

#OurSixTowns

Building a bright future together



Yarm High Street consultation

December 2022

Summary of findings

Delivered by

 **Stockton-on-Tees**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Introduction

In December 2022, the Council asked the public to share their views on proposed improvements to Yarm High Street.

The proposals included new paving along the High Street, new landscaping, seating and improved public spaces, de-cluttering of pavements, new cycle storage and electric vehicle charging points as well as enhancements to the River Tees and Snath's Field play area.

These improvements result in no loss of parking spaces along the High Street.

A range of potential additional improvements were also presented in the consultation, in addition to the planned works, including extended landscaping, seating and larger public spaces, larger cycle storage areas, more electric vehicle charging points and enhancements to the River Tees and Snaith's Field play area.

The additional improvements would bring more enhanced and improved facilities but would result in a loss of some parking spaces along the High Street if interventions were delivered as shown.

The public consultation took place from Wednesday 7 December to Friday 6 January 2023 and gave members of the public the opportunity to view and give feedback on the proposed interventions on the High Street and surrounding areas.

This is the second round of consultation following on from August 2022 where Yarm's residents, businesses and visitors were asked to give views on how the High Street could be improved as part of the overall allocation from the Government's Levelling Up Fund.

Part of the funding opportunity includes building on the success of Yarm as an attractive, popular destination and supporting businesses through improvements to public spaces in and around the High Street.

The priorities identified in the first round of consultation were:

- improving footpaths
- reducing street clutter
- adding more planting
- improving connections to the River Tees
- more seating and places to rest

In-person consultation events were held in Yarm Library on five separate days as well as an online consultation form which was available on the Council's website.

The survey questions covered a variety of options ranging from a minimum level of planned improvements through to options which explored additional areas of public realm improvements but would result in the loss of some parking spaces.

In total, 283 responses were received.

This summary presents the findings of this consultation.

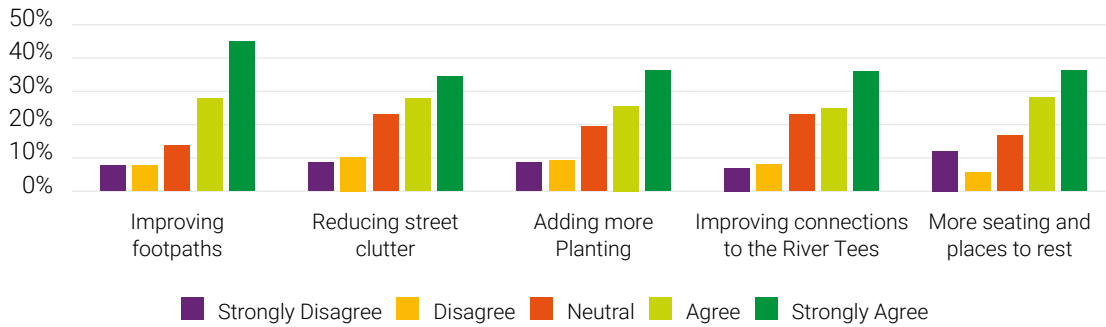
1. Planned improvement works

Question 1 of the survey related to the priorities that were identified during the previous consultation and posed the question of how well the planned improvements for Yarm High Street have incorporated these.

Respondents were asked to rank each priority from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Figure 1 details the results across the range of priorities.

Figure 1: When you look at the planned improvements for Yarm High Street, to what extent do you agree that these priorities have been satisfactorily incorporated into the design options?



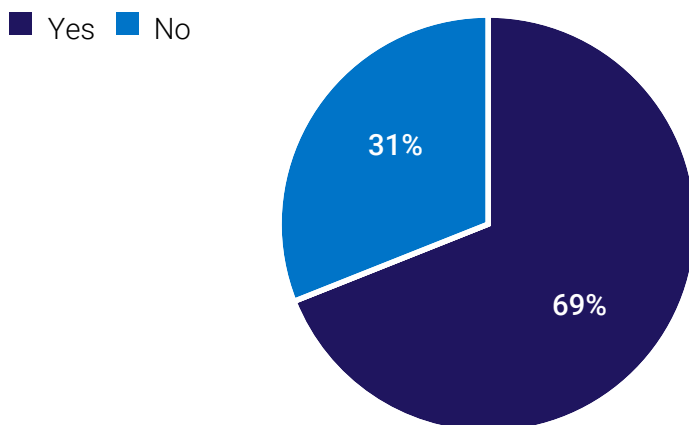
The results reveal that across all five priorities, there is a majority who agree or strongly agree that the planned improvements have satisfactorily incorporated the priorities into the design options.

Overall, this shows that for the minimum level of planned intervention, the majority of respondents felt that the scheme reflected the priorities identified in the first round of consultation.

2. Additional improvements

Subsequent survey questions related to the proposed additional improvements and whether they are in the most appropriate places along the High Street and whether they identify the right mix and type of improvement.

Figure 2: When you look at the proposed additional improvements, do you think they are located in the most appropriate places along the High Street?



As Figure 2 shows, when asked whether the proposed additional improvements are located in the most appropriate places along the High Street, 69 per cent of people feel that they are, showing a majority in support of the placement of the additional improvements.

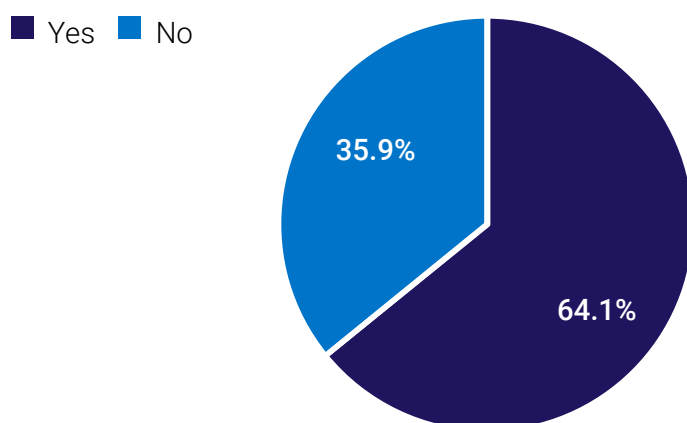
There was also a free text box below to allow the respondents who stated 'no' an opportunity to provide their reasons. Common themes drawn out within this section included:

- concern over the loss of parking with many respondents stating the High Street 'can't afford to lose any more parking.'
- discussion surrounding the provision of additional seating and concern of this 'encroaching on the pavement width.'
- concern around the placement of the proposed seated area next to Sainsbury's crossing with some respondents disagreeing with its placement due to busy traffic at this location

3. Type of additional improvements

There was a similarly supportive view towards the mix and type of additional improvements with 64 per cent of people agreeing that the proposals identify the right mix and type of additional improvements.

Figure 3: Do you think the proposals identify the right mix and type of additional improvements?



A free text box allowed respondents who stated 'no' an opportunity to provide their reasons, with common themes including:

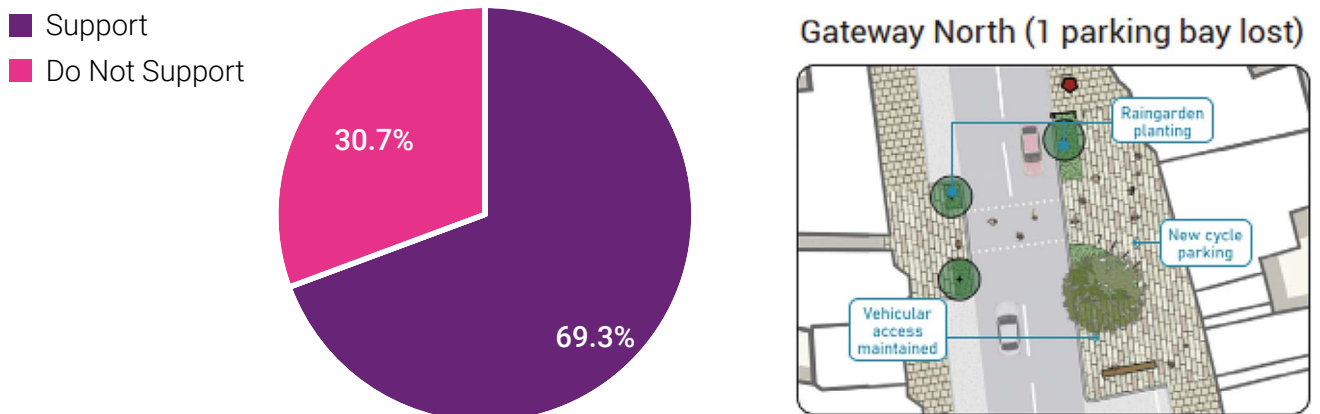
- Desire to see Yarm's individuality maintained
- Concern over parking spaces coming at the expense of café culture
- Concern regarding the removal of cobbles and if this would make Yarm too similar to 'every other high street'

4. Specific additional improvements

Question 4 asked respondents to consider six proposals which went beyond the minimum level of planned improvements and to state whether the benefits of the additional improvements represent an acceptable trade off against the potential loss of parking spaces.

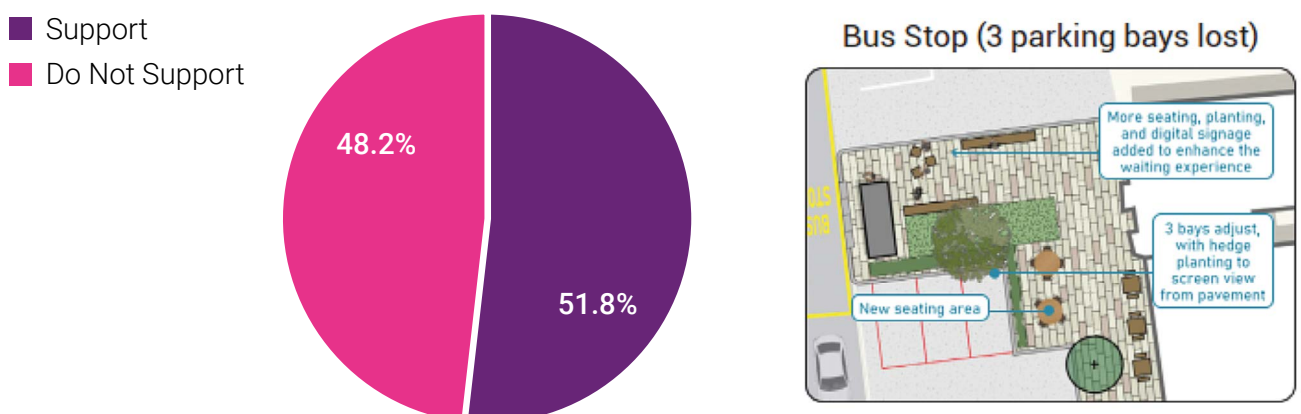
The first proposal was the Gateway North improvement which would see the loss of 1 parking bay. As shown in Figure 4 below, 69.3 per cent of people feel that the additional improvement does represent an acceptable trade off against the loss of the singular parking space.

Figure 4: Gateway North



The second additional improvement looked at, was improvements around the bus stop at the northern end of the High Street, which would see the loss of three parking bays. Responses were more mixed on this intervention, with 51.8 per cent of respondents supporting the trade-off for this improvement and 48.2 per cent feeling this improvement was not an acceptable trade-off for the loss of 3 parking bays. This suggests that removal of parking bays may be an important factor for respondents in this area.

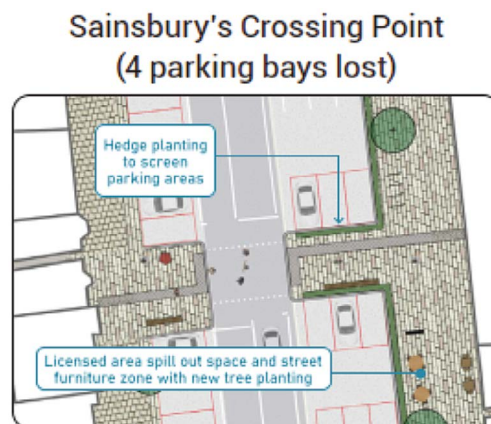
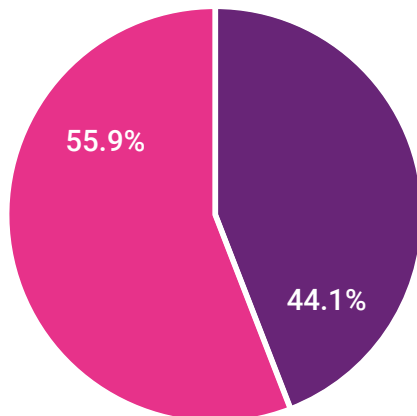
Figure 5: Bus Stop



There was generally a split response towards the potential loss of parking at the Sainsburys Crossing Point, with slightly more respondents (55.9 per cent) stating that they do not support the loss of four parking bays as a trade-off for this improvement, versus 44.1 per cent of those who do support the intervention.

Figure 6: Sainsburys Crossing Point

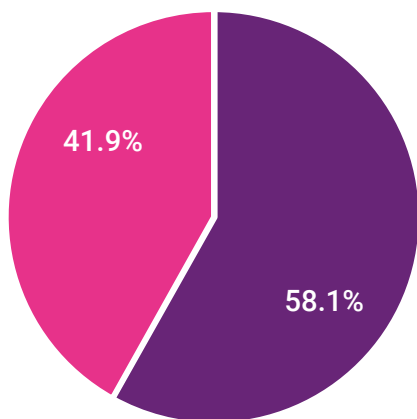
- Support
- Do Not Support



When looking at the responses to the proposed central area improvement on figure 7, which would see the loss of two parking bays, 58.1 per cent of people stated that they do see this improvement as an acceptable trade-off against the loss of the two parking bays.

Figure 7: Central Area

- Support
- Do Not Support

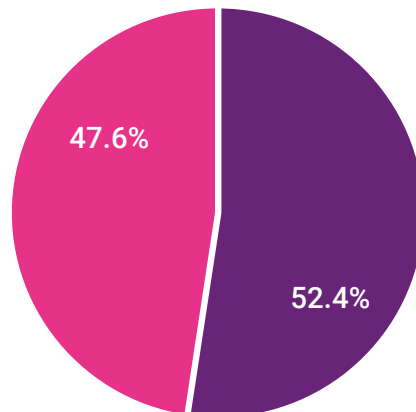


The southern area proposed improvement again sees the loss of four parking bays. However, slightly more people support this intervention (52.4 per cent) as an acceptable trade-off with the potential loss of parking versus those who do not support it (47.6 per cent).

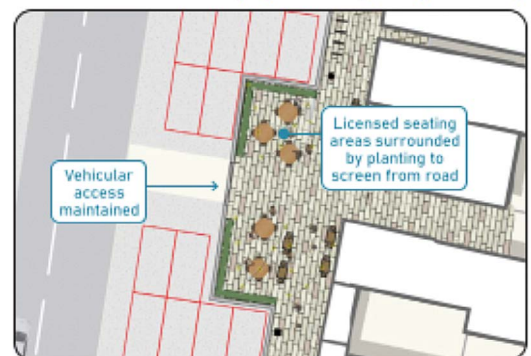
This is similar to the previous intervention at the Sainsbury's crossing where four parking bays would also be lost but only 44.1 per cent of people supported this. This suggests that there is generally a split view on the potential loss of a higher number of parking bays (four) to accommodate additional interventions in these locations, which may be driven by the potential end uses of the spaces or the location.

Figure 8: Southern Area

■ Support
■ Do Not Support



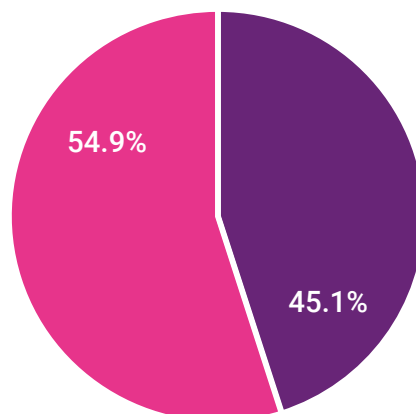
Southern Area (4 parking bays lost)



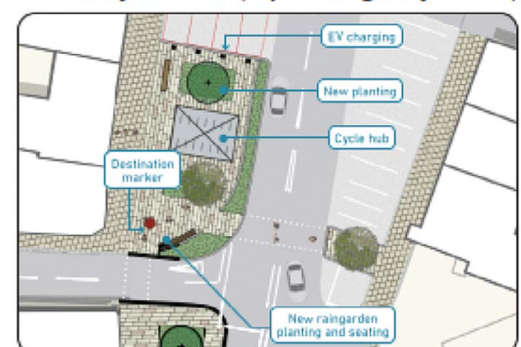
The final proposed additional improvement that respondents were asked their view on was the Gateway South improvement which would see the most parking bays lost (six bays). Following the trend observed across the other proposed interventions, this additional improvement received more opposition than support with 54.9 per cent of people not in support of the loss of six parking bays to accommodate this intervention.

Figure 9: Gateway South

■ Support
■ Do Not Support



Gateway South (6 parking bays lost)



5. Text responses on additional improvements

Question 5 provided an opportunity for respondents to leave any extra comments relating to other elements of the proposals for the High Street and the surrounding areas.

The list below includes the common themes that were picked up within this question. Many comments had already been stated within the free text boxes attached to the questions above.

- expression of desire to see Yarm's picturesque charm and individuality maintained
- concern over the potential removal of the cobbles
- desire to see more trees as well as planting to increase attractiveness of the High Street even more
- concern over number of car parking spaces lost within the proposals
- more signage needed to make people aware of High Street car parks
- the need for cycle parking at both ends of the High Street

Feedback from businesses

Throughout the consultation process, many businesses in Yarm were approached directly to discuss their individual thoughts on the proposed improvements on the High Street and surrounding areas. The themes below summarise the key comments from businesses in Yarm that were contacted throughout December 2022 and January 2023.

- support the additional ideas and expect them to bring custom into Yarm
- would like to have space outside premises for additional seating
- concern over lack of parking but in favour of some of the ideas
- more robust and sustainable paving near pubs and loading areas
- appreciation that the High Street needs to evolve
- problems with delivery vans getting near to certain businesses
- concern over removal of car parking and its impact on businesses

Feedback from Yarm Primary School

As part of the consultation process, an activity was undertaken with pupils at Yarm Primary School to gain their feedback on the proposed interventions as well as any other suggestions they may have.

The following themes emerged from this process:

- support for the proposed idea of more and newer seating
- the proposed increase in electric vehicle charging points was well received
- the pupils also supported the proposed increase in green areas due to this allowing more places for people to sit and rest
- concern was raised as to whether the widening of the footpath would negatively affect the flow of traffic

Profile of responses

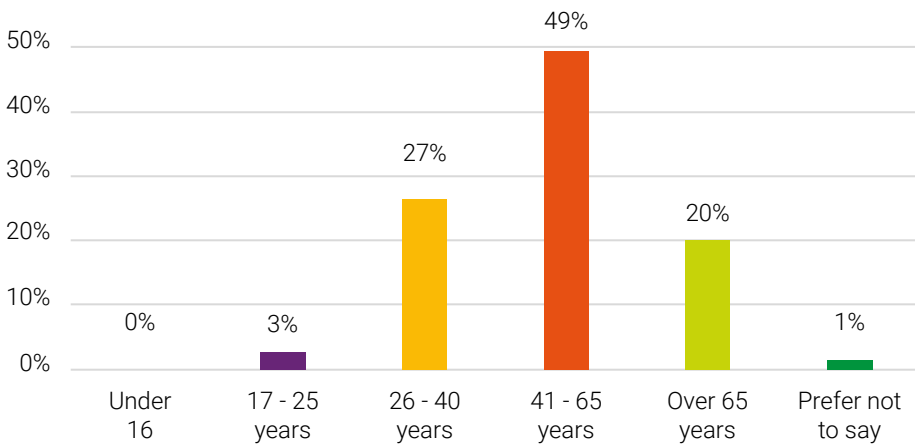
This section summarises the demographic profile of people that responded to the consultation to understand who is captured in the responses and if any groups of the community are missing from this data.

Age

The majority of respondents (49 per cent) were aged between 41 – 65 years old, with the second highest age category being that of 26-40 years old (27 per cent).

Only 7 people aged 25 or under responded to the consultation. 20 per cent of respondents were aged over 65 years old.

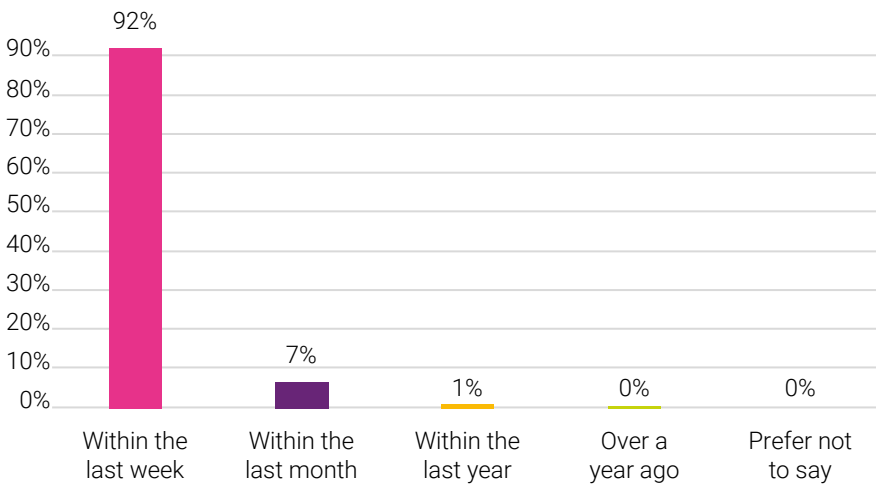
Figure 10: Please tell us your age



Visit frequency

Figure 2 demonstrates that the vast majority of people who responded to the consultation were people that have visited Yarm recently, with 92 per cent of respondents visiting within the last week.

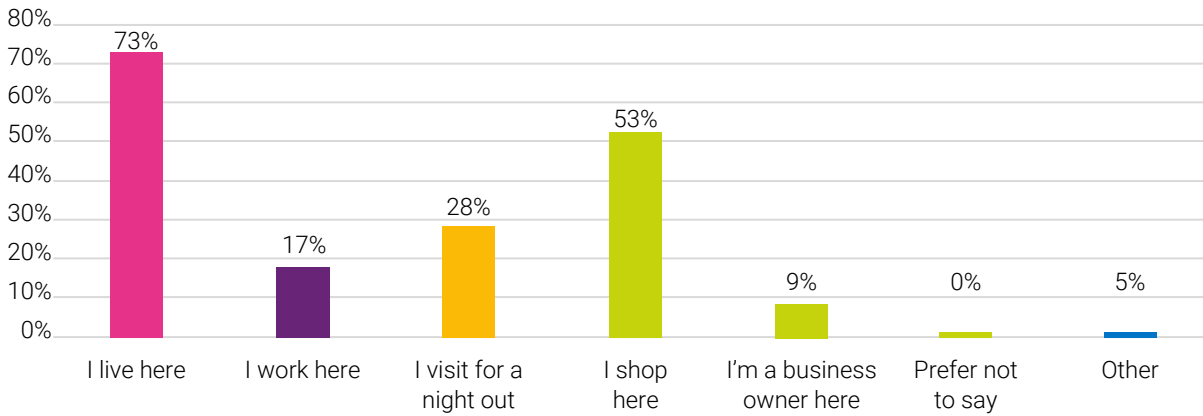
Figure 11: When did you last visit Yarm?



Connection to the area

In terms of connections to the area, respondents typically live in the area and/or shop in Yarm. A smaller number of responses were received from people that work in the area, with this figure standing at 17 per cent. In regard to the response from business owners, this figure stood at 26 responses, making up 9 per cent of the total responses.

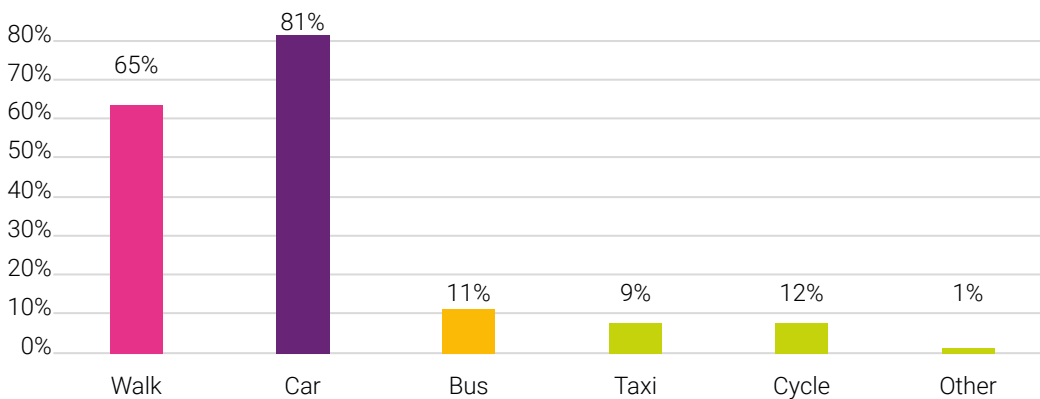
Figure 12: What is your connection to Yarm?



Modes of travel

When travelling to and from Yarm, the most commonly used mode was to travel by car (81 per cent). The second most popular mode was that of walking, with the figure being 65 per cent. Of the other transport modes, cycling was slightly more popular than bus (12 per cent versus 11 per cent), followed by taxi at 9 per cent, train at 4 per cent and other at 1 per cent.

Figure 13: How do you usually travel to Yarm?



Next steps

A summary of these findings will be reported to the Council's Cabinet in March.

Work will be undertaken on refining the presented proposals to reflect the findings of the consultation and any broader considerations in respect of the wider function and use of the High Street and surrounding area. Particular emphasis will be given to striking an appropriate balance of additional public spaces that reflect both the concerns and support demonstrated in respect of potential loss of parking across the High Street to accommodate additional improvements.

These refinements will be reflected in a final scheme which will be presented to the public later in the year.

More information on how the Council is transforming Yarm and the wider Town Centres Investment Programme can be found at: stockton.gov.uk/our-six-towns