

# **Let's talk about our towns**

## **Stockton Town Centre Consultation**

### **Results Summary**

## Stockton Town Centre Consultation

In September 2019, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council began a consultation about a shared vision for Stockton Town Centre.



The consultation took place in September 2019 and lasted for 4 weeks. The main objectives of the consultation were to seek people's views on the future of Stockton Town Centre, to identify what is important to the users of the town centre and to inform future priorities for intervention.

An online survey was created for responses, as well as face-to-face sessions held within Stockton Borough Libraries and Stockton Visitor Information centre. The online consultation was promoted widely on Social Media, via a postcard drop to central homes and to all town centre businesses. There was also a printed questionnaire circulated for those without internet access. All responses were added together, giving a final total sample size of 962.

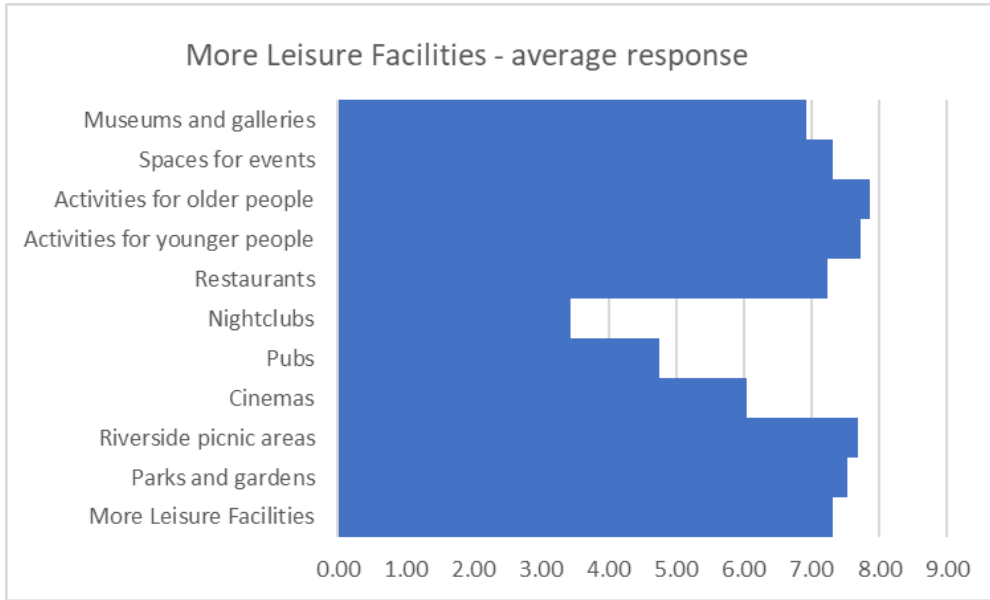
This summary presents findings from the Stockton Town Centre consultation, exploring attitudes to the redevelopment of the high street and covering a number of responses ranging from the refurbishment and repurposing of the Castlegate Shopping Centre through to the demolition of both Castlegate and the Swallow Hotel.

Here is the summary of findings from this consultation:

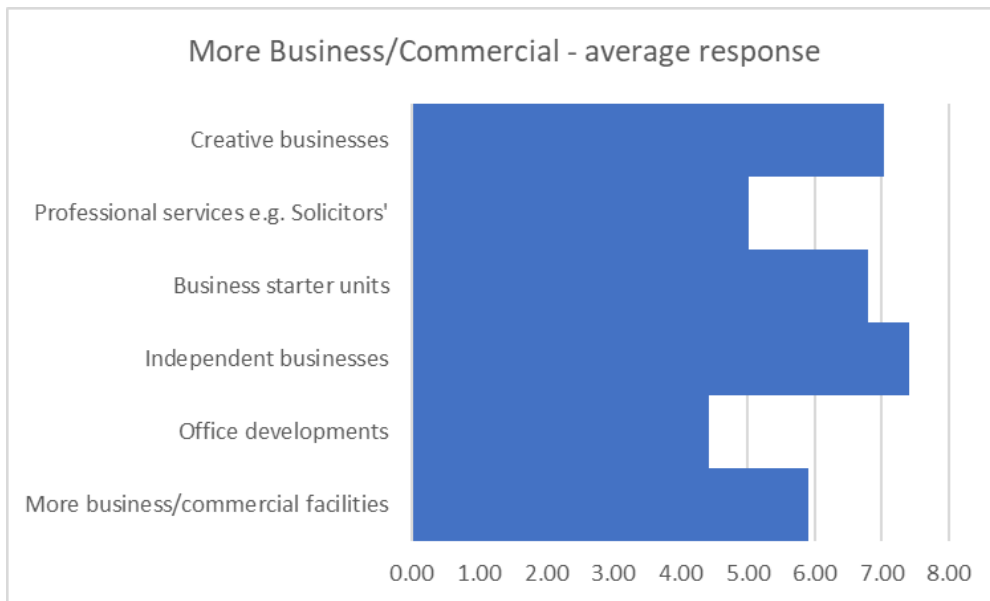
Most respondents answered positively when asked about more facilities on a scale from 1 (not at all) and 10 (would most like)

- Specific aspects attracted the following ratings:

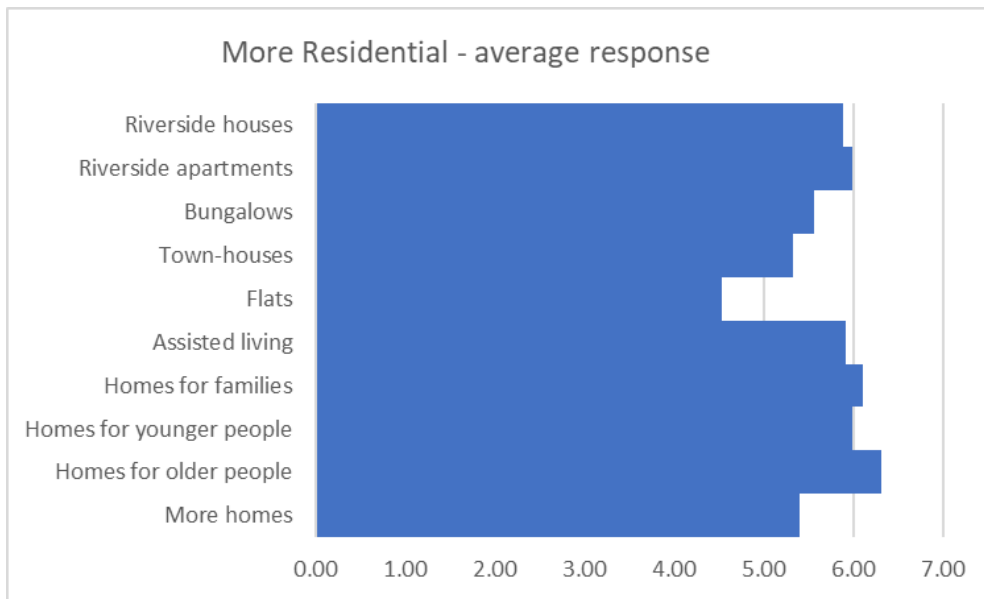
- More leisure facilities (average response 6.71)



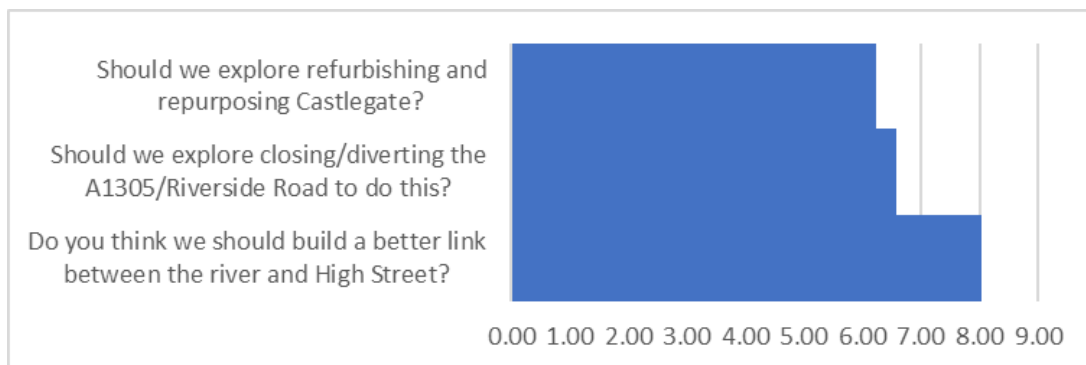
- More business/commercial facilities (average response 6.10)



- More homes (average response 5.70)



- Link river and high street / Riverside Road / Castlegate



Although not conclusive, this would suggest broad support for a 'mixed use' approach to any development. There was little desire for pubs and nightclubs as part of the development.

Better links between the river and high street scored particularly highly along with parks and gardens, riverside picnic areas, restaurants, activities for younger people, activities for older people, spaces for events, and independent businesses.

Over half of respondents offered additional general comments on the consultation (there was a total of 1,117 comments across the 4 main questions) and the following themes emerged:

- There was broad support for creating open space with lots of positive comments for parks and greenspace. Responses suggest this should include trees and seating areas along the river. In addition, comments in support of entertainment and leisure facilities include adding bowling, skating, cinema/theatre, swimming and indoor/outdoor sports facilities
  - *"Open spaces nicely planted would brighten the high street"*

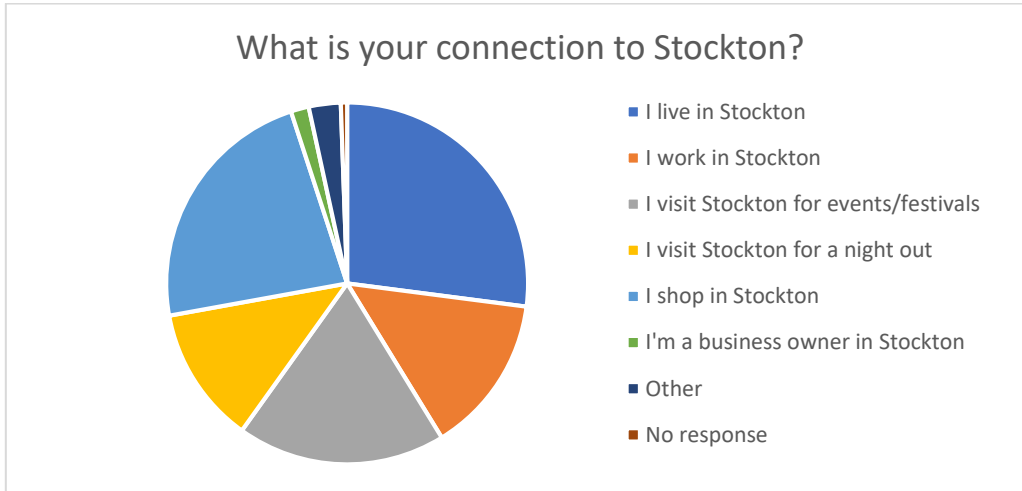
- *“Greenspaces that can be enjoyed by all”*
- *“Leisure that will bring people to visit Stockton”*
- *“Indoor and outdoor sports facilities”*
- Strong support for linking high street and riverside and creating more leisure facilities facing river – comments also referenced similar successful schemes in Durham, Newcastle and York.
  - *“A link with the riverside would make our town unique”*
  - *“I love the Riverside park idea”*
  - *“The River is the heart of the Tees Valley”*
- Concerns raised about the number of existing business/commercial units already vacant in Stockton, although comments acknowledge the need for more independent businesses and support for SMEs and the associated benefit of having businesses in the centre
  - *“Plenty of vacant office space available in Teasdale”*
  - *“Office developments often spend a lot of time being empty and unused”*
  - *“Co-working spaces”*
  - *“Having businesses in the centre will ensure that workers are here to spend money at lunchtimes and after work”*
  - *“An increase in commercial and business facilities, providing these can be filled and kept filled, would be a great opportunity for Stockton”*
- Lots of comments suggest the town centre should be for leisure / entertainment and less about housing, although acknowledgement residential would help build a community and bring footfall to town centre
  - *“The town should be made into a space for all to enjoy not more housing”*
  - *“The Town Centre should be a place people visit, not live”*
  - *“Town centre living has helped revitalise many northern cities”*
- Mixed response on future of Riverside Rd, most comments in favour of its removal to link high street/river but concerns on the impact of other roads without a replacement/alternative
  - *“The Riverside Road is a huge blot on the landscape & substantial barrier that prevents the benefit of the non-tidal river front being exploited to the full”*
  - *“Closing this road would cause problems, especially if/when there are traffic issues on the A19 and/or A66 when traffic has to find alternative routes”*
  - *“Riverside road helps ease a lot of congestion and would be detrimental to close”*
- Overwhelming support within comments to repurpose Castlegate/Swallow Hotel and bring more retailers in one place. Around 80% comments mentioning Castlegate are

in favour of its removal, comments also suggest we should consider the potential risk of re-locating businesses and the lack of covered shopping areas if progressed

- *“I’m in favour of demolishing Castlegate and relocating shops to Wellington and High St”*
- *“The Castlegate Centre is a thing of the past. To many empty shops in the rest of the town. We have marvellous buildings in Stockton...it's time to move on and embrace the future”*
- *“Castlegate centre has always been an eyesore”*
- *“Repurpose Castlegate. It's awful”*
- *“Please use this amazing opportunity to KNOCK DOWN the eyesore which is the Castlegate , Swallow hotel and awful multi story car parks. All of the businesses could be moved up the High Street to have a bustling and vibrant shopping area”*
- *“Castlegate Centre is good because it is undercover. Problem with Wellington Square is exposure to the elements”*
- *“The good thing about Castlegate is it is the only undercover space when it rains and let’s face it, it rains a lot!”*
- *“Every town centre needs a COVERED shopping centre”*
- General concerns raised about the cost, funding and community safety were raised
  - *“I think enough has been spent on Stockton High Street”*
  - *“Community Safety should be a key issue, make people feel safer and they will want to come into the Town Centre”*
  - *“How much of this money could be required by a) Borrowing b) increasing rates”*
- Some responses also suggested we should include heritage, events and public transport/bus station central into any development
  - *“Please consider having a museum to show off our history e.g. railway, John Walker etc”*
  - *“We should aim to have more events and activities alongside the river, whilst making more use of the river”*
  - *“More thought into public transport and bus station”*

### Profile of responses

- Over two thirds of respondents (69%) were from Stockton Borough, with most offering more than one response when asked 'What is your connection to Stockton?'
- 80% of responses came from people visiting 'within the last week'



- All age categories were represented in the consultation, with those aged 41-65 accounting for 43% of the responses

