



LUTON

CREATING A VISION
DELIVERING CHANGE

October 2020

Stage 1 consultation feedback

Luton

Avison Young with
Allies and Morrison

Stage 1 consultation summary



Stage 1
consultation ran
from 29 July to 31
August 2020

1,400+
survey
responses



500+
social media
comments



5
community group
discussions

**Community
Forum**



**E-mailed
comments**

**Luton Youth
Council**

**Young
People's
Panel**

Thank you
to everyone who
got involved.



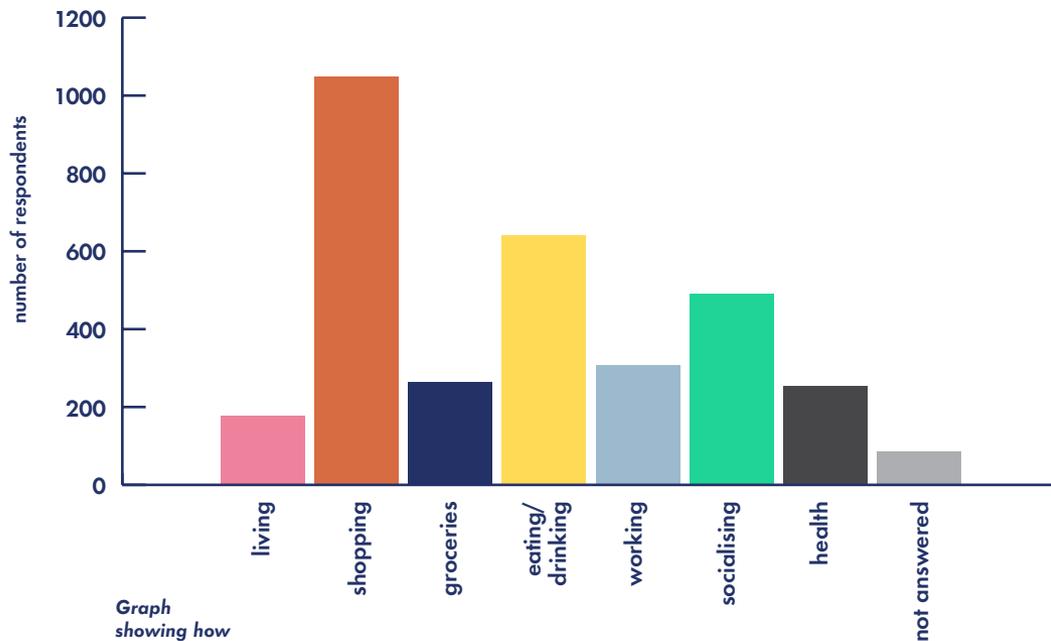


ONLINE SURVEY

Q1 What do you use the town centre for?

There were 3,181 responses to this question.

Most people use the town centre for shopping (75% of respondents). 47% of people go to the town centre to eat and drink and 35% to socialise. Respondents could pick more than one option



Graph showing how people use the town centre

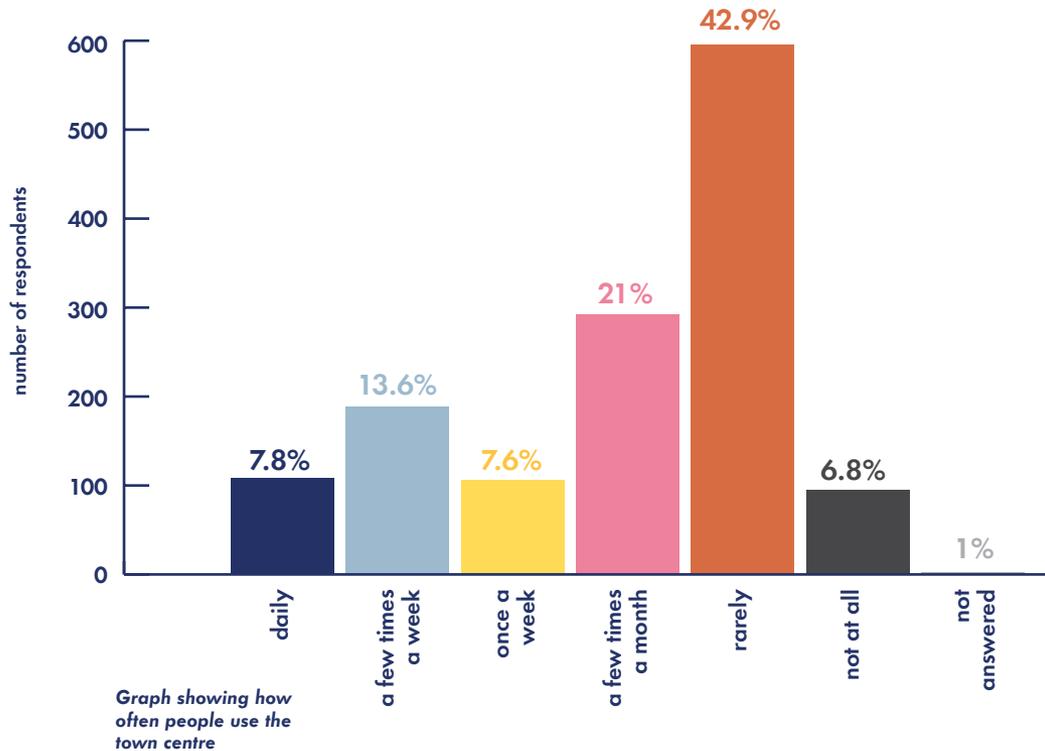


Luton town centre - shopping, food, leisure and cultural activities

Q2 How often do you use the town centre?

There were 1,389 responses to this question.

43% of respondents rarely use the town centre (the highest percentage).

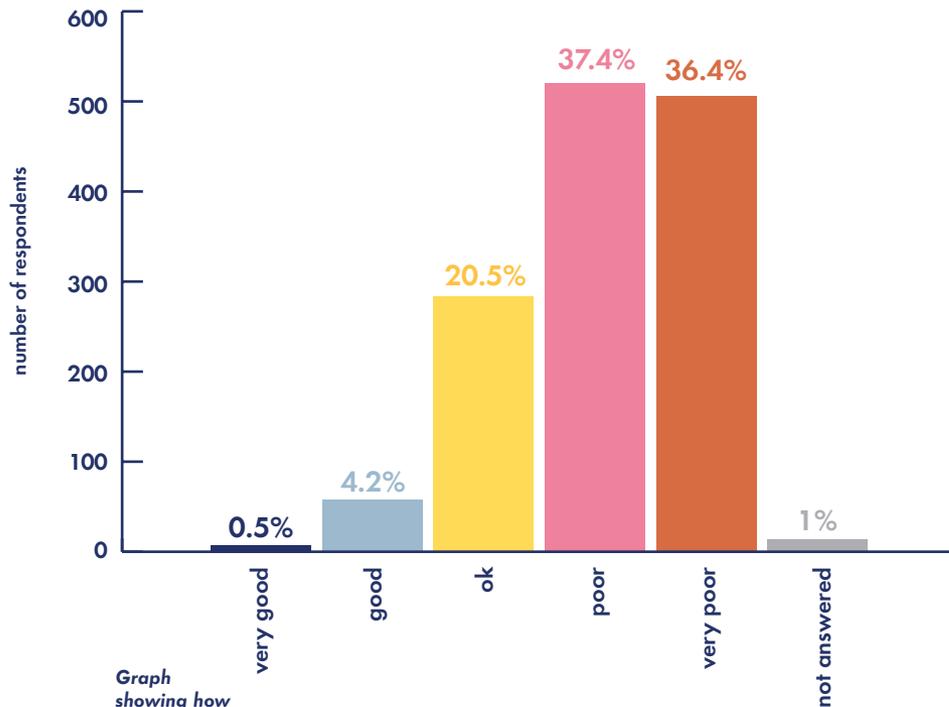


Luton town centre - outdoor spaces, the Mall and the Town Hall

Q3 How would you rate the offer of the town centre?

There were 1,389 responses to this question.

Most people travel to the town centre by car (63% of all respondents). 22% of people walk, 8% get the bus and only 1% cycle.



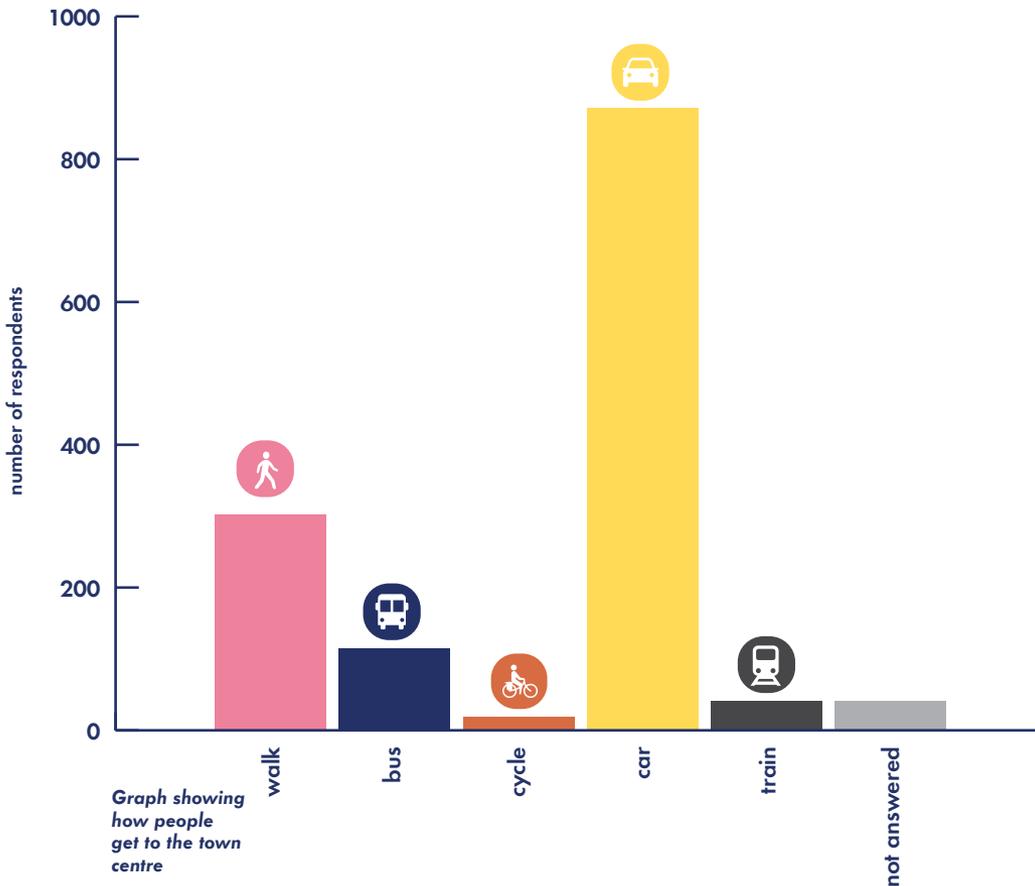
Graph showing how people rate the town centre offer



Luton town centre - shopping and leisure facilities

Q4 What mode of transport do you generally use to get to the town centre?

There were 1,348 responses to this question.



Most people travel to the town centre by car (63% of all respondents). 22% of people walk, 8% get the bus and only 1% cycle.



Methods of moving around in Luton town centre

Q5 Does this capture what the vision should be for the town centre?

There were 1,367 responses to this question.

71%
agree with the
vision for the
town centre.

Those that answered no raised the following concerns:

- The priority should be improving the **shopping** offer
- Centre already has many of these things (eg events spaces and programme) - we should be focusing on basic things like **parking** charges
- Economic challenges and recession mean the focus shouldn't be on big dreams
- Focus on anti-social behaviour first
- Need to focus on existing parks in residential areas first
- Need specific goals
- Vision is to safe - we need to be more radical
- Need more on cycling and walking
- Need to be prouder of our heritage - should be less about knocking things down and building new
- Stop wasting money on vanity projects, focus on community services

Photos of Luton town centre



Q6 What do you think makes Luton unique?

VISION

There were 1,246 responses to this question. The most popular responses were:

POSITIVE 😊

transport links
diversity/
multicultural
history
location
cheap shops
parks and open space
airport
friendly people
young age of
population

NEGATIVE 😞

no good shops
number of pound
shops/chicken shops
poverty/rundown/
vulnerable groups/
antisocial behaviour
nothing makes
Luton unique

Q7 What do you hope the town centre will be like in the future?

There were 1,324 responses to this question.

The most popular responses were:



SAFE CLEAN



VARIETY OF SHOPS



PLACES TO SIT OUTSIDE,



EAT AND SOCIALISE



LOTS OF ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS



GREEN THE TOWN CENTRE

VISION

Attractive, clean, a space to linger.

Less of a concrete jungle and more open spaces and green areas.

A welcoming and safe place for all to enjoy

A town centre that attracts the public with shops that are nice to go into.

Outside areas for flexible dining and green spaces where people can enjoy being outside.

More entertainment opportunities, particularly in music and theatre

Your hopes...

Read a handful of hopes from your responses.

VISION



Support and housing for the homeless

A town centre easily accessible to everyone

The River Lea will be raised, enhanced or celebrated along its entire route. People will be seen picnicking at its side.

A rejuvenated night life

I'd like to see independent art galleries and interesting shops

Cleaner, more inviting and better social spaces

Brighter, more sustainable and environmentally friendly

Proud to share its heritage

Reflective of communities

Many and varied opportunities to sit and relax.

I would like a vibrant culturally diverse and inclusive centre, where everyone knows themselves to be safe, welcome and included.

I'd like to see weekly markets in the high street which give the town centre a buzz of excitement.

I hope it will be a place where people are proud of

Q9 Are there any issues here that you disagree with?

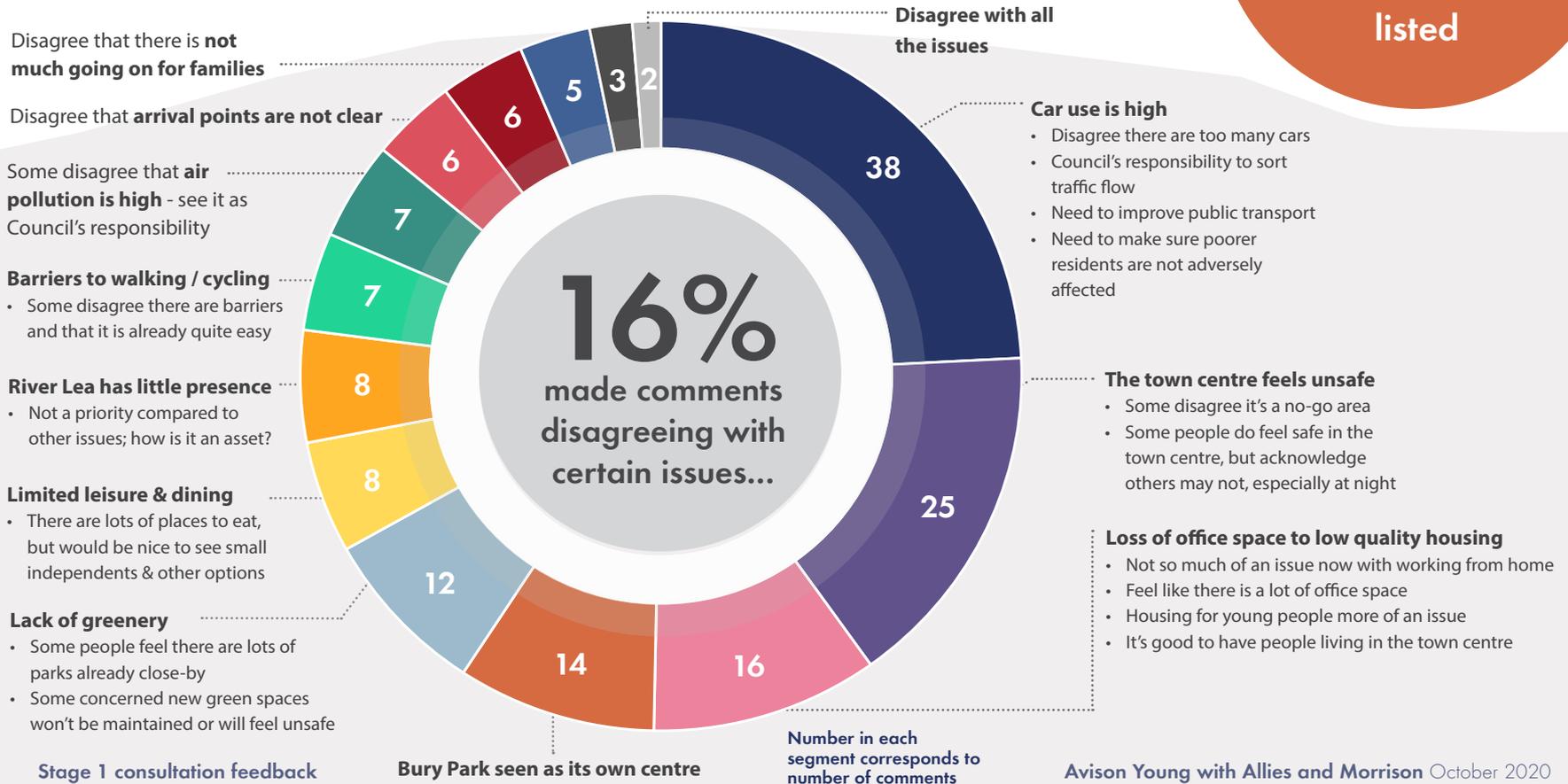
ISSUES

There were 959 responses to this question. 431 people left this question blank.

Of those who responded, 80% agreed with the set of issues listed.

16% of comments related to reasons why people disagreed with some issues.

The graph below shows the issues people most strongly disagreed with, and the reasons why.



- Car use is high**
- Disagree there are too many cars
 - Council's responsibility to sort traffic flow
 - Need to improve public transport
 - Need to make sure poorer residents are not adversely affected
- The town centre feels unsafe**
- Some disagree it's a no-go area
 - Some people do feel safe in the town centre, but acknowledge others may not, especially at night

- Loss of office space to low quality housing**
- Not so much of an issue now with working from home
 - Feel like there is a lot of office space
 - Housing for young people more of an issue
 - It's good to have people living in the town centre

- Lack of greenery**
- Some people feel there are lots of parks already close-by
 - Some concerned new green spaces won't be maintained or will feel unsafe
- Limited leisure & dining**
- There are lots of places to eat, but would be nice to see small independents & other options
- River Lea has little presence**
- Not a priority compared to other issues; how is it an asset?
- Barriers to walking / cycling**
- Some disagree there are barriers and that it is already quite easy

Q10 Are there any other issues that are missing?

There were **858** responses to this question.

Most respondents were happy that all the issues had been covered. Issues that people felt most strongly were missing, or could be unpacked further, are summarised below. Those listed first are the most common issues people felt were missing.

1

Not accessible or inclusive for those with disabilities, especially the train station

2

Homelessness and poverty is an issue that must be addressed.

3

Poor cultural offer and an absence of night life

4

The impact of the physical structure of the Mall on the town centre as a barrier to movement

5

Poor provision of community facilities in the town centre and future cuts

6

Issue of poor management and planning, and not enough funding from the Council

7

Poor public transport

8

Encouraging businesses into town - high rents and lack of investment off-putting

Many of the comments provided further detail to issues already identified:

- **Not all residents use the town centre:** people feel the shopping offer lacks variety and quality. Empty shops and the disappearance of larger stores is a major concern. The lack of outdoor attractive social spaces also puts people off from spending time there.
- **The town centre feels unsafe:** including antisocial behaviour, drug and gang activity, street begging and street drinking. Issues of littering and uncleanliness were also listed as issues that can make the town centre feel like a 'no-go' area. Lack of policing and enforcement exacerbates the issue.

Q11 What is the one biggest change you would like to see in the town centre?

OPPORTUNITIES

There were **1284** responses to this question.

Below are the key themes.



popular responses:

- greener and cleaner
- family friendly
- remove the mall
- antisocial behaviour dealt with and better law enforcement
- reopening the River Lea
- refurbishing train station
- improving road network
- greater diversity of uses in the town centre - not just retail
- improving the night life/evening economy
- improving the presence of the university
- better public transport
- reusing/taking better care of our heritage
- high quality affordable housing
- long term thinking
- develop empty sites
- better connections between different parts of the town centre
- better walking and cycling routes
- more places to socialise
- improve safety
- sorting George Street
- reinvigorate market

Q12

What you told us...

I don't think we should work around The Mall and embed it in the revitalization but look further forwards and see what can be done with the building to break it down a little, get some space back and not rely on it when comes to the connections between the station and the town centre as the plan suggests.

Even if you build 'high quality family homes' you will not attract buyers unless you improve other local amenities (schools, drs, schools) and the environment - reduce noise and litter, discourage antisocial behaviour at night, ensure that there are safe routes to schools and other external amenities.

I think the university already has a massive presence within the town. Affordable housing needs to be made available within the whole of Luton. Prices for properties have skyrocketed in recent years.

Building homes in the town centre is a no no, there is no parking, it will all be flats which will be unsuitable for families, the green areas will attracts the drinkers and the homeless which will put off most families.

I'm not keen on the town centre football stadium, partly because it will cause disruption, partly because the big out of town development that comes with it may further starve the town itself.

Very well produced summary, I am surprised how very aware of the issues you are.

Almost all of it. Neglecting retail, dismissing it as failed. Highly questionable prioritisation and promotion of the university engulfing even more of the town centre. It makes non-students feel alienated. Demonising the car. Reconnecting decaying, delapidated ugly buildings that nobody wants to visit. An ambiguous new "role" for George Street that answers a question nobody asked.

Q13 Are there other opportunities for the town centre that you feel we have missed?

There were 806 responses to this question.

Around half of the 1,389 respondents had no other opportunities to suggest.

Of those who suggested other opportunities, the most common comments were (with the most common first):

- the most common answer was to improve safety
- the next most common suggestion was a new theatre/live music venue
- adventure playground / free kids activities
- Clean the town centre
- Food/craft/farmers/good quality market
- Better nightlife and restaurants and bars
- Better shops
- Support for realising the football stadium
- Better public transport
- Suggestions to knock down/break up the mall
- Better provision for young people / teenagers
- Space for entrepreneurs
- Better recognition of arts and culture



Word cloud showing most frequent words used in responses - the size of each word indicates its frequency

It looks like you know what is needed but having the money and the will to do it is the big issue.



Buses in the town centre

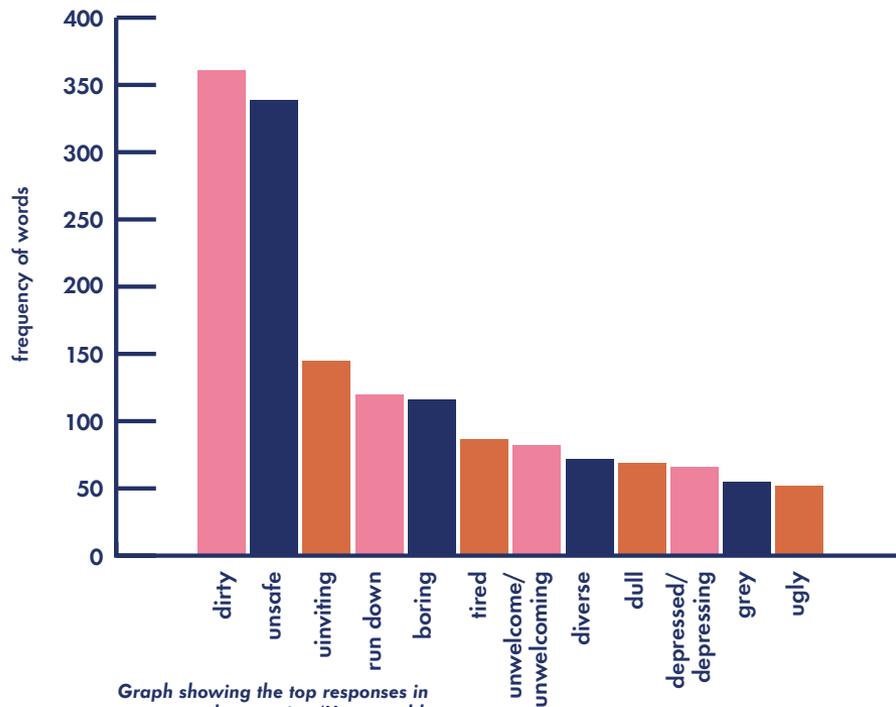


Music venue, Guildford St

Q14 How would you describe Luton in three words?

There were around 1,300 responses to this question.

At least 95% of the words to describe Luton were negative. The most frequent answers were Dirty (occurs 361 times), Unsafe (339 times), Uninviting (145 times), Rundown (129 times) and Boring (occurs 116 times).



Graph showing the top responses in answer to the question 'How would you describe Luton in three words?'

What were some positive ones?

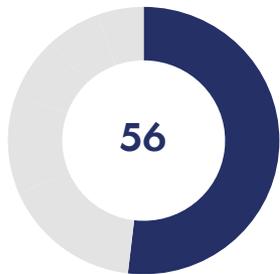
- Hope
- Cultural
- Growing
- Thriving
- Diverse
- Vibrant
- Multicultural
- Opportunities

Q15 Are there any priorities listed here that you disagree with?

PRIORITIES

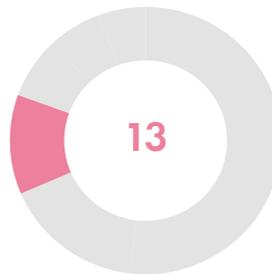
There were **645** responses to this question. 747 respondents left this question blank.

The graphs below show the level of disagreement across the five different priorities and reasons why. The number in the middle corresponds to the number of comments that disagreed with the priority.



AFFORDABLE AND INVITING

Need to attract people with middle and higher incomes too



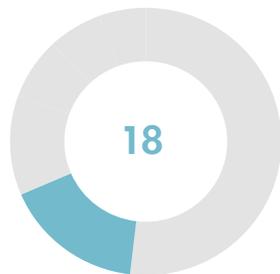
SUSTAINABLY ACCESSIBLE

- Plan for cars too
- Don't exclude the elderly / disabled
- Should include train station accessibility



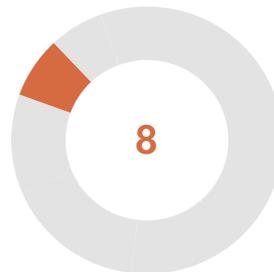
GREENER AND HEALTHIER

- Other more important things
- Should incorporate encouraging exercise, activity and interaction



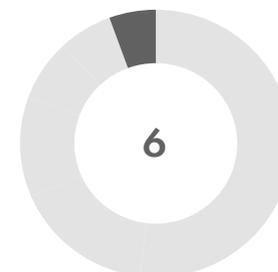
ECONOMIC DIVERSITY

- No more housing - already strained resources, don't need to grow population
- Residential areas should be houses, not flats
- Provision for current residents being priced out?



GENERAL

- Not realistic, no plans
- Maintenance is key
- Doesn't solve the root problem - deprivation
- Yes - disagree



DELIVERED

- Outcome not priority
- No faith in partnership working
- Partners don't include residents and users

Graphs showing the number of respondents who disagreed with each of the priorities.

Q16 Are there any priorities for the town centre you feel we have missed?

PRIORITIES

There were around 682 responses to this question.

Most respondents of the survey indicated they had nothing further to add to the list of priorities put forward. Just over 350 respondents indicated other priorities or emphasised existing ones from the list.

No, i think you've actually done a very good job, whoever you are.

Of those that did have suggestions, the most common answers were:

- Safety, policing and addressing anti-social behaviour
- Cleanliness
- Restaurants, bars and nightlife
- Overhaul of the station (including better accessibility)
- Future proofing the Mall to address changing retail trends or requests to demolish/redevelop the Arndale
- Culture offer
- Provision for young people
- Ensuring the town centre is welcoming to all incomes
- Addressing parking / delivering Park and Ride



George Street



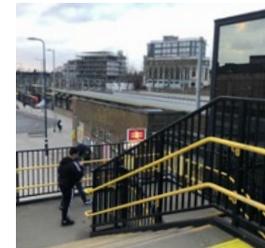
Outdoor spaces



Restaurants in Luton



Entrance to the Mall



Steps at Luton train station



View of the train station

Q16

What you told us...

Make it a great place for people who live in Luton to take advantage of, regardless of economic standing. Lutonians deserve that, as this should be the benefit of having a multi million pound airport in our town and being right under its fly over.

Bus timetables are never shown on the stops. In places I have loved previously there is a digital timetable and a paper one. In Luton there is often not one at all.

A place for the homeless as they r part of the town and could b any one of us

Force the owners of the mall to be prudent yet ambitious with the shops inside the shopping area. Unless the high street brands stay put, the mall will die and the town centre along with it.

Focusing on the movement away from brick and mortar retail and creating an appealing alternative town centre to be proud of

Getting the Luton Town FC stadium built at Power Court

I would like to see a new centrally located town centre leisure centre with a swimming pool close to the town centre and train station - meaning commuters and town centre users have access to this and at a location that works for those who come in to the town.

No, this is a great list.

Keep it clean, remove litter, fly posters etc.

A complete overhaul of the Station to make it more accessible, welcoming and user friendly

An aerial architectural rendering of a city grid, showing various building footprints, streets, and green spaces. The rendering is in a light blue/gray color scheme. The text "COMMUNITY GROUPS" is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Luton Community Forum

SHOPPING

Diversity is seen in the indoor market – and that's out of the way. If we had presence of George Street and that it's more affordable it would give it more of a diverse offer.

Affordable rent in the Mall is an issue. People want to be in the Mall but for an entrepreneur it is not affordable. Big players moving out, but hard for them to come in.

Good to have infrastructure for pop up shop model. Can jump in as a start up. Be gifted an empty retail unit.

TRANSPORT

Consider social and economic benefits of Power Court scheme. Connectivity between stadium and town centre on a physical level – there are some benefits. There is a buzz that a stadium can bring.

Air quality is a big issue – is there scope for a new road layout – low emission zones – have we thought about this?

During Covid-19 there has been a spike in cycling – need to keep this momentum.

Cycle parking/secure bike racks/bike paths- is there infrastructure for this?

OTHER

Use of digital. Young people expect to have access to technology.

Make sure we are engaging with the university.

Quality of housing stock is an issue. When new things are built, it needs to be a higher end.

Perception is the reality - the town centre looks and is run down.

Infrastructure costs of putting on events - waste of money – good examples in Hitchin. Some sort of infrastructure would help to be able to put on events/markets more easily.

Young People's Panel

GREEN SPACES

There aren't a lot of plants and trees or grassy areas - only a few benches

NIGHTLIFE

There is just one pub that everyone goes to and gets overcrowded

SAFETY

Safety - one of the biggest issues is safety and perception

OPPORTUNITIES

More opportunities for young people - more youth centres

ACTIVITIES

Would like to see more things for families and young people

SHOPPING

Used to go to the Town Centre more often but now shops are closing they are going to St Albans, London or Milton Keynes



Outdoor seating



Outside the Galaxy



St George's Square



Luton at night



Town centre restaurant



Creams and Mall entrance

Youth Council

TRANSPORT

Improving the walking and cycling routes into the town centre is a way the masterplan can help to improve safety and perception. The underpasses does not feel very safe, not very well lit – need to look at improving existing underpasses but also creating new crossings across the ring road to make it easier to travel into town.

There are a large number of car parks, particularly long stay, in the town centre and how these present a good opportunity to be better used, not for parking but for other things like affordable leisure facilities, pop up stalls or markets, new buildings with other uses and activities.

Perhaps car parks could be located further out – obviously some parking is required in the town centre for those who struggle with mobility – but there are a lot of car parks and we should be encouraging people to walk into town.

PERCEPTION

Mixed response to how often people go to the town centre – a couple said they go often to shop, or go with their family, but most said they don't really go in, there isn't much to do there, there isn't much of an incentive to visit.

Lots of pound shops and a lack of national shops whereas places like Milton Keynes has more to offer.

The image of Luton is quite poor and not very welcoming - it doesn't feel very safe.

Parent's perception of the town centre means they aren't confident letting young people go there alone.

MARKET

Currently, the market is indoors and tucked away, but it really represents the diversity of the community and it should be made more visible and improved. It could be relocated to somewhere more prominent, near George Street for example.



Photos of the market area

Youth Council

ACTIVITIES

Milton Keynes has a number of indoor public squares in their Mall and there's no pressure to leave – it has more welcoming spaces to hang out which are free to spend time in.

The Hatfield Galleria lets a lot of natural light in and is a nice place to spend time in, whereas the Mall feels quite dark and dingy.

A key consideration for the masterplan is to include spaces where young people can spend time which feel safe, inviting and don't cost money – inside and outside spaces.

To improve safety the masterplan could encourage all ages, all different groups into town throughout the day so there is natural surveillance – by thinking about the different activities and uses – so cultural and evening activities, leisure and recreation, office space, the retail offer, family friendly activities.

More green and open spaces, uncover the River Lea which currently runs underneath the town centre. Opening it more and have a string of green spaces along it with bars, restaurants and cafes spilling out.

Luton town centre could do with more sports space so things like table tennis tables, open outdoor sport spaces, outdoor gyms. This would link into Luton youth group's aims.



Photos of the Mall, River Lea and outdoor public realm



EMAILS

Culture Trust Luton

TRANSPORT

Make a strong and bold commitment to young people and Creatives

Include the Hat District Creative Cluster as an existing opportunity with potential to become a major town centre destination of choice.

INDIVIDUALITY

More ambition and ideas that will ensure Luton is distinctive rather than like any other town.

EXISTING STRENGTHS

Celebrate existing strengths consistently through the suit of document eg Multiculturalism and diversity of today against a historic backdrop of industrial heritage and trading buildings.

INCLUDE CULTURE TRUST

Include Culture Trust, Luton as a key cultural facility and venue leader in the Town Centre (we have three venues and soon will have four) and as curators of the Hat District creative cluster in the master plan and future vision.

CHARACTER AREAS

Clearly break-down and define different destination areas - so that customers/ the community know why to go there and what to experience they will get there.

General emails

TRANSPORT

Free parking in the town centre to promote local and more distant visitors

An attractive walkway to link the centre to the railway interchange

PUBLIC REALM

'Green corridors'

Green leafy open space

Create underground car parks and to allow green spaces above

Restoring the river Lea

FOOD AND DRINK

The town centre should adopt the continental approach to dining and offer many more pavement/outdoor restaurants and eating establishments.

Restaurants and bars with outside seating.

No more charity shops, fast food outlets, amusement arcades or pound shops

Entrepreneur/boutique establishments

The Mall in Luton should be encouraged to open up more space to artisan restaurants and shops emphasising the cultural heritage of Luton but also allowing smaller traders to display unique and bespoke goods and services.

General emails

USES

The Parish Church utilised for more varied activities

Rebuild the Luton Central Library site and build a Theatre and Music Venue.

Community games Centre in the Savoy cinema

Create a hub in George Street

OTHER

More people to live and work in the Town Centre either through multiple small, but quality shops, with good accommodation above.

New Apartments

Guildford Street is already developing artistic businesses and should continue its strong links with the university to develop further

We have had a bad rep over the years, but I think this can change

The town needs to engage more with the youth

Cultural diversity should be encouraged as an identifier of Luton and the town centre should reflect this in a wide range of foods and services on display.



St Mary's



The library



St George's Street

An aerial architectural rendering of a city grid, showing various building footprints, streets, and green spaces. The rendering is in a light blue and grey color scheme. The text 'SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS' is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font.

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS

Social media comments - facebook and twitter

Look at the Preston model.

Nothing nice to say in all honesty, all you hear is nothing but sirens and loud exhausts, all you see is **rubbish, graffiti and drug paraphernalia**... many residence have little respect, morals and values to other residents/neighbours.... looking at moving out of this town for these very reasons

Do something about the **old Savoy**, it's a lovely building being ignored!!

Do not put a football stadium in the middle of town!!! What a ridiculous idea.

All them dodgy take away places is just bringing place down. Would be great if there was little **pop up independent shops or market**. Something to make people want to go back. All the side roads make it feel unsafe and stinks. I would have loved to see a small park with rest around that area so it has a open inviting feel. A gym/paid club for 12-16 yr old would be awesome.

So you can ignore our views & opinions & do exactly as you want to. As proved time & time again in this town.

Knock The Arndale down. It was the worst experiment in our town's history. All it has done is divided the town centre. Ensure anything in its place is architectural excellence. Don't just accept cheap, cladded sh*t. Aim for the top. Big, bold civic squares, fountains.

There's **lots that can be done for not to much money** to make the place a little smarter. For example the land opposite the station. now that the college isn't going there and no one else is interested in developing it why not smarten it up and do the same as being propose for the silver street site. now that power court won't be developed for many years to come and will remain an eyesore the town need other sites to to make the town more appealing to the eye.

No more chicken piri shops...there's enough of them. Defo need a place to goto after the pubs so a Chicago's, liquid be sweet. As for the shops ...everything is going online so I would stick to the above plan and **create a nightlife** in Luton #LutonNightlifeReborn

How about creating a permanent performance space that can be used for concerts, open air theatre, even weddings & cultural events. Maybe even the fair. Leave wardown park for quiet relaxation.

Knock part of the mall down and divide it in 2 so you have a road/pathway leading to the town hall/Wellington st from the station. This should have been done in the 1st place instead of ripping the heart out of the town and forcing it to become a ghost town in the evenings.

The football stadium with leisure complex and underground car park is a fabulous design. Also needed are **tall trees, green spaces, a sustainability and international cultural centre, theatre** where the old cinema was and shopping centre full of designer shops for the many international students attending the University. Also a **start up centre** showcasing the many crafts and local entrepreneurs work.

Start with the central train station. This is the face of Luton for visitors on the train and from the Airport. The station roof is leaking. What an eyesore! Liaise with Railtrack, and put in modern facilities similar to St Albans.

Sort out George Street for starters its a total disgrace as a council you should be ashamed of the neglect and take in some of the other comments on here as they are worth reading which you probably don't

Think about how ugly the square concrete buildings look. Everything looks like the back entrance of somewhere. **Make some attractive frontages**, not just cheap and functional. Please.

I also have lived in Luton all my life, 58 years. The town has changed so much in these years ,it's not the same, I am to scared to even go into the shopping center now as all you see is crowds if youths which really intimidate you . Also with most of the shops now closing down the place looks so scruffy, **not a nice place to be.**

Lower your rent prices and you may actually have some luck with other retailers to provide us with more choices to shop , there's a empty cinema make use out of that no more takeaway shops no more £ shops either or coffee shops or charity shops we have enough make the place look a bit brighter and **create more jobs for those struggling** and with COVID I'm sure there's lots of people who need that opportunity right now.

An aerial architectural rendering of a city grid, showing a dense arrangement of buildings, streets, and green spaces. The rendering is in a light blue and grey color scheme. The text "THANK YOU" is overlaid in the center in a bold, dark blue font.

THANK YOU