

# Connecting Sheffield: City Centre Consultation

## Executive Summary

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### **1.0 Launching Connecting Sheffield**

Connecting Sheffield represents a first significant step in transforming Sheffield's transport infrastructure for active travel and bus services. The City Centre proposals are the first to be consulted on of several ambitious projects to be delivered by March 2023. While each project stands on its own, the wider overarching vision that brings each project within the Connecting Sheffield umbrella was considered important to communicate. As a consequence, prior to any public consultation, there was a media launch of Connecting Sheffield as a concept on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020, to ensure that the aims and goals that knit together each project are recognised and understood.

The Connecting Sheffield consultation website went live at this time. The website provides information on the overarching aims and ambitions for active travel and bus services. It is also designed to host the separate consultations on each project within Connecting Sheffield, as they are ready to be launched. The City Centre consultation was the first to go live.

### **2.0 City Centre Consultation**

Public and stakeholder consultation on the Connecting Sheffield: City Centre proposals was held between the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 7<sup>th</sup> January 2021. The consultation process was as follows:

#### **2.1 Stakeholder Mapping**

Prior to the start of consultation, an extensive community and stakeholder mapping process was undertaken to identify different individuals and groups who were likely to have an interest in the proposals. The following groups and examples were identified:

- **Political Representatives:** Paul Blomfield MP; Mayor Dan Jarvis; and local councillors.
- **Economic and Business Groups:** Sheffield City Region LEP; Sheffield Property Association; Sheffield Chamber; Heart of the City; Moor Traders Association; Sheffield BID; key city centre businesses; and others.
- **Educational Organisations:** University of Sheffield; and Sheffield Hallam University.
- **Community and Interest Groups:** ChangingSheff; Sheffield Climate Alliance; Voluntary Action Sheffield; Green City Partnership Board (SCC); and Sharrow Community Forum.
- **Accessibility Groups:** Transport4All; Disability Sheffield; Access Liaison Group; and Sheffield Cycling 4 All.
- **Local Transport Organisations:** Confederation of Passenger Transport; South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive; First Group; Stagecoach; Sheffield Taxi Trade Association; and others.
- **Local Service Providers:** South Yorkshire Police; South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue; Yorkshire Ambulance Service; and Sheffield NHS Teaching Hospitals Trust.

**Local Residents and Businesses** were also contacted directly. A distribution area for the consultation leaflet covering the majority of the city centre was defined, so that nearby properties would directly

receive information about the proposals and how they could respond and find out more information. The identified distribution area for the consultation leaflet included approximately 14,527 addresses.

## 2.2 Engagement Overview

Due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, methods of engagement that did not require face-to-face contact were employed. However, the consultation was operated in way to ensure that people could still get the appropriate information and have their say. We did this in a number of ways:

1. **Briefing Pack:** A briefing pack was produced to provide information about the city centre proposals, an overview of Connecting Sheffield more broadly, and the consultation programme. This was distributed to key stakeholders.
2. **Consultation Leaflet:** Consultation leaflets were produced by the Council directly and distributed to all residential and business properties located within the agreed distribution area of 14,527 properties.
3. **Consultation Website:** A website was set up using the community engagement platform, Commonplace. The platform makes it easy to share the consultation widely via social media and allows anonymised comments to be viewed publicly adding transparency to the process. We also received feedback through an **email address, Freephone information line and Freepost address.**
4. **Stakeholder Webinars:** Ahead of the consultation launch, three online webinars were held with stakeholder groups. The first was with civic organisations and emergency services; the second was with specific city centre businesses; and the third was with representative organisations of businesses and city centre residents. Further meetings were held with the Council's Green City Partnership Board and Our Cow Molly, to answer specific questions they had. Each webinar and meeting followed the same format. A presentation on Connecting Sheffield: City Centre was delivered followed by questions and comments, providing the opportunity for attendees to give feedback.
5. **Press release:** A press release was directly issued by the council at the start of the consultation to media outlets containing introductory information about the City Centre proposals and details of the consultation period.

## 3.0 Explaining the Consultation Responses

### 3.1 Public Consultation

A total of **1224** responses were received as part of the consultation. **36** came through via email, the freephone line and freepost, and **1188** were submitted online via the Commonplace Connecting Sheffield website.

The website provides two avenues to comment:

- a) A **heatmap** (a) that shows all corridors to be consulted on as part of the total package of schemes to be consulted on under Phase One of Connecting Sheffield – although details of proposals were only available to be viewed on the website for the City Centre scheme via the design tile referenced as (b).
- b) A Connecting Sheffield: City Centre **design tile** (b) – featuring details of what is proposed specifically for the City Centre scheme.

### 3.2 Design Tile feedback

Comments received via the design tile (b) are authenticated on Commonplace, with respondents asked to confirm their email address to check that an email address is correct and corresponds with the person submitting the feedback. Only authenticated responses via the design tile are considered in the assessment of the sentiment of feedback. However, all responses are considered when mapping specific comments – which can be viewed in the body of the main consultation report – to ensure any specific detailed concerns are picked up and can be considered.

Design tile feedback is attained via a mixture of **‘closed’ responses** – for example, ‘what do you like about this scheme’, and ‘what don’t you like about this scheme’, that allow respondents to select a number of responses from a menu of options. Opportunities to highlight positives and negatives are split into separate questions. Respondents tend to choose between one and five responses options for each question that most closely align with their views on a topic.

Respondents can also leave **‘open’ responses** – that allow respondents to comment however they wish. While respondents can answer open questions in whichever form they wish, in practice, they often tend to provide more details on the closed responses they have provided. The screenshots below (Figure 1 and 2) show how open and closed questions are presented on the consultation website.

What do you like about this scheme?

Active neighbourhood with reduced traffic	Greener streets	Environmental benefits	Safer to walk and cycle	Improved bus stops
Better environment for cyclists	More child-friendly	Improved route for buses	Priority for cyclists and pedestrians	
More attractive environment	Improved pedestrian crossings	Improved cycle crossings	Better environment for walking	Other

Figure 1: Closed question response

Do you have any other comments on this scheme?

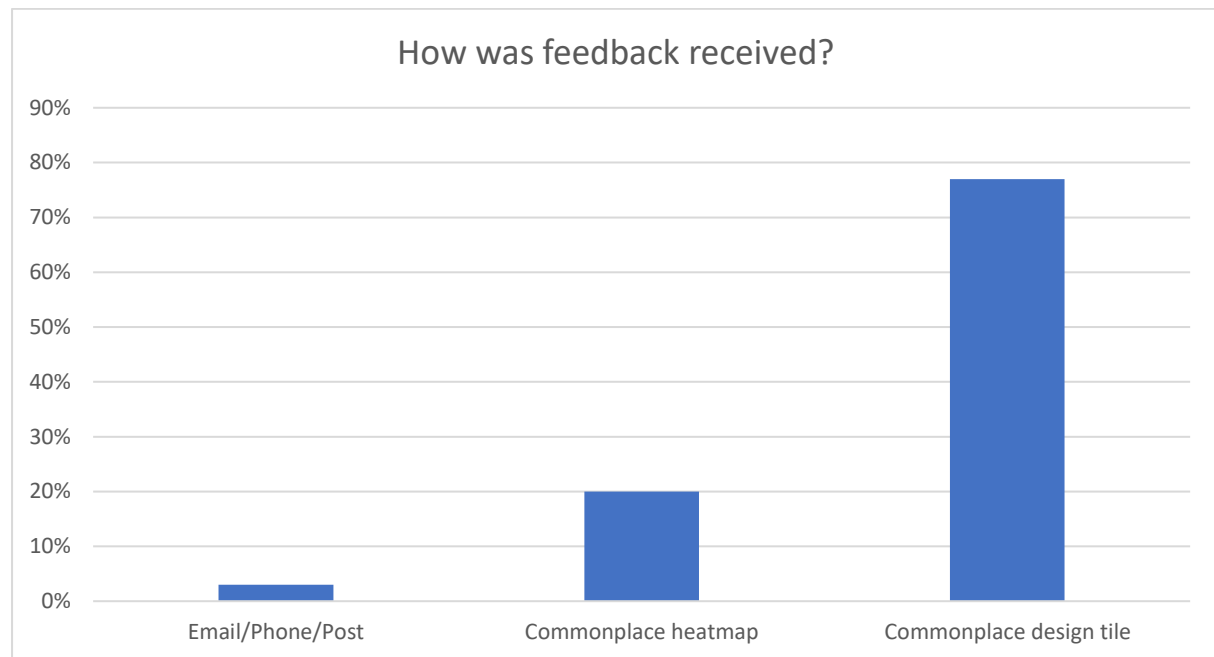
Your comment will be public. Please don't mention any personal details.  
By commenting you agree to our terms of use. Read our [privacy policy](#).

Figure 2: Open question response

## 4.0 Summary of Feedback

Considering each of the different methods for feedback open to respondents, the following is a summary of feedback.

In total, **239** responses were received via the heatmap (a). **949** responses were made via the design tile (b), with **785** of these being validated. A small number of responses were received by email, phone or post.



### 4.1 General Sentiment - Heatmap

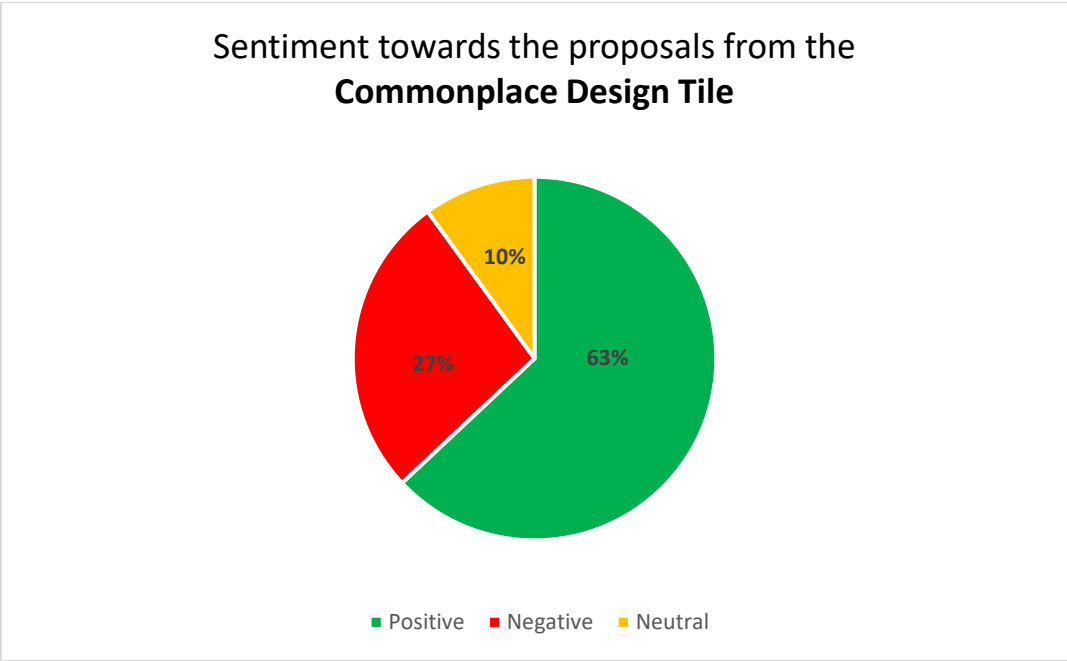
**People commenting on the heatmap** tend to take a more overall view of the proposals. On entering the Connecting Sheffield website, they will have seen the overview of the vision and aims of Connecting Sheffield as a long-term project before then visiting the heatmap to comment. Because the heatmap then also shows the totality of the routes under Phase One, commentators tend to be more likely to view and give feedback on the wider scheme aims compared to visitors who purely view the details of a specific scheme via the design tile.

Visitors to the heatmap can still leave comments on specific schemes and they have the opportunity to continue to visit the scheme design tile thereafter for details, but their feedback tends to present an indication on views of the wider aims of Connecting Sheffield because of the use patterns explained above.

Among the **239** people who responded via the heatmap **96%** of the comments received were positive, indicating strong support for the principles behind Connecting Sheffield.

### 4.2 General Sentiment – Design Tile – All Responses

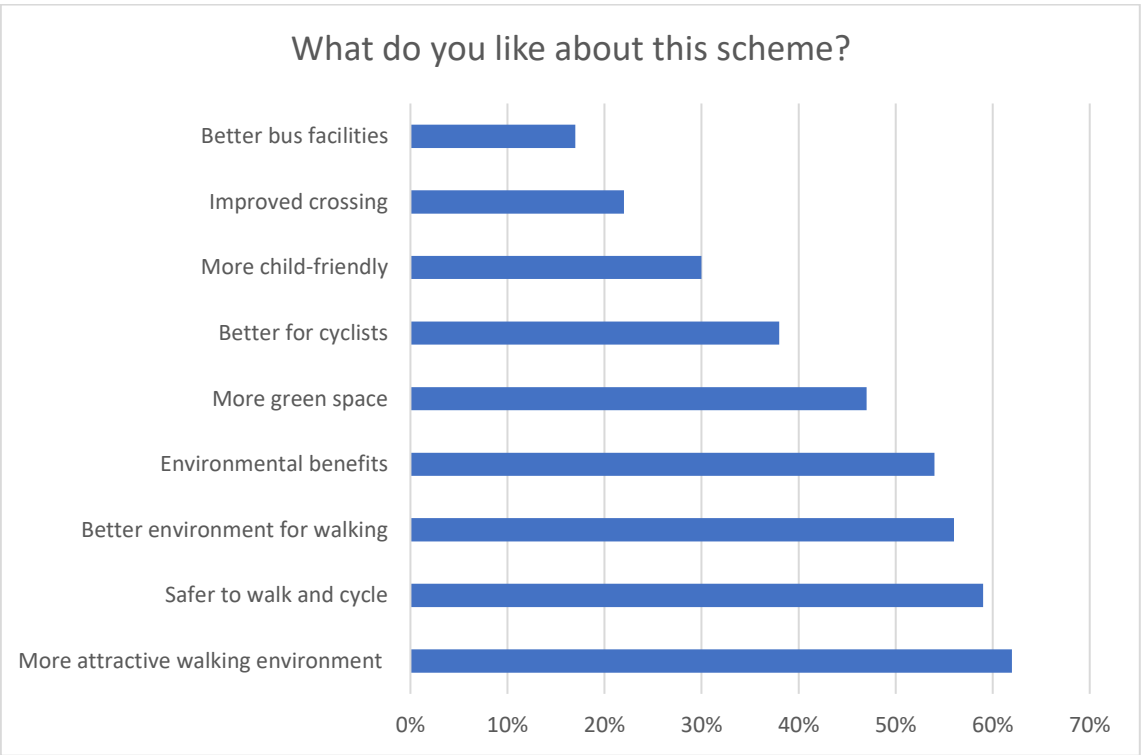
As people see more detail of any proposals, it is natural that this then raises more questions and carries greater potential for people to find objections or questions about proposals. Of the **785** authenticated **responses received via the City Centre design tile**, there was still a significant majority in favour, with **63%** providing positive feedback. **27%** of comments were negative and **10%** were neutral. This indicates that there is overall support for the City Centre proposals among those who commented.



**5.0 Specific Themes from the Consultation**

**5.1 Positive – Closed Responses**

The table below shows what people liked most about the scheme in response to the closed questions in the Commonplace design tile. This shows that around 62% of respondents clicked that they like the more attractive walking environment, while 59% of respondents agreed that the proposals would mean it is safer to cycle and walk.



## 5.2 Positive – Open Responses

In terms of the themes highlighted through authenticated feedback on the design tile that appear to underpin the positive sentiment, the proposed environmental improvements were most prominent. Comments around the proposals creating an attractive environment, greener spaces and an increased sense of safety and ease for people walking and cycling came through. **Over 500 people (around 64%)** commented on the better environment and greenery, with around **450 or more (just under 60%)** liking the improved sense of safety and ease for walking and cycling.

Around **31% of people (240)** commented that the proposals would make the city centre more child-friendly and a similar number liked the improvements in crossing facilities. Only 3% of respondents felt the proposals would make the city centre less child-friendly and just 6% felt that the proposals would be worse for pedestrians. Taken together, the comments on the environment and making the city centre more child-friendly suggest that a majority of people believe the city centre would improve under the proposals as a place to spend time, meet friends and relax, which is a key aim of the scheme, and it is likely that these responses mean the city centre would be viewed more favourably as a place to live.

The proposals for improvements to cycling were welcomed but there were some questions as to how effective the proposals would be as well. **52% of respondents (410)** felt that the proposals would make the city centre better for travelling by cycling. **Only 3%** of respondents felt there would be no improvements for cycling.

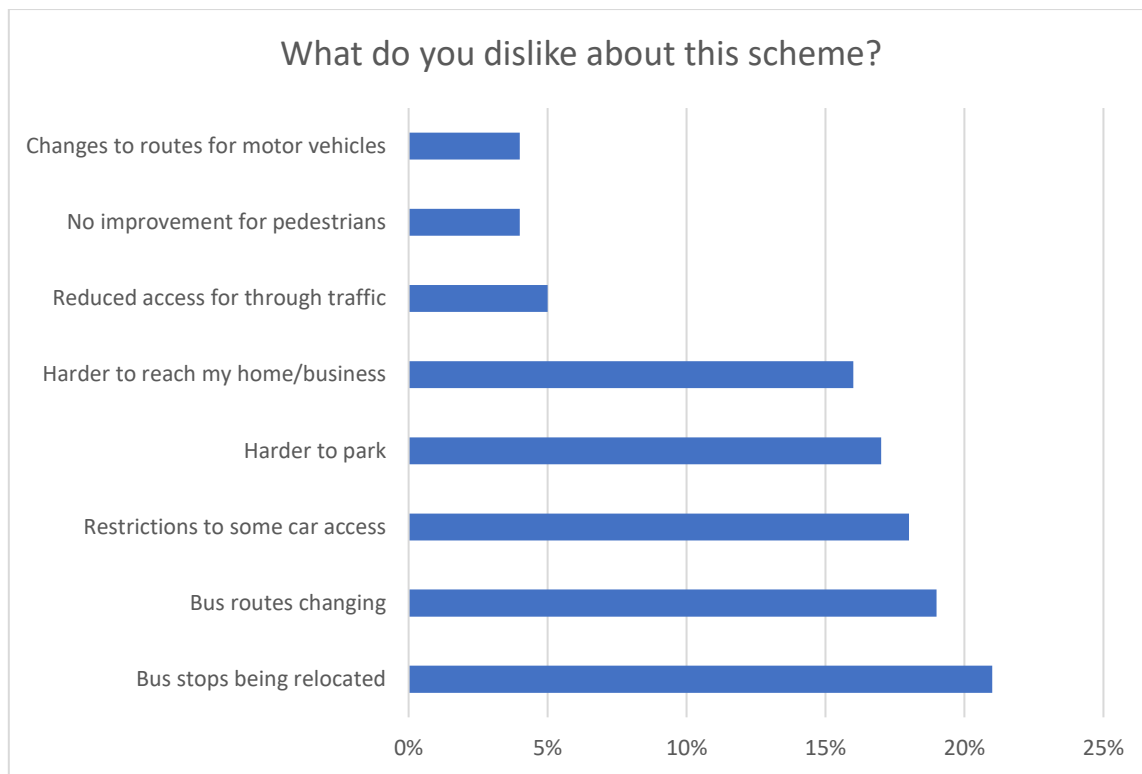
## 5.3 Positive but with Caveats – Open Responses

Open responses allow nuances in views to be identified, or further clarification on views to be given. The following comments came through the open responses, therefore. These show that a significant number of people did question elements of the proposals for cycling, despite the positive feedback. Some were concerned as to whether the new cycle routes would connect into the wider cycle network – something that will be answered positively as the other schemes are made public.

Others were concerned about the interaction between walking and cycling, with some cyclists expressing a view that the pedestrian crossing points and walkways, and landscaping around the scheme, would make the cycleways too weaving in nature and require too much stopping and starting on cycling journeys, meaning the new cycleways would potentially not be sufficiently convenient or attractive to use. Equally, this view of a mixed use of routes for cycling and walking did concern some respondents commenting as pedestrians.

## 5.4 Key Concerns – Closed Responses

The table below shows what respondents dislike most about the scheme in response to closed questions. Around **22% of respondents do not like that bus stops are being relocated**, while around **18% of respondents do not like that bus routes are changing**. As above, this does not mean that 78% of respondents like the fact that bus stops are being relocated, just that 22% of respondents do not like this element.



### 5.5 Key Concerns – Open Responses

**23% of respondents (184) liked the proposals for better bus facilities.** However, this was set against concern from a similar but slightly larger proportion of respondents about the bus proposals. The main concerns expressed were around the relocation of bus stops away from Pinstone Street to other locations that were perceived as being significantly more distant and that required the negotiation of a steeper incline.

**Around 222 (28%) and 210 (26%) of those commenting stated that they were concerned about the relocation of bus stops and bus routes changing respectively.** This may have been exacerbated by the fact that we were not able to provide information in the consultation as to the specific routes that bus services would take under the new proposals, and where replacement bus stops would be for specific routes.

Based on email enquiries, **elderly respondents or those with disabilities had the greatest concern regarding bus services.** However, the comments above should also be set against a general focus on Fargate being the centre of gravity of retail and services, rather than Moorhead – as is rapidly becoming the case due to the redevelopment of The Moor and the Heart of the City development – for which the newly proposed routes are more convenient. This can also be seen by a number of comments suggesting that the cobbles used in the city centre – which are concentrated around Surrey Street and Fargate are not pleasant to walk on, with a number of people asking if they would and could be removed.

**A final repeated concern was around a worsening of the ability for people to access homes and businesses by car. 118 people (15%) were concerned that it would be harder to reach their home or business,** be it to access premises directly or to receive deliveries. It is worth noting, however, that 15%, while noteworthy, is some way from being a majority of respondents.

## **6.0 Stakeholder Consultation**

### **6.1 Civic Organisations/Emergency Services**

**The civic organisations and emergency services were generally supportive** of the scheme. They made it clear that a joined-up approach would be required between new cycling infrastructure bringing more bikes into the centre and the need for secure cycle parking, with the risk of cycle theft. Wayfinding was also flagged as something requiring careful thought. **It was also made clear that it would be important for deliveries to still be able to be made.** Generally, the new cycling routes were welcomed, and it was felt that improved bus routes would help patients attend appointments at hospitals. There was an appetite from some for the approach to be extended to more areas of the city and for Division Street to remain closed to through-traffic.

### **6.2 Individual City Centre Businesses**

**The individual businesses were very positive about the environmental improvements** planned for the city centre. Key points revolved around the **need for deliveries to still be possible and some specific questions around access to premises. Some businesses queried whether visitors by bus would spend as much as those coming by car.** Q-Park raised a question around a right-hand turn into their Charles Street premises and a further meeting was arranged to discuss this, resulting in a solution being proposed that resolved this positively. Businesses were clear that the cycle routes needed to be joined up and, as with the civic/emergency services organisations, wayfinding across the city centre needed to be considered carefully, and the changes to bus routing needed to be communicated well.

### **6.3 Business/City Centre Resident Groups**

**The business and resident community groups were enthusiastic about the transformational change** proposed and they generally welcomed the ambition they perceived was being shown. The environmental improvements in particular were seen as being very positive with the potential to attract far more people to the city centre, particularly as the volume of retail is likely to reduce overall and there needed to be more reasons to visit the city centre. It was felt that less traffic in the city centre would generally have a positive impact on the ability of the city to attract investment although there was a view that examples from elsewhere may be required as **it was recognised that there may be some challenges in persuading some other groups in the city of this view.**

### **6.4 Green City Partnership Board**

**The proposals were welcomed**, with questions tending to focus on being reassured that the scheme was deliverable and could be adequately maintained. It was felt that traffic **modelling should be undertaken to confirm the bus journey savings** and impacts on traffic, and there was a request for Division Street to remain closed to through-traffic.