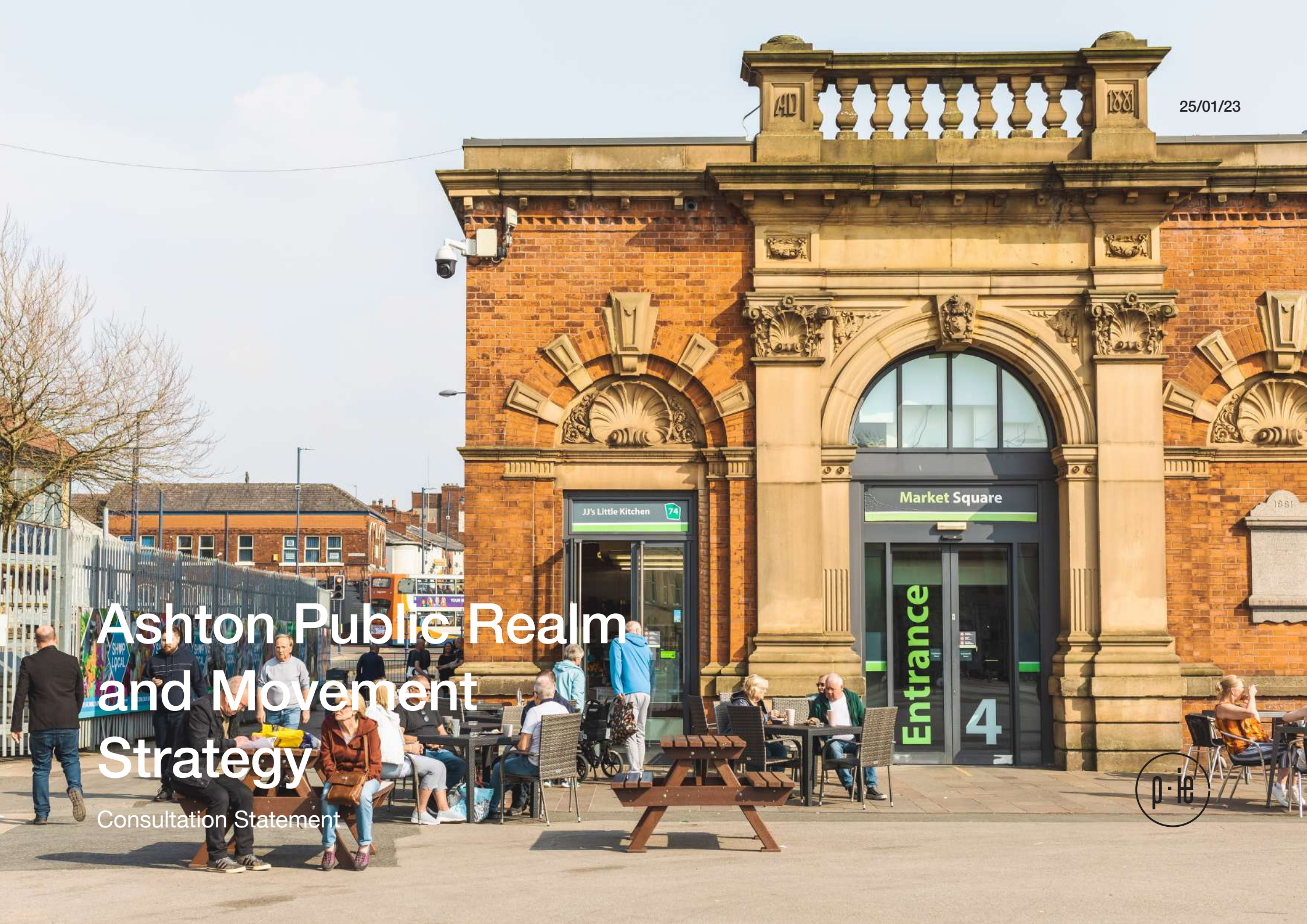
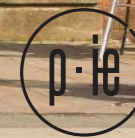


Ashton Public Realm and Movement Strategy

Consultation Statement



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Introduction

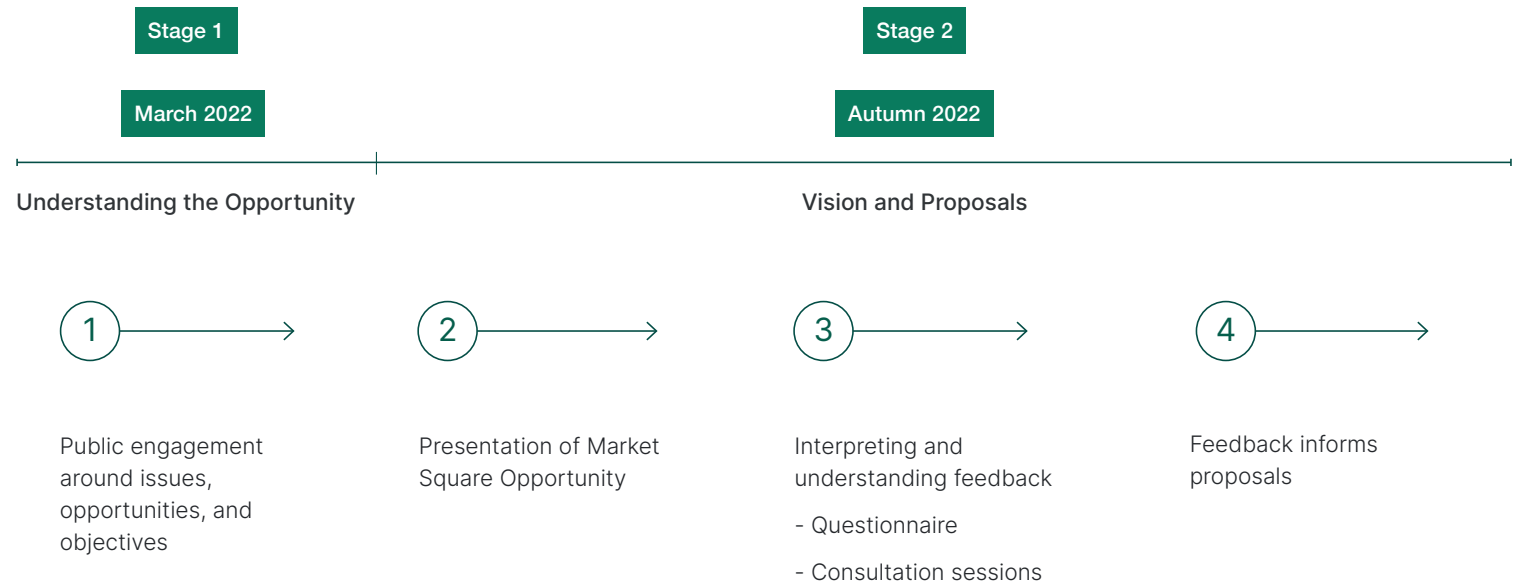
This Consultation Statement has been produced in support of the Public Realm Strategy for Ashton-under-Lyne.

A two stage programme of engagement and consultation has been designed to run alongside the Public Realm Strategy. The project team are nearing the end of the Public Realm Strategy, so it is important at this stage to take stock of the responses to the emerging proposals and ideas so far and to assess how emerging issues and ideas are being received by stakeholders and the wider community.

This document presents the findings of the Stage 1

Consultation from March 2022 and the Stage 2 engagement sessions which included; stakeholder workshops, a 4 week public consultation with sessions and a questionnaire. These findings will help the project team to discount or support the design of the Market Square, Hall and Town Hall, and the key design ideas to consider for detail design.

Throughout the preparation of the Public Realm Strategy a comprehensive consultation process has taken place.





01

Stage 1

March 2022

Love Ashton Engagement



Planit-IE and Members of Tameside Council talking to the public



Residents reviewing the engagement boards

TMBC have appointed Planit and Civic Engineers to undertake a Public Realm and Movement strategy for Ashton-under-Lyne Town Centre.

This is to create a thriving Town Centre for Ashton-under-Lyne through collaborative design approaches, seeking to breathe new life into the town centre public realm, in turn attracting inward investment to create a prosperous town centre for years to come.



Input on the engagement boards - 'Functions of Space'



Input on the engagement boards - 'Physical Interventions'

Objectives of the Strategy

To create a public realm strategy that is memorable and unique for Ashton. This requires a holistic approach that takes into consideration a wide variety of factors to create a comprehensive, but simple solution for Ashton town centre.

These objectives will influence the final Ashton Public Realm and Movement Vision and aim to create:

A town that is
Functional and accessible



A town that is
Connected



A town to
Enjoy in the day and night



A town that has
Healthy and beautiful green spaces with planting



A town with
An identity



A town that
Instigates further regeneration



A town with
A high quality market space



Council have **spent too much** on renovating the market square, many times

Market stalls are **unattractive and not practical**

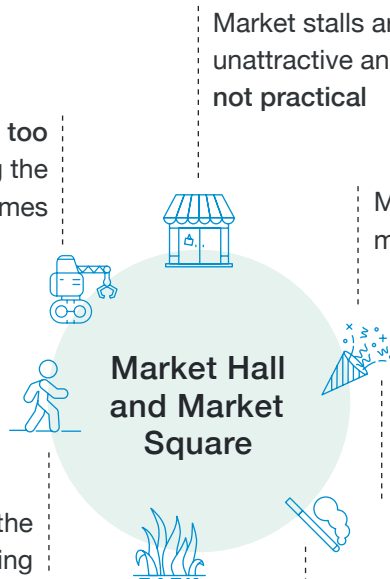
Missing the once vibrant market stalls and atmosphere

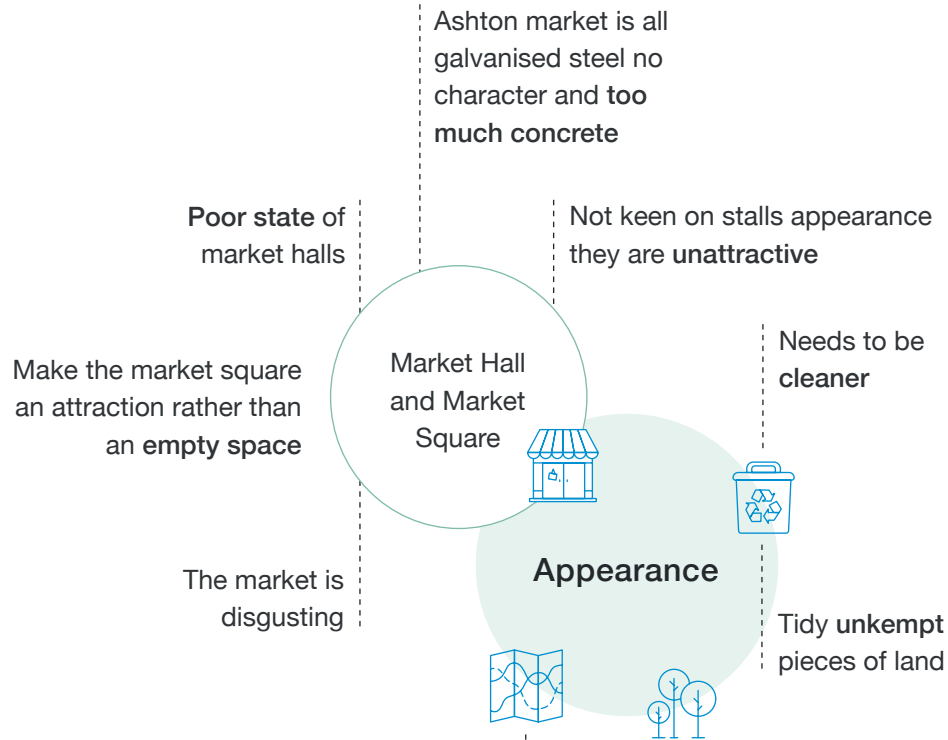
Regular markets were **once a vibrant part of the town**

Uneven paving in the square - needs sorting

Issue with youths in the square - **lounging around smoking**, making the space **unattractive**

Lack of greenery in the space





All derelict closed building to be made attractive maybe a false/ fake (? – not legible) either material, metal or wood design on front how it could look. When occupied, so looks more attractive and appealing.



Aerial view too much concrete - so grey, depressing and no character





Bus station drives footfall straight into the Arcades SC with many never venturing into the square

Bus stops returned to back of market hall. Able bodied students given pedestrian zone at the expense of less able bodied bus users i.e. – further to walk, more roads to cross and uphill on Henrietta Street.

Too much concrete by our new bus station which by the way is too small half of the buses do not have a space

Coaches not allowed in bus station yet the bus station is empty most of the time so plenty of room

Improve public transport to Stamford Street



Bus Station

Safer and better walking routes

Forgotten 'Old Town', larger investment in Albion Way

Transport/
Accessibility



Lack of movement in the 'Old Town'

Accessibility from public transport

Parking

Too much car traffic in the centre of Ashton



Taxis

Taxis not in the right place

Free 1 hour parking



Disabled parking closer to town

Taxi rank





This building (Town Hall) used to symbolise Ashton town and its heritage

Ashton town hall needs due care and attention

Where is the history/ heritage of the town



Ashton Town Hall

Town Hall needs updating and opening up - what is going in there?

Hippodrome – More theatre and events in Ashton again



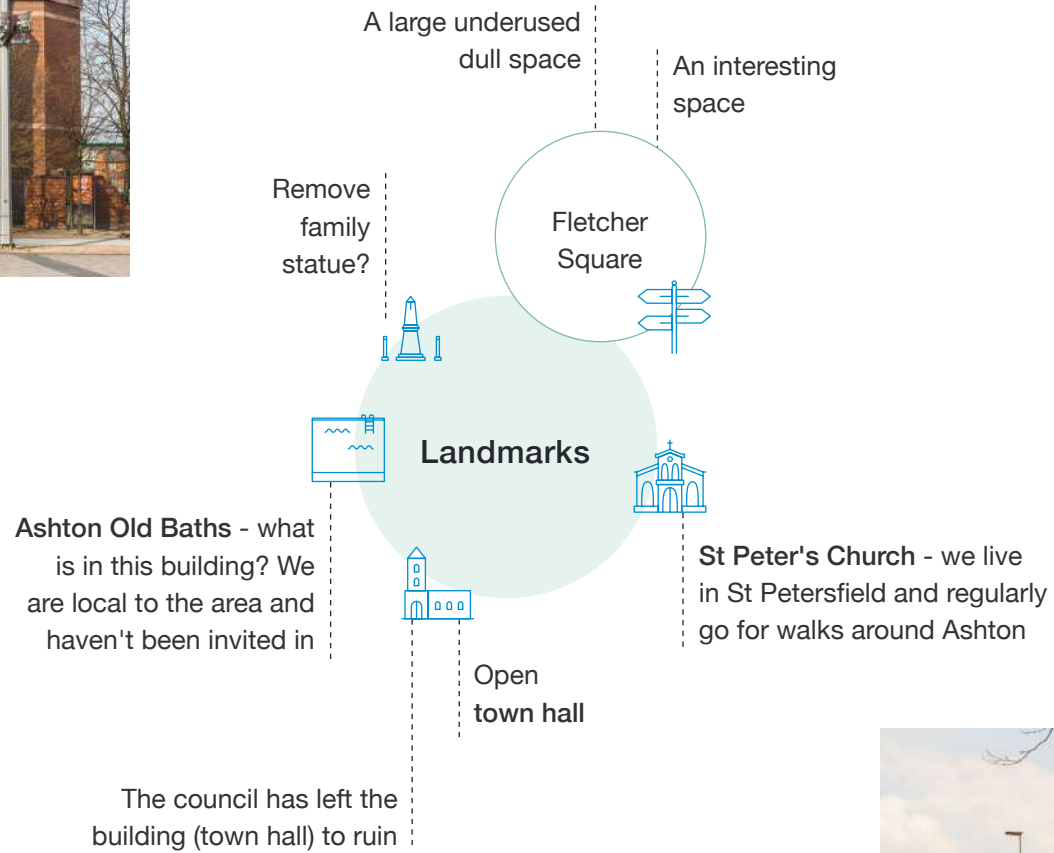
Theatre

Culture

The theatre once an important place (Charlie Chaplin played here) is being left to rot

Saturday market was once busy and interesting now it is empty and lifeless



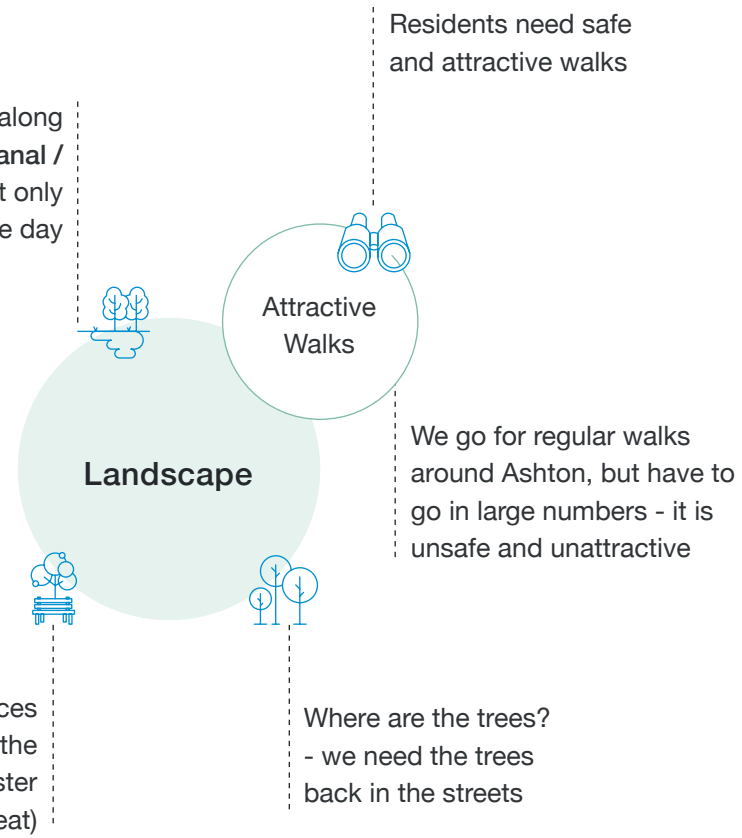






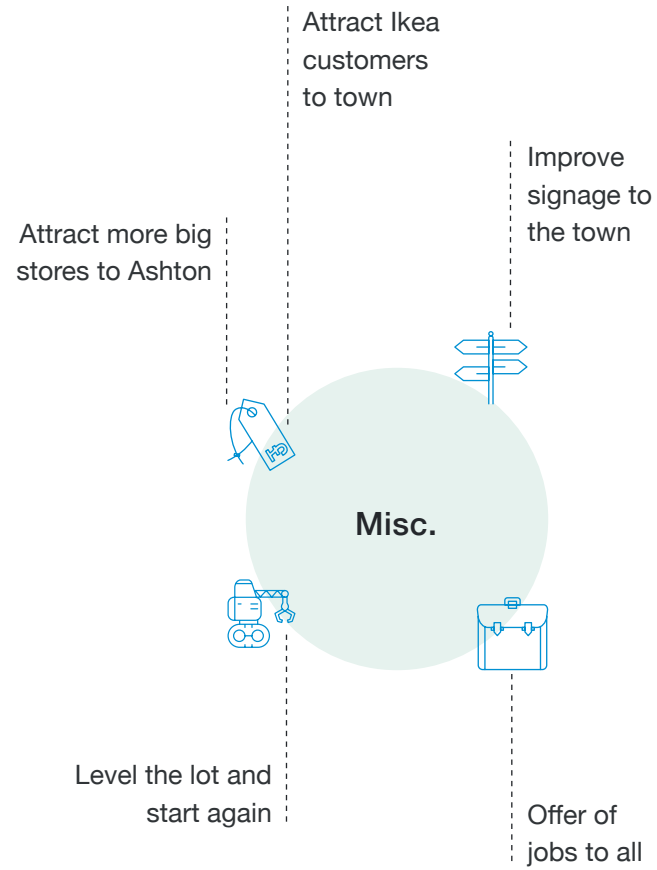
Walks along the canal / river but only during the day

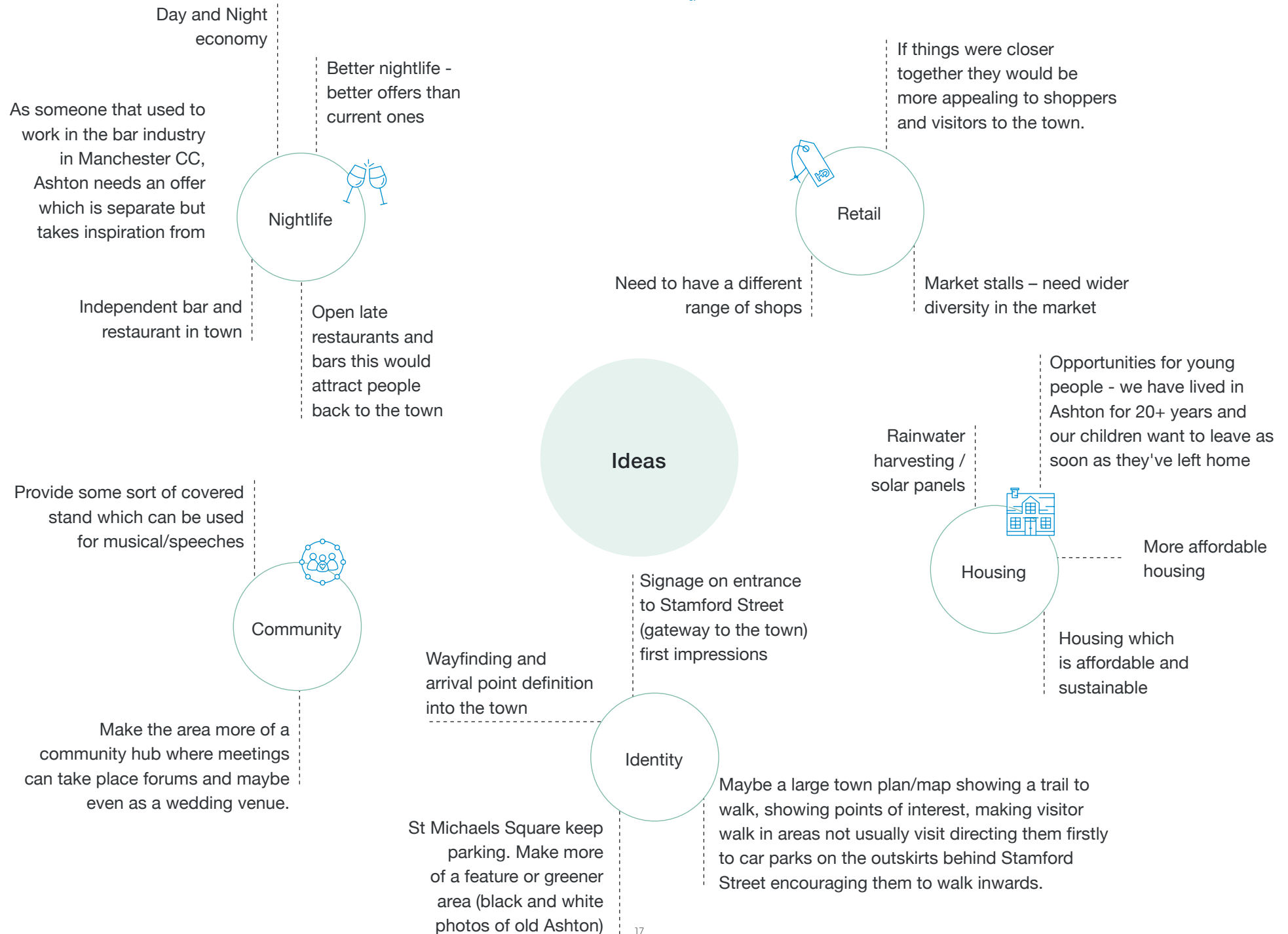
Residents need safe and attractive walks



We go for regular walks around Ashton, but have to go in large numbers - it is unsafe and unattractive







551
questionnaire
responses

02
Stage 2
November 2022



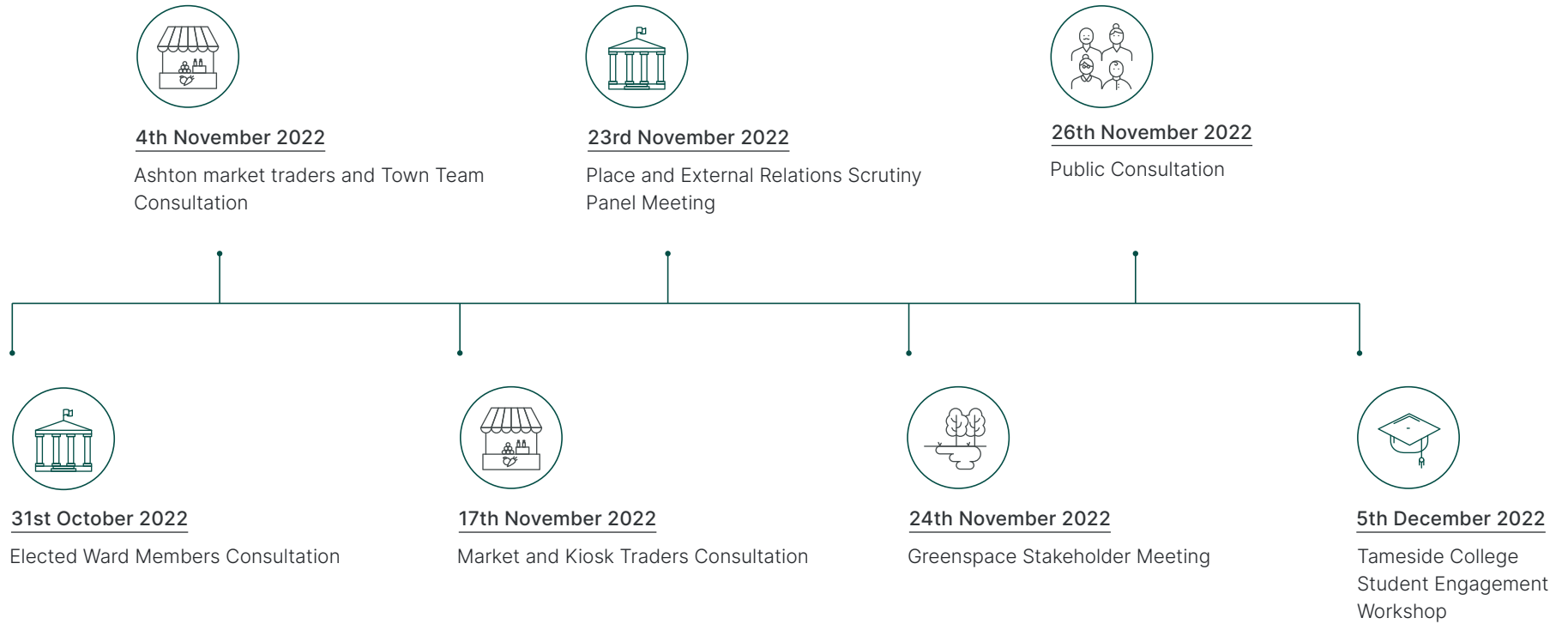
The Consultation

Consultation in Stage 2 focussed on the Market Square and took the form of workshops, briefings and meetings. The objectives of the consultation were to engage with key stakeholders and a wide variety of people and community groups to develop a clear local picture and to gain an insight into issues, opportunities, and future aspirations for Ashton Market Square and Market Hall.

The consultation went public with a Public Realm Strategy booklet, associated consultation boards for the public events and a questionnaire.



Stage 2



Public Consultation



As part of the engagement process, the project team carried out public consultation drop-in sessions in the Market Hall. Ashton residents raised some objections and concerns, and contributed suggestions.

Objections to:

- Re-doing the market square which was only recently done, and the perceived waste of money that could be better spent
- Losing the outdoor market
- Investment being focussed on Ashton rather than distributed to other areas in need of investment across Tameside
- Not convinced that investment in the market ground will have the desired uplifting effect on the town centre

Tameside Resident

"I object to anymore money being wasted on Ashton [...] What about the rest of tameside."

Concerns over:

- Play area location in relation to taxi rank, pub spillout, servicing and attracting antisocial behaviour
- Proposed fixed structures such as cinema or music stand could quickly look obsolete as tastes change, obstruct eyelines and might lead to vandalism.
- High levels of homelessness.
- Safety and antisocial behaviour in areas with poor visibility - particularly in social spaces and along key strategic movement corridors.
- Proposals being out of step with the culture and economics around shopping and leisure with e-shopping and out-of-town retail
- General state of neglect across the town, low quality offer, and high vacancy rates.
- Lack of things for children and teens to do, and perceived lack of safety - encourage college students to use the centre and local teens to
- Lack of demand for a seven-day market and empty market kiosks
- Bird droppings becoming maintenance burden or deterrent for seating areas

Ashton Resident

"Not so long ago a lot of money was spent on the market [...] the market ground is uneven and terrible to walk on [...] what a waste of money that was!"

"No amount of money spent on the market area will make it more attractive to shoppers. The centre is full of 'non shops' such as pound shops, betting shops etc all the decent shops have gone to out of town."

Suggestions to:

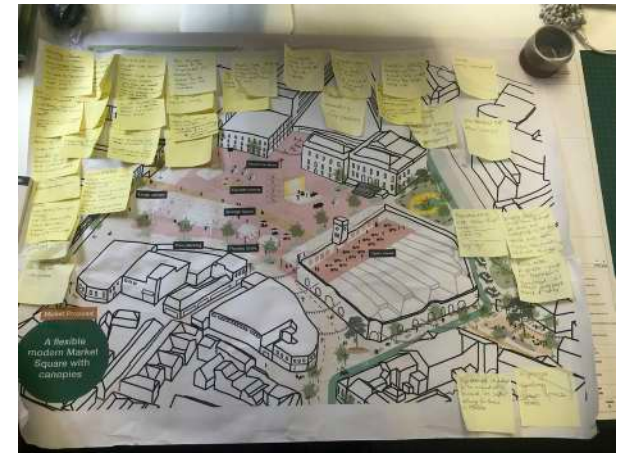
- Move play more centrally in the square
- Retain kiosks on market ground
- Provision needed for trade waste and site cleaning operation.
- Buses to be rerouted back onto Wellington Road. Thereby needing a crossing between the college buildings.
- More trees, planting, and seasonal interest
- Retain and facilitate the Sunday flea market
- Reduce market days to concentrate demand and supply over fewer days and increase market square activity and buzz on those days.
- Specify temporary outdoor furniture to ensure quality of environment - Could be leased/rented from the Council?

Ashton Resident

"The plans would be enhanced by a lovely sunken garden, with plenty of benches and colour."



Public consultation in Ashton Market



Responses to emerging proposals

Ashton Resident

"We'd like to see a better variety of trees. Could we have some the same as those in Library Square in Manchester? They have startling spring blooms."

Ashton Business Owner

"It looks great, Ashton needs the investment... Ashton is ready to improve, Stamford street could be something really special again"

Ashton Resident

"It is to be hoped that the mistakes made in developing the current Market Square can be avoided and an amenity of which Ashton can be proud can finally be realised."



Paulownia trees in spring bloom, St Peter's Square, Manchester



Market Traders and Kiosk Traders

Market and Kiosk traders were consulted on proposals to understand what would work best for their businesses.



Responses to emerging proposals

Concerns over:

- Access for deliveries and own car to stalls
- Bus stop provision has been removed
- Too far to walk with shopping
- Accessibility for less able bodied and important pensioner trade

Suggestions to:

- Shelter and protection from the elements - especially westerley wind and rain, summer shade - free standing roof rather than canopies
- Need large van servicing access along Bow St for market traders not all day only at key times of the day
- Storage to stop lots of unloading for market traders
- Access for people from public transport required from Wellington Road (bus routes along this road)
- Pop-up/temporary/seasonal events/offer in the market square.
- Lighting in the evening is critical
- Food and drink offer - night-time economy
- Mitigate westerly wind
- Signage and wayfinding from key transport hubs
- Need to establish intimate spaces and curate atmospheres of 'hustle and bustle', buzz.

- Improve drainage capacity

Kiosk Design:

- Kiosks need protection from the weather
- Kiosks designed for food – required
- 10ft by 10ft doesn't work for some uses - Different sized kiosks to suit different trader needs– carrier for storage
- Industrial quality of finishes needed for this use
- Intimate space – overlooked if the kiosks all face inwards, under the canopy
- fixed kiosks to operate as a 'shop
- Need own canopy
- Kiosks need protection from the weather

F&B:

- Food and drink as a cluster along gallery side of canopy
- Cafes along market frontage
- F&B at the rear end of the Market Hall (near Market Street edge)
- Option to place the F&B at the back of the Market Hall
- Outdoor seating for food stalls



The engagement work that had been undertaken to date had revealed a long list of aims, objectives and aspirations for Ashton. Whilst all of these objectives will be important to the future success of the project, not everything can be delivered at once. The purpose of this activity was to collectively determine the priorities for the project and to consider how these might be delivered.

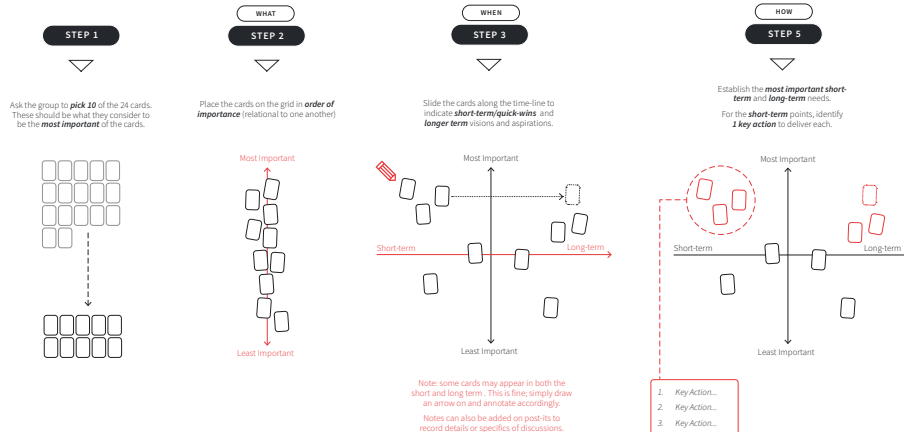
The Prioritisation Game helped establish where the most important and shortest term opportunities were for the Market Square and Ashton Town Centre. The workshop was split into two groups of up to 10 students from Tameside College. The results are discussed on the next page..

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE MARKET SQUARE: PRIORITISATION GAME INSTRUCTIONS

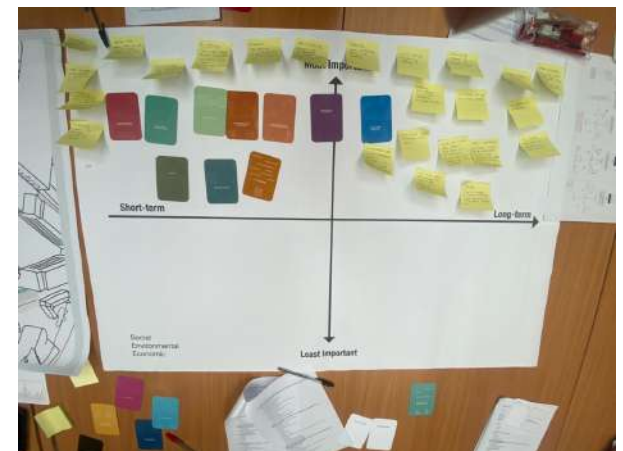
THE CARDS*

1. Commercial Viability	7. Local Character / Identity	13. Eco-friendly / Sustainable Principles	19. Inclusivity
2. Local Business	8. Retail	14. Retention of Heritage Buildings	20. Access and Connectivity
3. Green Space / Wildlife Habitat	9. Play and Recreation	15. Community Spaces	21. Outdoor events
4. Housing	10. Job Creation	16. Charitable Organisations	22. Nighttime Economy
5. Arts and Culture	11. Car Parking and Traffic Solutions	17. Access and Connectivity	23. Advertising and Marketing
6. Educational Uses	12. Public Space	18. Health and Wellbeing	24. Make your own...

*These are based on previous engagement outcomes



Group 1



Group 2

Students from Tameside College gave valuable insight into Ashton from a youth perspective.

Inclusive Spaces:

Students spoke of the broad range of religions and ethnicities which make up the Ashton community, not all of which are represented in the town centre. Students felt there is a lack of inclusivity and provision for youths. They complained of no place to go, a lack of social spaces or amenities where they can socialise.

College finishes in the evening when everything is closed. Safety and security was raised as an issue, including inadequate lighting. They felt judged for loitering at certain times, and that there is a lack of seating and opportunities for them to dwell comfortably. They called for a range of spaces to suit different needs, including safe spaces for girls, quiet spaces, active spaces for play and recreation, and a community hub, which should be free or cheap with passes (for students).

Celebrate Heritage:

Students were proud of the heritage buildings and rich history of Ashton, but felt it was under-celebrated. They suggested that the industrial heritage needs to be reflected through regeneration, and that more could be done to celebrate Ashton's history, including promoting Portland Basin Museum.

Social Issues:

It was felt strongly that Ashton suffers from pronounced social issues which affected the experience of the town centre, including a visible drug and homelessness problem, and gang culture which needs to be tackled.

Suggested solutions to these problems were discussed, and there was agreement that regeneration of the town centre is important for job creation which can help to alleviate these social issues.

Students complained that there was a lack of choice and variety for work, with most jobs in retail. They hoped for a better variety of work options.

Need for Regeneration:

Students felt that the edges of the town required significant attention, and that this should be a priority. They complained of too much car parking with much of it derelict, such as Lady Smiths, and that it attracts anti-social behaviour and drug users.

Promoting Active Travel:

Students advocated for better provision for active travel to boost health and wellbeing and increase sustainability, including increased pedestrianisation around the market to promote walking. They complained of not enough cycle storage and not in right place, with safety a concern and a lack of trust in leaving bikes locked up.

Bring it to Life:

Students felt the town centre was lacking vibrancy. They complained that the townscape lacked visual and architectural interest, that it's all grey and would benefit from some colour, better lighting, more greenspace and wildlife habitat.

They suggested an emphasis should be placed on Food and drink / Outdoor events / Night time economy / Arts and culture, and attracting smaller local independent business back to town.



Student engagement workshop, Ashton Old Baths



Greenspace Team

Tameside Council's Greenspace team contributed practical considerations for design, management and maintenance of the public realm.

Inclusive design

- Skateboarding provision for teenage offer
- Plenty of ideas for play related including QR code offer
- Youth services have a bike track that could be brought to site for use during and after market hours.
- Play for all ages needed to attract all ages.
- Seating to encourage college students to use centre (stop 5/6 groups standing around which other people might find intimidating)

Safety

- Is CCTV and lighting being considered within the scheme for night use and safety?
- Sight lines need considering

Maintenance

- Maintenance needs considering with provision and resources built in.
- No Grass (maintenance issues) turns to mud in winter.
- Trees (Chinese Privet grows to 5m high) can be grown in containers but moving around not good idea as plants are prone to die off if their environment is changed.
- Canopy no sides preferred for ease of cleansing and to minimise ASB
- Outdoor gym equipment has maintenance and health and safety issues attached.
- Enforcement needed on private land owners/ developers around visual impact of sites.
- Build in annual deep clean going forward.
- Provision needed for trade waste and site cleaning operation.
- No point improving the centre when periphery looks like a building site/top.
- No communal planting areas on square (issues with ownership) maybe look at provision in partnership with the college for herb beds on the mezzanine

Public realm considerations

- Gateways need to be considered when drawing the red line to give best first impression.
- Consistency across scheme same materials etc.
- Large statement pieces rather than lots of small installations
- Whole site needs to be considered to maintain continuity, standard and best use of area.

Environmental/Climatic considerations

- Wind breaks need considering
- Drainage including SUDS needs looking at. Run off in such a large area will be large.

Street furniture considerations

- Wayfinding and signage need improving
- Provision for Bike parking



Tameside Owners and Drivers Association

Tameside Owners and Drivers Association submitted a formal response to the consultation, which raised important considerations regarding transport strategy and placemaking.

"The taxi trade provides public transport to all sectors of the community including vulnerable persons [...] we are on occasions the only form of public transport available.

Extending the taxi rank would provide daytime shoppers with better accessibility, and at night-time assist in preventing antisocial behaviour by dispersing crowds quickly and efficiently, especially when hosting events in the Market Square."

Objections to:

- Positioning of play area/'park' in relation to taxi rank, pub spillout, servicing and attracting antisocial behaviour.

Concerns over:

- Previously been assured at trade meetings that there were plans in the pipeline to extend this rank and move it closer to the Town Hall.

Suggestions to:

- Move play more centrally in the square
- Extend the taxi rank into the former compound area and closer to the town hall to increase capacity, mitigate rank overspill to help facilitate flexible event uses in the square.



Taxi rank and compound site, Wellington Road



Consultation materials showing play area at compound site, Wellington Road



Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel Meeting

Tameside Council's Place and External Relations Scrutiny Panel submitted a formal response to the consultation, which highlights important considerations for the ambition of proposals, how to ensure good footfall, good governance of the project, and how to ensure success beyond delivery.

Ambition

- Remain as bold as possible in supporting a wider pull factor. To create something that differentiates Ashton Market Square within the region.
- Maximise the use of environmentally friendly and sustainable methods, actively reducing the carbon footprint and for this to be an exemplar project in Tameside for materials and renewables.

Footfall

- Members are keen to ensure that work is undertaken to understand what will lead to greater use and footfall, and what mix of uses will work best.
- Need for extended use of the square outside of trader and shop opening times.
- Potential to create a more structured approach to accessing the square with entry and exit that supports footfall to traders and businesses, whilst maintaining the ease of movement to wider public services and the college.
- Signpost the Market square as a destination.

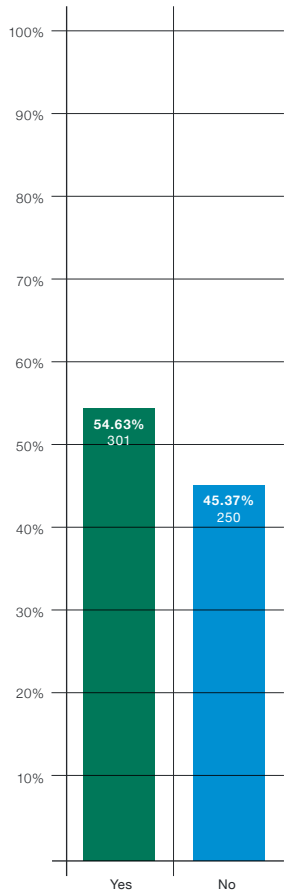
Governance

- Continued and progressive methods of dialogue and engagement with key stakeholders is key to the success of the project.
- Potential option to establish - Ashton Market Square Advisory and Delivery Panel - for the duration. To include representatives of the Council, Elected Members, Market Traders, Businesses and the Town Team. To promote transparency and deliver key messages and updates at agreed intervals.
- The importance of effective costing, delivery timetables and transparency of communication throughout the length of the programme with key stakeholders. In order to work for all, the project needs to be informed by all.

Beyond Delivery

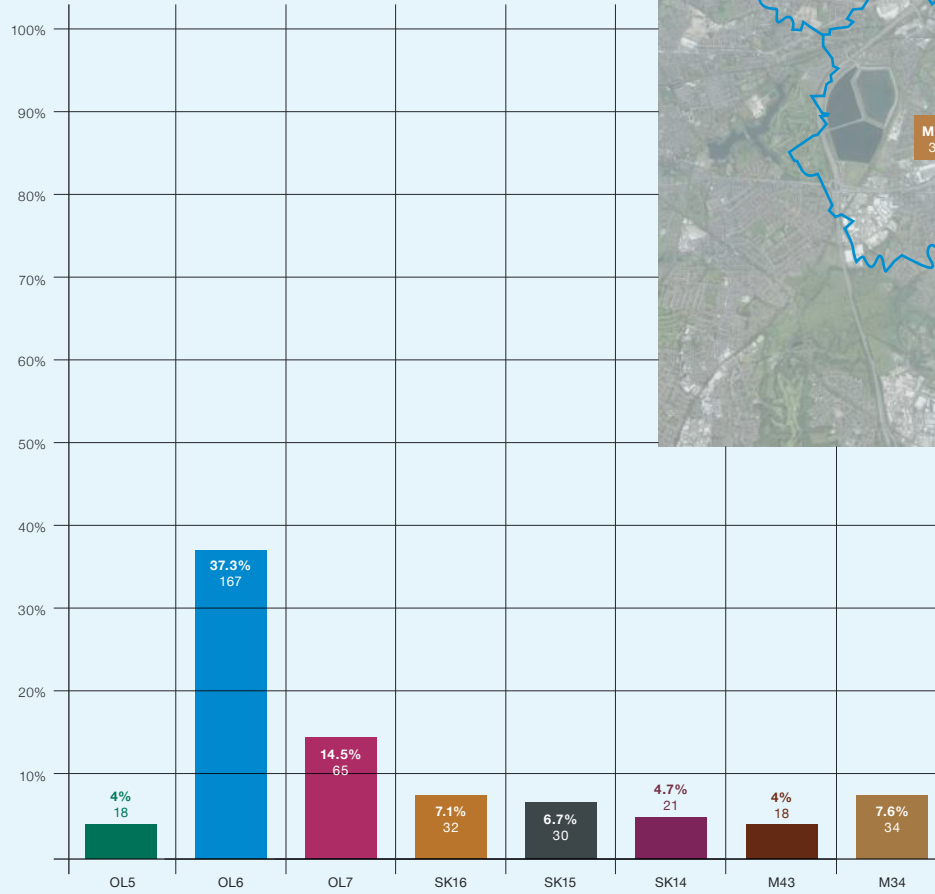
- Members are keen for proposals to consider future expansion of public realm and accessibility to the market square from all available public transport locations and car parks.
- Future maintenance strategy and long-term financial commitment is needed for Town Centres, beyond LUF investment and one-off monies.

Q1 Do you live in Ashton?

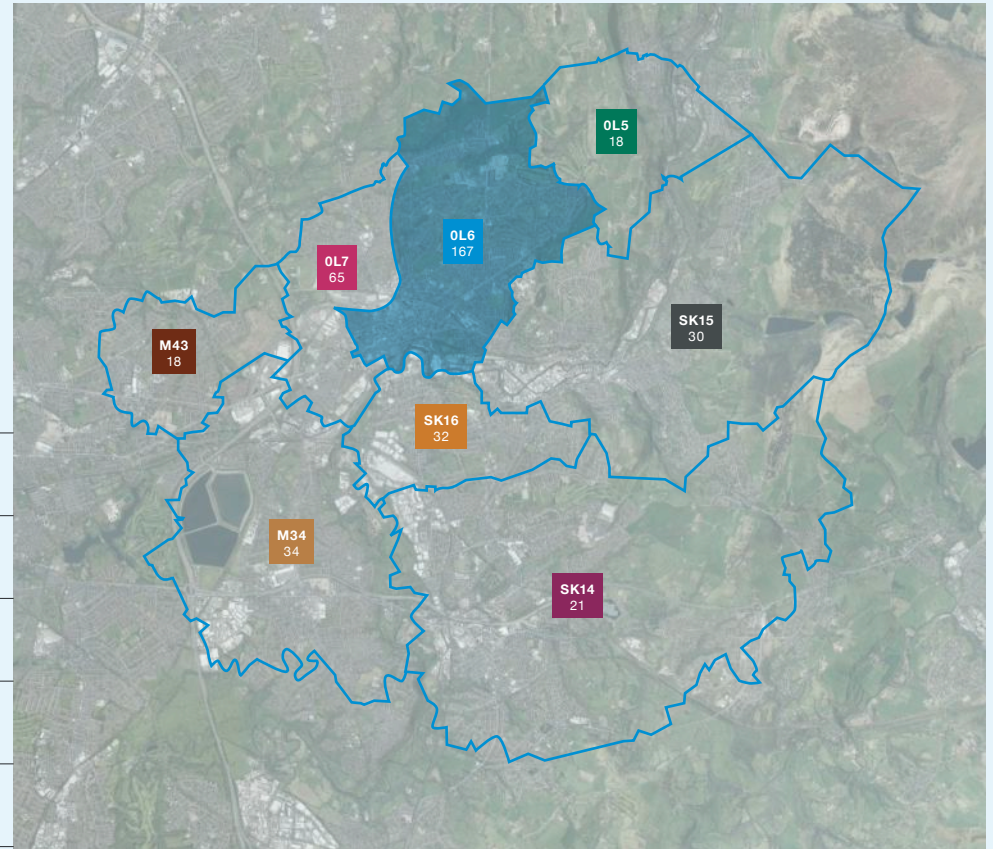


ANSWERED 551
SKIPPED 5

Q14 What is your postcode?



ANSWERED 448
SKIPPED 108

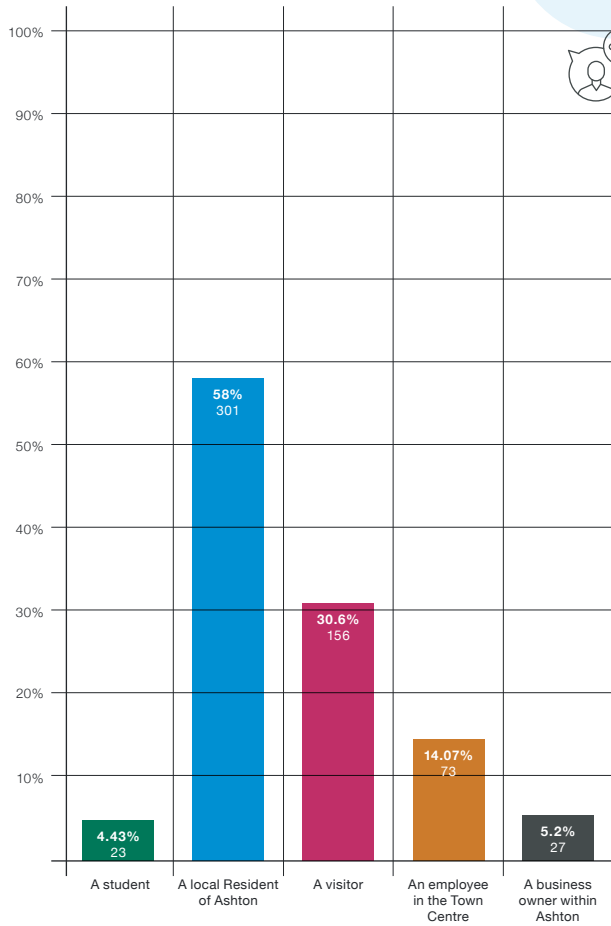


Q2

What is your interest in Ashton Market Square? Are you...



31
stated they visit Ashton often

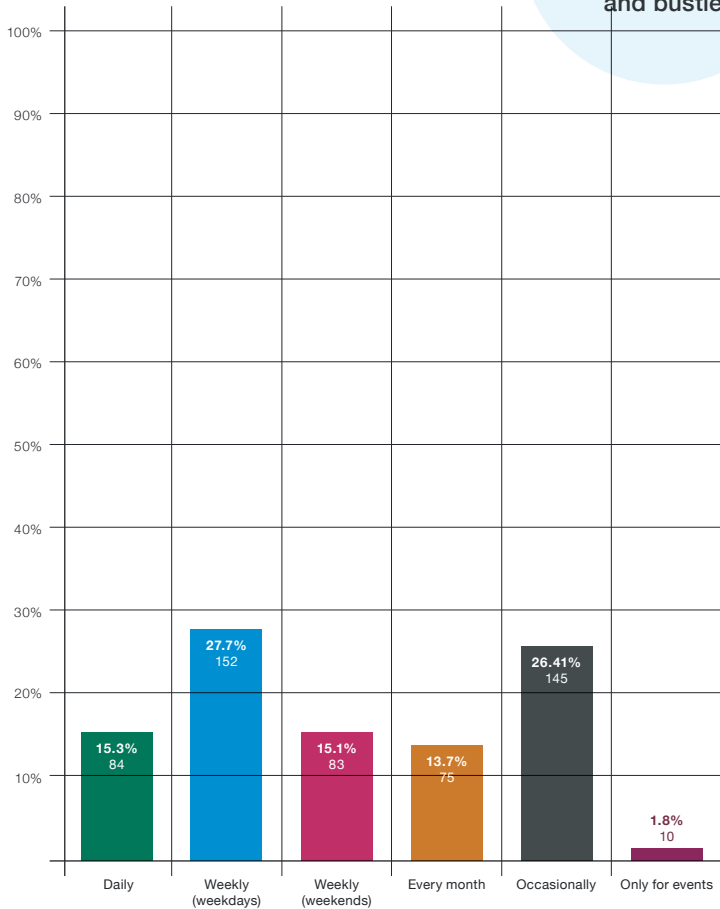


ANSWERED 519
SKIPPED 37

Q3

How often do you visit Ashton Market Square?

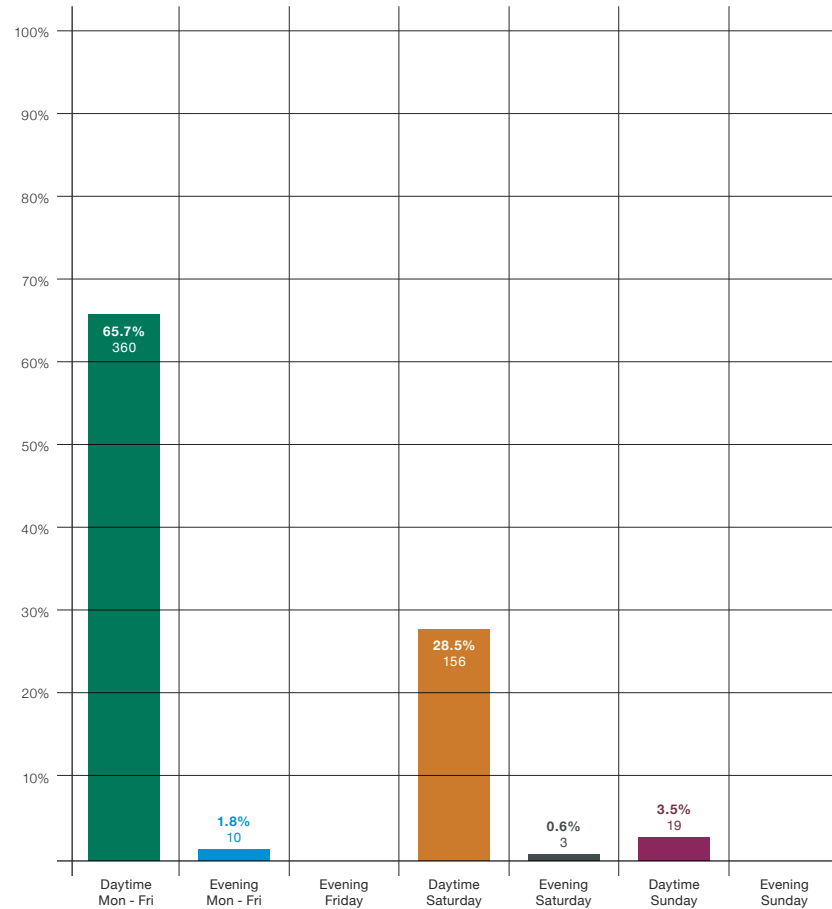
My favourite thing about Ashton is the indoor market and the hustle and bustle



ANSWERED 549
SKIPPED 7

Q4

When do you usually visit Ashton Market Square?



ANSWERED 548
SKIPPED 8

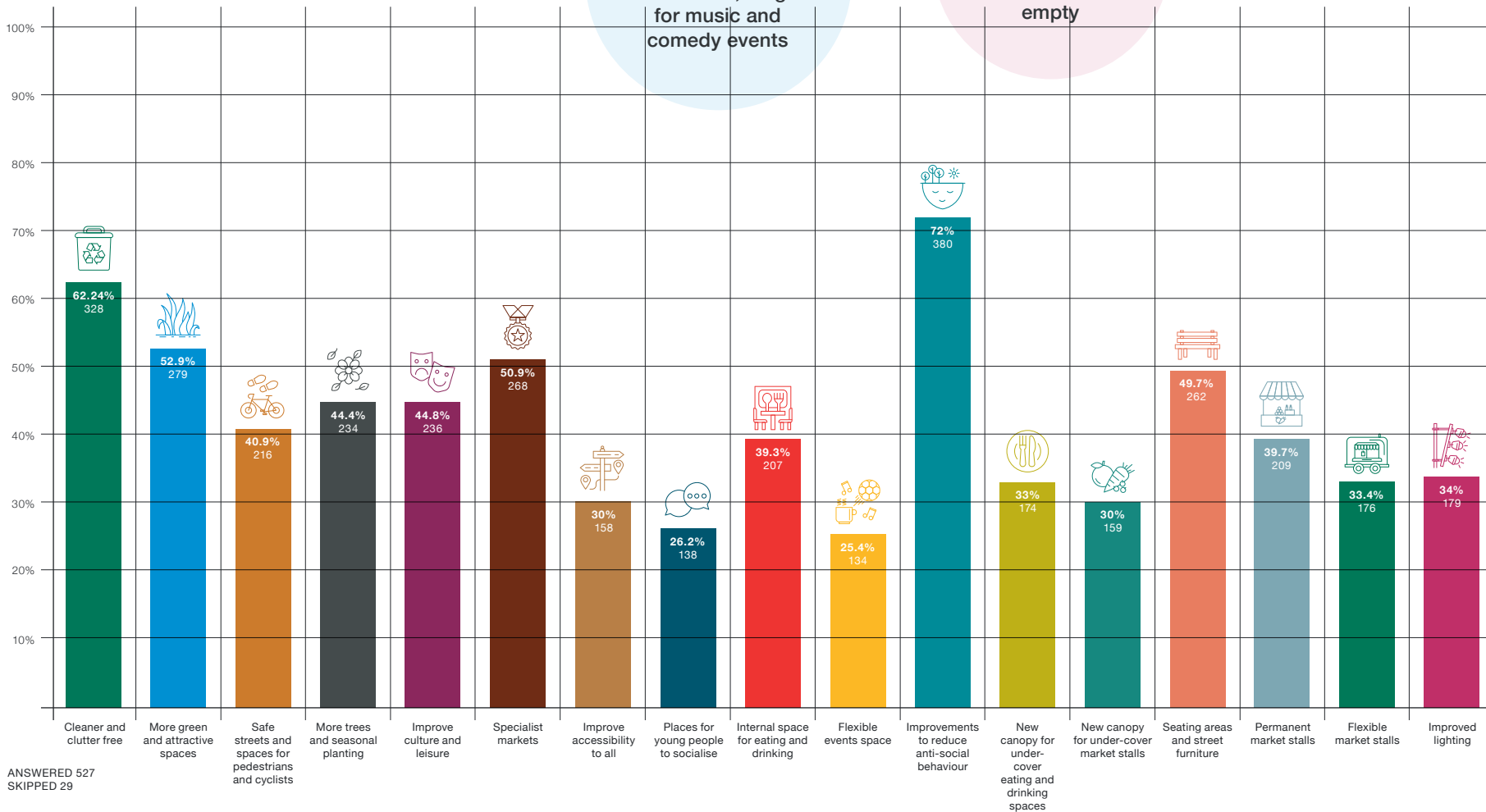
Q5 How would you like Ashton Market Square to be changed?

People seem frustrated about previous projects which haven't been completed in Ashton therefore have little positivity for future endeavours. They have mentioned Altrincham Market, Stockport Market, Bury Market and HATCH as places they visit more often than their local Ashton Market.

Consideration for people with autism and other learning disabilities

Sporting activities, interactive events, seasonable family attractions, stage for music and comedy events

Ensure the space is well used - it currently feels uncomfortably empty



ANSWERED 527
SKIPPED 29

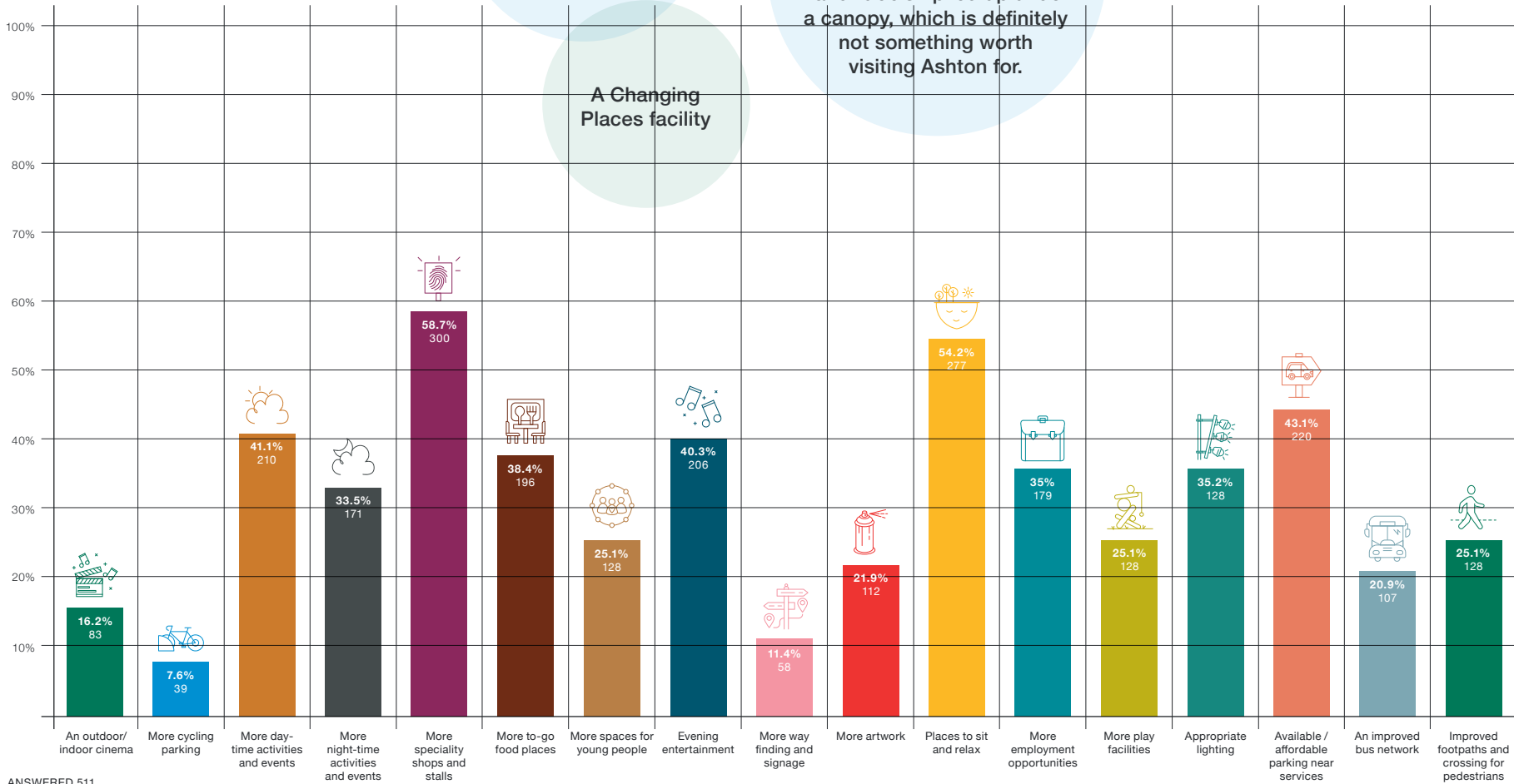
Q6

What do you think is missing from Ashton Market Square?

Re-open the hippodrome theatre and cinema - happy times spent there with family and friends

Some quality control as to what market vendors are selling and setting up. The majority of vendors are now selling second hand rubbish piled up under a canopy, which is definitely not something worth visiting Ashton for.

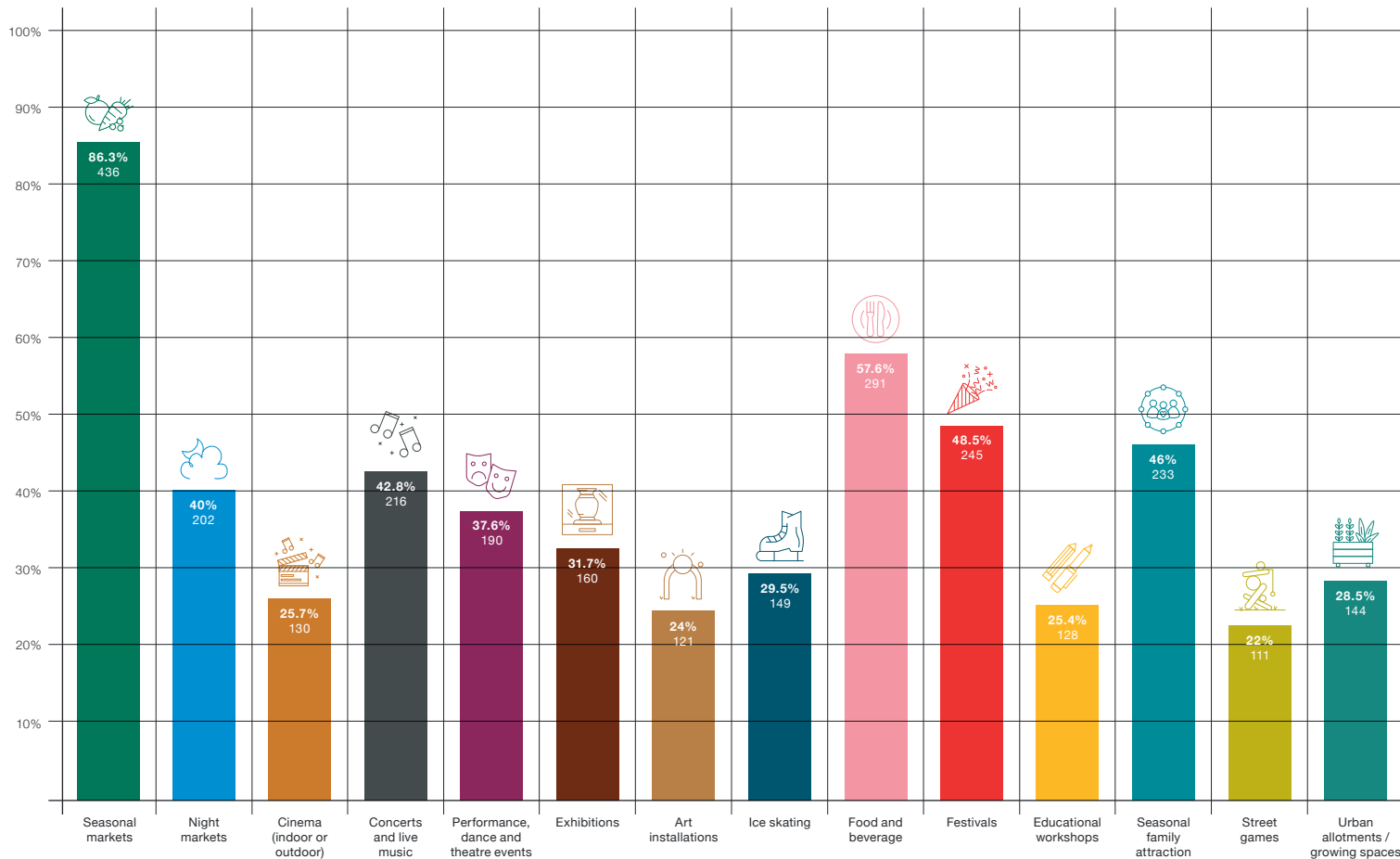
A Changing Places facility



ANSWERED 511
SKIPPED 45

Q7

What kind of events/activities would you like to see in Ashton Market Square?



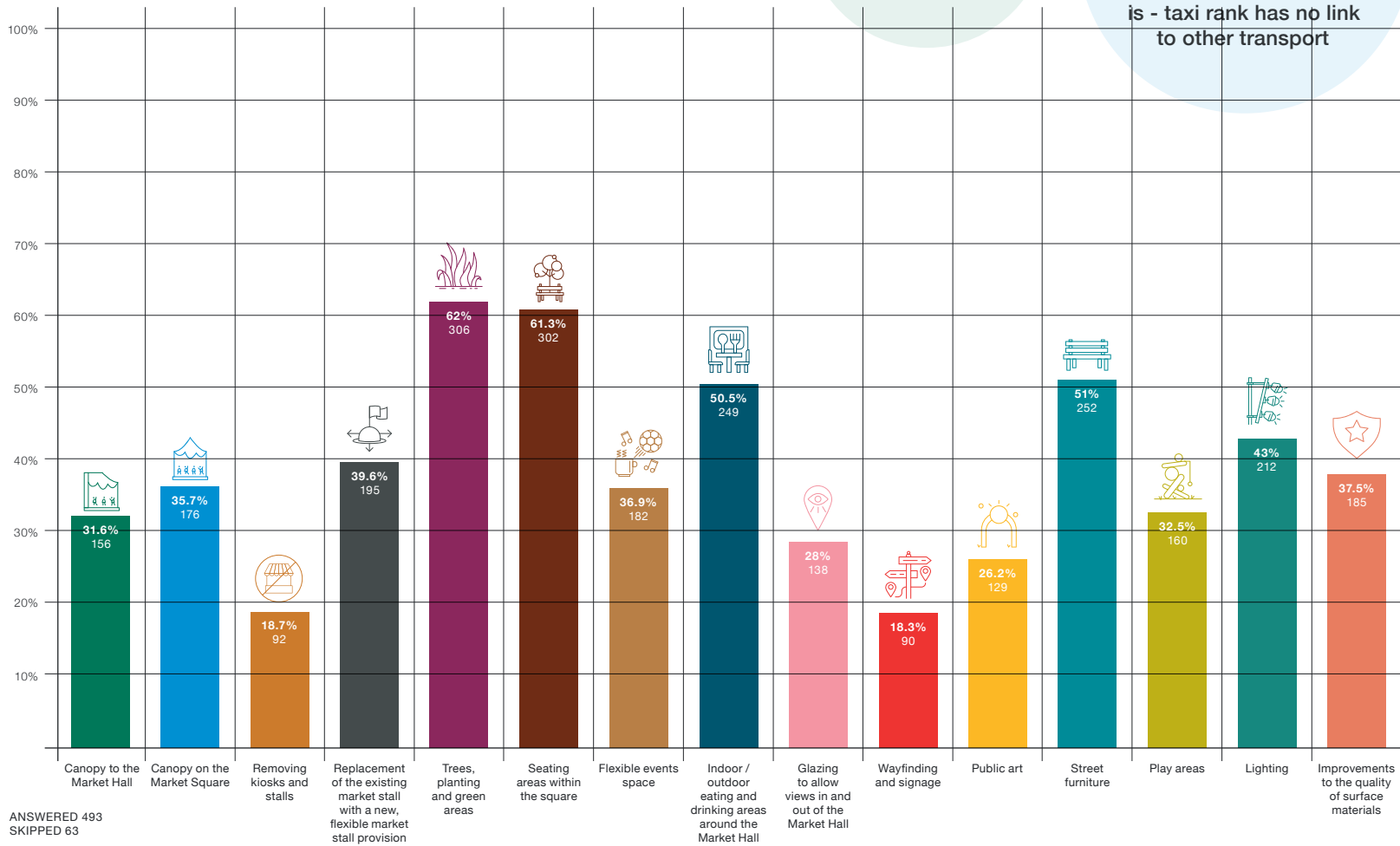
ANSWERED 505
SKIPPED 51

Q8

Looking at the consultation material, which features of the draft proposal for the market square do you agree with?

An 'escape to freight island' sort of venue would be great & make a fortune!

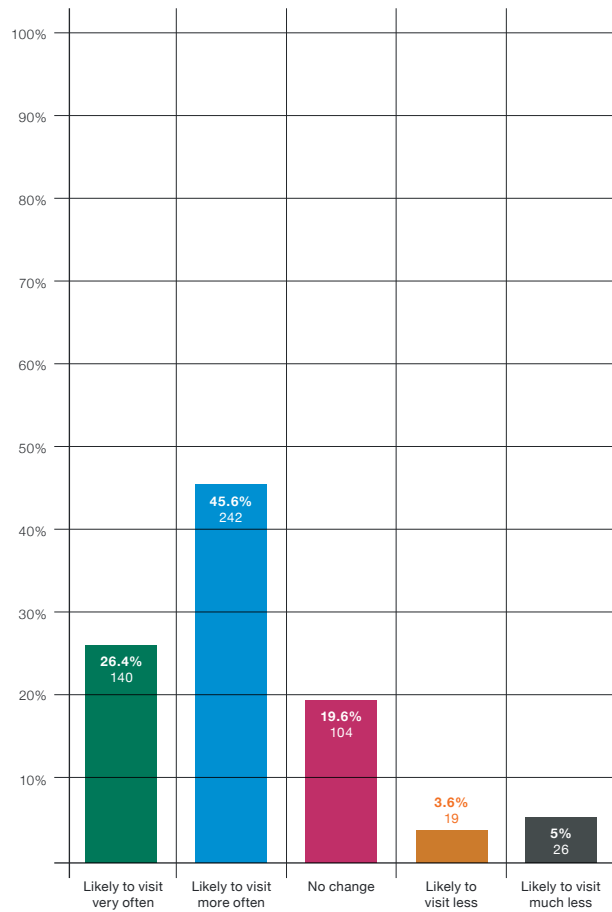
Coherent transport hub linking tram / bus / taxis / bike hubs with Market Sq - at moment new arrivals have no clue where centre of Ashton is - taxi rank has no link to other transport



ANSWERED 493
SKIPPED 63

Q9

How often are you likely to visit the Ashton town centre if the changes to the Market Square were implemented?



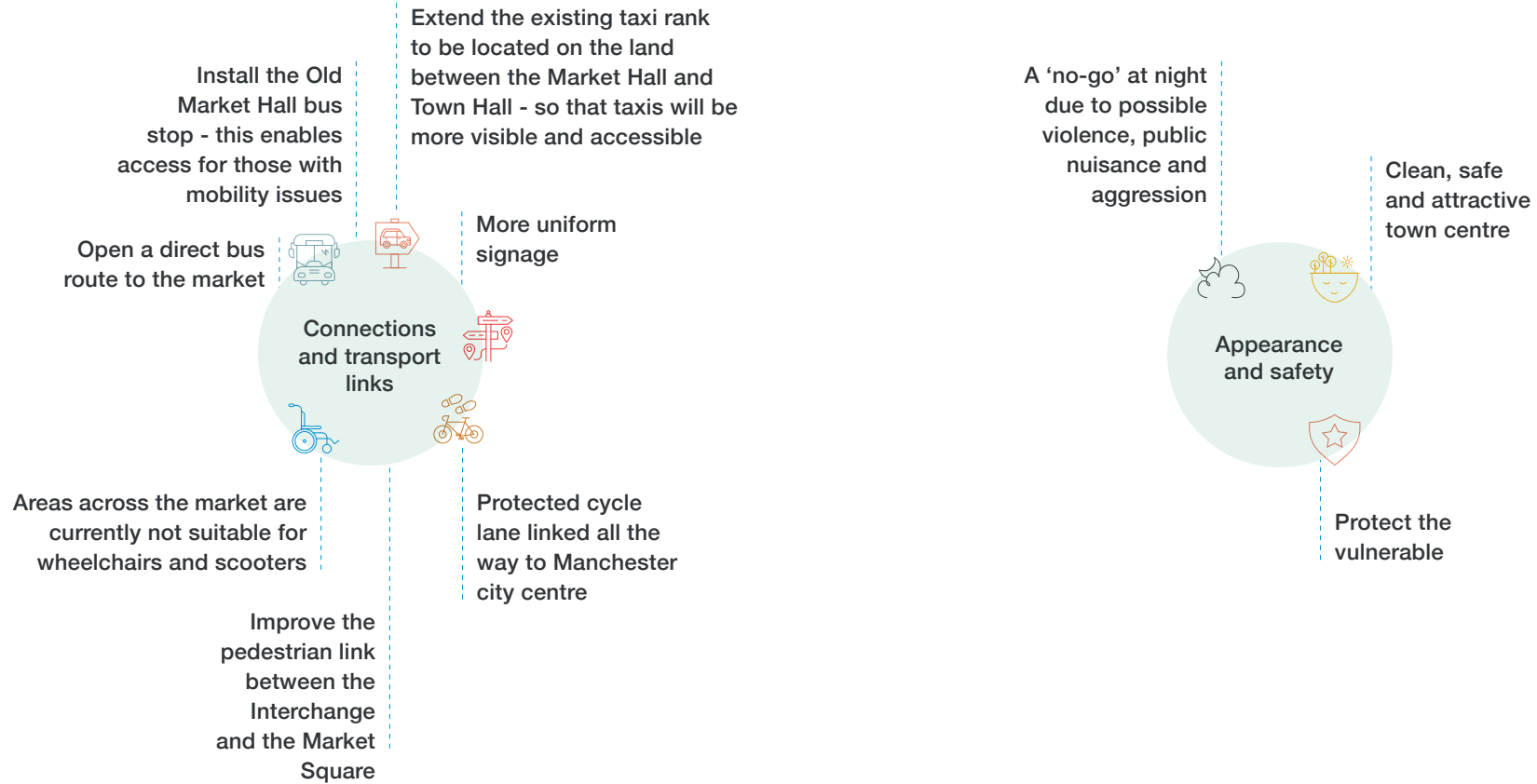
ANSWERED 531
SKIPPED 25

Q10

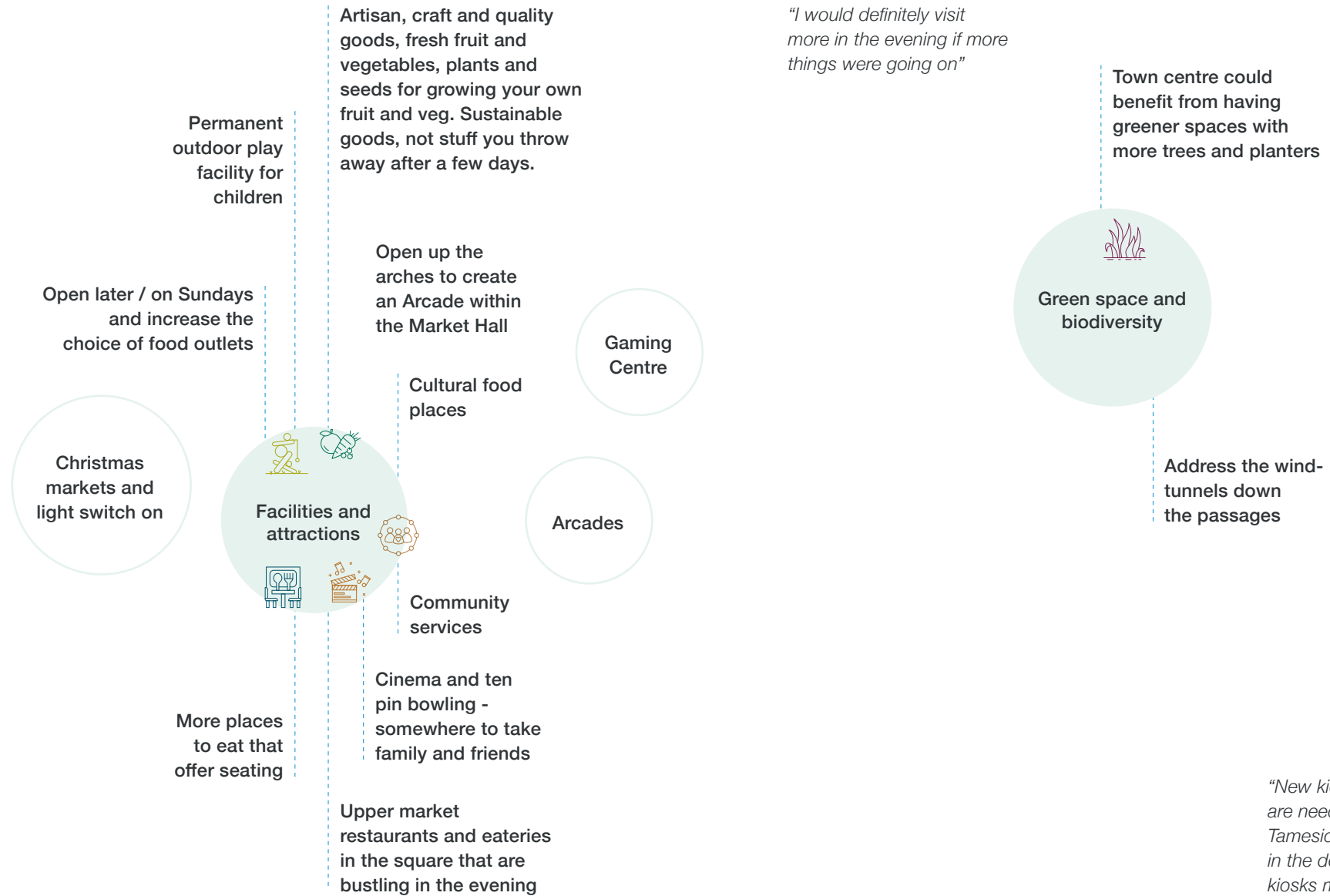
Please use this space for any other feedback, ideas or suggestions.

These will help us to shape the project as it progresses.

"Give us something to be proud of"



"Small businesses will be integral to the success of the town going forward."



Key considerations

A number of consistent themes and important considerations emerged across the various consultation sessions, which must be incorporated into the next stage of proposals and are summarised;

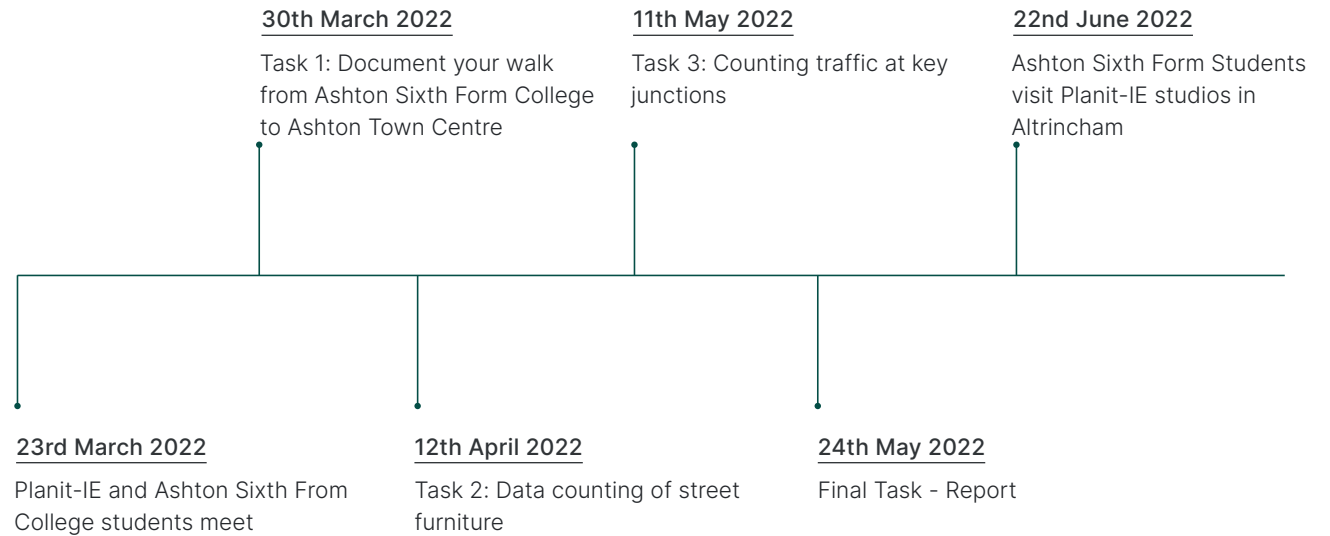
- Review location of play area within the Market Square.
- Consider the current, significant antisocial behaviour issues in design.
- Consider safety and inclusive design for children, youth, girls and minority groups.
- Consider the needs of students/teenagers and invite their active use of the town centre.
- Accessibility for less able-bodied and review location of public transport on Wellington Road.
- Review of taxi rank location and size in relation to sustainability, placemaking and transport strategies.
- Review flexibility of kiosks and market days in relation to overall programming of the square.
- Incorporate design recommendations/ requirements from kiosk traders relating to kiosk design, storage and servicing.
- Factor in environmental conditions to the design, particularly westerly wind and rain.
- Devise an F&B strategy.
- Incorporate heritage interpretation within design of the public realm.
- Devise strategy for long-term management and maintenance of proposals beyond delivery timescale.
- Review sustainable urban drainage approach in response to local climatic conditions, which are likely to intensify.
- Establish a governance strategy to ensure project transparency and good communication between stakeholders and Tameside Council.



Social Value

Ashton Sixth Form College Work Experience

As part of the commission for the Public Realm and Movement Strategy for Ashton, taking part in social value activities with local facilities was important in the process. A six-part engagement with local AS-Level Geography students at Ashton College informed the strategy work.



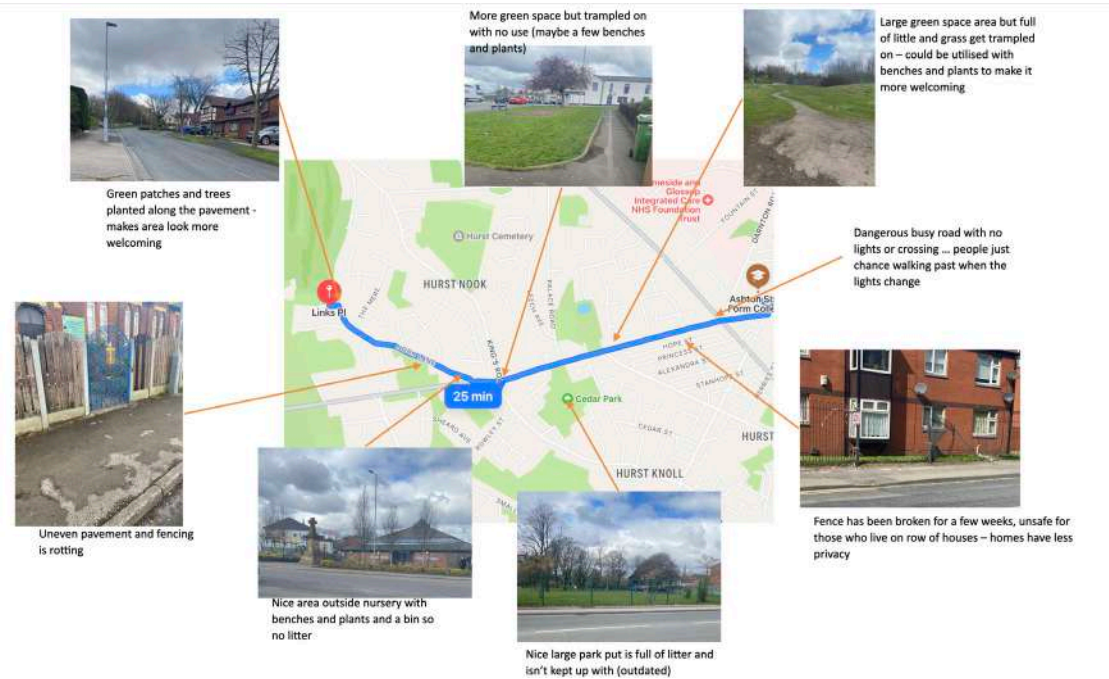
Task One

Purpose

Understanding the length, time of day, mode of travel and appearance of the journey for students from their home to Ashton Sixth Form College.

Outcome

On the following pages Students 1-5 have illustrated and documented their journeys. From Task One's documentation and insight we can identify the problem sites within their journey and areas of opportunity e.g. spaces for dwelling and enjoying the sun. This analysis helps inform the public realm strategy proposals.



Student 1

Overall, it was clear that from my route to college (around 25 minute walk) there was significant lack of green spaces and bins which contribute to large amounts of litter being left on the pavements. It was also clear that even though there was some green spaces, they were not being used efficiently meaning they are being walked on by the public and become an 'eye sore' for the local community. This could be improved by utilising green spaces already in place and adding pathways, gardens and/or benches which will attract the community to use these areas rather than walk past or over them. This could also increase community engagement in Ashton.



Student 2

Every college day, I take the 346 Stagecoach service from Hyde into Ashton, stopping at Glebe Street to embark on an approximately 10 minute walk at a steady incline to Ashton Sixth Form. From Glebe Street, I walk across the pedestrian crossings to near where Armstrong's Office Furniture is; I continue to stroll towards to the Penny Meadow junction where in which lies an island between several sides of traffic with some greenspace for local residents to perhaps walk their dogs. However, this greenspace is not the most appealing space for someone to use- for instance, the fact that on all four corners of the island there is a busy road which may be difficult to escape in the event of someone being threatened by street crime.

Despite the presence of litter bins, these seem to have insignificant effect since litter is often discarded on the grass or the pavement. Pedestrians often feel uneasy about using the crossing from the Penny Meadow island at Neal Avenue since there is not a traffic light to direct when pedestrians can safely cross the two lanes of traffic before reaching a small traffic island.

Upon crossing at Mossley Road, I continue walking across the same pavement, crossing at small crossings such as at the industrial park and at Tesco Express. When at the convenience store at Mossley Road, I turn right to walk down Curzon Road which then leads me directly to Ashton Sixth Form College. Curzon Road- a residential street- is often covered in litter from college students using the convenience store for snacks and it could be suggested that improvements to the street's bins need to be made in order to accommodate for the litter.

After finishing a college day, I tend to stick to the same route as outlined before although when near to Armstrong's Office Furniture, I sometimes use the Cricket's Lane shortcut if I believe I may be late for my bus home at the Penny Meadow Bus Stop. I usually only use this shortcut during a well-lit day since I am wary of the potential dangers that come with taking this route.



Ashton's Memorial Gardens

Whilst this garden is usually pleasant to pass, I regularly see it not being used by local residents.



Street landscaping near Crickets Lane

This street landscaping provides a boundary between the commercial building of Armstrong's Office Furniture, some terraced houses and the A670.



Discarded waste on the side of the road

We could may be view this is as a sign that local residents do not feel invested or have pride in the area that they live in.



Penny Meadow green space

In the Spring, this green space is usually nice to walk down alone, however if there is anybody in the communal sitting area, I tend to avoid this green space to walk on the pavement instead. It's shame because it is quite sweet to see daffodils and greenery in a deprived urban area.



Dangerous Penny Meadow crossing

This crossing with a large island in the middle between two lanes is unpleasant to walk on. Many pedestrians report that this crossing is unsafe, saying that they would want to see a pedestrian crossing nearby so the mostly young people using this crossing do not fear being hit by a car walking to or from college.

After the first set of difficult roads to cross, there is another very wide road, and traffic in all directions. You can see these people just go, and cars have to wait for us, which is obviously not very safe.

Problem continues when you make it across the first part of the road, the middle crossing still has traffic in all directions and very wide/busy.

These issues could be more problematic for the two schools nearby, as although unsafe for adults/ us at college, even worse for school children.

I do think the park area in between is nice instead of all road, but no one goes in here often other than to walk through.

Problem roads: very wide and difficult to cross. Traffic from all directions, including buses and large trucks.

Closest bus down to Ashton from college- helps busy roads be less people busy which is probably safer.

Student 3

For me, my journey to college is fairly simple. When I get the 348 bus from Stalybridge to Stamford street in Ashton, the route is easy and I feel not much could be improved. However, my regular journeys to Ashton are where more issues lie. On the journey from college to Ashton town centre, the main issues are the roads. Some of the 'crossings', notably Mosley road and the junctions with Neal ave and Beaufort road. These crossing places are extremely wide, with cars coming from up to 4 or 5 directions.

This is especially dangerous at peak times, such as 3-4 when schools and colleges finish. I think this road would be specifically hard for younger children, even when with an adult, as there is multiple nurseries and primary's schools nearby, along with the 2 colleges in close proximity.

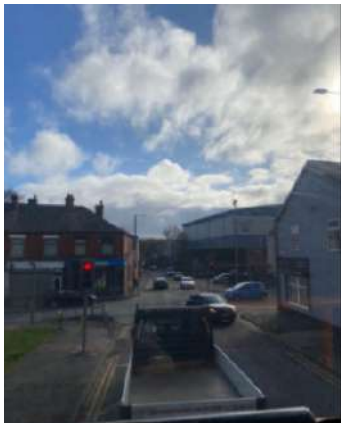
I think these issues are quite important, as safety is a major concern. When in Ashton town centre, it is not particularly appealing, and I think there is no real purpose to go, other than a practical reason such as going to buy something specific.

However, I think that there is more of an appeal for older people, as I would say pensioners are the main demographic of Ashton town centre. I personally think the market hall could be more "special" as I feel it used to be more of the focal point of the city centre. The bus station, since its renovation, is very easy to use and has good connections to the rest of Manchester and surrounding areas.

Student 4

Every morning I take the 231 Stagecoach bus from Clayton Hall which then drops me right outside college on Darnton Road for me to then attend. However on my journey home I take a different route. From college, I walk into Ashton town centre, which is an approximate 10-15 minute walk. I then get the 216 Stagecoach bus from the service interchange which then drops back off at Clayton Hall bus stop and I finish my journey by walking the remainder home.

My journey to and from college is fairly straightforward. However, walking through Ashton and into the town centre on my way home is where I feel there are some particular areas in need of attention.



For example, the roads are extremely hectic at the average time of finishing college (4pm) with cars approaching from numerous directions due to the wide roads with various stopping islands in the middle. For me, this is a concern especially as there are primary schools in close proximity along with two colleges. It's extremely difficult to cross these roads and I have witnessed many students struggling to do so on a daily basis. Ashton town centre has a great sense of community with music playing as you walk through, despite particular areas looking slightly worn-down and derelict. A final point to focus on, is the outdated advertisements located at the crossroads at New Market Road with a company car that has been dominated by overgrown weeds etc. This could be considered an eyesore to the public, especially as it's a very popular route for everyday commutes, and public transport, as my bus also takes this route. However, overall there are many green space areas for people to enjoy whilst on the journey to and from college which looks appealing to the public.





Student 5

1. Green space (island) – this area could be seen as an integral part of the Ashton community despite its benign significance upon first glance however, after observing this area since the last meeting I have seen a wealth of activity and opportunity to socialise on the benches and grass/gravel paths. This almost acts as a way to deter people from walking near the main road. Furthermore, throughout last year the community has taken great of the wild/planted flora (suggesting green space with social amenities acts as the pride of the community or even a space for people to built community ties, much like an allotment) suggesting that if we were to replicate the much needed green space within Ashton town centre in similar ways we could see an improvement in environmental quality (which is one of the seven domains of inequality).
2. This is a major pedestrian road hazard due to the width of the road itself. This area takes approximately 7-10 seconds to cross which is quite long especially silly when there is no safe way to cross (zebra crossing, traffic lights etc). Additionally, in this area the cars all have right way and so there is no clear place to safely cross, thus putting the lives of people at risk possibly from dangerous driving or even careless behaviour when crossing the road. Over the two years I have been at college I have seen many people struggle to cross this intersection as cars very rapidly come towards you as they pull off from a main road.
3. In my opinion this area has great pedestrian flow and great traffic control. The traffic lights don't cause much congestion throughout the day other than rush hour (approximately 17:00-18:30) and during the mornings as I am coming into Ashton from Failsworth (8:00-9:00). Although the pedestrian flow is somewhat optimal these key hours of commuting cause degradation in terms of environmental quality (air pollution) and possibly stress levels (although this hasn't been directly correlated with chronic symptoms of stress) there is reason to believe this is true.
4. This area is around the residential inner town centre regions and reflects one of many similar states. Many of these rows are littered with rubbish and in this case is prone to industrial tipping and fly tipping. Opportunist crimes such as these are damaging the spirits of the community as there is a sense of dismay for their shared environment, which is simply not true for the majority (the minority commits environmental crimes in these residential areas).



Task Two

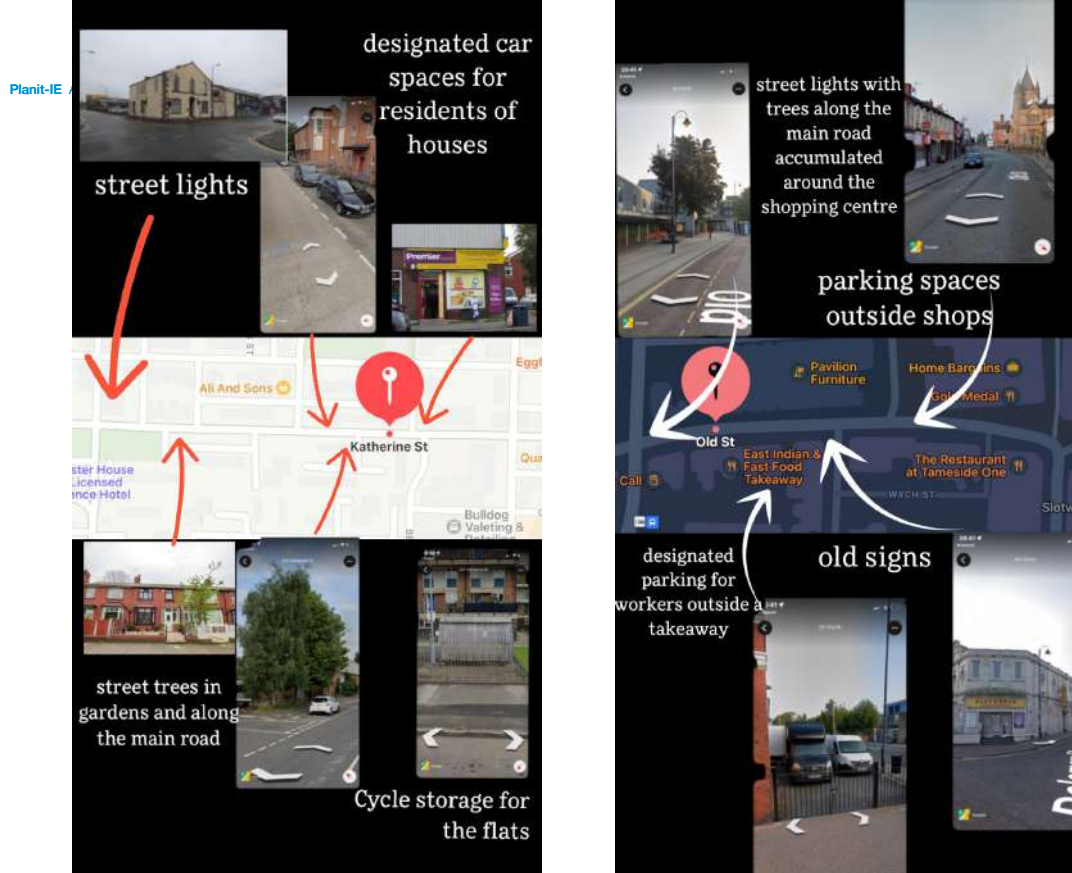
Purpose

Data counting of street furniture in two groups in specific streets and spaces. Taking note of the;

- Number of cycle storage / parking places
- Number of on-street parking spaces – along streets (how many parking spaces along the street)
- Number of wayfinding signs (to help you navigate around the town centre, directing you to other places in Ashton)
- Number of street lights
- Number of sculptures in the street / Art Installations / Murals on the Wall
- Number of benches / seating areas
- Number of loading bays
- Number of taxi ranks
- Number of street trees

Outcome

On the following pages Groups One and Two documented their findings. From Task Two's insight we can identify the streets and spaces which require more thought and consideration for planting, benches and cycle parking etc.



Group One

Street furniture	Katherine Street	Old Street	Market Street
Street trees	23	12	15
Benches	-	-	-
Taxi parking	1	0	1
Cycle storage	1	0	0
On-street parking	100	0	10
Wayfinding / signage	5	3	3
Art installations	0	2	2
Loading bays	4	3	3
Street lighting	15	7	4

Group Two

Street furniture	Percentage of total street furniture items
Street trees	18.6%
Benches	12.6%
Taxi parking	0.6%
Cycle storage	2.6%
On-street parking	32.6%
Wayfinding / signage	4%
Art installations	2.6%
Loading bays	2%
Street lighting	24%

"It was clear that Market Square was the only location that was focused on when designing this area. This meaning that other areas ,especially Wellington Street, are neglected causing them to be areas which would generally be avoided by the local community. Because of the features that Ashton is lacking, this may cause individuals to travel through Ashton rather than it being a destination location. If a number of art installation, street trees, benches and other forms of visually pleasing vegetation where added (for example community gardens), this may make Ashton a more attractive area, causing community interaction to increase."

Student 1

"The results of this task were fairly expected, and the main finding/ issue was the lack of way finding signs, especially to main points such as the train station. Throughout the town centre, signs were few and far between, and some were fairly unclear/ unreadable. Although Ashton is easy to find your way round, especially because I don't think people who don't live near, ever come to Ashton, if improvements in Ashton did turn the town centre into more of a 'destination', there is few signs to direct people. However, I think this is an easy fix during renovations, as signs can be placed in key locations to ease movement around the centre."

Student 3

"I specifically was tasked at counting car parking spaces, bicycle parking and wayfinding signs. My findings were that there were plenty of car parking spaces (32.6% of the street furniture on the five streets happened to be car parking) with some occupied as we surveyed on a Sunday afternoon. Only 4% of the street furniture items were wayfinding signs which suggests that pedestrians use the centre of Ashton regularly enough to know where they need to go without the need of wayfinding signs to guide them. Perhaps an increase in safe and secure bicycle parking or storage would encourage cycling in Ashton which could have the potential to carbon reduce emissions from cars since Ashton's air quality does need to improve (Ashton has a PM2.5 concentration is 2.2x higher than the WHO annual air quality guideline value according to IQAir.com)."

Student 2

Street furniture	Market Square	Stamford Street	George Street	Market Street	Wellington Street
Street trees	8	1	0	19	0
Benches	12	0	0	7	0
Taxi parking	1	0	0	0	0
Cycle storage	4	0	0	0	0
On-street parking	15	34	0	0	0
Wayfinding / signage	3	1	1	0	1
Art installations	1	0	0	3	0
Loading bays	1	1	0	0	1
Street lighting	22	3	5	4	2

Task Three

Purpose

Movement analysis in two separate groups at specified key junctions for 30minutes - 1 hour, recording the time of day and a tally count of cars, cyclists and pedestrians. And using online tools understanding traffic data; what are the peak times for traffic through the week.

Outcome

On the following pages Groups One and Two documented their findings. From Task Three's insight we can identify the amount and type of traffic in and around Ashton. Identifying the junctions which are causing the highest amount of congestion and pollution will help with the public realm strategy to determine methods to reduce reliance on cars and provide public transport which will ease congestion.

We used two physical counters to count pedestrians and cars. And an online counter to count cyclist.

Katherine street Oldham road junction had lots of cars and buses, but crossing were safe as each section of the road had red/green men. It was very well laid out for pedestrians with good routes around the junction.

The IKEA junction is very busy as the data shows, but again it is easy to cross due to lots of red/green men crossings.

Again for the Henrietta street junction, it is easy to cross as there is a pedestrian crossing.

The station crossing was the most difficult to cross as there is cars from 3 directions but no

Group One

Junction	Cars	Pedestrians	Cyclists
Katherine Street (Katherine St and Oldham Rd junction)	556	68	6
IKEA (large cross roads junction to the corner of IKEA)	113	216	2
Station (Road parallel to Albion Way and Turner Lane, down the side of the main train station)	298	17	1
Hen Street (junction of Albion Way and the side road, Henrietta St)	224	23	1

Group Two

Memorial Gardens Junction (opposite the Crickets Lane clinic)

Time observed	Cars	Vans	Taxis	Buses
15 minutes	139	27	11	8
Est. 1 hour	556	108	44	32

Penny Meadow Junction (opposite the funeral directors)

Time observed	Cars	Vans	Taxis	Buses
15 minutes	128	21	8	8
Est. 1 hour	512	84	32	32

"From the data collected at the Junctions at Penny Meadow and Memorial Gardens, this suggests to us that the main mode of transport throughout Ashton is cars on both junctions, it also shows us that there were little to no cyclists and that motorcycles were rarely spotted. This could suggest that we need to focus on making cycling more attractive to the community within Ashton and provide some forms of incentives (for example more bike storage facilities that are accessible – we know they are in short supply from Task 2). This would also decrease the carbon emissions produced in Ashton which would overall benefit air quality and Ashton's carbon footprint."

Student 1

"During my trip to count and assess traffic at various junctions, we found that the majority of vehicles are cars and buses, especially near Katherine street which, is a key bus route towards Manchester.

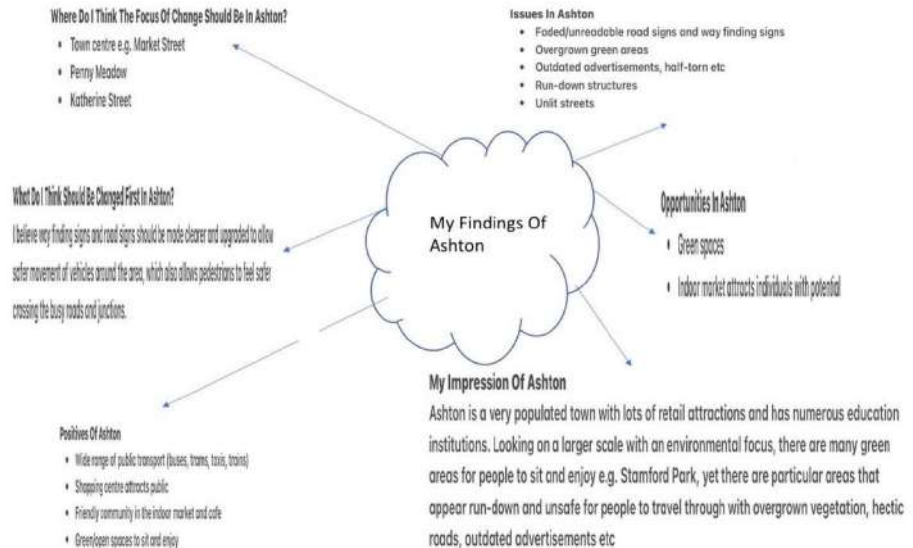
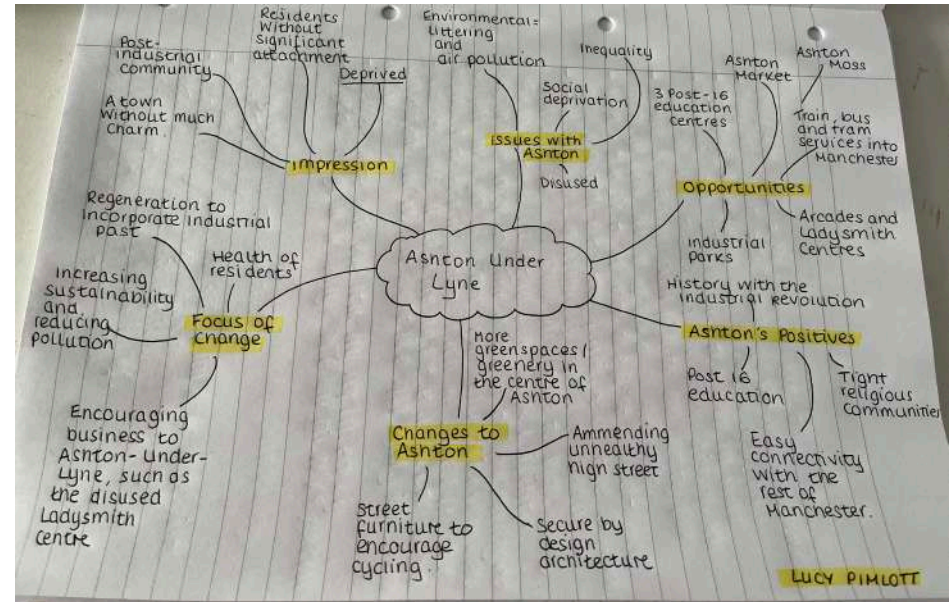
Despite the busyness of the IKEA junction, Katherine street, Henrietta street and the train station, pedestrians are able to easily move around, as the crossings are well laid out with red/green crossing symbols, as well as the noises and beeps for visually impaired pedestrians. Although it can take some time to cross the junctions, especially IKEA as there is around 5 different points to make it to the other side, I believe there are few elements that could be improved as it is safe, if you follow the crossings and their symbols. Personally, I prefer to wait longer at crossings because it is safe, but many people do 'chance' the roads. The only road/junction (which I surveyed) that was hard to cross, is parallel to the train station. This road does not have a designated crossings or red/green symbols, and with traffic coming from 3 directions, can be difficult to cross. Due to this being a key crossing point for onward journeys from the station to the town centre, Ikea/Sainsbury's/ Marks and Spencers, the bus station and the short row of shops on the way to Ikea (Oldham Road.) I believe this is an easy fix with a crossing aid such as red/green man, as there is already traffic lights.

Student 3

Task Four - summary findings

Purpose
 A summary of all the tasks set and the main findings for each student, in the form of;

- A mindmap
- A 'mental map' / memory plan / map
- Written summary of each task



Focus of Change

market, outdoor and indoor hall
• I really think it could be brought back to its 'former glory' eg. a go to place or 'foodie' reputation like Altrincham

Change

- outdoor market
↳ just walked past
- indoor market
↳ could be made a destination eg. 'foodie' ref.
- outdoor square
↳ currently just concrete

ashton final summary

Positives

- market attracts older generation
↳ could be made even better
- Bus station has good lines and investment seems worth while - bus, tram, train, taxis
- Practical shops eg. supermarkets

Impression

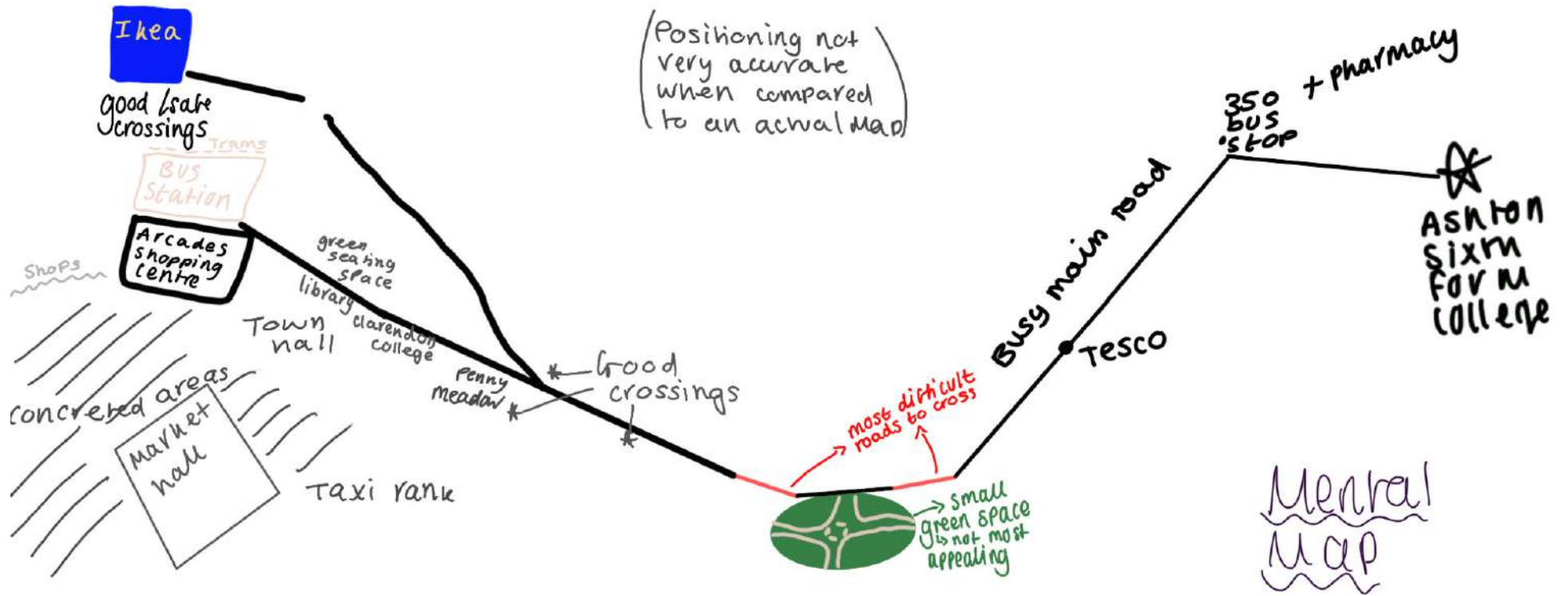
- outdated
- not particularly appealing
- Bad reputation
- Could be made nicer
- a bit rough • litter
- good travel links into Manchester.

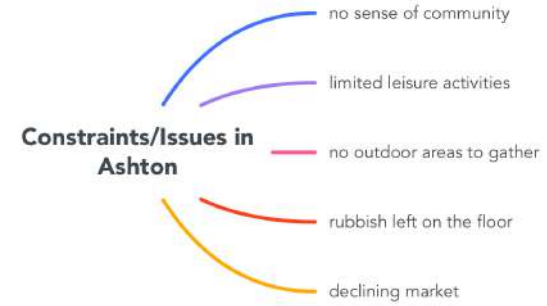
Issues

- crime reputation
- run down shops / buildings
- few appealing 'gathering' / sitting spaces
- declining town centre / market

Opportunities

- Market hall and town centre could be made more of a 'destination'
- Green spaces that are appealing and feel safe
- more visually attractive centre spaces
- updated / renovated shopping areas.





Where do you think the focus of change should be for Ashton?



Core Findings

Engaging with the students revealed some rich insight into the physical and social elements of Ashton. Key themes emerged which are indicators of place quality and should inform priority areas for investment and intervention.

Care and maintenance

- Poor upkeep and management contributes to a sense of neglect.
- Issue of littering, notably from students using convenience stores and takeaways.

Natural space

- Lack of and poor quality greenspaces. Many seen as functionless, left-over spaces.
- Opportunity to build on existing community action and involve residents in the management of community green spaces to foster better sense of ownership and a more resilient and meaningful stewardship of the public realm.

Identity and belonging

- Ashton town centre currently caters to a limited, older demographic, not representative of the diversity of Ashton.
- Need to attract a range of demographics and age groups to the town centre, and capitalise on the student demographic who currently frequent the town centre after college, but are poorly provisioned for in terms of amenities.

Streets and spaces

- Lack of public realm design consideration for key streets and spaces beyond Market Square e.g. Wellington Street.
- Need to think beyond core space and how ancillary spaces are crucial to curating a range of environments that support the core.

Feeling safe and Social interaction

- Students report discomfort and a perceived lack of safety in some spaces.
- The most effective way of combating unsafe spaces is through activation and natural surveillance.
- Public realm interventions are opportunities to maximise the potential for community formation and sociability.

Traffic and parking

- Predominance of cars as modal choice negatively impacts on place quality, particularly with primary roads creating barriers to active travel.
- Excess of surface parking within town centre negatively impacts on place quality, creating urban voids and car-dominated secondary streets.

Moving around

- Pedestrian desire lines are not designed into highways infrastructure, which prioritises the car.
- The result is a 'car is king' culture twinned with difficult and dangerous crossings - particularly those connecting a number of schools, colleges and nurseries with the town centre.
- Convoluted and unintuitive pedestrian crossing infrastructure, and a prevalence of pedestrians 'chancing it' at unmanaged crossing points, with clear safety issues.
- Wayfinding is less of an issue since Ashton predominantly attracts local and repeat visitors who are familiar with the town's layout.
- More important to invest in improving the pedestrian experience and safety; and in quality ancillary public spaces and key streets.
- Low rates of cycling is compounded by a lack of cycle infrastructure.

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