

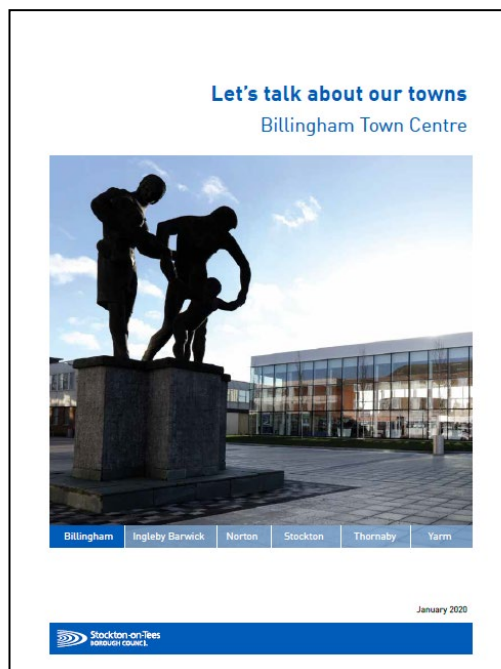


# Let's talk about our towns

Billingham Town Centre Consultation Results Summary

## Billingham Town Centre Consultation

In early January 2020, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council began a consultation about the future of town centres and high streets in Billingham, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, Thornaby and Yarm.



The consultation lasted for 6 weeks and sought people’s views on the future of the five centres in the Borough, to identify what is important to the users of the town centre and to inform future priorities for intervention.

There were five different ‘Let’s talk about our towns’ documents – for Billingham, Ingleby Barwick, Norton, Thornaby and Yarm – complete with questionnaires. Online surveys were created for responses, as well as face-to-face sessions held in each of the five centres.

The consultation was promoted widely on Social Media, and in each of the centres via a printed questionnaire for those without internet access. All responses were added together, giving a total sample size for each as follows:

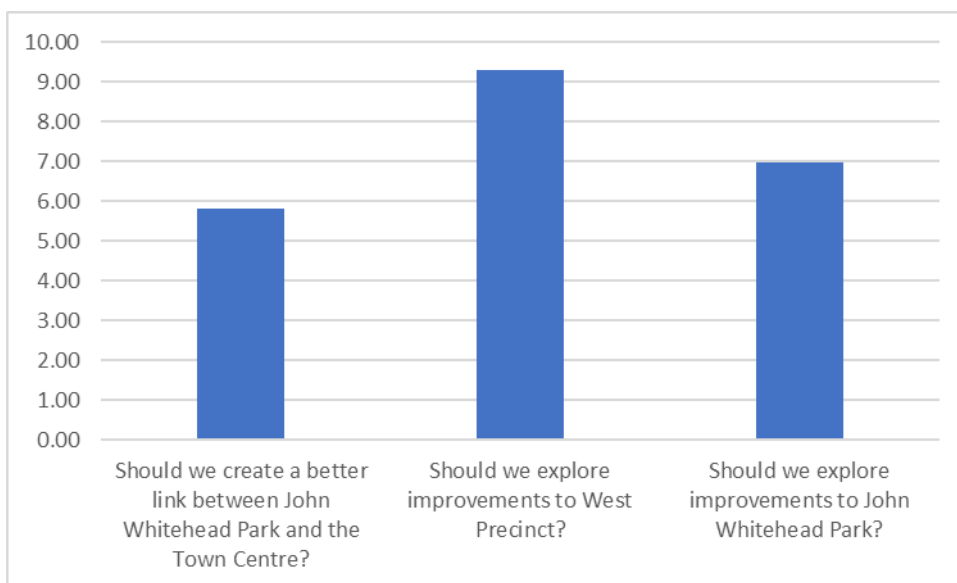
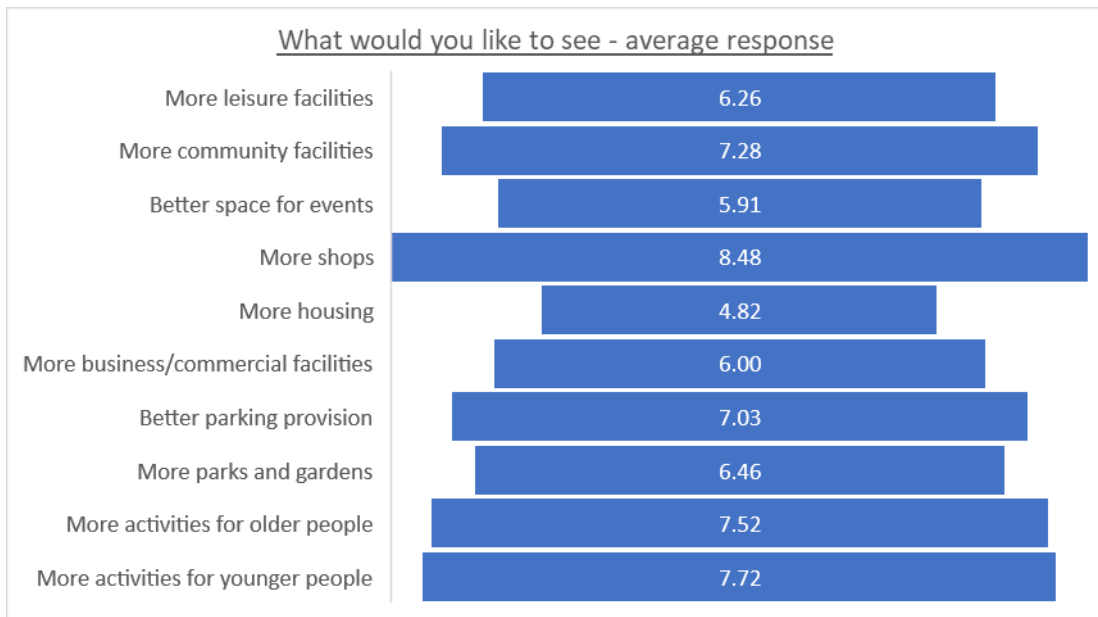
Billingham Town Centre	311 responses
Ingleby Barwick Town Centre	462 responses
Norton Town Centre	285 responses
Thornaby Town Centre	349 responses
Yarm Town Centre	208 responses
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,615 responses</b>

This summary presents findings from the Billingham Town Centre consultation, exploring what the priorities ought to be for the centre and how we could work alongside the owners to bring about change that will help ensure its long-term vitality and popularity.

Here is the summary of findings from this consultation:

Most respondents answered positively when asked about more facilities on a scale from 1 (not at all) and 10 (would most like).

Specific aspects attracted the following ratings:



This scoring would suggest broad support for a 'mixed use' approach to any development with retail remaining central to any plans and including community, leisure and green spaces. There was little desire for more housing as part of the development for the town centre.

Improvements to West Precinct scored particularly highly along with more shops, community facilities and activities for older and younger people.

Most respondents offered additional general comments on the consultation (there was a total of 789 comments across the four main questions) and the following themes emerged:

Please comment if you'd like to add any more things you'd like to see:

- When asked to comment on any more things people would like to see in the town centre, the majority of respondents mentioned more retail and leisure facilities.
  - *"I'd like to have more food and clothes stores in our town as there's loads of empty spaces"*
  - *"More businesses and better shops to increase footfall"*
- Also, suggestions to help start-ups.
  - *"I think we should provide space for new retailers starting out, like the Enterprise Zones in Stockton Town Centre"*
  - *"More shops in the Town Centre Employment Enterprise Schemes for start-up businesses and test trading (similar to the Fountains in Stockton)"*
- Many acknowledged Billingham Forum as an asset for the town centre and suggestions to make more use of this facility.
  - *"Billingham are very lucky to have the Forum, it is well provided for in terms of leisure facilities and entertainment of all ages and abilities. I would like these expanded and not reduced."*
  - *"Initiatives that build communities. Forum activities (in empty shop units)"*
- Concerns raised about the access to parking and a greater police presence also featured in this section.

When thinking about Billingham, can you suggest up to three priority areas where you'd most like to see change?

- Lots of support for more / better shops along with improvements to parking were once again a reoccurring theme in this consultation, with comments referencing:
  - *"More small businesses - pop up opportunities would be lovely. A cocktail bar or two. Something family oriented"*
  - *"We desperately need a town centre with more shops and facilities (and more upmarket not cheap stores) Some nice bars and restaurants/eating places"*
  - *"Improvement in car parking, more shops/ services brought to the town centre"*

- *“Better parking - the car park behind the town centre is not fit for purpose”*
- *“Parking is good as it is free, but the spaces are very narrow in most car parks”*
- Mixed response on future of West Precinct, with the majority of comments in favour of its demolition with other suggestions include redeveloping the site and revising the town centre layout.
  - *“Shrinkage of the centre, it’s far too big”*
  - *“Get rid of the empty West Precinct make that into additional parking. Like the intentions of Stockton High Street. Too many empty stores. Demolish or knock through empty stores”*
  - *“Change to town centre layout - very old fashioned in layout and practicality in the multi storey end of the town - the new end close to Aldi is a much better layout”*
  - *“West Precinct - if not shops, use as places for leisure facilities”*
- Several suggestions to bring more residential facilities into the town centre.
  - *“Houses above the shops occupied”*
  - *“Utilisation of accommodation above shops”*
- General concerns raised about crime, anti-social behaviour and policing along with suggestions to include a covered shopping area within the development.

Tell us more about improvements to John Whitehead Park and West Precinct, what would you like to see?

- Overwhelming support within the consultation to explore improvements to West Precinct, with most comments backing its demolition and the redevelopment of the site.
  - *“West Precinct needs pulling down and starting again”*
  - *“In my opinion it needs opening up to let natural light in”*
  - *“Knock the West Precinct down it’s an awful place”*
  - *“Shops moved to unused units further in the town”*
- Concerns raised about the current levels on anti-social behaviour in John Whitehead Park along with improvements to lighting and facilities.
  - *“John Whitehead Park needs to be safer”*
  - *“More security for the evenings”*
  - *“John Whitehead Park needs more for families and better security - too much anti-social behaviour in this park”*
  - *“I’d like to see better lighting in the park so that you can see where you are walking when its dark”*

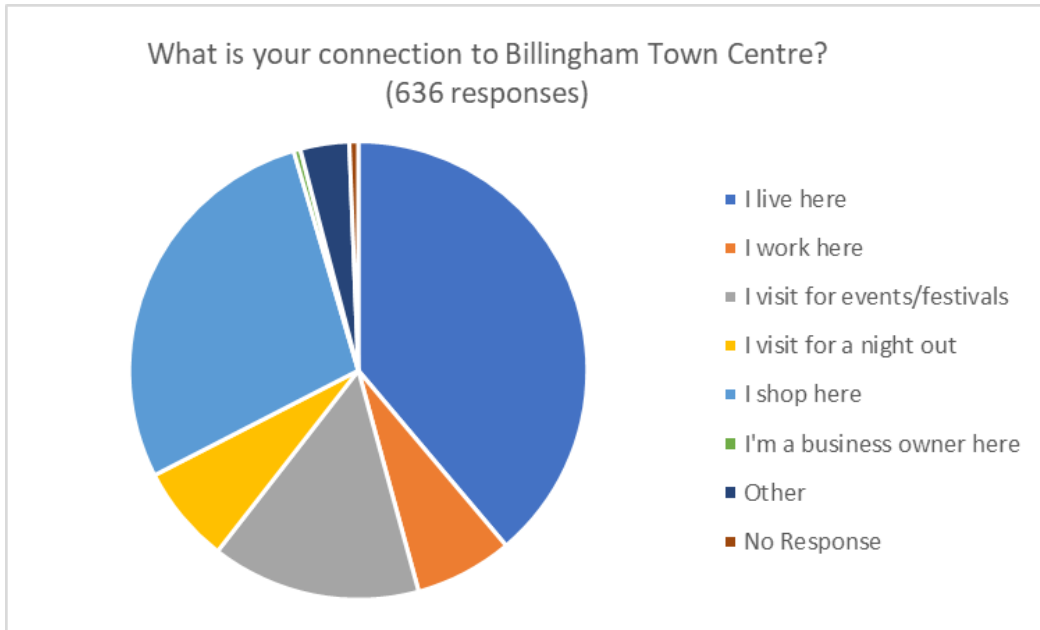
- General concerns raised about the footpaths, seating and facilities.
  - *“Improved drainage in John Whitehead Park, better lighting and improved footpaths”*
  - *“John Whitehead Park needs maintenance rather than improvements”*
  - *“In the park the general maintenance & upkeep of the things that we have already such as play area, gym equipment, tennis courts”*

And finally, is there anything else you'd like to tell us? Please use the box below to share any thoughts, ideas or plans you'd like to be considered.

- Retail attracted the highest number of comments in this section, with calls for more/better shops and investment in the town centre amongst the most popular responses.
  - *“We need better shops to make going to the Town Centre worthwhile”*
  - *“Encouragement of new shopping outlets and businesses to stop the further decline of the town centre”*
  - *“Buy the town centre to take back control”*
  - *“More money invested back into Billingham”*
- West Precinct again attracted lots of comments, with responses ranging from its demolition through to redevelopment of the site.
  - *“West Precinct needs knocking down - its unsafe and disgusting”*
  - *“West Precinct brightened up, modernised and units let out to businesses”*
  - *“West Precinct is a priority and if not suitable for shops etc. perhaps thinking about demolition”*
  - *“Ideally the West Precinct should be demolished, and a modern development built in its place to become a real focal point for the town centre”*
- In addition, comments on events, parking and issues around crime and anti-social behaviour featured with the following themes:
  - *“Make the town centre a safer place”*
  - *“The 2-storey car park is a complete eyesore and not at all practical for modern cars - spaces are too small, huge concrete pillars make it nearly impossible to get in and out of the car. It too needs to be demolished and replaced with a more practical design”*
  - *“More big community events, markets etc.”*

### Profile of responses

- Almost eight in ten of respondents (79%) live in Billingham, with most offering more than one response when asked 'What is your connection to Billingham Town Centre?' Over half of respondents (57%) also use Billingham Town Centre for shopping.
- 85% of responses came from people visiting 'within the last week'



- Those under 16 were not represented in the consultation, responses came from all other age groups were with those aged 41-65 accounting for almost half (47%).

