

# Banbury Vision 2050

# DRAFT

## Engagement Findings

April 2024

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# Introduction

# 01

This is the largest engagement exercise ever undertaken for Banbury town centre. A total of 2772 responses were received to the survey and around 150 people took part in workshops to inform the Vision. This document is informed by those responses.

The survey results show that people value Banbury's 'market town' qualities: its walkability, its independent shops, its green spaces and its heritage, particularly the Old Town and the Canal. They show that people value Banbury's diversity: the diversity of its communities and the variety of cultural, leisure and recreational opportunities available in the town centre. The variety of reasons why people visit Banbury town centre is a key strength.

But the survey results also demonstrate a clear desire to see Banbury town centre improve and highlight some major issues that the Vision needs to address. These relate to the quality of the shopping offer, the quality of the markets and the impact of competition from Gateway Retail Park. They relate to the quality of bus services, walking and cycle routes, and to perceptions of safety in the town centre which all increase the reliance on the car. There is also a very clear message that people want Banbury to show more pride in the town's heritage.

This document presents a summary of the key findings from the engagement process, the key issues that the local community want to see addressed, and the type of town centre they want Banbury to be by 2050. It presents the emerging 'Vision Values' defined by the community, and it highlights the opportunities available within the town centre and prioritises the actions needed to help deliver this change.

(For a fuller analysis of the engagement please [visit](#))

# Emerging 2050 Vision Values

# 02



The survey questionnaire, and each of the workshops, asked respondents to list three words to describe the town centre they would like Banbury to be by 2050. The words that came to the fore state that respondents want their town centre to be a **Vibrant, Safe, Clean, Green, Fun, Independent Destination**.

The Banbury 2050 Vision should seek to deliver a town centre that reflects these values that have come directly from the community engagement process. All future proposals for the town centre should be considered against how they help to deliver these values and a process developed to facilitate this.

Everything that happens in Banbury town centre should support the move towards a **safer, cleaner, greener** town centre, that is more **vibrant**, more **fun** and more **independent**, and should help it become a stronger 'destination'.

# Vibrant

## Banbury should be a “Vibrant” town centre

Other similar words used include Busy, Bustling, Cultural, Prosperous and Flourishing. People want to see a town centre full of ‘life’ and therefore full of people, with empty shop units occupied, a strong local market and events and activities animating its streets and spaces.

# Safe

## Banbury should be a “Safe” town centre

Other similar words used include Welcoming, Friendly, Inclusive, Open, Social and Community. A key desire is to see more people in the town centre, creating a natural sense of surveillance and security and addressing any negative perceptions regarding the safety of the town centre. Young people in particular want a town centre with spaces in which they feel welcome and where they are free to ‘hang out’ and socialise with friend.

# Clean

## Banbury should be a “Clean” town centre

Other similar words used include Attractive, Beautiful, Pleasant and Tidy. Banbury people are proud of their town centre and its heritage and they want to showcase the quality of its streets, spaces and buildings. And the starting point for achieving this is to at least ensure that those places are clean and well-maintained.

# Green

## Banbury should be a “Green” town centre

Other similar words used include Sustainable, Innovative and Progressive. People want to see a forward-looking town centre that demonstrates its commitment to tackling environmental, social and technological challenges. People also want to see a greener town centre, in the true sense of the word, a town centre with more trees and planting lining its streets and public spaces.

# Independent

## Banbury should be an “Independent” town centre

Other similar words used include Interesting, Diverse, Variety, Unique, Creative and Different. Banbury people want to see a town centre that does not seek to duplicate the national chains that populate the retail park, but that supports and nurtures distinctive, local businesses. Key words used by survey respondents and workshop participants to emphasise the importance of creating a distinctive local ‘brand’ include authentic, history and heritage.

# Fun

## Banbury should be a “Fun” town centre

Other similar words used include Lively, Buzzing, Joyful, Entertaining, Bright, Colourful and Sociable. Banbury people want to see a town centre that is ‘always alive’ with a sense of excitement about what they will find when they visit.

# Destination

## Banbury should be a “Destination” town centre

There is a clear sense from the survey responses that Banbury town centre needs to become a ‘destination’, and has the qualities and attractions to do this. Key words from the workshops that promote a possible change in Banbury’s mindset include ‘city’ and ‘cosmopolitan’.

This is an important message and perhaps the biggest challenge for Banbury moving forward. The implication is that Banbury should perhaps rely less on ‘convenience’ and short trips and more on creating an ‘experience’ that encourages people to visit for longer and to see all that the town has to offer.

In order to deliver this change the engagement process indicates that Banbury also needs a change of mindset. Banbury’s growth and success, as demonstrated by the scale and quality of jobs available in and around the town centre, the education offer, and the extent of its cultural and leisure offer, means that it has already moved beyond being a ‘traditional’ local market town. In order to become the ‘destination’ that people wish it to be, Banbury needs to think like a larger town, possibly even like a city, whilst retaining the distinctive market town qualities that people appreciate. The Vision Values can help transform attitudes as well as the physical environment.

# A People-led Vision

# 03



Every place benefits from having its own unique Vision for its future. An idea of where it wants to go, and a set of principles and values that help it get there. That Vision needs to be clear enough that local residents, businesses, and policy makers understand what it is saying. It needs to be specific enough that it is addressing the needs of the place and everyone with an interest in it. It needs to set both long term direction and short-term goals, including committing to early activations, to demonstrate progress and maintain momentum. And it needs to be flexible enough to be able to adapt to changes without wholesale review every 3 years or so.

The process of developing that Vision can be just as important as the Vision document itself. The process should promote collaboration between different stakeholders, between the public sector, voluntary sector and private sector, between officers, politicians, residents and businesses, between the diverse communities that characterise Banbury. It should ensure that the Vision is rooted in the elements of Banbury that people value, and will deliver the type of town that they want to spend time in.

To paraphrase Jane Jacobs (one of the earliest advocates of grass roots, community-led planning), if Banbury is to be a place that provides something for everybody, then it has to be a place created by everybody. This report is an important step, but only the first step, in that direction. It has ensured that Banbury 2050 Vision will be developed from the largest engagement exercise undertaken in the town. It will ensure that the 2050 Vision is rooted in a set of core values defined by the local community. It will ensure that the 2050 Vision addresses the priority issues identified by the local community. It should ensure that the 2050 Vision will be delivered in partnership with that local community. And it should ensure that the Vision understands, and builds on, what people already value about Banbury.

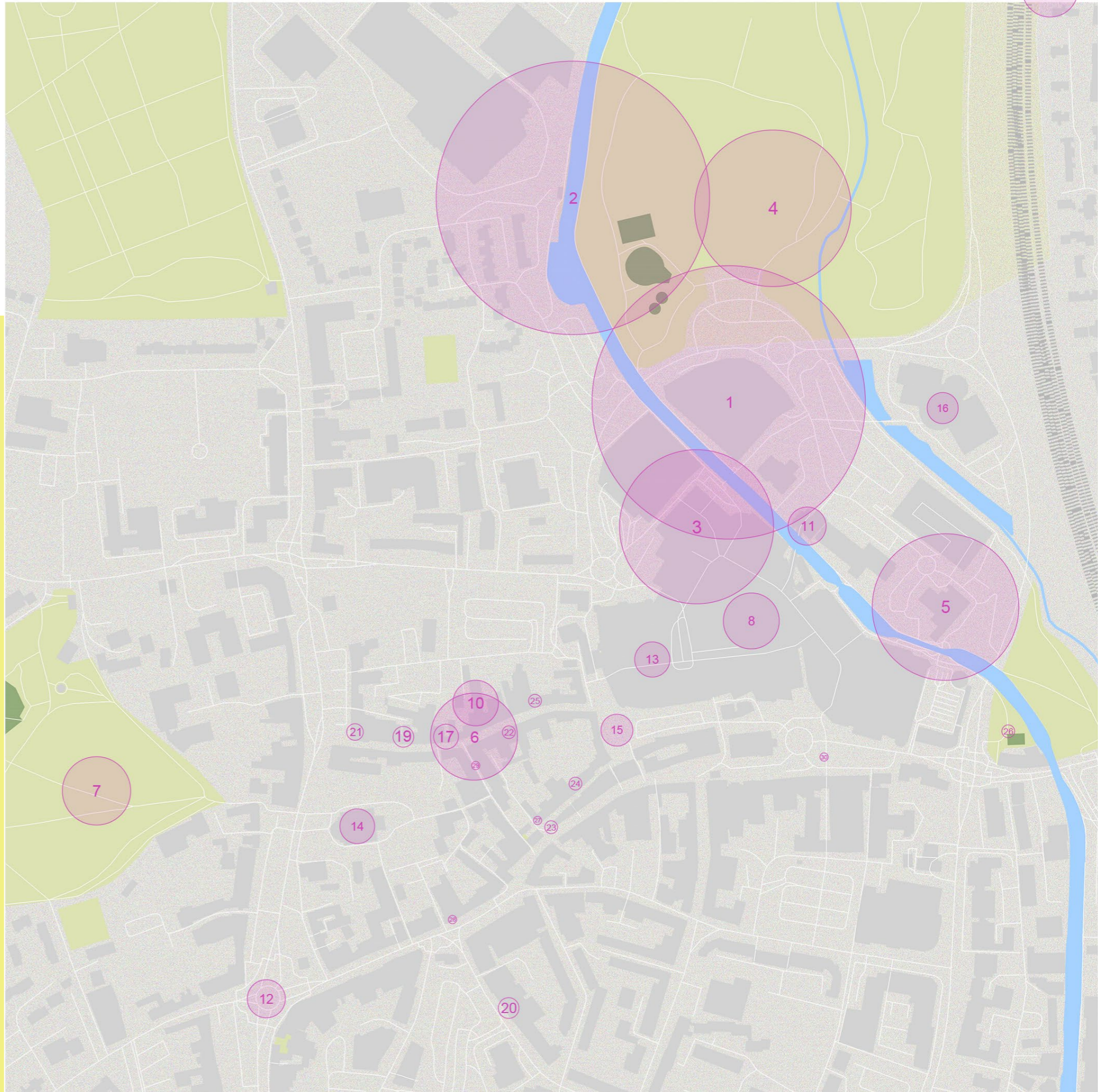
So what did the survey show that people like about Banbury?



### Favourite Places

The survey asked people to identify their favourite places in Banbury. People listed the cultural venues, historic streets and buildings, parks and green spaces, independent shops and the larger shopping centres. It shows the strength and variety of attractions that Banbury town centre has to offer and that should underpin any future Vision. Banbury's parks received the highest 'approval rating' of all town centre facilities, with 59% of people agreed that it has good parks and green spaces.

1	The Light	671 (mentions)
2	Canal	669
3	Lock 29	392
4	Spiceball Park	382
5	Mill Arts Centre	353
6	Parson's Street	212
7	Peoples Park	167
8	Castle Quay	139
9	Gateway Retail Park	135
10	Ye Old Reine Deer Inn	111
11	Banbury Museum	95
12	Banbury Cross	92
13	Nothing but footprints	86
14	St Mary's Church	83
15	Market Place	77
16	Spiceball Leisure centre	75
17	The Old Auctioneer	63
18	Grimsbury Reservoir	51
19	Pizza Calzone	50
20	Library	48
21	The White Horse	39
22	Zushi	36
23	Missing Bean	34
24	The Apothecary Tap	33
25	Tess' Brilliant Bakes	32
26	Bridge Street Community Garden	31
27	Orinoco	23
28	The Coach and Horses	23
29	Betts Butchers	19
30	Bridge Street	19





### Living in Banbury

The survey asked what people like about living in Banbury, and the feedback shows appreciation of its 'market town qualities'. People like its friendly, community feel, access to parks, green spaces and the countryside, accessibility by car, bus and rail, and the walkability of the town centre. Parks and Green Spaces were considered the most important quality that makes Banbury a good place for families, alongside the range of leisure and cultural facilities it has to offer. As Banbury continues to grow it is important that the Vision protects and enhances these key qualities.



Survey Question: What do you like about living in Banbury? (size relates to number of mentions)



Independents / Castle Quay



Independents / Market



Independents / Church Lane



Canal / Banbury Museum



Canal / Spiceball Park



Canal / The Light



Parks and Greenspaces / Bridge Street Garden



Parks and Greenspaces / People's Park



Events / Canal Festival



Events / Canal Festival



Cultural Offer / Mill Arts Centre



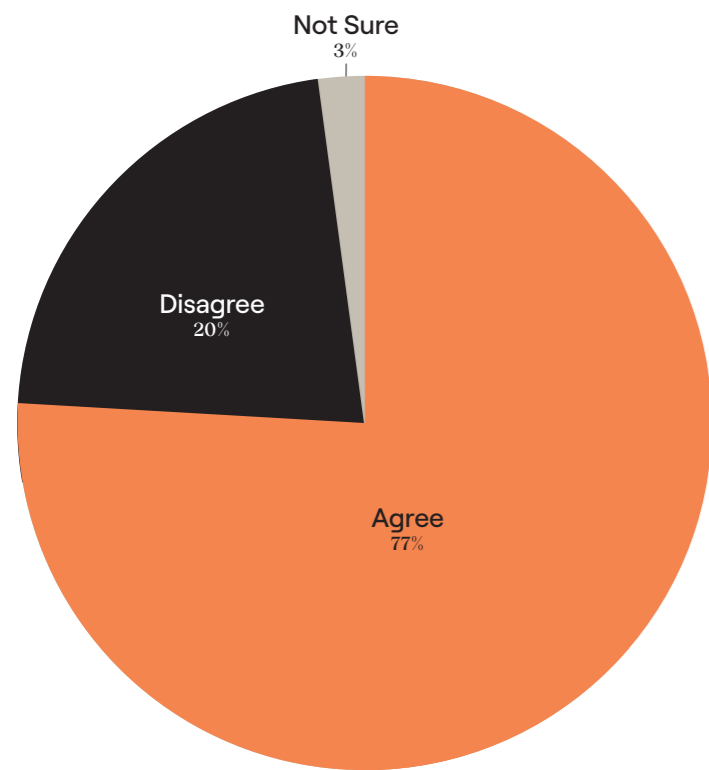
History / Town Hall - Market Place



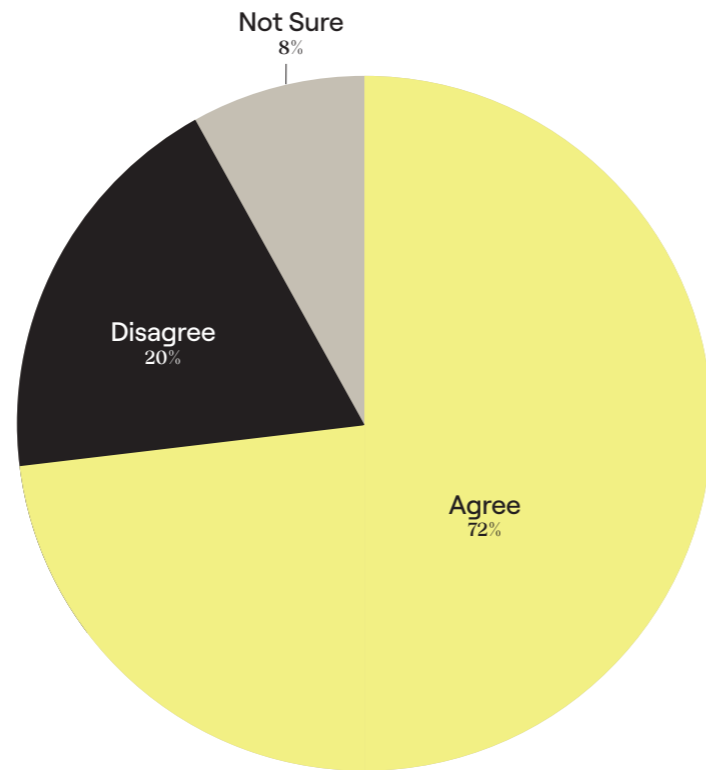
### Accessible and Walkable

77% of local residents said they find Banbury town centre easy to get to. Around 30% of residents walk to the town centre, and over 90% say they find it easy to do so. Almost 60% of local residents drive (or are driven) to the town centre and nearly 80% of visitors. Of all those who drive (residents and visitors), 70% say they find the town centre easy to get to.

Importantly, once people are in the town centre the majority also find it easy to walk around (only 20% disagree).



Survey Question: Banbury town centre is easy for me to get to?



Survey Question: The centre of Banbury is easy and comfortable for me to walk around?



Parson's Street



Broad Street



Church Lane



Canal - The Light



Market Place

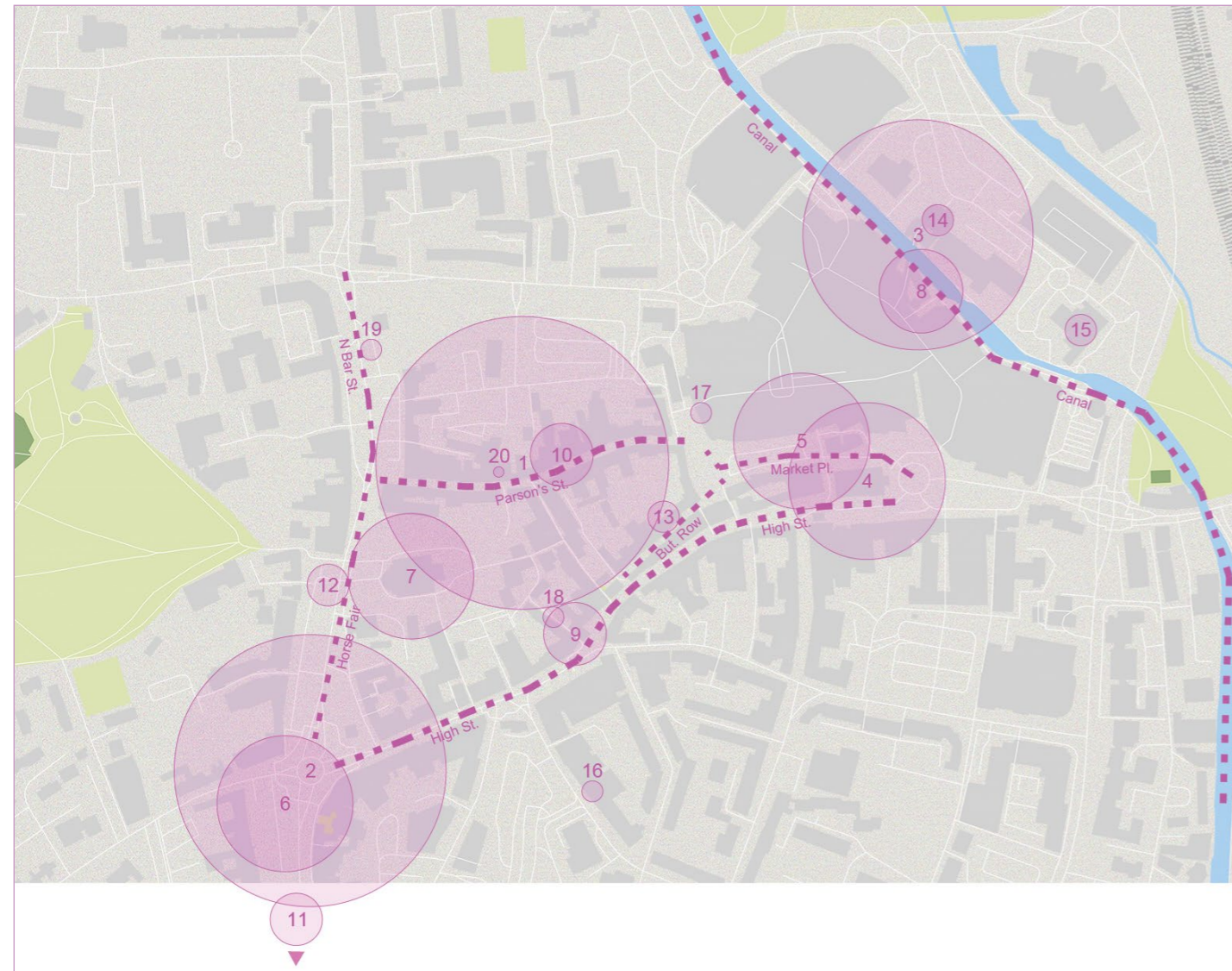


High Street



### Historic

The survey asked people to identify their favourite historic features in Banbury, and respondents listed a wealth of different streets, spaces and buildings. A network is shown from Market Place to Horse Fair and The Cross via Parsons Street and High Street, with a separate cluster along the stretch of the Canal between The Mill, Tooley's Boatyard and The Museum. The survey clearly shows that people value Banbury's history, and want to see it celebrated.



Survey Question: Please list your favourite historic features of/in Banbury? (size of circle relates to number of mentions)



Buildings on Parson's Street



Banbury Cross



Canalside



Town Hall



Buildings on Market Place



Fine Lady Statue



St Mary's Church



Tooley's Boat Yard



Buildings on High Street



Buildings on South Bar Street



Buildings on Butcher's Row

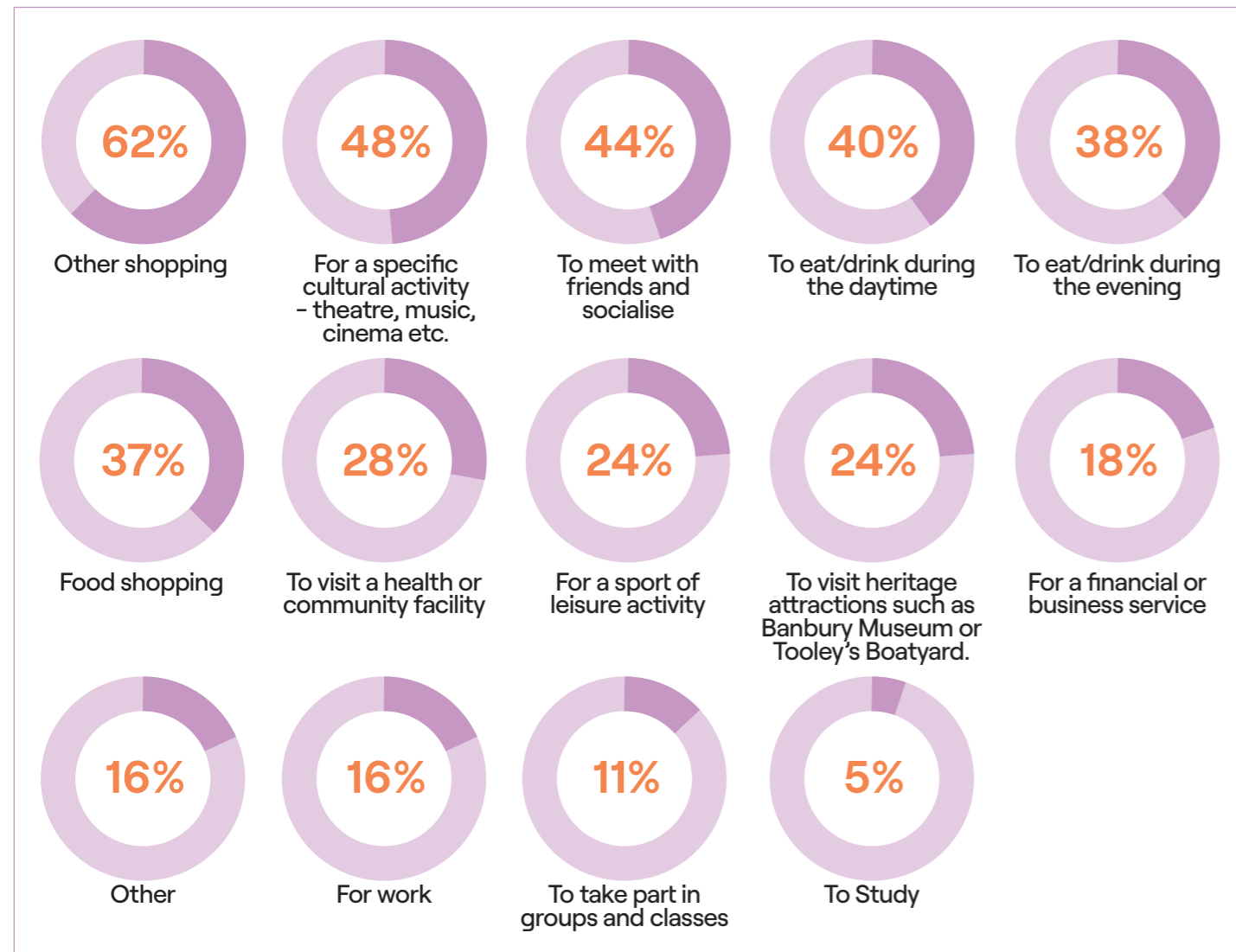


Mill Art Centre

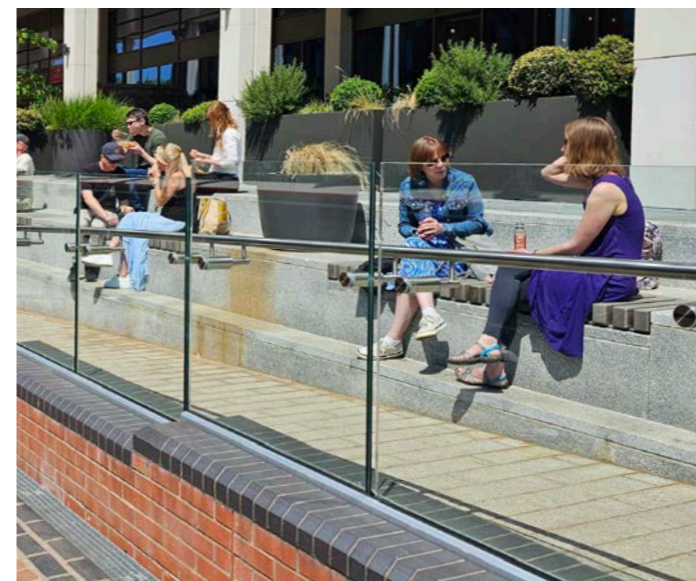


Diverse

The survey asked why people visit Banbury, and the findings demonstrate that people value the variety of cultural, leisure and recreational opportunities available in Banbury town centre. The variety of reasons why people visit Banbury town centre is a key strength.



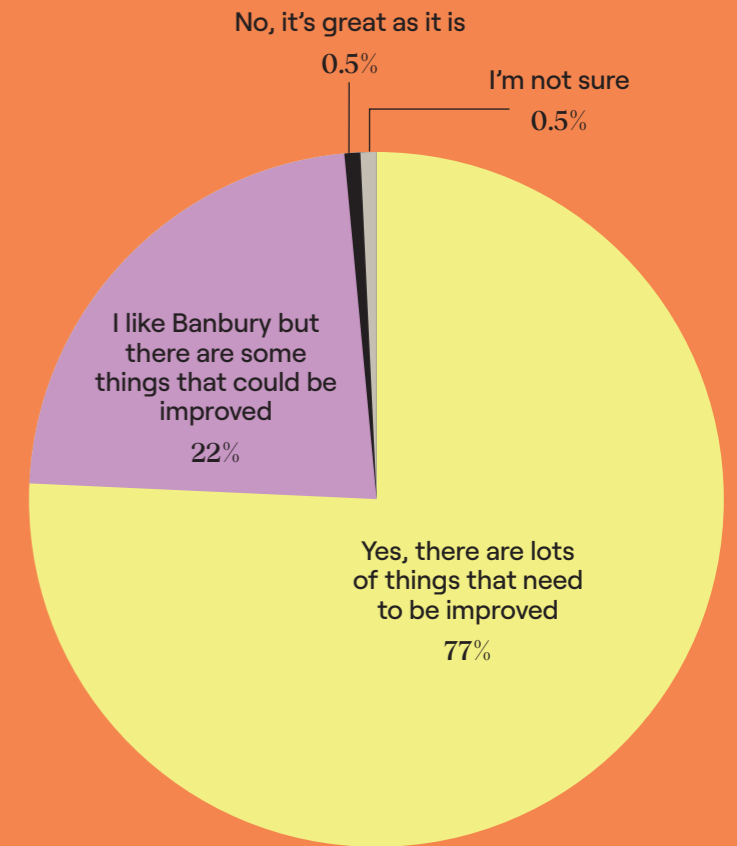
Survey Question: What are your reasons for visiting Banbury town centre?





# Desire for Change

# 04



Survey Question: Could Banbury town centre be better?

Although the survey highlighted a variety of things that people love about Banbury, the results also show a strong desire for change in the town centre. Out of 2722 responses to the survey over 99% want to see improvements and the vast majority (77% of all respondents) think that *'there are lots of things that need improving'* in Banbury town centre. Only 14 people thought Banbury did not need to change.

It is not surprising therefore that the survey results highlighted some major issues for the Vision to address. These include:

- the quality of shopping provision and impact of retail parks,
- the quality of Banbury's regular markets,
- treatment of its historic streets, spaces and buildings,
- frequency and cost of bus services,
- quality of cycling and walking routes,
- overall perceptions of safety in the town centre.

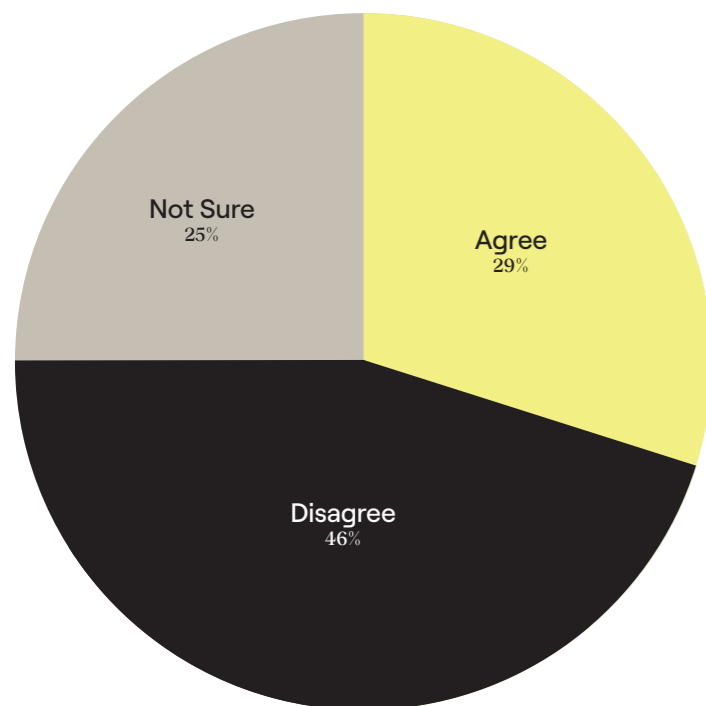


### Shopping and Retail Parks

Like many towns, Banbury residents are concerned about empty shops in the town centre.

The survey confirms that Banbury’s biggest shopping competitor is Gateway Retail Park and around a third of local residents say they shop at the retail park but never in the town centre.

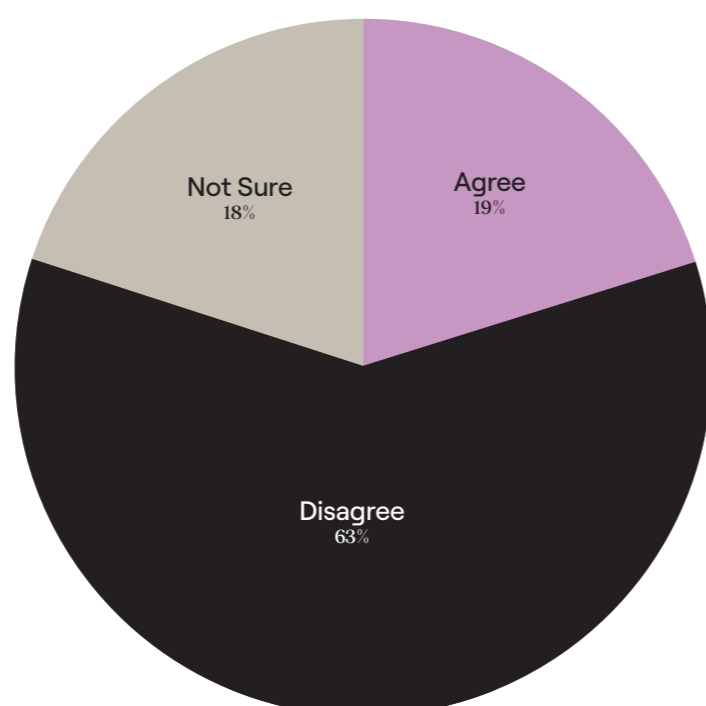
This is not a surprise to local traders. The 2021 retail study calculated that since 2012, expenditure on comparison (non-food) goods in Banbury as a whole had increased by approximately 10%. However, Banbury town centre turnover had halved, whilst the turnover of stores on the retail park had nearly tripled. Almost all the trade lost by town centre businesses in that period could therefore be attributed to Gateway Retail Park. It is vital that competing more effectively with the retail parks on its doorstep is considered a priority for Banbury town centre.



Survey Question: Banbury is a town centre full of interesting shops?

### Quality of markets

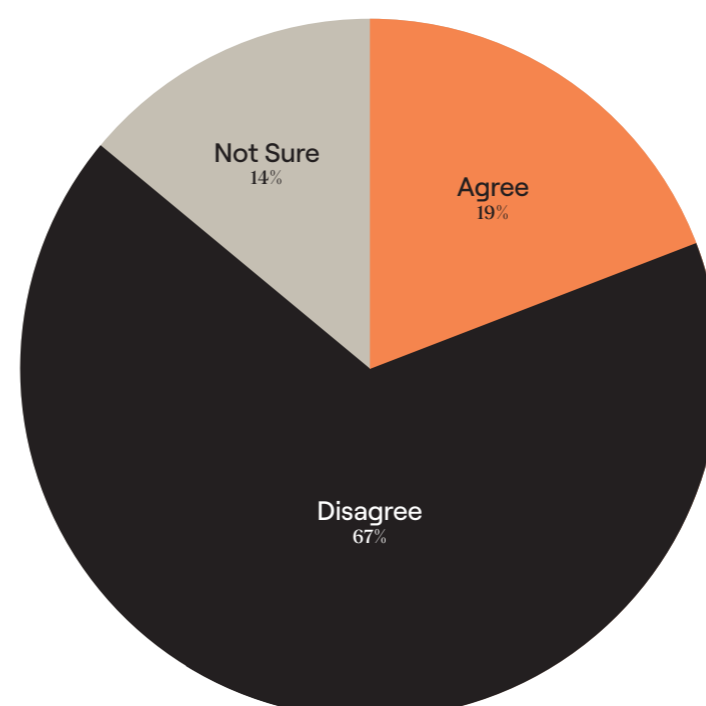
Disappointingly, only 19% of respondents believe that Banbury has interesting markets (this does not include the annual event markets). As a result over 50% of those surveyed don’t visit any of the weekly or monthly markets in the town centre. Successful markets are a key part of the identity of market towns, bringing in visitors and creating local pride. Improving the markets should therefore also be a priority for the town centre, and will help to differentiate the offer from the retail parks.



Survey Question: Banbury is a town centre with interesting markets?

### Valuing Banbury’s Heritage

The survey shows that whilst people value Banbury’s historic streets, spaces and buildings, they do not feel that the town is making the most of these assets. Promoting local heritage increases local pride in a town centre but is also a key factor in encouraging visitors and increasing their length of stay. There is a clear sense from all the workshops that were undertaken that this is a missed opportunity for Banbury to market itself as a visitor ‘destination’, promoting its historic market town characteristics and assets.



Survey Question: Banbury town centre makes the most of its historic streets and buildings?

### Buses, Walking & Cycling

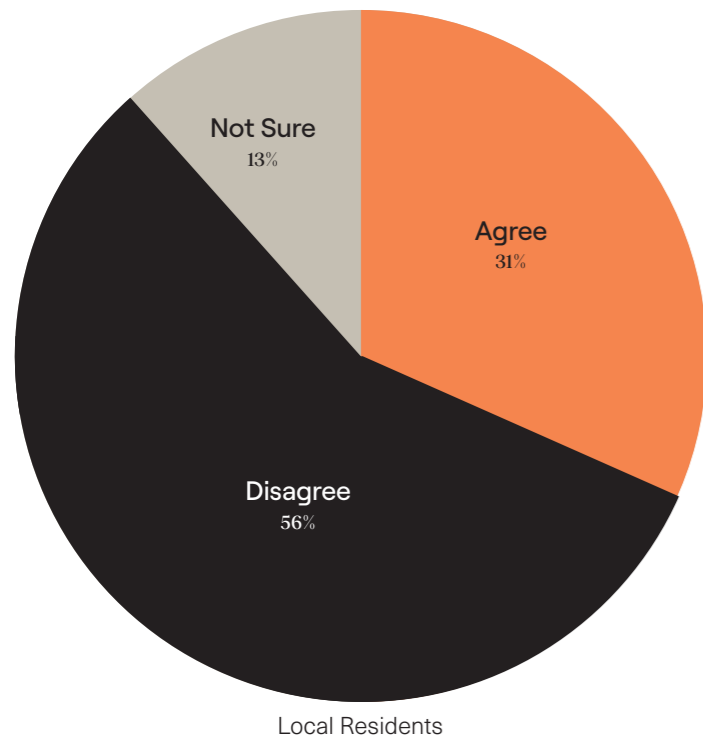
In common with many market towns, Banbury serves a rural catchment that can be heavily dependent on access by car. Of concern however is the percentage of local residents who say that they have no option but to drive to the town centre.

If Banbury is to become a greener, more sustainable, cleaner (air quality), and people-friendly place, then it needs to ensure that those people living within a 2 mile radius of the town centre feel able to walk, cycle or get the bus. At the moment, half of those residents say they do not have an attractive alternative to the car, however 75% of those residents also state that safer walking and cycling routes and more frequent bus services would encourage them to leave their car at home.

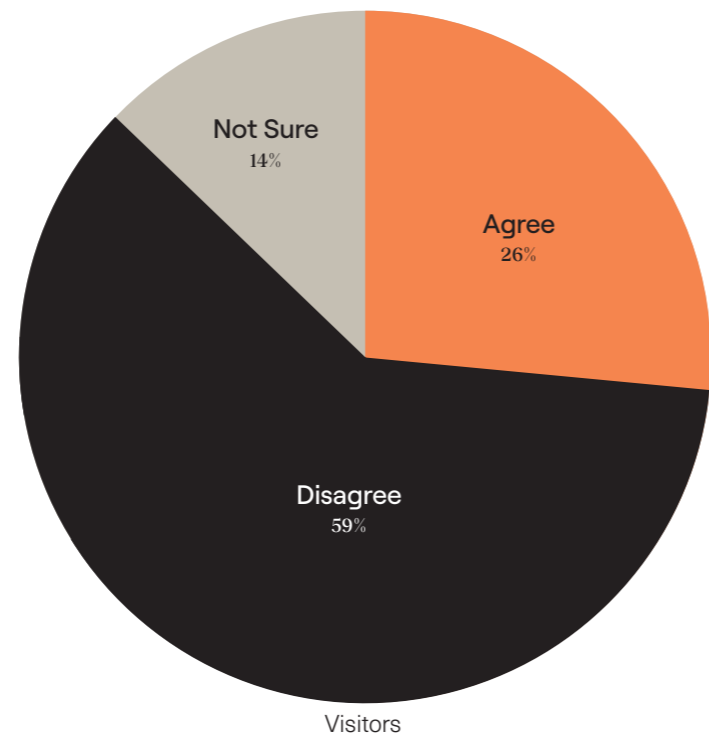
This is therefore a major opportunity for Banbury. Providing this large section of the population with alternatives to driving reduces congestion and pressure on car parking spaces, making the town centre more accessible for those who are reliant on cars.

It also helps ensure that those residents without access to a car are able to access the jobs, services and facilities that they need. Across Cherwell 15% of households do not have access to a car. However within the core town centre areas of Neithrop, Ruscote and Grimsbury the figures are 24%, 25% and 29% (2021 Census). Better walking and cycling routes within these areas will improve access to jobs and services and address key health indicators such as childhood obesity. And it is important to remember that the lack of alternatives falls disproportionately on younger and older people. The survey results show that 60% of U19s walk or get the bus to the town centre.

Surveys also show that people who walk and cycle visit town centres more often, spend more over the course of a year than those who drive, and are more likely to spend their money with local shops and businesses. It is therefore clear that encouraging walking and cycling to the centre will bring both economic as well as social and environmental benefits. Investigating and improving the walking and cycling routes, and bus services between these residential areas and the town centres should therefore be a priority for Banbury.



Survey Question: There are attractive alternative ways for me to travel into Banbury, so I don't have to travel by car?



Survey Question: There are attractive alternative ways for me to travel into Banbury, so I don't have to travel by car?

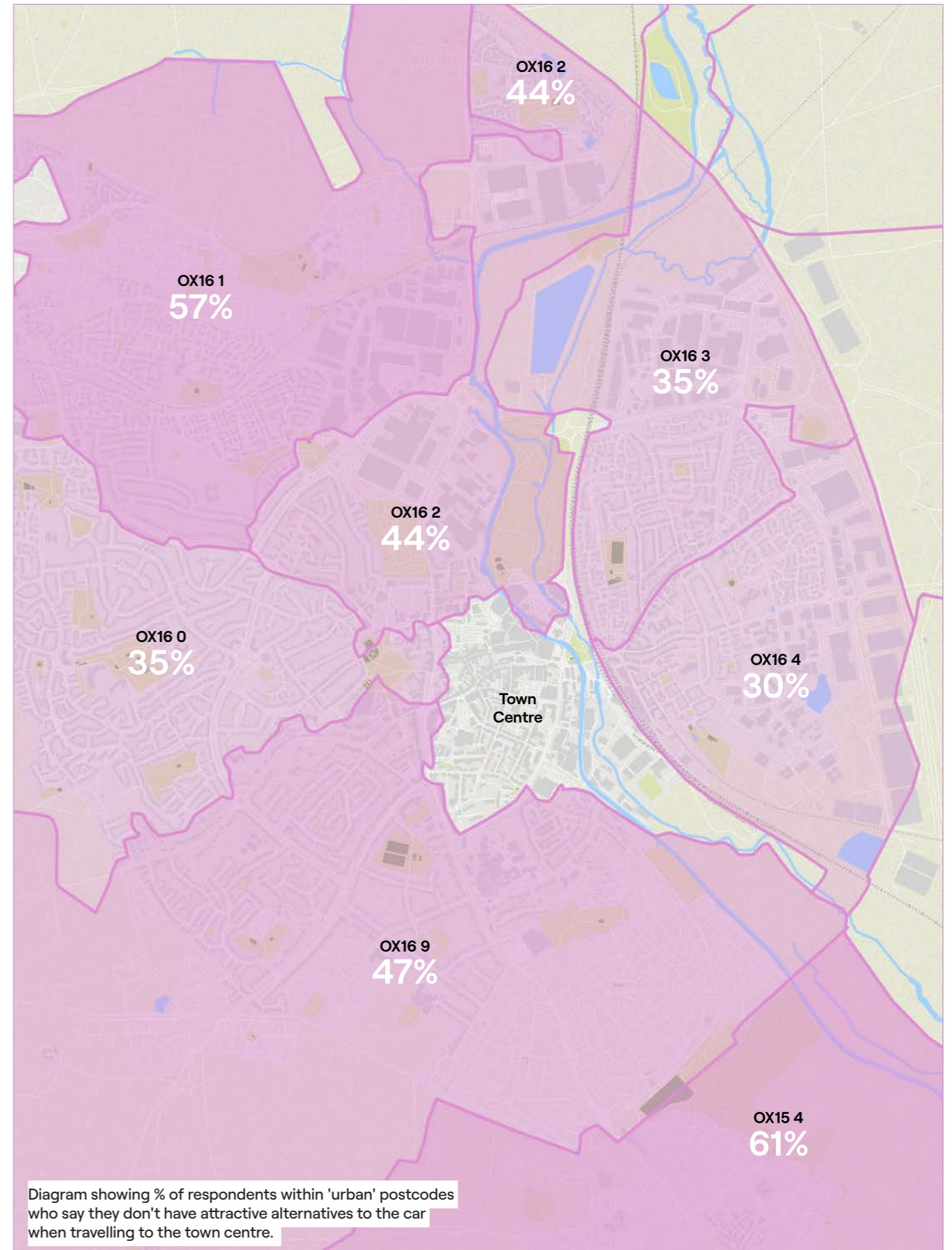


Diagram showing % of respondents within 'urban' postcodes who say they don't have attractive alternatives to the car when travelling to the town centre.



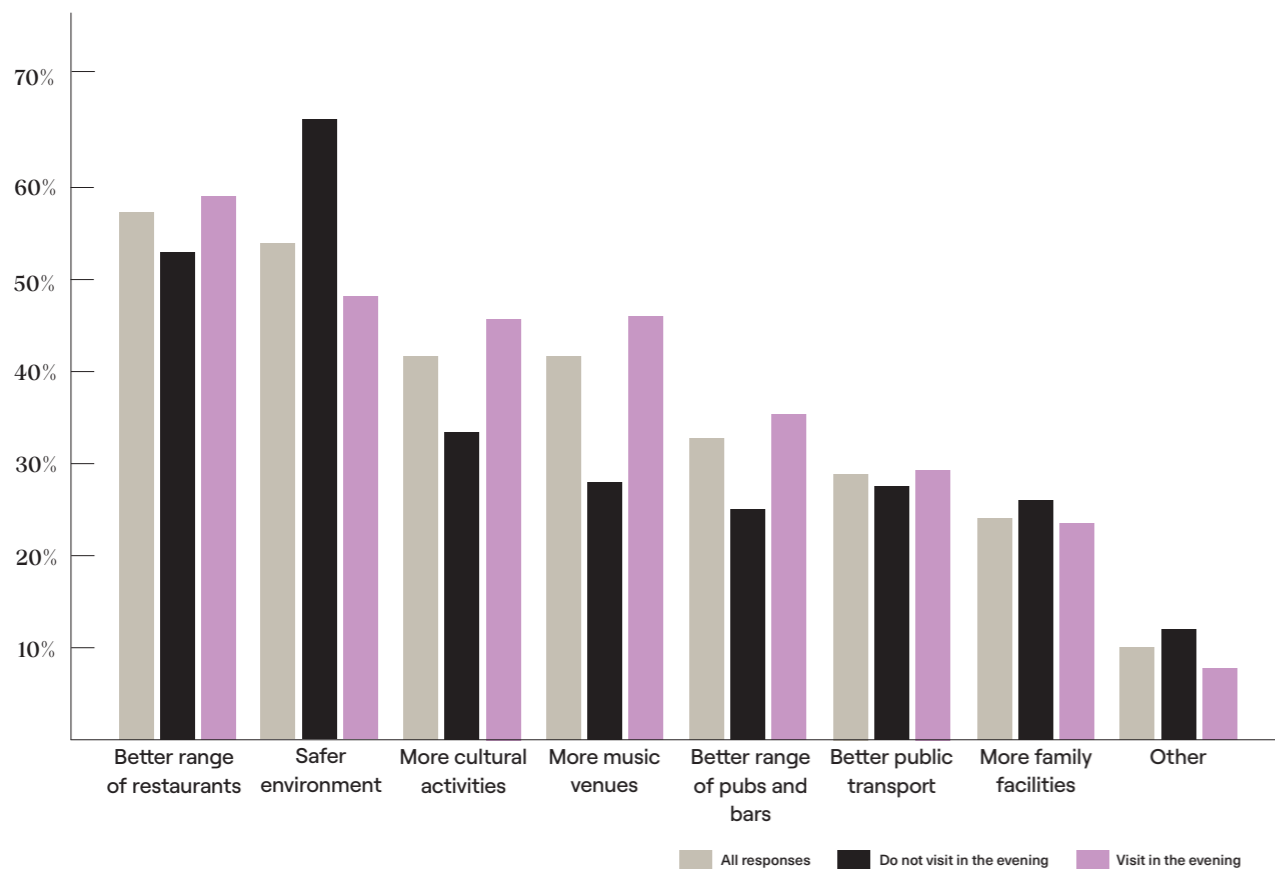
### Perceptions of Safety

A 'safe' town centre can mean a variety of different things to different people. It means creating a welcoming and inviting environment where everyone feels welcome. It means having well maintained and well cared for streets and spaces, which are well-lit, clean and litter free. It means addressing vehicle speeds and pollution so that pedestrians and cyclists do not feel in danger. It means having natural surveillance from windows in shops, offices and homes. And perhaps most of all it means having lots of people in the town centre, so that people don't feel isolated or vulnerable.

### Safety and the evening economy

The survey shows that many people are not visiting Banbury town centre because of perceptions regarding safety. When asked what would make them visit in the evening, the most frequent response was 'a safer environment'.

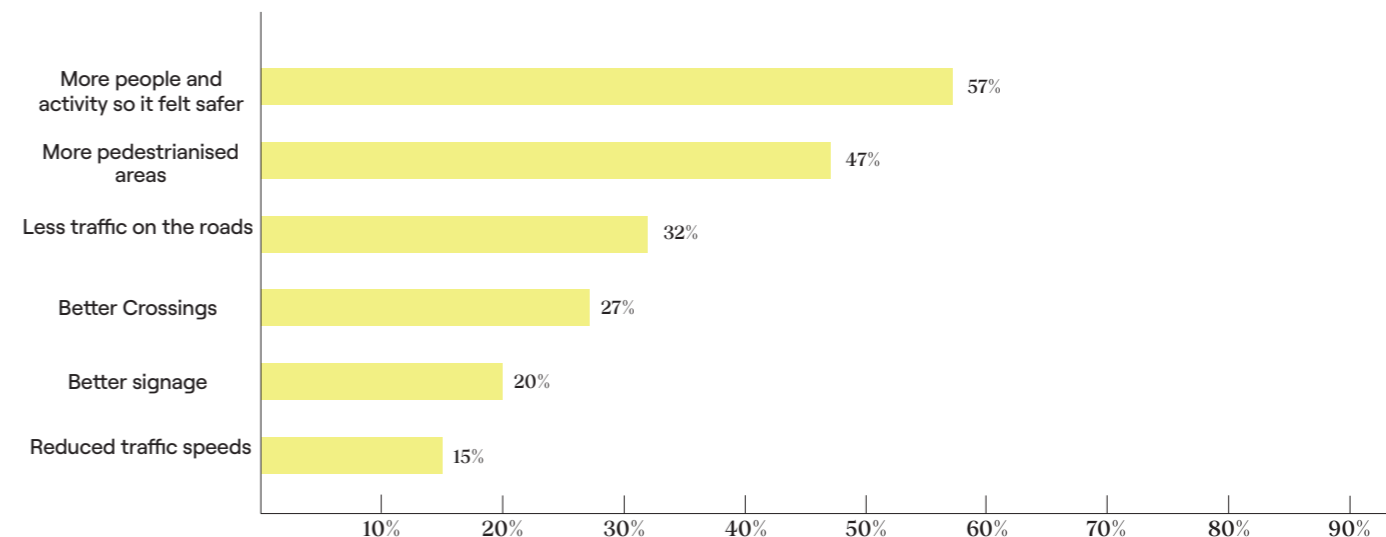
Perceptions of safety in the town centre was a common issue raised in the survey responses and in the workshops, even for people who visit the town centre regularly. Nearly half the people surveyed said they don't visit Banbury town centre in the evening and when asked what would encourage them to visit, the most frequent response was 'Safer environment'. This is therefore an area where short term action could have a significant impact on the number of people visiting the town centre.



Survey Question: What would encourage you to visit Banbury more often in the evening?

### Safety and use of the car

This was the most important issue for almost all demographics, although younger people (U25s) placed slightly more priority on having more pedestrianised areas and the priority issue for U15s was to have less traffic on the roads. This is potentially a 'vicious circle' where fewer people in the town centre exacerbates concerns about safety, meaning that even fewer people are comfortable walking, which in turn makes the town centre feel less safe.



Survey Question: What would make Banbury town centre better to walk around?

# Opportunity for Change

# 05

12 key opportunities for change have been identified from the survey response and workshops:

- Retail Parks,
- Shopping Local,
- Local Markets,
- Food & Drink,
- Culture,
- Events & Festivals,
- Young people,
- Heritage,
- Walkability,
- Bus & Rail,
- Parking,
- Local jobs.

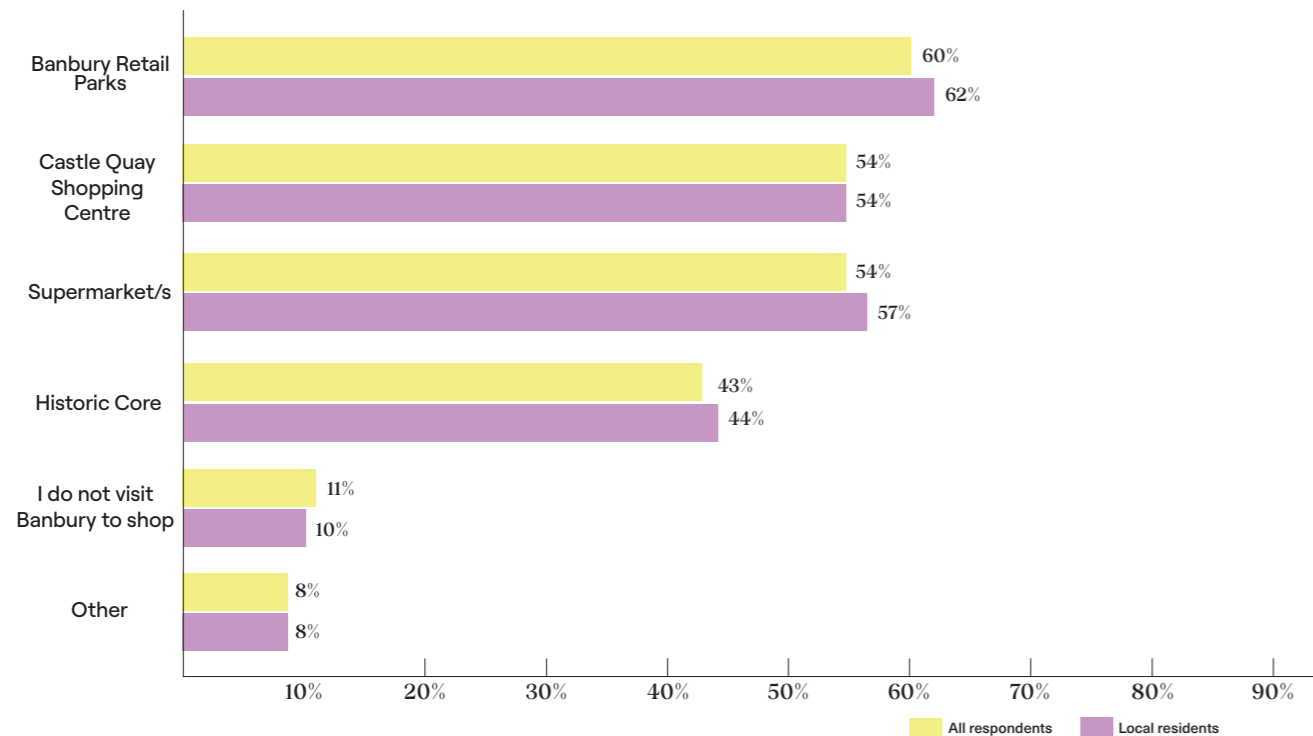


### Retail Parks

The survey makes it very clear that Banbury’s biggest shopping competitor is Gateway Retail Park. Around a third of local residents say they shop at the retail park but never in the town centre. The CACI market survey (pre-Castle Quay 2) also showed that Banbury’s retail parks take half of the available expenditure in Banbury’s core catchment area.

This is not a surprise to local traders. The 2021 retail study calculated that since 2012, expenditure on comparison (non-food) goods in Banbury as a whole had increased by approximately 10%. However, Banbury town centre turnover had halved, whilst the turnover of Gateway Retail Park had nearly tripled. Almost all the trade lost by town centre businesses in that period could therefore be attributed to stores on Gateway Retail Park.

This can however be seen as a significant opportunity for Banbury town centre. There is the potential to significantly increase trade in the town centre by appealing better to people who live within 2 miles of the town centre. Business workshops highlighted the need to ensure that visiting Banbury provides an ‘experience’ that cannot be found at a retail park or on-line. This opportunity should give confidence to the town that by addressing some of the issues highlighted in the survey there is significant potential to increase trade for local businesses.



Survey Question: If you visit Banbury to shop, where are you likely to go?

### Shopping Local

Shopping (non-food) remains the biggest single reason people aged over 35 visit Banbury town centre and it is still the second most important reason for those under 35. It must therefore remain a key part of any Vision to improve the vibrancy of the town centre.

The survey has highlighted that people are currently dissatisfied with the offer in Banbury town centre, but also identifies a variety of ways in which people can be attracted to visit more often.

The good news is that 96% of those not shopping in the town centre said they would be encouraged to do so if the town centre was improved. 72% of them said that more independent shops would encourage them to visit, and 80% of those already visiting Banbury town centre said that this would also encourage them to visit more often. 89% of respondents said that better markets would encourage them to visit Banbury more often, with the priority being a better variety of stalls and more local businesses represented. 28% want better vintage, second hand and charity shops, and 25% want more pop-up shops, showing the importance of ethical, independent, local businesses in attracting shoppers to the town centre.

This can be seen as a significant opportunity for Banbury town centre. There is the potential to significantly increase trade in the town centre by appealing better to people who live within 2 miles of the town centre through local and independent traders that can't be found at the retail parks.

The CACI market study highlighted that Banbury’s catchment has a large number of affluent residents, who are more likely to shop independent brands and have strong ethical values around supporting their local high street.

A critical element of any long-term Vision for Banbury town centre therefore needs to be a strategy to support and nurture independent businesses.

A key request from the business workshops was for greater support for local businesses, particularly in terms of websites and digital promotion. It can be difficult for individual retailers to have time to manage and update websites and social media pages, or to provide on-line retailing. A coordinated town-wide approach for Banbury local businesses can however help to address this, as well as promoting individual businesses as well as the town centre as a whole.



Precedent Case Study: Lower Marsh Street, Waterloo

Lower Marsh promotes itself a distinct street for independent business (retail, cafés, restaurants, bars and market/pop-up activity). Gateways and independent businesses are highlighted and promoted through the use of bespoke/branded outdoor furniture, planting, and signage.

#### ACTION PLAN:

- Strategy to support and ‘incubate’ local and independent businesses in Castle Quay.
- Digital strategy to promote local and independent businesses online.
- Consider independent business events.



## Local Markets

Markets are, obviously, a key part of the identity and purpose of a market town. The survey shows quite a strong level of dissatisfaction with the current weekly markets, with only 19% agreeing that Banbury has interesting markets and more than half the respondents not visiting the weekly markets (Thursday or Saturday) or the monthly farmers' market. More positively nearly 90% of people said that improvements to the market would encourage them to visit more often, with the main requests being for a better variety and quality of traders, and more local traders.

A strong market can help deliver many of the other priorities identified in the survey. A good local market provides variety and diversity, history, and character, encourages local entrepreneurs and builds a stronger sense of community. It provides an offer rooted in the local area, that is distinctly different from the generic retail park offer, but importantly must be different from the traders that can be found in other town centre markets in the area.

Markets provide affordable opportunities for new businesses to set up and grow, make it easier for young people and new traders to test out trading opportunities at relatively low risk. They offer environmental and health benefits by encouraging people to shop locally and providing relatively affordable fresh food produce.

A good market is an event - combining street food, community activities, participatory workshops and music and street performance, all elements that respondents said would bring them to Banbury and its markets more often and that help make a town centre 'fun' to visit.

### ACTION PLAN:

- Strategy for improving weekly markets, curating offer, and pop ups in Castle Quay



### Precedent Case Study: Holt Market

Holt Sunday Market is an curated outdoor monthly market which closes the Market Place on the first Sunday of the month to host 60+ regional makers, street food traders, communal dining and live music each month.

## Food & Drink

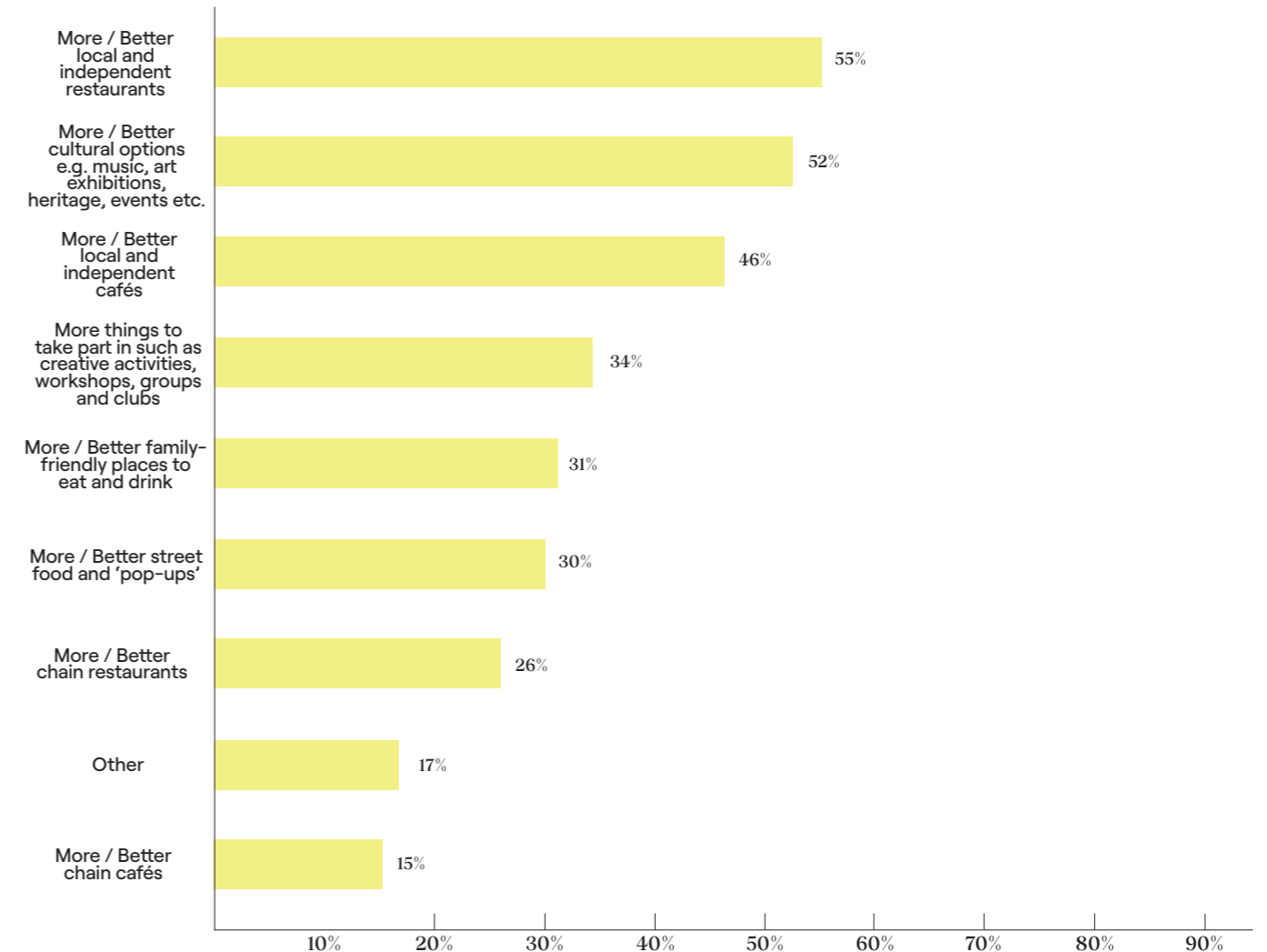
The satisfaction with Banbury's places to eat and drink is strongest amongst the younger age groups. For those U35, over 60% are happy with the range of places to eat and drink in the daytime, but satisfaction decreases for those over 45.

The biggest demand is for more local, independent cafés, bars, and restaurants and for more 'cultural' activity. Around half of all respondents say this would encourage them to visit the town centre more often, but this figure rises to around 70% for the older age groups which are currently least satisfied with the offer and are likely to have more disposable income. There is also a strong demand for more 'pop-ups' and for more creative community activities, with around a third of respondents saying this would encourage them to visit more often during the day.

It is also important to note that for those aged 15-19 and 35-44 (potentially the group more likely to be eating as a family) the biggest priority was for more chain restaurants and more family-friendly restaurants.

### ACTION PLAN:

- Strategy for improving street food offer in weekly markets. Opportunities for pop-up food vendors in Castle Quay.



Survey Question: What would encourage you to visit Banbury more often during the daytime?

### Culture

Culture is an important reason why people are coming to Banbury and has the potential to bring even more people into the town centre. Attending a cultural event (theatre, cinema, music) is the second biggest reason people visit Banbury town centre. Nearly half of all respondents said they visit for cultural reasons, with a quarter also saying they visit the town centre for cultural heritage reasons such as the Museum or Tooley's Boatyard.

The most popular venues are clustered along the canal. The strongest destination is, not surprisingly, The Light, given the range of attractions it contains, but the Mill Arts Centre and Banbury Museum are also key destinations. These places were ranked number 1 and 11 when people were asked to list their favourite places in Banbury town centre.

52% of respondents said that more/better cultural activities would encourage them to visit more in the daytime. 59% of respondents said more cultural activities would encourage them to visit more in the evening. When asked specifically what cultural or leisure activities would encourage people to visit Banbury more often the most frequent responses were more live music venues, bigger/better theatre productions (with an associated request for larger theatre venue) and more cultural events and festivals.



Survey Question: What new cultural or leisure facilities would encourage you to visit Banbury more often? (size of type relates to number of mentions).

### Events and Festivals

The most popular festivals are the Canal Festival, the Food & Drink Festival and the Christmas Market. Around half of all respondents said they enjoy visiting these three events, although they are most popular with those over 25 (although the Food & Drink Festival and Christmas Lights are popular with U15s).

Respondents aged 16-24 are significantly less likely to attend events in Banbury than other age groups. Around a quarter of all respondents do not visit any of the events but this increases to a third of those aged 16-24. This suggests the offer/content/programming may need reviewing to be of interest to this age group.

When asked what events they would like to see more of in the town centre, the most popular responses were music, food, family and multi-arts events. Music is a particular priority for those aged 16-24.



Survey Question: What type of events and festivals would encourage you to visit the town centre more often? (size of type relates to number of mentions).

#### ACTION PLAN:

- Promote the activation of vacant Castle Quay units with pop-up events, exhibitions, music, theatre, and performance.
- Encourage music as part of the weekly markets offer.



Precedent Case Study: Fore Sreet for All, Edmonton

Residents of Edmonton reported a distinct lack of community space, opportunities to develop skills and engage with culture, as well as a town centre which feels unsafe at night. Since 2021, Fore Street Living Room Library, following improvements including improving ability to host larger events that bring visible cultural animation onto the high street in the evenings, has brought to life with a wide-ranging calendar of events, programmed by community group Fore Street for All. Events include makers markets, lectures, readings and performance.



Precedent Case Study: Culture Club Basildon

Culture Club Basildon was an exciting and experimental programme launched by Basildon Council that aimed to celebrate culture, creativity and local talent whilst facilitating community engagement and cultural activity in Basildon town centre. Operating from a former betting shop, the Culture Club venue was transformed from an unloved vacant unit into an inspiring, safe space that supported a range of activity. This included live music, scratch theatre, comedy nights, workshops, film nights, and discussions. It also boasted a fully functioning bar that allowed us to facilitate evening activity, feeding into the town's night-time economy.



## Young people

16–25 year olds are less positive about living in Banbury than other age groups. Around half disagreed with the statement that Banbury is a good place to live, and only 10% of 16–19 year olds agreed with the statement (the rest being unsure). 16–25 year olds are also more likely to disagree with the statement that Banbury is a good place for families.

The way young people use the town centre is also slightly different. The main reason they visit the town centre is to meet friends and socialise. 70% of U25s say this is why they visit the town centre (compared to 44% for all respondents). As a result, the priority for young people is that the town centre provides space where they can socialise, meet their friends and feel comfortable spending time, often without necessarily having to spend money. Banbury, like all towns, needs to make young people feel safe, welcome and valued in their town centre. This is vital for building young people's long term affinity with the town and the town centre.

### ACTION PLAN:

- Promote pop-up events for young people within Castle Quay and at the market.
- Create dedicated social space/alcohol free bar for young people within Castle Quay.
- Encourage creation of Youth Panel or Youth Council.

Safer environment
Affordable homes
More Employment Opportunities

# Dedicated youth spaces to hang out and socialise in

Improved sports facilities
Improved public transport - particularly in the evening, and active travel options

Improved night-life including more live music events & venues
More affordable entertainment & cultural activities

Survey Question: What would make Banbury better for young people? (size of type relates to number of mentions)



**Precedent Case Study: Rising Green Youth Centre**

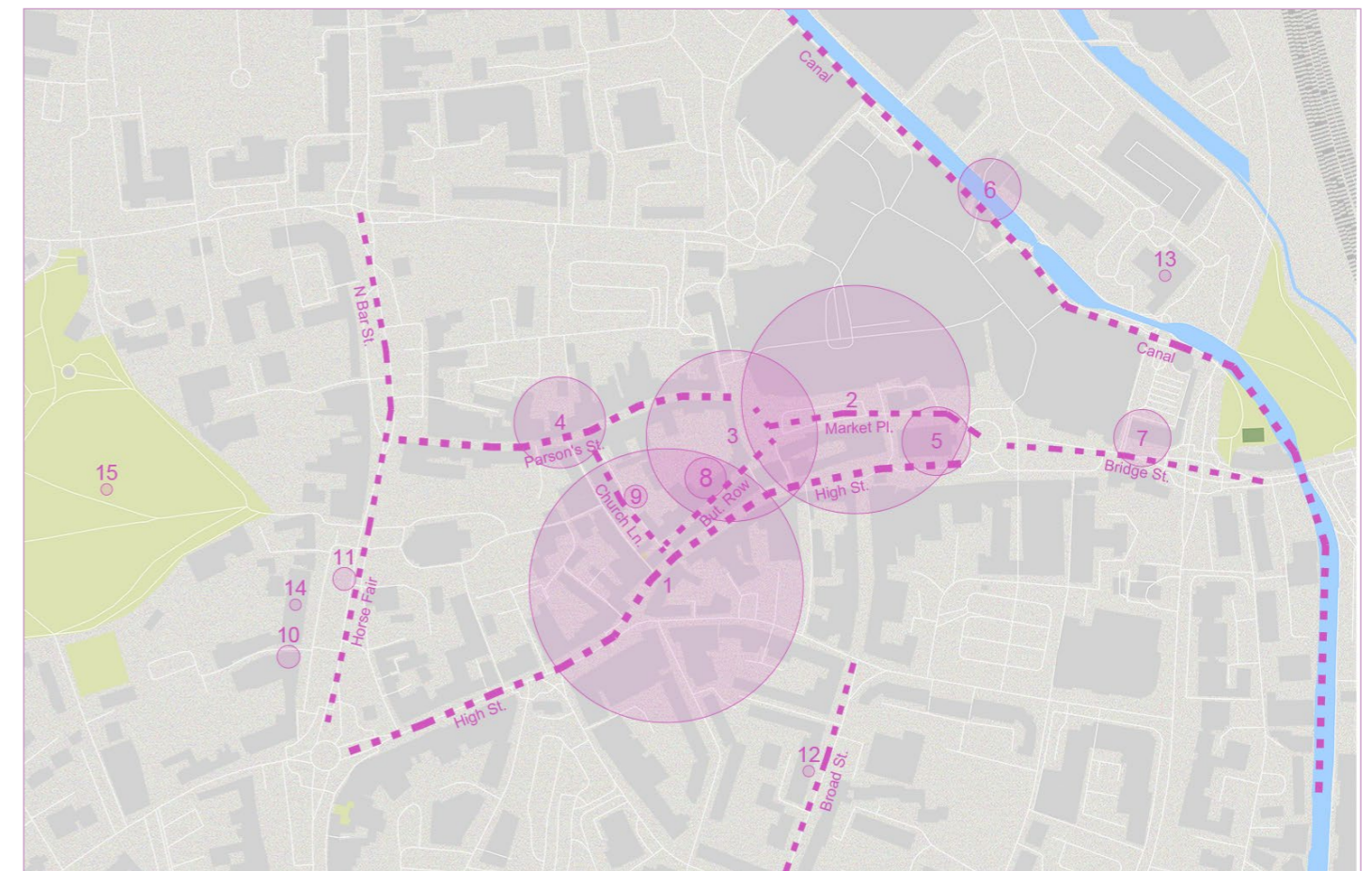
Rising Green is the conversion of a vacant retail unit into a youth centre in Wood Green, north London. The project came with a clear remit from Haringey Council to co-design and deliver the youth hub, named Rising Green, alongside local young people. Haringey Council led a series of co-design exercises with a local group, known as the Wood Green Young Voices, to help embed their ambitions within the design.

## Heritage

Heritage is a strong driver of tourism, but also of local pride, bringing social as well as economic benefits to town centres. It is particularly important to historic market towns.

67% of people disagreed with the statement that 'Banbury town centre makes the most of its historic streets and buildings'. The survey asked them to identify the key areas in need of improvement and the priority areas were considered to be the Old Town areas of Market Place and High Street with the most important building being Unicorn Inn. This shows that local people recognise and value the historic qualities of Banbury town centre, but that they do not believe it is fulfilling its potential.

The public focus for heritage improvements is clearly within the Old Town but there are also opportunities to improve the interpretation and setting of heritage attractions along the canal (including the canal itself). To make the most of Banbury's heritage potential the survey indicates a need to address the connections between these two areas and the barrier formed by the Castle Quay shopping centre.



Survey Question: Which areas or buildings do you feel need to be looked after better? (size of circle relates to number of mentions)

### Walkability

The survey results indicate that Banbury is a relatively 'walkable' town centre. It is reasonably compact and flat and has a variety of pedestrianised areas.

When asked what would make the town centre easier to walk around, the biggest issue is the lack of people (and activity) in the town centre, which creates a perception that it is unsafe. This is the priority issue for all age groups above the age of 25. Research shows that more people in a town centre (shopping, working or living) increases natural surveillance which makes people feel safer. Research also indicates that streets that are cleaner, better maintained and better lit improve perceptions of safety.

The second area of change was to reduce the impact of traffic, with 47% requesting more pedestrianised areas and 32% a more general request for 'less traffic on the roads'. These are the priority issues for respondents under the age of 25 (although activity and perceptions of safety were also important issues for this age group).

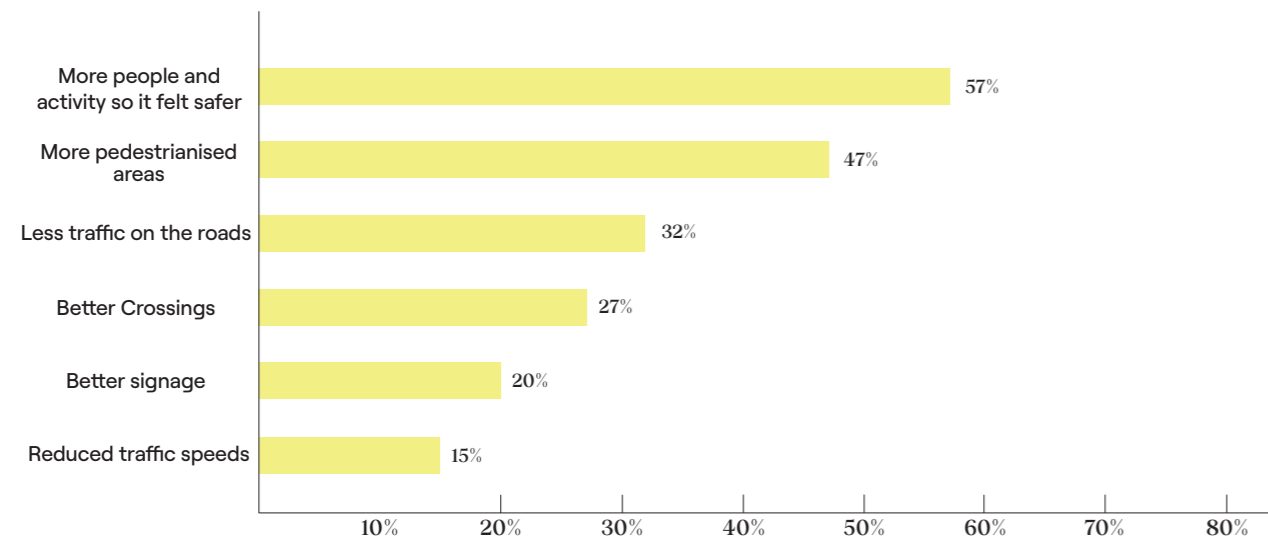
A further 15% requested reduced traffic speeds in the town centre. A common theme in workshops, and in comments received in the surveys, was frustration that streets that are supposedly pedestrianised still have high levels of traffic using them which makes them feel unsafe.

The final opportunity for change relates to wayfinding, improving signage and crossings so that it is more straightforward for people to navigate their way around the town centre.

It should also be noted that a fairly large percentage of those who drive to the town centre (21%) said that safer walking routes to the town centre would encourage them to leave their car at home. This would appear to present a significant opportunity to remove traffic from the town centre without impacting on town centre trade.

**ACTION PLAN:**

Review the residential areas where improved walking routes can help to reduce car use. Coordinate with the LCWIP to prioritise improvements to pedestrian routes into the town centre.



Survey Question: What would make Banbury town centre better to walk around?

### Bus and Rail

Only 5% of local residents and 7% of visitors stated that they currently use the bus to travel to the town centre. This does however vary quite significantly according to age, with the figures being between 10% and 20% for those aged under 25 or over 65.

However, almost half (49%) of all local residents who responded (regardless of mode of travel) stated that the main thing that would help them travel to the town centre would be more frequent bus services. This is over 1,000 people who responded to the survey saying better bus services are the most important thing that would improve their journey to work. 29% of residents (and 19% of visitors) said better bus information would improve their journey to the town centre, and 28% of residents (24% of visitors) said a nicer bus station would improve their journey.

This is reinforced by other survey findings. Of those who currently drive to the town centre, more than half (53%) said that more frequent bus services would encourage them to leave their car at home, and over a third said that cheaper bus and rail services would encourage them to do so. Given that more than half of local residents currently drive to the town centre, this indicates that around a quarter of the local population, who currently drive to Banbury town centre, could be persuaded to take the bus instead, if more frequent services were provided.

5% of visitors stated that they travel to Banbury town centre by train and 22% said that more frequent trains to the town centre would improve that journey. 38% of visitors (and 33% of residents) said a nicer walk from the rail station would improve their journey to the town centre.

**ACTION PLAN:**

- Review the survey findings along with the bus survey findings.
- Review the bus routes that serve the postcodes where significant numbers of people say improved bus services would encourage them to leave their car at home.



## Parking

Parking provision and pricing is always a contentious issue in any town centre, regardless of its size, location or function. Market towns, which serve a rural catchment where bus services are often patchy at best, need to find the right balance between retaining their accessibility and protecting their historic character.

The survey shows that the majority of people travelling to the town centre drive, and that 70% of those who do so said that they find it relatively easy to get to. When asked what would improve their journey the most frequent request from visitors was for more parking. However it is notable that 43% of visitors and 45% of residents stated that less traffic on the roads would improve their journey. There is therefore a potential contradiction here, as more parking to improve journeys would naturally lead to an increase in traffic which would make journeys worse.

There was concern expressed by some about proposals to reduce overall parking levels in the town centre without a clear strategy or rationale for how people will access the town centre in the future. If there is a desire to reduce large areas of surface-level parking in the town centre the 'narrative' for this needs to be clearly set out. This should include the benefits of alternative, activity generating uses on these sites, but also a strategy for how more people living close to the town centre can be encouraged to walk, cycle or use the bus. The surveys show that significant numbers of local residents who currently drive to the town centre would leave their cars at home if pedestrian routes, cycle routes and bus services were improved. As well as having environmental, economic and health benefits, this strategy would also free up road space and parking spaces for those who are reliant on the car to access the town centre.

The location of parking and the pedestrian connections to the town centre were a major issue in many of the workshops. There is concern that the linkages between the modern, multi-storey car parks and the historic 'old town' of Banbury are poor and unwelcoming. This is particularly important in the evening when routes through Castle Quay shopping centre are often closed and pedestrians have to walk around the shopping centre to access pubs and restaurants. Concern was also expressed by the Mill Arts Centre about the quality of pedestrian routes in the evening along the canal which do little to encourage visitors.

The survey responses, and the workshop discussions, also showed a desire from many people to remove the impact of parking in the historic core. Particular areas of concern were Market Place, Horsefair/The Cross and the impact of vehicular access on historic streets such as Parsons Street. It is important for Banbury to find a balance between the desire to maintain the accessibility of a market town and the desire to promote the historic qualities which make it a visitor destination.

### ACTION PLAN:

- Undertake a comprehensive parking survey and assessment of whether parking can be reduced in certain historic areas.
- Review public realm strategy recommendations for improving pedestrian connections between car parks and key destinations.

## Local Jobs

Independent national research consistently shows that one of the biggest factors impacting on the vibrancy of town and city centres is having large numbers of people working close to the shops, services, bars and restaurants that their expenditure can help support.

23% of survey responses were from people who work in Banbury, either working in the town centre, on the edge of the town centre, or working from home. Around half of these respondents stated that they travelled to the town centre from their place of work, reinforcing the benefit of employment opportunities close to the town centre.

The survey does however indicate opportunities to strengthen connections between the town centre and the larger employers in the surrounding business parks and industrial estates. Banbury is fortunate in having many large, high quality employers on the edge of the town centre. Research shows that proximity to a vibrant town centre makes it easier for such companies to recruit and retain staff, particularly younger graduates. Although the sample size is relatively small (111 respondents) the survey shows that only 23% feel that these edge or out of centre locations are attractive places to work. This compares to 49% saying the town centre is an attractive place to work. Consideration could therefore be given to working with these companies to understand if, and why, job satisfaction (in terms of location) appears to be low, and whether improving physical, social and economic connections with the town centre could be beneficial. Employers in similar locations in other towns often provide free electric bike hire, or run shuttle buses throughout the day, to make it as easy as possible for their employers to use the town centre.

Working in the town centre seems more popular, although 42% still disagree that it is a good place to work. Suggested improvements included more small office space, flexible space / co-working space and meeting space. There was a concern about the relative lack of job opportunities in the town centre, the cost of all-day parking and costs of establishing and running business premises in the town centre. It was also commented that the lack of places to eat, drink and socialise made it harder to recruit and retain staff.

41% of those working from home also said this was not currently a good working environment. Again this suggests an opportunity for flexible and co-working space in the town centre, for meeting spaces and potentially for alternative house-types which cater better for home-working.

### ACTION PLAN:

Review available space for small businesses and co-working within the town centre. Consider how to engage major employers more effectively in promoting the town centre offer and its events to their employees.

# Areas for Change

# 06

This chapter sets out how the opportunities for change identified in Chapter 5 can be considered as potential physical 'Areas of Change' within the town centre.

- Canal
- Old Town & Heritage
- Green Space
- Castle Quay
- Walking and Cycling



## The Canal

The top 5 favourite places identified in the survey responses all relate to the Canal. The Canal itself was identified in the survey as the most important 'green space' in the town centre. The Light and the Mill Arts Centre are the most popular leisure and cultural destinations, and the Canal Festival is the most popular town centre event. The Canal is also home to Banbury Museum, and Tooley's Boatyard, which was identified regularly as one of the most important yet under-appreciated heritage features of the town centre. It is clear therefore that the Canal area is at the centre of placemaking within the town and needs to be a major part of any successful Vision for Banbury town centre.

The public survey also highlights a number of issues and opportunities for improvement relating to the canal area, these include: a lack of public space, greenery and seating; lack of activity particularly along the blank edges of Castle Quay shopping centre; it feeling particularly unwelcoming at night - partially a result of the aforementioned lack of activity; and poor lighting and routes to the bus and rail station, car parks, and historic core.

Any Vision should provide more space for visitors to relax and enjoy the canal, the Museum and Tooley's Boatyard, as well as the cultural and leisure destinations in this area. It should also ensure that public routes along the canal are safe, well lit, and inviting in the evening, with activities and natural surveillance between car parks, the rail station, bus station and cultural/leisure destinations. Wayfinding to and promotion of the canal area should also be considered essential to a future strategy.



### ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:

The proposals and projects being developed by the Quays Consortium, Castle Quay Management and Cherwell District Council for the canal frontage area should be reviewed as well as the latest proposals for the Bus Station.

A coordinated strategy should be identified for the cultural spaces including improving space and setting around Banbury Museum and Tooley's Boatyard. A coordinated strategy should also be identified for the area comprising Mill Arts Centre, and adjacent public car parking, the rear of 'Debenhams' and the bus station. Opportunities should be identified to create lively frontages during the day and evening, with activity and overlooking of the canal and the bus station (if retained). Safer connecting routes should be created to nearby green spaces, particularly Spiceball Park, and to the rail station.



### Canal Improvements

-  Existing lively public realm
-  Opportunities to improve public realm

### Old Town

A clear priority for Banbury2050 Vision must be to promote the history and heritage of the Old Town to its full potential. In particular, any successful Vision must find a way to balance the need for accessibility by car with the importance of making the best possible use of its historic 'jewels'.

The Market Place is an attractive historic square. The workshops and public survey highlighted that a larger public space could provide the focus for improved markets and associated events, for cafés and restaurants or for a greener public space where people can rest, relax and socialise. A priority should be for Banbury to consider whether better use can be made of the surface car park, and whether the town can manage without the use of this area for short stay parking. This would provide opportunities to address concerns regarding the scale and quality of markets and cultural events, the availability of green and social space in the town centre. In the short-term it can provide an opportunity for independent street food vendors, and in the medium-term it should encourage more bars, cafés and restaurants to locate in the surrounding retail units. Cherwell District Council can also utilise its ownership of Castle Quay to promote an appropriate, and relevant mix of uses in the units that front onto Market Place.

The survey highlights that many of Banbury's most valued historic features are situated within the 'Old Town' network of streets. However it also highlights that many of the same buildings identified need to be looked after better, specifically those on the High Street and Market Place.

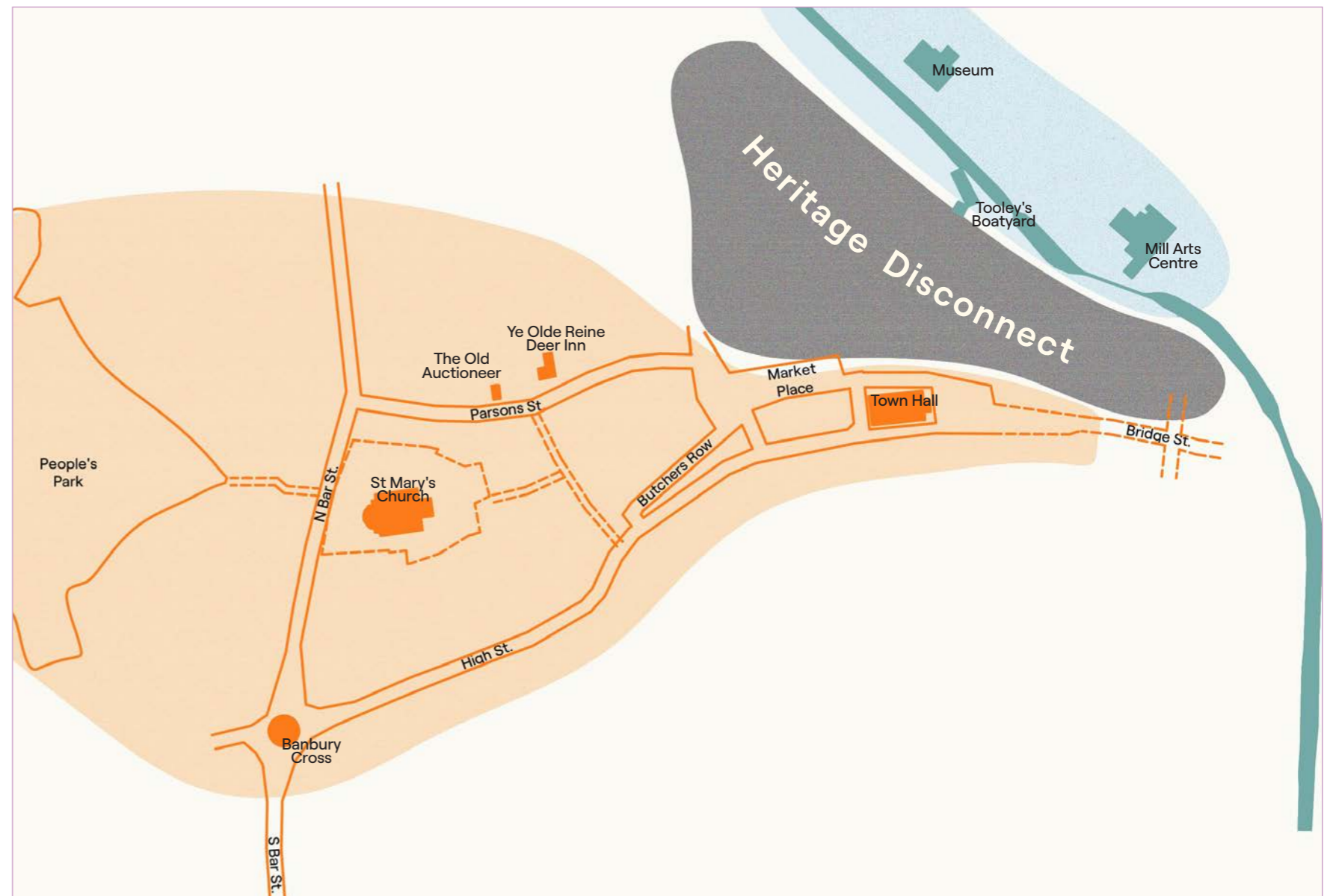
The public survey also identifies Banbury Cross and Horsefair amongst respondents' favourite heritage features yet the dominance of cars and infrastructure (notably railings) undermine the quality of these heritage assets.

The Vision should seek to promote Banbury's network of historic streets through public realm improvements; increased seating, trees and planting, informative wayfinding and interpretation, alongside the reinforcement of pedestrianisation, to create clear, safe and attractive routes through the town centre from Market Place via St Mary's Church to Horsefair and to People's Park.

Any future Vision or strategy may also want to consider the promotion of Banbury's heritage assets to enhance visitor experience, through the creation and promotion of heritage trails, connecting key heritage features and points of interest within the town. This might extend to interactive and digital promotion of assets.

#### Heritage Disconnect

- Old Town Heritage Focus
- Valued Areas/Places (Old Town)
- Areas for improvement
- Canalside Heritage Focus
- Valued Areas/Places (Canalside)







**Precedent Case Study: Connecting Colliers Wood**

Public realm improvements in Colliers Wood Town Centre create a sense of arrival and celebrate local identity through a series of interventions addressing routes to the high street and re-establishing the presence of River Wandle and Wandle Park. C

Charred timber cobbles reference the charcoal burning, while the iridescent tiles referenced the Art and Crafts heritage. The planting palette responds to the Arts and Crafts heritage of the site and the riverine environment of the River Wandle.



**Precedent Case Study: The Square, Wimborne**

Enhancements to The Square in Wimborne Minster have seen alterations to the traffic flow to create more pedestrian areas and an attractive 'centrepiece' for the town to host markets, events and cafe spill-out.

**ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:**

A priority should be to review parking provision and strategy across the town centre, to identify whether car parking can be removed from the key historic areas identified within this report and in the Banbury Public Realm strategy. Access and servicing arrangements to historic streets (such as Parsons Street) and enforcement of existing restrictions, should also be reviewed.

Opportunities for remodelling of the edge of Castle Quay shopping centre, and the 'curation' of occupiers should be considered to try and bring more life and activity into Market Place, particularly in the evening.

Consideration should be given to the highway infrastructure around Banbury Cross and Horsefair to identify potential improvements to the setting of historic buildings/structures and to the quality of the pedestrian environment.



### Green Spaces

Banbury’s green and blue spaces are well loved and well utilised. The survey reveals that The Canal, Spiceball and People’s Parks are amongst resident’s favourite places in Banbury and the most visited green places in the town centre. However, there are areas within the town centre where respondents have expressed a clear desire for improvement, this includes the network of streets and spaces within the historic core, with specific focus on Market Place, improved play facilities and amenities, and increased biodiversity at Spiceball park; and more seating, greenery and better maintenance along the Canal.

Any Vision should prioritise enhancing and connecting existing, and creating new green spaces within the town centre to support high-quality town centre experiences; creating opportunities for community activities, social interactions, recreational activities, and cultural events; providing a more attractive setting for retail, and dining experiences; providing health and well-being benefits for residents and visitors alike in connecting people with nature; and helping mitigate the impacts of climate change and extreme weather events.



Network of Green Spaces

#### ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:

The Public Realm strategy priorities greening of the ‘hotspots’ in Market Place and the historic core, to help provide shade and reduce heat island effects. A detailed design needs to be considered for Market Place and the surrounding area (as noted in the Old Town recommendations). This needs to incorporate not just planting but long term strategies for events and improving the markets.

Areas for planters and parklets should be considered within other streets to create stronger green connections between public spaces and attractive seating areas. The importance of St Mary’s Church as a green space (and heritage/ cultural attraction) needs to be recognised and promoted. Opportunities for green spaces and planting along the canal should be considered (see above) to improve connections between Spiceball Park and the town centre, and between Castle Quay and the rail station.

#### Precedent Case Study: Grey to Green, Sheffield

Grey to Green is an environmental and economic development strategy devised by Sheffield City Council that responds to a need to re-connect the Castlegate area, including the Law Courts and Victoria Quays, with the rest of the city centre. The scheme is the UK’s largest retro-fit SuDS project, and also the UK’s largest inner city ‘Green Street’. In addition to the SuDS the project aims to increase urban biodiversity and create a wildlife corridor, protect pedestrians from air pollution through multi-layered planting, promote health and wellbeing, and provide a stimulus and catalyst for further inward investment in the area.





## Castle Quay

Castle Quay has an important part to play in addressing many of the issues identified in the survey. It has the potential to address some of the concerns about the retail offer by supporting local and independent business start-ups.

Two key strengths identified for Banbury town centre are the canal corridor and the historic core. They are the areas most frequently mentioned when asked what makes Banbury a good place to live and what makes it a good place for families. They are home to many of Banbury's most popular leisure and recreation destinations, cultural venues and 'evening economy' attractions. They contain almost all of the heritage assets identified in the survey as important and they host Banbury's most popular events.

But the survey also highlighted the 'disconnect' between these two key areas. And that disconnect is created by the form, function, character and operation of the Castle Quay shopping centre.

The evening economy survey shows two key areas of activity. With Castle Quay shopping centre a blank space between them.

The Vision must also identify a way to create an interesting 'heritage' connection from the Canal to the Market Place. The plan shows that at the moment Castle Quay presents a disconnect between the heritage destinations along the canal and the historic core. This is even more problematic in the evening when the routes through Castle Quay can be closed to the public. The structure and management of Castle Quay's internal 'streets' can therefore play a big role in integrating the town centre.

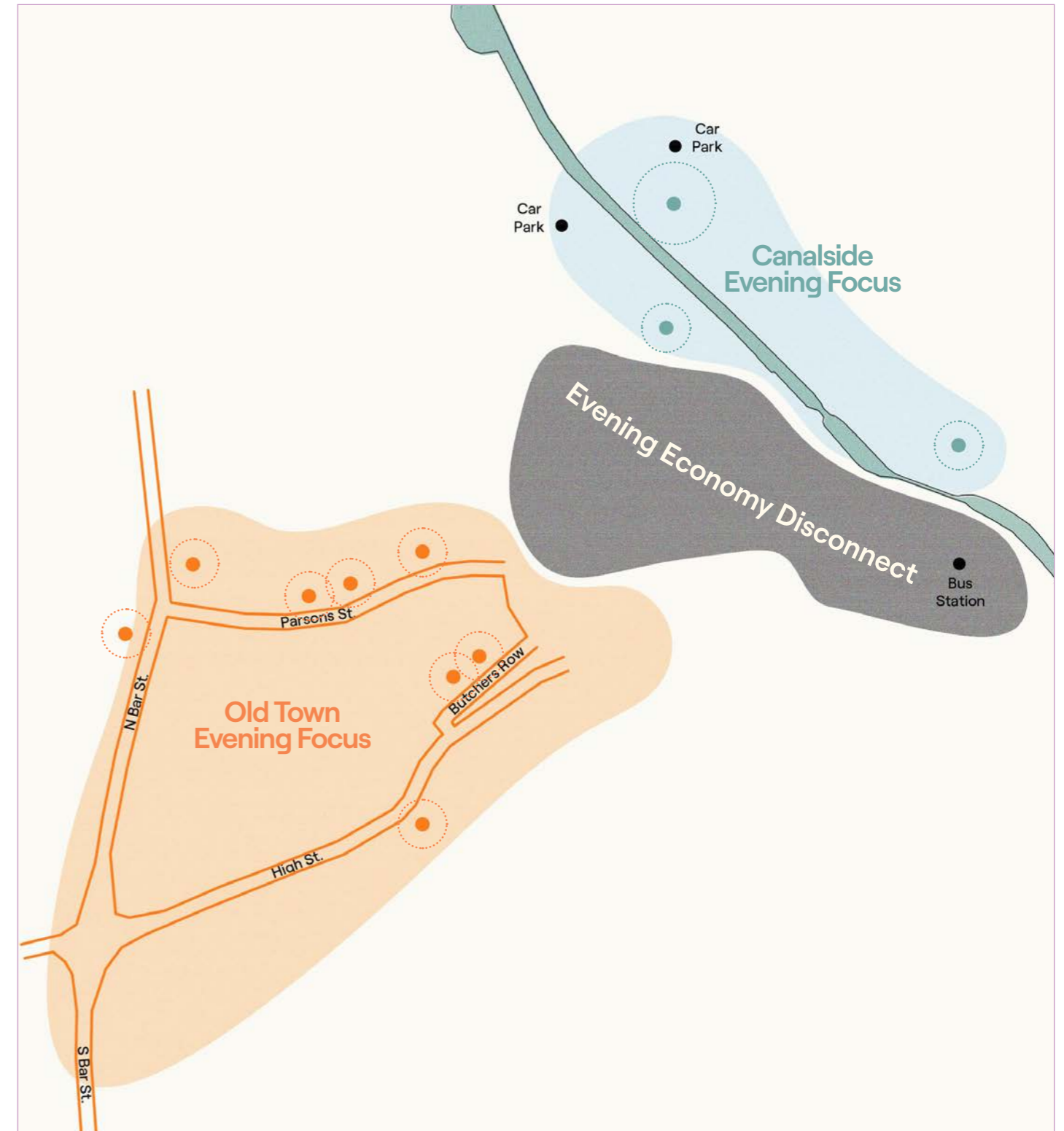
The quality of arrival at both the bus and rail stations is particularly poor. The bus station is an unattractive place to arrive and to spend time waiting for a bus. The Vision needs to consider how the bus station can be a more welcoming and livelier place to spend time, so that if people find their bus is delayed there are things to see and do without leaving the bus station.

### ACTION PLAN PRIORITIES:

An immediate priority must be to create more certainty as to the hours when pedestrian routes through Castle Quay are open in the evening. These routes should feel safe and secure and ideally there should be some activity along them during evening opening hours. When they cannot be kept open efforts should be made (as noted in the Public Realm Strategy) to improve the sense of security for routes around the edges of Castle Quay.

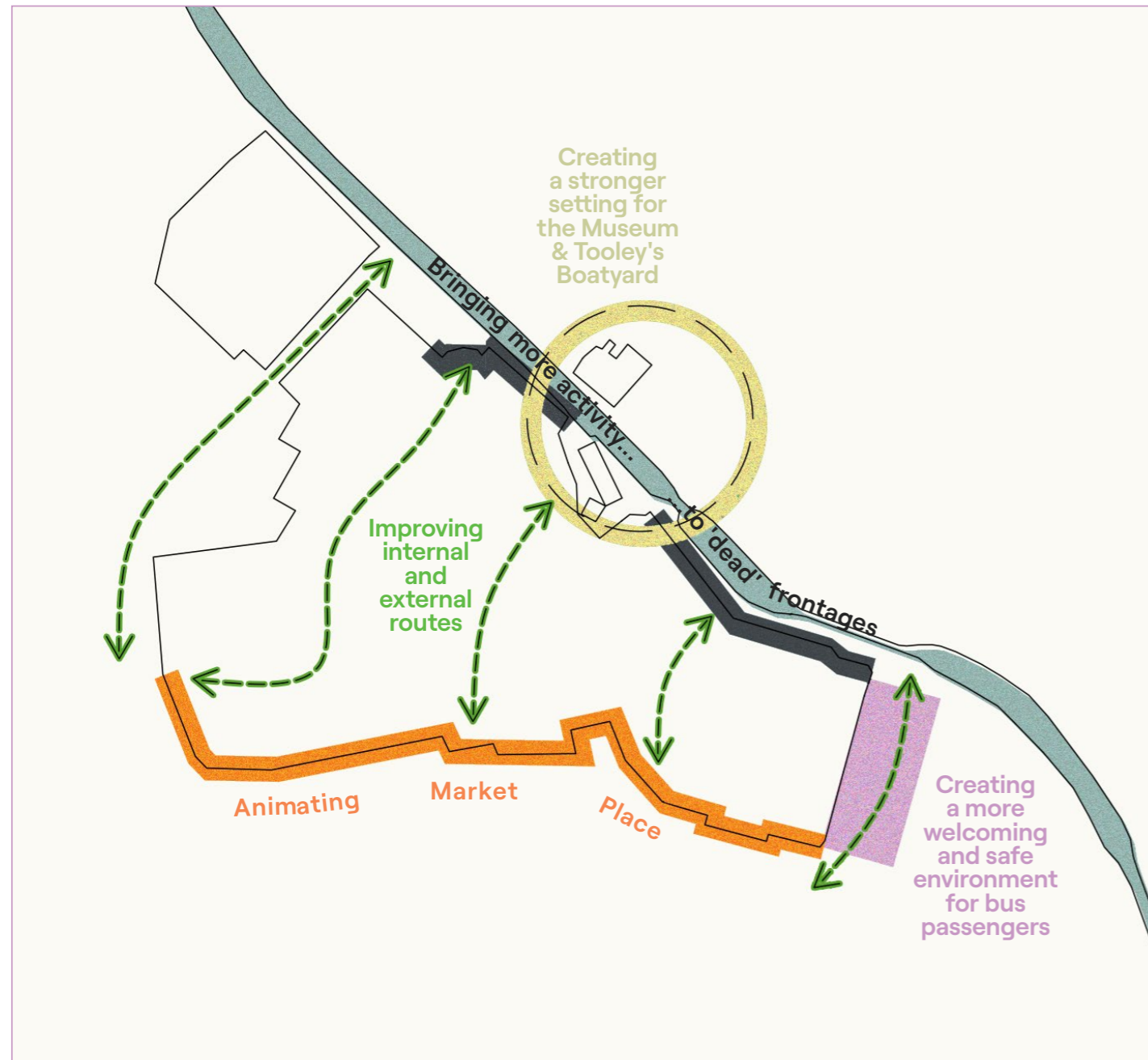
Consideration is being given to the curation and incubation of small businesses within Castle Quay. This should be coordinated with the BID to identify wider potential to promote small and independent businesses across the town centre (for example with promotion, marketing and internet orders). This should be coordinated with proposals to improve town centre markets.

Consideration should be given to improving the external appearance (and potential remodelling) of Castle Quay, to create more space along the canal and to bring more life and activity to the canal and to Market Place.



### Evening Economy Disconnect

- Old Town Evening Economy Focus
- Canalside Evening Economy Focus
- Transport nodes



Castle Quay Improvements



Precedent Case Study: Culture Palace, Enfield

Culture Palace was a 300sqm pop-up creative hub housing a performance space, satellite museum, bookshop, café and screening room utilising vacant retail space within Enfield Palace Gardens shopping centre.



Precedent Case Study: The Sovereign, Weston-super-Mare

In Weston-super-Mare, The Sovereign shopping centre, have transformed two vacant retail units into 30 mixed size studio spaces, meeting rooms and co-working workspace for local entrepreneurs, start-ups and small businesses.



Precedent Case Study: Kingland & Dolphin, Poole

In 2021 shopping centre landlord Legal & General launched a scheme to revive a row of 10 shops providing local independent businesses space free of rent and business rates for two years. Three years on six of the original remain, and those that have moved on have been replaced by new independent and start-up businesses. Following the launch footfall on the street saw a 16% increase and Kingland is also helping increase visits to the neighbouring Dolphin shopping centre which has also seen new services and initiatives including NHS, market stores for microtraders and event spaces used by artists to fitness instructors. Whilst a former job-centre linked to the shopping centre, has been converted into Foundry, a sleek co-working space with desk space, offices and studios.



Precedent Case Study: Makespace Oxford

Makespace Oxford, transforms underused space in Oxford city centre into affordable and accessible workspaces, retail spaces, offices, studios, shared community hubs and more. Makespace Oxford is part of the 'Meanwhile in Oxfordshire' programme, a county-wide initiative seeking to reanimate underused space across Oxfordshire, developed by Oxford City Council, with funding secured by OxLEP from the central government's Getting Building Fund.



## This section requires discussion with OCC

### Cycling and Walking

A priority action should be to improve walking and cycling routes into and around the town centre. These opportunities should be developed through the Banbury Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

#### Pedestrian routes

The LCWIP proposes a series of improvements to pedestrian routes in Banbury. The Core Walking Zone considers areas within 400m of important destinations within the town centre and a series of radial walking routes that link residential areas to the town centre. The proposals seek to address issues along these routes which discourage walking, such as high traffic speeds, long waits at junction crossings, crossing safety, street clutter, narrow pavements, and parking on pavements.

Improving the following eight routes (identified in the first phase of the LCWIP) would address issues raised by the survey, and help meet opportunities identified in the Vision to increase walking and reduce car journeys in the town centre:

- Route 1 – Market Place to Daventry Road.
- Route 2 – Market Place to Bankside.
- Route 3 – Market Place to Horton View
- Route 4 – Market Place to Easington Road
- Route 5 – Market Place to Queensway
- Route 6 – Market Place to Woodgreen Avenue
- Route 7 – Market Place to Orchard Way
- Route 8 – Market Place to Hennef Way

(see LCWIP p113)

Route 1 would improve connections to postcode OX16 3&4 where 38% and 50% of people said that better walking routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Routes 2, 3 and 4 would improve connections to postcode OX16 9 where 24% of people said that better walking routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Routes 5, 6 and 7 would improve connections to postcode OX16 0 where 27% of people said that better walking routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Routes 7 and 8 would improve connections to postcode OX16 2 where 40% of people said that better walking routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

#### Cycle routes

The LCWIP also highlights a number of routes for cycling improvements, including reduced traffic speeds, segregated routes or lanes, improved junction crossings and modal filters. Improving the following routes would address issues and opportunities raised by the survey, and help meet opportunities identified in the Vision to increase cycling and reduce car journeys in the town centre:

Route 1: A361 North Bar Street/South Bar from Castle Street to St John's Road

The LCWIP states that this is a key north-south route on the western edge of the town centre and there is enough highway and public realm space to enable high quality provision for cyclists and pedestrians without any impact on parking. Reducing the impact of vehicles would support Vision objectives to enhance the historic character of these streets.

## This section requires discussion with OCC

Route 2: A361 Bloxham Road From Parsons Piece to South Bar Street

The LCWIP states that this is an important route for people cycling into the town from the south and for children accessing schools in the area. It is also a route used by inter-urban bus services and therefore the impacts of cycling and walking improvements on bus services will need careful consideration. This would improve connections to OX16 9 where 18% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 4: A422/ B4100 Warwick Road from its junction with Highlands to Castle Street

The LCWIP states that this busy radial route is a key corridor for walking and cycling as it connects schools, shops, businesses and a number of residential areas. This would improve connections to OX16 0 where 28% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 5: A361/ A423 Southam Road

Southam Road provides the north-south radial route into Banbury and the LCWIP states that this will be a key connecting route for walking and cycling as it connects residential areas, schools, retail, businesses and community facilities. This would improve connections to OX16 2 where 13% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 6: B4035 Broughton Road from Queensway to High Street/ A361 North Bar Street/ South Bar Street

Broughton Road is another radial route into Banbury, with lower traffic volumes than other routes. The LCWIP states that this route would provide connection between the college, residential areas, leisure facilities, schools and businesses. This would improve connections to OX16 9 and 0 where 28% and 18% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 10: Overthorpe Road to Town Centre (from Nethercote) via Causeway and Bridge Street

The LCWIP states that this radial route into the town centre will provide an important connection between the industrial and retail/ shopping areas and housing areas in Grimsbury and beyond. This would improve connections to OX16 4 where 30% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 13: Railway Station to Bodicote via Bankside and White Post Road

This north-south route would connect residential areas with schools, businesses, community facilities and leisure locations, as well as the station. This would improve connections to OX16 9 where 18% said that better cycle routes would encourage them to leave their cars at home.

Route 14: Wildmere Industrial Estate to Bridge Street via Spiceball Park

This route connects the town centre, leisure facilities, green space and the Wildmere Industrial Estate, and links with the existing routes on the northern side of Hennef Way which provide access to the Banbury Cross and Banbury Gateway Retail Parks. The route includes the new cycle path along the River Cherwell between Spiceball Park and the car park by The Mill.

Route 18: Canal Towpath from M40 north of Wildmere Industrial Estate to M40 east of Longford Park

Oxford Canal runs north-south through the town and links residential areas including those at Bankside/ Longford Park with the business and retail parks on Southam Road, the station and the town centre. The canal also provides a key route for leisure travel.

# Next Steps

# 07

This has been the largest engagement process undertaken for Banbury town centre. It has established a clear desire for change. From the survey results, this report has identified a set of priorities and opportunities which can help drive short-term change. It has identified an emerging set of values and objectives which can help steer long-term change. It has created interest and momentum for change which needs to be maintained.

It is important to remember however that this report does not set out to provide a Vision or a Masterplan for Banbury Town Centre. It provides an analysis of the findings and implications from the major community engagement events undertaken in 2023/2024 and represents the start of an on-going process of bringing local residents, businesses, politicians and key stakeholders in Banbury together to deliver comprehensive and coordinated change in their town centre.

The priority next steps for the next 12 months are therefore considered to be:

1. Publish this report and provide feedback to survey respondents
2. Refining the core 'values' of Banbury.
3. Developing an overarching Vision/Strategy/Masterplan for Banbury town centre.
4. Developing a short-term action plan to demonstrate commitment to change.
5. Identifying an organisational structure to manage and coordinate delivery of this change.

It is important to note that these are not necessarily sequential steps, and that these actions will be more effective if undertaken in parallel.



## 1. Report 'Launch'

The most important thing following any major engagement exercise is to provide feedback to those who spent time and effort providing their input. Providing quick feedback to those who completed the survey, and took part in workshops, makes them more likely to support the next stages of engagement and to view the process positively. Conversely, delaying this feedback creates not just uncertainty but a sense that the time spent was not valued by the Council, and that their views will not be taken into account. This in turn reduces subsequent engagement levels.

It is recommended that consideration be given to publishing this report as soon as possible after the May local elections. Any 'launch' needs to be accompanied by a clear media strategy, identifying the key messages from the report, and the next steps being taken to address those messages. Importantly it should identify how and when people will be invited to participate next in developing the proposals for the town centre.

## 2. Core 'values' of Banbury

The emerging values identified within this report have come from the '3 words' that survey respondents provided to describe the town they would like Banbury to be by 2050. The most frequently used words indicate that people want their town centre to be a Vibrant, Safe, Clean, Green, Fun, Independent Destination.

These values do however need to be refined in partnership with the resident and business community. These values will steer the future development of Banbury for the next 25 years and should form the basis of any wider Vision or Branding for the town centre. It is essential therefore that they are tested to ensure there is an in-depth understanding of what people mean when they use these words, and to ensure that these are the right choice of words to steer long term change in Banbury.

## 3. An overarching Vision/Strategy/ Masterplan

Banbury will need a document to help steer future change in the town centre. This can be a 'Vision' document, a 'Spatial Strategy' or 'Masterplan' but the more site-specific and detailed this document is, the longer it will take to prepare, and the shorter its 'shelf-life' will inevitably be. It is recommended therefore that consideration be given to preparation of a Town Centre 'Vision' document which will incorporate the Values identified in Step 1, create a strong community-led 'identity' for Banbury which will steer all future proposals.

This Vision document needs to bring together the results and recommendations from this report, but also the work undertaken in other areas, such as the cultural strategy being prepared by the Quays Consortium, the Public Realm Strategy which has been on-going whilst this engagement has taken place, the work on Castle Quay and potential new occupiers for key units, the LCWIP and the transport work on the bus and rail stations.

#### 4. Short Term Action Plan

Although this is a 2050 Vision, it has been emphasised throughout that the engagement will help identify early projects for delivery. This is essential to help show commitment to delivering the change that the survey has shown is desired and needed. It is particularly important to show early action in addressing elements that the public have identified as important and which they may feel are relatively easy to address. This could include maintenance of existing street furniture, cleanliness of streets, enforcement of existing traffic restrictions and perceptions of safety.

The starting point for the Action Plan should be the five 'opportunity areas' identified within this report, The Canal, The Old Town, Castle Quay, Green Infrastructure and Walking/Cycling Infrastructure. As noted above, the Action Plan should coordinate the project development work being undertaken by the Quays Consortium, LCWIP, Castle Quay, Banbury BID and others.

The Action Plan should be developed alongside the Core Values identified in Step 2 and in parallel with any overarching Vision in Step 3. It should not have to wait for the completion of this exercises before projects are announced, but it should ensure that all projects are tested against the emerging Vision Values to demonstrate how they will contribute to delivering the Banbury town centre that people have said they wish to see by 2050.

#### 5. Cultural and Events Strategy

There is a lot of good work being undertaken to promote cultural and other events in Banbury. It is important that the Town Council, Quays Consortium, BID, Castle Quay Management and others work together to coordinate the range of events and activities being promoted in the town centre. It is also important to ensure that future events and activities reinforce the emerging 'Vision Values' for Banbury and the findings of the cultural survey will help to refine this strategy. Working with operators and stall-holders can also help make the weekly markets more of an 'event' in the town centre. Engagement with young people should help to create a programme of events which appeals to this, relatively neglected, demographic.

The creation of a coordinated events programme should be considered as part of the public realm strategy and any proposals to create new public space along the canal, or additional public space within Market Place. A complementary programme of meanwhile uses should also be supported across the town centre to animate vacant units and any areas of the town centre which would benefit from increased footfall and natural surveillance.

#### 6. Organisational Structure

Although this engagement process has been led by Cherwell District Council it has brought together a number of different organisations and individuals through the workshops and wider activities. This helps create a sense of 'ownership' of the outcome, and creates a better outcome by ensuring that local knowledge and skills inform the report. It also creates more opportunities for interaction between organisations and businesses within the town.

It is recommended therefore that consideration be given to an organisational delivery structure which continues to involve these organisations. This would include the three tiers of government County, District and Town Councils. It should of course include key individuals from the District Council and private sector involved in managing Castle Quay, as well as representatives from the Quay Consortium, Chamber of Commerce and Banbury BID. It should include representatives of community organisations, heritage organisations and key employers such as the Hospital and Banbury College. And it needs to find a way to build on the interest shown in the Schools Workshop and involve young people and students in shaping the future of Banbury.



# Banbury Vision 2050

Thank you!

# DRAFT