



Horley High Street and subway engagement, spring 2022

Background and aim

To support Reigate & Banstead Borough Council's project, delivering change in Horley town centre, the council wanted to understand the views of Horley's residents, visitors and businesses on proposed ideas and early design principles for public realm improvements in the High Street. The council also wanted to hear about people's views on and experiences of the nearby subway in relation to safety and ease of use.

The aim of this engagement was to test the council's ideas with local people with a view to developing the design in line with local preferences.

How we engaged

We provided information on the council's website and in Horley Library about the project, the issues the council believes could be overcome to improve the High Street and the design principles the council would like to adopt to address these.

RBBC also held two market stall events in the town centre, delivered fliers and posters to businesses on the High Street, spoke to food club users and volunteers at the community centre, and worked with colleagues at Surrey County Council to meet with young people at the YMCA.

We ran a survey (online with paper copies available on request) promoted through local media, social media, at events, posters and through partner organisations to ask people about the proposed design principles, their visits to the town centre and their use of the subway.

Alongside the survey, we received a small amount of correspondence, including a submission from Horley Town Council. The council also monitored related social media such as through Facebook groups and Twitter.

This activity followed previous engagement with town councillors and businesses forming Horley Town Management Group. Officers also met with representatives of the Horley Pavement Audit Committee.

The survey was open from 21 February to 14 March 2022. This report discusses the results of the survey.

Key findings

1. Participants generally support the six principles with all but Principle 4 (safer routes for cycling) being fully or largely supported by more than 50 percent of participants.
2. However, for each of the principles there was a notable proportion of people with reservations. For example, 18.9 percent saying they did not support principle 6 (signage) and 24.1 percent of participants saying they did not support principle 1 (providing wider pavements).
3. Principle 5 (provide street planting and trees) received the most support with 78.3 percent of participants saying they fully or largely supported this.
4. Principle 4 (provide safer cycle routes) received the least support with 48.6 percent saying they fully or largely support this.
5. Across the principles, people raised concerns around parking, congestion, pedestrian safety (from cyclists and drivers), access for disabled people, vandalism and meaningful improvements relating to the environment (wildlife, biodiversity etc).
6. The subway is well used by local people, and therefore an important link to other parts of the town but there is a high level of awareness of the maintenance issues listed in the survey and many perceive the subway to be, or feel, unsafe.
7. Examples of reasons for feeling unsafe include risk of injury from cyclists not dismounting and perceived risk of crime resulting from environmental crime (e.g., graffiti indicating anti-social behaviour), not being seen by others, lack of surveillance and poor lighting.
8. Some issues appear to result in people avoiding using it and this may affect women and older people disproportionately.

Participation

We received 378 responses to the survey. Of these, 292 said their main link with the town was that they lived in Horley.

This table shows the age profile of participants and the age profile of the borough's adult population¹. Ages 25 to 74 are well represented among participants, but we struggled to hear from younger adults, particularly under 24s and the oldest age group of over 85s.

Table 1: Age profile of survey participants compared to local adult population

Age	Number of participants	% of participants	% of this age group in the borough
18 to 24	7	1.9	8.1
25 to 34	47	12.4	15
35 to 44	95	25.1	19
45 to 54	78	20.6	19.2
55 to 64	69	18.3	15.3
65 to 74	54	14.3	12.3
75 to 84	22	5.8	7.3
85+	1	0.3	3.8
Prefer not to say	5	1.3	Not applicable
Total	378	100	100

¹ Note first, that survey participants mainly said that they lived in Horley but some may have lived outside of the borough, and second, the age profile of Horley may vary from the age profile of the borough. This age comparison is therefore a guide to how the profile of participants compares to the local population.

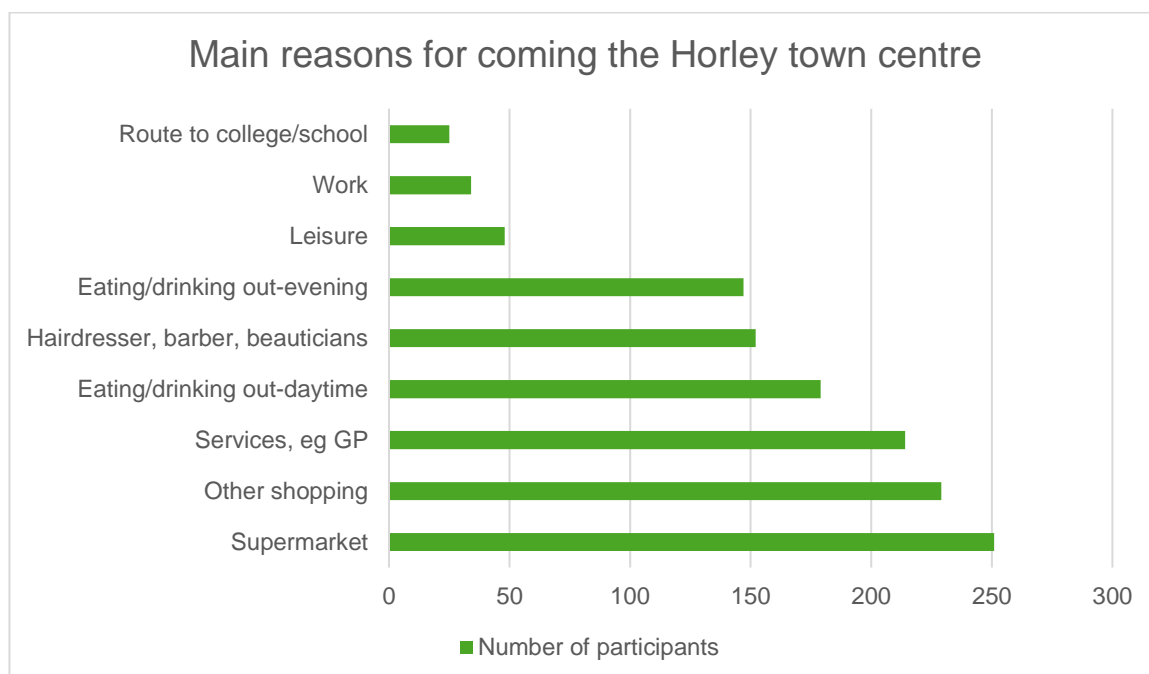
Of those who gave their gender, 144 said they were male (38.4 percent) and 225 (60 percent) were female. Nobody identified as gender neutral and 6 people preferred not to say. A further 3 people did not answer the question.

Around 50 people responded on paper surveys. The remaining majority took part online.

Results

Using a supermarket, doing other shopping and using services such as the GP were participants' main reasons for coming to the town centre.

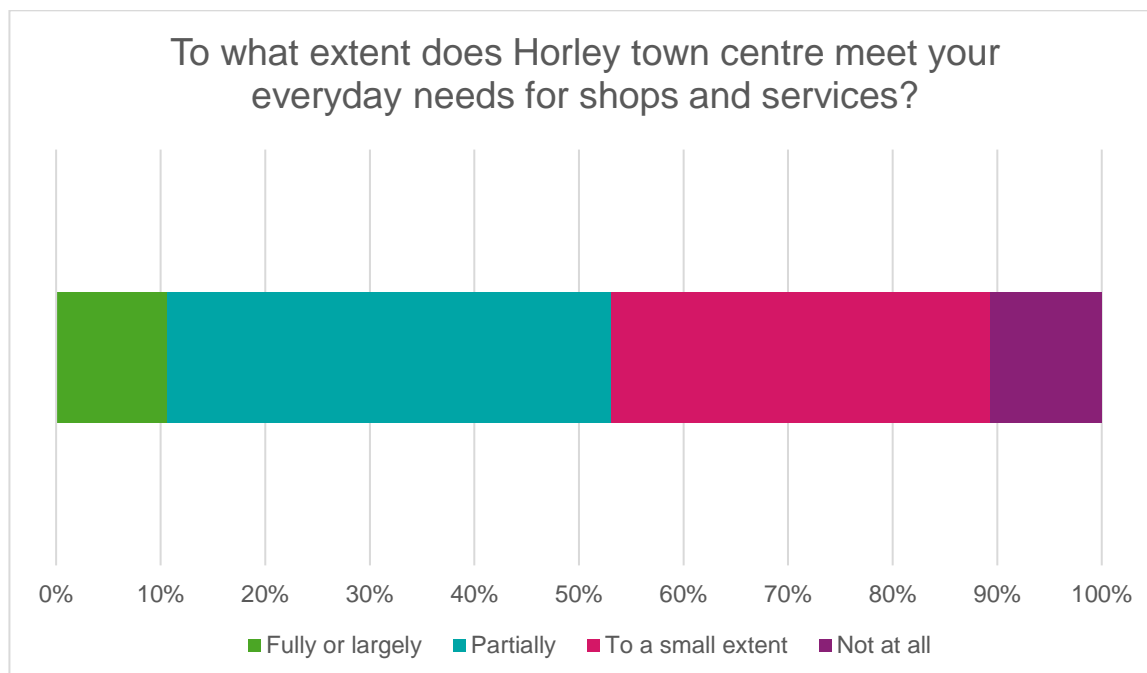
Table 2: Main reasons for coming to Horley town centre.



We asked participants how they travelled to Horley town centre, with the option to choose up to two answers. Nearly all participants came by car (259), by walking (267) or a combination of both. 33 (8.8 percent) said they cycled and 23 came by bus (6.1 percent). Fewer than 10 said they came by train, taxi or motorbike. The low number of participants arriving by train is in line with survey participants being mainly from Horley.

The survey asked participants to what extent the town centre met their needs. The largest group, 42.4 percent (159 people) said it partially met their needs. 10.7 percent (40 people) said it did not meet their needs at all.

Table 3: Extent to which Horley town centre meets participants' needs.



The council asked participants to what extent they supported each of the proposed principles to shape the new design for the High Street.

The table below shows the extent of support from participants based on the number and percentage of responses for each principle.

Table 4: Extent to which participants support proposed principles.

Principle	Fully and Largely combined	Fully	Largely	Partially	No
Principle 1. Create an environment that is safer for pedestrians and easier to use - providing wider pavements on both sides of the High Street by removing street parking.	196 52.8%	135 36.4%	61 16.4%	85 22.9%	90 24.3%
Principle 2: Provide opportunities for further seating to rest at and meet others.	204 55.1%	121 32.7%	83 22.4%	85 23%	81 22%
Principle 3: Reduce the level of traffic and reduce speed (20mph speed limit).	243 62.8%	173 46.6%	60 16.2%	70 18.9%	60 18.3%

Principle 4: Provide safer cycle routes - promoting cycling with cycle parking facilities in appropriate locations.	180 48.6%	110 29.7%	70 18.9%	101 27.3%	89 24.1%
Principle 5: Provide street planting and trees - planting provides shade and shelter, to encourage biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change.	286 78.3%	232 62.7%	54 14.6%	53 14.3%	31 8.4%
Principle 6: Signage to help people find their way around Horley town centre and opportunities for public art to create a more pleasant environment.	224 60.6%	153 41.4%	71 19.2%	76 20.5	70 18.9%

For each principle, participants were invited to leave a comment in their own words if they wished. The table below shows examples of the issues, ideas and concerns participants raised for each principle.

Table 5: Examples of issues raised by participants about proposals.

Principle	Comments
Principle 1. Create an environment that is safer for pedestrians and easier to use - providing wider pavements on both sides of the High Street by removing street parking.	<p>Concerns about loss of parking, suggestions of a period of free parking in local car park.</p> <p>Concerns about access for disabled drivers and or passengers, including need for dedicated parking spaces and ease of use of the high street for disabled people.</p> <p>Full pedestrianisations: calls for and against this.</p>
Principle 2: Provide opportunities for further seating to rest at and meet others.	<p>Concerns that seating attracts anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>There is already adequate seating available and or that seating outside cafes will be sufficient.</p> <p>Some would like other facilities: water fountains for playing, covered seating, table tennis.</p>

Principle 3: Reduce the level of traffic and reduce speed (20mph speed limit).	Concerns around respect for new and or proposed speed limits, enforcement and congestion.
Principle 4: Provide safer cycle routes - promoting cycling with cycle parking facilities in appropriate locations.	<p>Safety concerns around cyclists and pedestrians sharing space, in particular cyclists adhering to rules.</p> <p>Differing views about whether there was demand for improved cycling facilities.</p> <p>Concerns about need for improved security for bikes such as CCTV, secure cycle and motorbike parking.</p> <p>Suggestions to improve the route to assist people using wheelchairs.</p>
Principle 5: Provide street planting and trees - planting provides shade and shelter, to encourage biodiversity and mitigate the effects of climate change.	<p>Many welcomed this as a means for making the environment more attractive, welcoming, cheerful and better for wildlife.</p> <p>Concerns about lack of long-term maintenance, vandalism, tree roots and fallen leaves.</p> <p>Some felt this was not a good use of money and highlighted noteworthy trees that had been removed.</p> <p>Some were unconvinced of the benefits of additional trees, particularly in addition to existing planting.</p>
Principle 6: Signage to help people find their way around Horley town centre and opportunities for public art to create a more pleasant environment.	<p>Concerns about vandalism.</p> <p>Request to ensure signs are suitable for visually impaired people (e.g., preference for newer technology that may be more widely used as opposed to Braille).</p>

There were also further comments related to this project (such as expanding on or emphasising some of the points above), linked but not directly relevant to the project or outside its scope. Every comment has been read and noted.

The subway

We asked participants about their use and views of the subway to find out to what extent participants were aware of specific issues and what, if any, impact these had on them.

- 31.7 percent said they used it weekly or more often. A further 16.8 percent used it at least monthly.
- 44.1 percent said they felt very or fairly safe using the subway during the day.
- 11.3 percent said they felt very or fairly safe using the subway after dark.

However, this varied by gender:

- 49.3 percent of males said they felt very or fairly safe during daylight hours compared to 41.3 percent of females.
- 17.4 percent of males said they felt very or fairly unsafe during daylight hours compared to 27.4 percent of females.
- 17.6 percent of males said they felt very or fairly safe after dark compared to 7.14 of females.
- 44.37 percent of males said they felt very or fairly unsafe after dark compared to 62.6 percent of females.

Similarly, age may impact on how safe a person feels:

- 31.2 percent of participants over 65 said they felt safe using the subway during daylight hours.
- Only 10.5 percent of participants over 65 said they felt safe after dark.

When asked for how safe or unsafe they felt using the subway after day, 39.5 percent of participants over 65 chose 'not applicable.' For safety during the day, 22.1 percent chose 'not applicable'. The proportions are both higher than for younger age groups and suggest they perhaps avoid it. As the alternative pedestrian crossing is by footbridge this could limit some older people's access of the town centre and may be worth investigating further. (Caution: low base.)

With so few participants under 25, it is not possible to identify younger people's feelings of safety in the subway. However, the views of under 18s have been investigated in separate engagement through a local school and a young people's group.

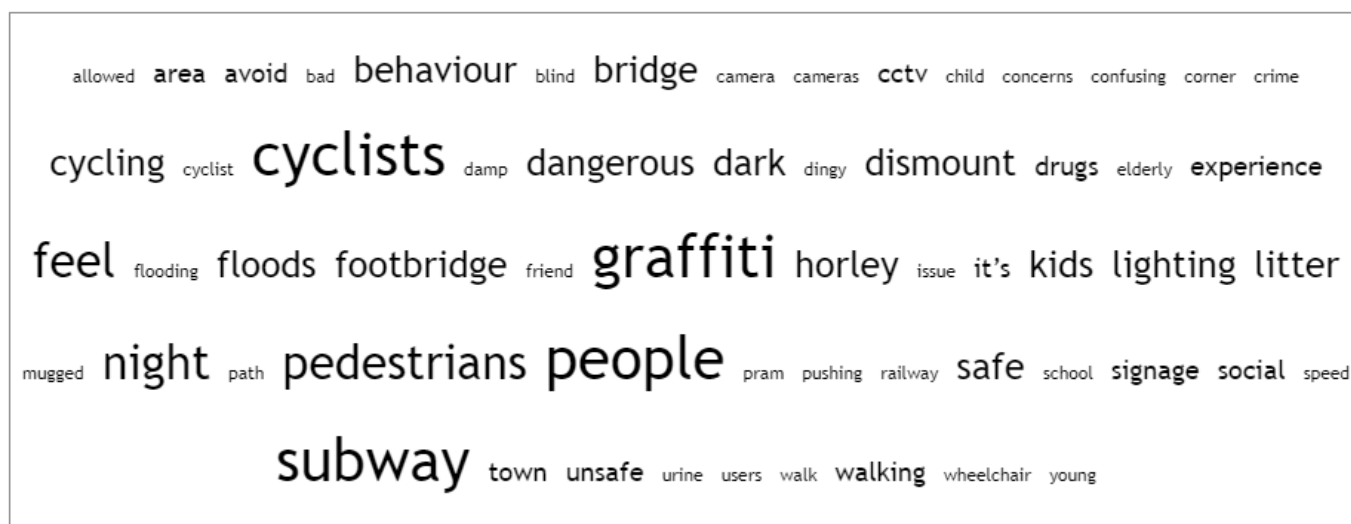
Safety concerns

In terms of safety and anti-social behaviour, the most frequently mentioned issue for participants (of any age or gender) was cyclists who do not dismount and or cycle too fast through the subway. There was also a perception of it being unsafe (e.g., risk of mugging and through poor sight lines) and uninviting.

There were also mentions of graffiti, smell of urine, evidence of drug use and similar anti-social behaviour. Some would like to see improved security such as CCTV or lighting.

Participants also mentioned the frequent problem of flooding. Many opted to use the footbridge although they noted that could also be improved.

Table 6: Word cloud showing frequently mentioned keywords in comments about the subway. More frequently mentioned words are larger.



We presented a list of issues that RBBC was aware of and asked participants which they were concerned. Participants most frequently rated lighting and flooding as concerns:

- 84.6 percent of people were concerned about poor lighting.
- 83.3 percent of people were concerned about flooding.
- Concerns for over 65s were very similar to younger age groups but they were slightly more likely to flag graffiti (72.6 percent compared to 56 v) and steep gradient (31.2 percent compared to 28.1 percent) as a concern than those aged 25 to 64.

We invited participants to tell us about any accessibility issues that they may have that could affect their use of the subway. Responses included improving the gradient and addressing flooding as this comment illustrates:

“Gradients in the subway are steep if you are pushing a wheelchair. Also, people do ride bicycles in the subway - this is a menace, and you need to find a way to discourage it.”

Participants using buggies for their children also mentioned that the flooding and gradient makes it difficult to use the subway comfortably and that the footbridge is therefore not a viable alternative for them.

Next steps

1. Review the results of the consultation to help inform the next stage of the design process.
2. Although participants largely supported the proposed principles, there were a number of issues and concerns too. In response to this, RBBC will:
 - i) review the issues and concerns raised by participants to see how these could be addressed by amended or alternative principles, or whether they can be mitigated (e.g., enforcement of anti-social cycling, vehicles speeding etc)
 - ii) work with local partners to address these issues and concerns
 - iii) consider other evidence related to the issues and concerns raised
 - iv) carry out continued engagement with residents to help resolve those issues.
3. Participants raised issues outside the scope of the project (such as wanting better shops). Ongoing communications should focus on the overall purpose of this project – to create an improved high street environment that would attract more people (and therefore attract more and varied businesses) – to help residents understand the potential benefits of the project to them.
4. Consult further on updated proposals based on developed principles.
5. Continue work to address the concerns related to the use of the subway with a view to ensuring it is accessible, safe and welcoming to all.
6. Review these survey results with the findings from other engagement, such as that carried out with young people by partner organisations.