre.

Highways – Parking dominated this theme predominately due to worries regarding moving disabled parking from the Clock Tower. Respondents also commented on the convenience of parking in the town centre when shopping and for the elderly. Furthermore, many respondents raised highway safety concerns particularly around speeding in the area and road safety on Spring Head/Ridding Lane.

Miscellaneous/Other – The majority of respondents in this theme requested an improved retail offer and more family activities to attract residents to the town centre during the afternoons and evenings. Many responses asked for more police and CCTV/security due to reoccurring anti-social behaviour issues.

Summary

Overall, the consultation exercise succeeded in gaining the views of residents and local stakeholders with over 213 responses and 182 written representations.

The majority of respondents were supportive of the proposals set out and this was evident in the online and written feedback as well as the face-to-face events. The strongest objections to the proposals were expressed by market traders who stated that the current market location is more convenient to potential buyers in comparison to the proposed location at Market Place.

Concerns were also raised around highway safety and parking in the town centre. Furthermore, many respondents have requested for more security in the area due to ongoing anti-social behaviour issues.

Next Steps and Considerations

Consultation findings will be made available online.

The consultation plans will be reviewed taking into consideration the comments made through the consultation.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Leaflet



HM Government

WEDNESBURY Hi!STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE

Town Centre Heritage Regeneration

As part of Sandwell Council's commitment to helping our struggling high streets, we have partnered with Historic England to deliver an exciting heritage regeneration scheme.

As part of the project, we are proposing highway and public realm improvements around Market Place and will be consulting on these plans from Tuesday 9 November to Tuesday 30 November.

You can view the proposals and have your say via the link below:

www.sandwell.gov.uk/WednesburyHAZ

Or come along to the face to face consultation at:



Historic England

**Market Place (near Wednesbury clock tower) - Tuesday 16 November
10am to 2pm**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

**or Union Street (near William Archer Pub) - Saturday 20 November
10am to 2pm**

Appendix 2 – List of key locations

Wednesbury Central Methodist Church
The Wesley Centre for All
Wednesbury Central Mosque
Wednesbury Post Office
Morrisons
Bus station
Wednesbury Library
Sandwell Local, Wednesbury
Wednesbury Museum and Art Gallery
William Archer pub
Butchers opposite the pub on Union Street
Butchers (12A Market Place)
Phone Shop (10 Market Place)
Golden cuts (corner with Upper High Street)
Bojangles (15 Market Place)
Boobielous (23a Market Place?)
Golden Cross pub (a few left)
Newsagents (26 Market Place)
Nail shop (28 Market place)
Booze King (31-33 Market Place)
36 Lower High st (Butchers)
38 Lower High street (Hairdressers)



HM Government

WEDNESBURY HIGH STREET HERITAGE ACTION ZONE

Town Centre Heritage Regeneration Scheme

As part of Sandwell Council's commitment to helping our struggling high streets, we have partnered with Historic England to deliver an exciting heritage regeneration scheme. The scheme runs from now until March 2024 and hopes to bring back the vibrancy to the town centre and embrace its heritage.

Whilst grant opportunities are limited to buildings within the conservation area, the scheme is designed to bring wider benefits to the whole town centre.

Scheme elements:

- grants for property improvements to buildings within the conservation area, including shop fronts;
- public realm improvements to Market Place;
- cultural and community activities within the town centre.



Historic England

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH



You can find more information about future consultation events and proposed plans at www.sandwell.gov.uk/WednesburyHAZ

Community and Cultural Events

A set of community engagement activities and events have been launched.

Community and cultural activities will be delivered to make the high street an engaging and vibrant place where the community can come together.

Look out for more event details on our website.



You can find out more at:

www.sandwell.gov.uk/WednesburyHAZ

or email Wednesbury_HAZ@sandwell.gov.uk



Appendix 4 – Consultation Feedback Form

Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) and Active Travel Fund (ATF) Proposals



Thank you for taking the time to view the proposals for Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone and Active Travel Fund. We really appreciate your interest and involvement. We have aspirations to improve the public realm within Market Place to create a vibrant and welcoming space. Your feedback is vital to shaping our plans.

The deadline for feedback is Tuesday 30 November, so we would be very grateful if you could complete your form by then.

For more information, please visit the link below:

www.sandwell.gov.uk/wednesburyhazconsultation

Data privacy

We recognise how important it is to protect the privacy of your information. All responses received will be stored and subject to General Data Protection Regulations. For more detail on how we store your data, please visit Sandwell Council's Privacy Notice here: www.sandwell.gov.uk/privacynotice.

1. Postcode: _____
2. Which of the below statements best describes you?
 - Local resident
 - Local business owner, or work locally
 - Elected member
 - Responding on behalf of an organisation (community, sports club, education etc)
 - Other (please state)
3. What is your age?
 - Under 25
 - 25 to 34
 - 35 to 44
 - 45 to 54
 - 55 to 64
 - 65 to 64
 - 65 and over
 - Prefer not to say
4. Which of the following groups do you consider you belong to?

<input type="radio"/> White – British	<input type="radio"/> Bangladeshi
<input type="radio"/> White – Irish	<input type="radio"/> Chinese
<input type="radio"/> White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<input type="radio"/> Any other Asian background
<input type="radio"/> Any other White background	<input type="radio"/> Black – Caribbean
<input type="radio"/> Mixed – White & Black Caribbean	<input type="radio"/> Black – African
<input type="radio"/> Mixed – White & Black African	<input type="radio"/> Any other Black background
<input type="radio"/> Mixed – White & Asian	<input type="radio"/> Arab
<input type="radio"/> Any other mixed background	<input type="radio"/> Any other background
<input type="radio"/> Indian	<input type="radio"/> Prefer not to say
<input type="radio"/> Pakistani	

Improvements to the public realm at Market Place

5. Do you support the proposals set out within the plans for Market Place to create a vibrant and welcoming space?
- Yes – very supportive
 - Somewhat supportive
 - Somewhat unsupportive
 - No – very unsupportive
 - Not sure
6. Do you support the proposals to make Market Place into more of a community focused space?
- Yes – very supportive
 - Somewhat supportive
 - Somewhat unsupportive
 - No – very unsupportive
 - Not sure

Measures to support Active Travel

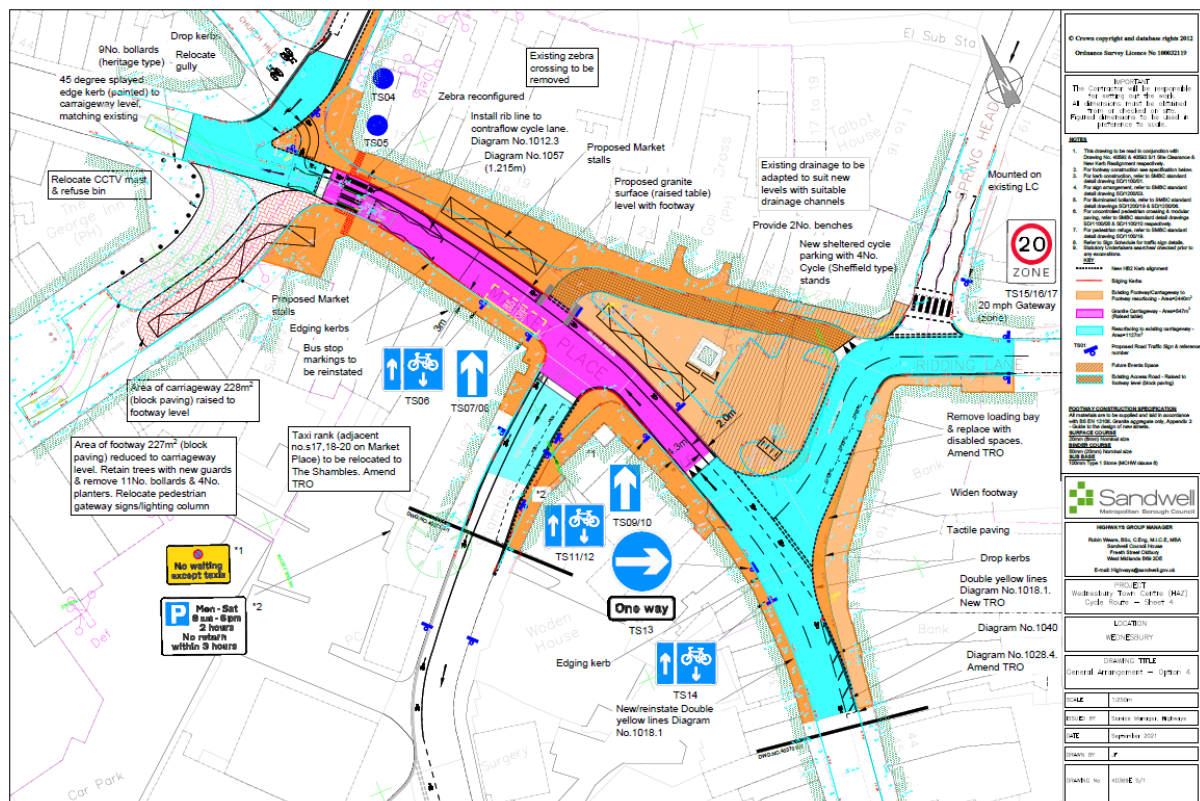
7. Do you support transport and highway proposals to reduce traffic and improve pedestrian and cycle facilities within the town centre?
- Yes – very supportive
 - Somewhat supportive
 - Somewhat unsupportive
 - No – very unsupportive
 - Not sure
8. Please provide any further comments or suggestions on the proposals below.

Thank you for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire. Your feedback is very important to us and will help shape the plans for the Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone.

For further updates on the project visit: www.sandwell.gov.uk/WednesburyHAZ

You can also get in touch by emailing Wednesbury_Feedback@sandwell.gov.uk

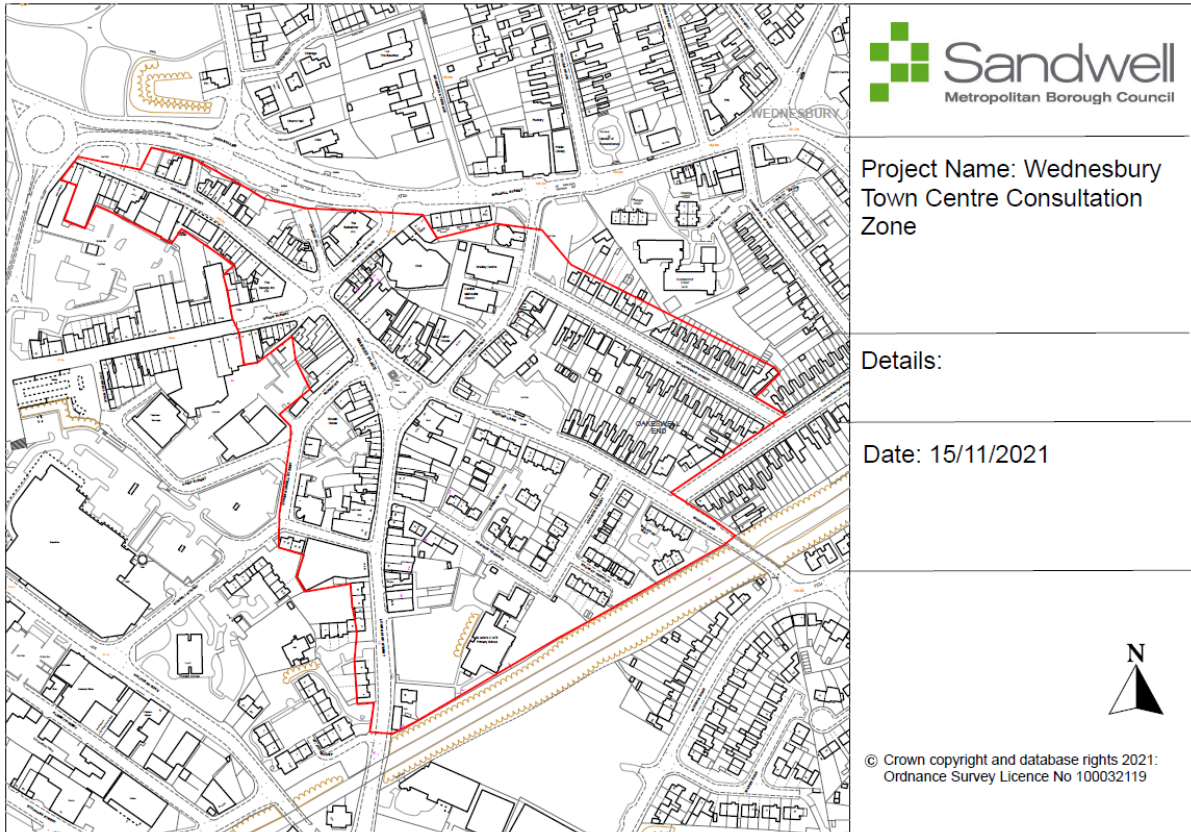
Appendix 5 – Technical plan of proposals



Appendix 6 – Artist impression of improvements to the public realm



Appendix 7 – Consultation pack catchment area map



Appendix 8 – Market trader information form

Proposal to relocate and redevelop Wednesbury Market – Information for Market Traders

As part of the Wednesbury Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) project there is a proposal to relocate and redevelop Wednesbury market. This would involve relocating the market to the upper end of Union street and to Market Place where the market was originally located. This would enable the market to be located more centrally in the town centre and to benefit from the additional customer flows that operate there. In addition, the changes and improvements to Market Place will help create a more pedestrian friendly environment that will promote the benefits of street markets.

The market would consist of new stall structures that would incorporate solar panel roofs that will generate and store electricity that could power integral lighting, which would boost low daylight conditions in the winter months. It would also provide electricity for additional lighting for events and national holidays like Christmas, Eid and Diwali.

The Council will be starting a general consultation programme on these proposals and the documentation for that is attached, which includes a street plan to show you where the blocks of stalls would be located. However, we have included an extra couple of artist impressions to give you some idea of the type of stalls we are proposing. We are very keen to hear your views on these proposals, particularly on the proposal to relocate and redevelop the market. Please make any comments below:

Appendix 9 – Press Release

Wednesbury residents and workers to be consulted on proposals to revitalise town centre

Published 8th November 2021

People living and working in Wednesbury are invited by Sandwell Council to give their views on proposals to revitalise the town centre's historic conservation area.

Their views will also improve its walking and cycling infrastructure.

The consultation runs from 9-30 November.

The Wednesbury High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) project proposes:

- Public realm improvements to Market Place, featuring the enlarging of pedestrian space to create a multi-use event space, and high quality paving materials
- The relocation of the open air market to Market Place and the top of Union Street
- Transportation and highway proposals to be delivered as part of the Active Travel Fund (ATF), complementing the HSHAZ project, consisting of walking and cycling infrastructure improvements which aim to improve people's physical and mental health.
- Improvements to the clock tower
- Enhancements to the buildings within the conservation area.

The proposed public realm works will revitalise the town centre, creating a safer and more enjoyable experience for residents and visitors. The ATF transportation and highway proposals seek to improve health, quality of life, the environment, and local productivity.

The project is being led by Sandwell Council in conjunction with Historic England.

There will be in-person consultation events next to the Clock Tower in Market Place on Tuesday, 16 November (from 10pm-2pm); and outside the William Archer public house, Union Street, on Saturday, 20 November (from 10am-2pm).

Wednesbury residents and workers can also take part in the consultation [online](#) (the text takes you to the web link).

Councillor Iqbal Padda, Sandwell Council's cabinet member for regeneration and growth, said: "The contributions of Wednesbury's residents and workers to the consultation will help create a more attractive environment where people choose to live, work and visit. The proposals will create a positive benefit for people's physical and mental health, and their wellbeing, and deliver an improved shopping experience for residents and visitors."

Notes to editor

The Wednesbury HSHAZ project is part of Sandwell Council's commitment, in partnership with Historic England, to help the borough's struggling high streets and to highlight the historic significance of the area. The heritage-led regeneration scheme runs until March 2024.

About High Streets Heritage Action Zones

The High Streets Heritage Action Zones is a £95 million government-funded programme led by Historic England, designed to secure lasting improvements and help breathe new life into our historic high streets for the communities and businesses that use them. Historic England is working with local people and partners to unlock the rich heritage on these high streets, through repair and improvement

works as well as arts and cultural programmes, making them more attractive to residents, businesses, tourists and investors. <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/regenerating-historic-high-streets/>

About Historic England

We are [Historic England](https://historicengland.org.uk/) the public body that helps people care for, enjoy and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment, from beaches and battlefields to parks and pie shops. We protect, champion and save the places that define who we are and where we've come from as a nation. We care passionately about the stories these places tell, the ideas they represent and the people who live, work and play among them. Working with communities and specialists we share our passion, knowledge and skills to inspire interest, care and conservation, so everyone can keep enjoying and looking after the history that surrounds us all.

Appendix 10 – Wednesbury Conservation Area red line boundary

