

## **The history of The Gungate purchase**

Since the purchase of the Gungate site in 2018 the Council has completed a Masterplanning exercise funded by Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership and incorporating specialist housing consultancy support from the Local Government Association. Work has started on preparing a consultation exercise on the Masterplan that will include a town centre exhibition, a web-based consultation and local newspaper publicity which will commence following the local election “purdah” period starting on the 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

As expected, the financial viability study of the Masterplan identified a funding gap for the private sector to undertake the regeneration of the area. Consequently, the Borough Council is researching bids for grant funding to be made to organisations such as LEPs, WMCA and the Government to help realise the regeneration opportunity. As part of this work, bids for £150,000 each have been submitted to Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership to develop further two elements of the Masterplan: a new Leisure Centre and a Multi-story Car Park.

At the same time work is continuing on land assembly. Negotiations continue over land in the ownership of the County Council, the Police and the lease of Gala Bingo.

## **The emerging Town Centre Masterplan**

Production of a Town Centre Masterplan is proposed as part of the on-going application to the Future High Streets Fund. The Town Centre Masterplan will seek to take into account the Borough Council’s regeneration projects, national trends affecting town centres and Tamworth’s unique heritage. As all town centres are subject to historical and disruptive change from on-line retail and out-of-town retail, the Town Centre Masterplan will aim to identify how Tamworth town centre can develop to become a sustainable centre for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## The Future High Streets Fund

The key challenges articulated in the Expression of Interest (EOI) for Tamworth Town Centre were:

- High levels of vacant properties (predominantly retail – 13.5%)
- Significantly decreasing footfall – 44% decline
- Unbalanced housing, retail and office accommodation offer, above average number of retail units, below average number of offices and homes.
- Limited night time economy: poor food drink and evening leisure offer.
- General perception that the Town is a dated, unsafe and unattractive environment.

The fund has the following objectives:

- Investment in physical infrastructure
- Acquisition and assembly of land including to support new housing, workspaces and public realm.
- Improvements to transport access, traffic flow and circulation in the area.
- Supporting change of use including (where appropriate) housing delivery and densification.
- Supporting adaptation of the high street in response to changing technology.

The vision laid out and agreed in the EOI for Tamworth Town Centre was:

“To restore Tamworth Centre as the beating heart of the community to become a place that people want to visit, rather than a place they have to visit”

“It expresses the desire to make the Town Centre a place where people come together, to relax, to eat and drink, to be entertained and to enjoy activities with friends and families in pleasant surroundings. This will be achieved through:

- A greater leisure offer, including places to eat, things to do.
- A greater variety of smaller independent shops
- Provision of housing, offices and places of innovation to meet a range of local needs
- An accessible and improved physical environment.

On August 27<sup>th</sup> 2019 the Council was informed that it had successfully been moved into tranche 2 of the fund project and would move directly to business case development stage. To support the creation of a business case, the Council has been awarded revenue funding up to the value of £150,000, from which a multi-

disciplinary team of consultants was appointed under the management of Aspinall Verdi in November 2019.

To access the capital funding the Council must deliver a full business case to Government, meeting the HM Treasury Green Book compliant, 5 stage process by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020, which will be scored to the following criteria and weightings:

- Strategic case: setting out the rationale for activity and the objectives of the proposal. It will be used to assess the extent to which proposals could successfully meet the overall objectives of the fund.
- Economic case: including an appraisal of a number of options and a robust assessment of the predicted costs/ benefits of the project. This is used to assess the overall value for money of projects.
- Commercial case: setting out the delivery model including procurement and commercial arrangements that are needed to implement the project. This is used to assess whether the proposal can be effectively delivered and is commercially feasible.
- Financial case: Including details on the costs of the project demonstrating that the preferred option can be delivered successfully within the funding available.
- Management case: setting out the planning and practical arrangements for implementing the project, including any risks and monitoring and evaluation. It is used to assess if the proposal is practically deliverable.

| <b>Assessment Criteria</b>   | <b>Weighting %</b> |
|--|--------------------|
| <i>Value for Money (in accordance with HMT guidance, and departmental guidance where applicable)</i> | 50%                |
| <i>Strategic fit of the proposal</i>   | 20%                |
| <i>Deliverability (made up of the commercial, financial and management cases)</i>                    | 30%                |

The timescales for delivering this process are as follows:

| <b>Requirement</b>                                | <b>Deadline</b>    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Early first draft business case submission</b> | 16 March 2020      |
| <b>Full business case submission</b>              | 30 June 2020       |
| <b>Announcement of successful places</b>          | Summer/Autumn 2020 |

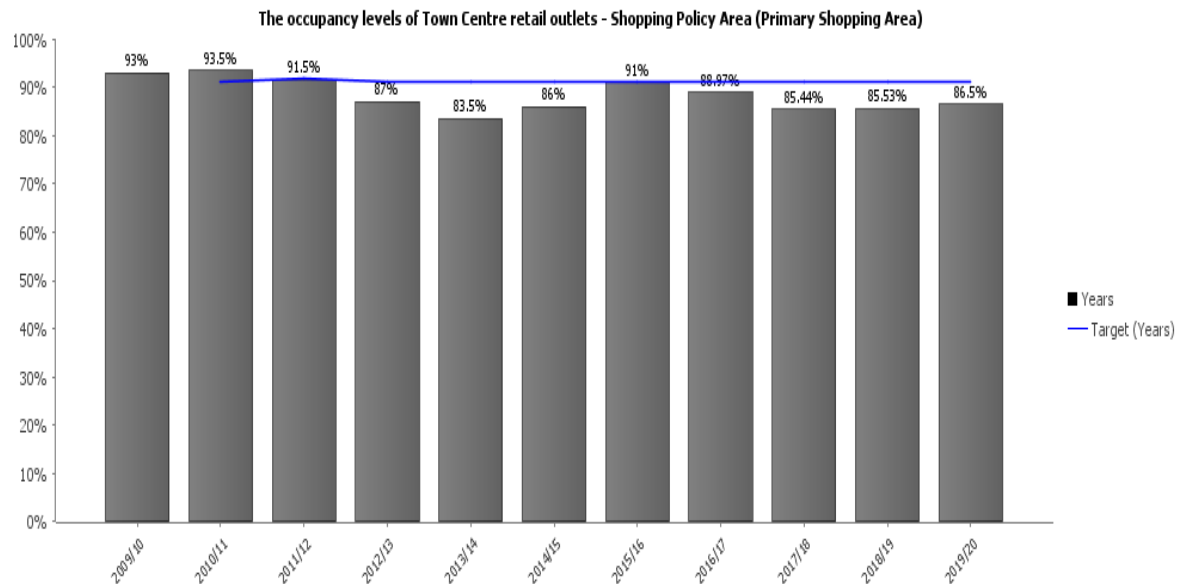
The Council will have until March 2024 to spend all of the capital grant funding received and must include monitoring and evaluation as part of the project.

The Council is exploring projects that will have the following high level outputs:

- Regeneration to mixed use of derelict listed buildings.
- Enhancement of Tamworth Castle (scheduled ancient monument) heritage offer.
- Demolition of surplus 1960's / 70's retail floor area.
- Renovation of surplus 1960's / 70's retail floor area to other uses.
- Re-design of transport infrastructure to improve the town centre permeability and attractiveness.
- Construction of new residential, commercial, leisure, office and retail floor space.
- Redevelopment / refurbishment of areas to better suit the street market.

## Town centre vacancy rates and interventions

Like many other towns, Tamworth town centre has seen a drop in the occupancy rates of its retail outlets; the graph below shows the trend over time.



In 2019 there has been a considerable focus on the future of Tamworth Town Centre. This activity has revolved around several themes:

1. Engagement
2. Funding Applications
3. Data and Information
4. Regeneration Projects
5. Strategy development
6. Project Development

All of the themes having ongoing work streams that will continue for the foreseeable future, but the main activity has been summarised below.

## **1. Engagement**

### **Tamworth - What's Next**

Leader led, public engagement about the Future of the Town Centre. This resulted in a highly interactive viral campaign, achieving high levels of engagement with residents, business and the voluntary sector. Information from this activity has supported numerous strands of activity and was instrumental in supporting the Future High Streets Fund application.

### **Tamworth Together Business Group**

As a direct result of the What's next campaign the Economic Development and Regeneration service has been successful in encouraging previous members of the former BID board and other local businesses to come back together to deliver activities for other businesses in the Town Centre. Currently called Tamworth Together CIC – (Community Interest Company), they are renaming to I Love Tamworth CIC and are focused on networking, marketing and branding. The group has met several times over the last month and is growing, with Council support, at a sensible pace.

### **Commercial Property Owners**

Engagement with the three principal landowners in the Town Centre (Co-op, Ankerside and Peer Group) has increased greatly with regular communication taking place between all parties.

## **2. Funding Applications**

### **Future High Streets Fund**

Tamworth Borough Council was successful in reaching Round 2 of the Future High Streets Fund process and now has the opportunity to submit an outline business case to government for up to £25million to transform the High Street, the deadline for which is 15 March 2020. Consultants (Aspinall Verdi) are appointed to support the Council to get the proposal to accord with HM Treasury Green Book standards of appraisal and evaluation associated with the delivery of public investment.

## **Heritage Action Zone**

As part of the wider government funding agenda for Town Centres, the Council applied for a capital bid of £440,000 to bring the Town Hall into wider use, provide a grant scheme for Heritage shop fronts and develop an augmented reality heritage trail. This funding bid was unfortunately not successful.

### **3. Data and Information**

As part of the submission of the expression of interest for the Future High Streets Fund, the Council collated many different sources of information and intelligence in one place. At the same time, the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP) funded a study of ten town centres across the area, of which Tamworth was one. With all of this information, in conjunction with the considerable feedback from the Tamworth...What's Next? Campaign, the Council is now in a very strong position to understand the various drivers affecting the Town Centre and possible options for future change.

### **4. Regeneration Projects**

#### **Tamworth Enterprise Quarter**

This project; which includes, the refurbishment of the Philip Dix Centre into Tamworth Enterprise Centre, the refurbishment and expansion of the Assembly Rooms, the converting of the Carnegie Centre into a restaurant, enhancing the library and improving the public realm is reaching its conclusion with all buildings in the scheme being handed over to relevant bodies in 2020.

#### **Gateways Project**

The Gateways Project is about enhancing key access points to the Town Centre. Work has previously been completed across Lady Bridge and around the train station into Victoria Road. The next phase to be focused on will be Corporation Street and the area around Church Street. Council officers are meeting with County Council officers to move this project forwards.

#### **Gungate Masterplan**

With the support of GBSLEP and the Local Government Association, the Council is in the final stages of master planning the Gungate site for future uses. Consultation on this masterplan and progression to the delivery stage will commence in 2020. A

timetable and programme for the delivery stage is currently being worked upon and will be presented to committee in due course.

### **Castle – Battle and Tribute**

Tamworth Castle has received funding from Heritage Lottery Fund to create an interactive display in the long gallery. This project will further enhance the offer at the Castle and provide a new offer for residents and visitors alike. This project is due to complete in June 2020.

## **5. Strategy development**

### **Town Centre Strategy**

A Town Centre Strategy was initially planned for completion in financial year 2019 / 2020. Due to the requirements of the Future High Street Fund (FHSF) work Cabinet has agreed that this will be postponed until the financial year 2020/2021. It is also the case that the FHSF workload will drive and guide a future town centre strategy.

### **Tourism Strategy**

In consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Growth and Heritage the delivery of a Tourism Strategy is being explored, though due to the FHSF this is either likely to be delivered as part of the wider Town Centre Strategy or as agreed by Cabinet, delivered separately in financial year 2021/22.

## **6. Project Development**

### **Town Centre Programme**

The Council has a working group of officers that has a small budget to develop projects that are additional to current service delivery. The following projects are being explored as options for delivery:

- Digital signage
- Enhanced festival lighting
- Footfall Grant to key property owners
- Town Centre Grants Scheme
- Business Support Scheme for retailers



## **Market Tender**

The contract with the current Market operator expires at the end of March 2020. A Tender for a new operator is in the process of being finalised to ensure the market meets future expectations.

## Tamworth 'What's Next' Summary Findings Report

### Introduction

Tamworth Borough Council has to establish a new vision for Tamworth town centre, to identify viable uses that people want and that the market can support. It needs to define what Tamworth town centre should offer to ensure it is thriving, successful and a place that people want to visit. In January 2019, Tamworth Borough Council, with support from the Tamworth Herald, launched its Tamworth 'What's Next?' survey to obtain the views of residents, businesses and visitors.

### Methodology

This initial Tamworth 'What's Next?' consultation commenced in late January 2019 and three key groups (residents, businesses and visitors) were encouraged to share their views on what would encourage them to use the town centre more.

### Executive Summary

There were a variety of ideas put forward by respondents which fell under the broad headings of:

- Transport
- Shops
- Restaurants
- Entertainment
- Family attractions
- Heritage
- Accommodation
- Castle Grounds
- Infrastructure

Most ideas from respondents were for niche shops and better/more varied restaurants within the town centre. There was also a lot of support for a new museum and the promotion of Tamworth's heritage.

### List of appendices

|            |                                  |
|------------|----------------------------------|
| Appendix A | All ideas graph and pie chart    |
| Appendix B | Top 10 ideas graph and pie chart |
| Appendix C | Individual themes graphs         |

## **Respondents' ideas**

### **Transport**

Respondents wanted to see these improvements into transportation in the town centre:

Improved connectivity between Ventura, the town centre and Tamworth Railway station with a tramline or ride way over Ladybridge, shuttle bus,

Cheaper transport between Ventura Park and the town centre,

A central Bus Station,

Bus companies encouraged to have later buses into and out of Tamworth to encourage the night time economy,

Car parking incentives i.e. first hour free.

### **Shops**

Respondents in favour of niche shops, craft shops etc. as opposed to bigger stores,

Comments received that the town centre currently has several shops offering the same thing,

Rebranding of Tamworth Market and relocating it to a dedicated market site,

Niche market events,

Improved signage and marketing at Ventura Park directing people to the town centre.

### **Restaurants**

Regeneration of St Editha's square including the Middle Entry, making the area a place for bistro type restaurants, an outside eating area with a central entertainment hub for live music etc.

Establish a daytime 'café culture',

Create a quality 'food court',

Encourage family-friendly eating establishments.

### **Entertainment**

Community Hub in the town centre,

Assembly Rooms to attract more national shows,

Encourage schemes that bring more community activities into the town centre,

Better evening entertainment

More live music events, such as 'open mic'.

### **Family attractions**

More family attractions and activities, such as soft play centre within the town,

Escape Room

Events such as Easter Egg hunts

### **Heritage**

Relocate TIC to the Town Hall or somewhere more central,

Promotion of Tamworth's heritage and its Saxon roots,

A new museum.

### **Accommodation**

Conversion of empty shops into accommodation,

Build small town centre apartments for the young and professional people,

More homes in the town centre

### **Castle Grounds**

Splash pad/ water feature for children,

Temporary 'beach' in the summer,

Boat rides on the river,

Provision of outdoor fitness related activities, such as a weekly Park Run, colour run or obstacle events,

Dedicated picnic areas and more benches,

Extension to the skate park.

### **Infrastructure**

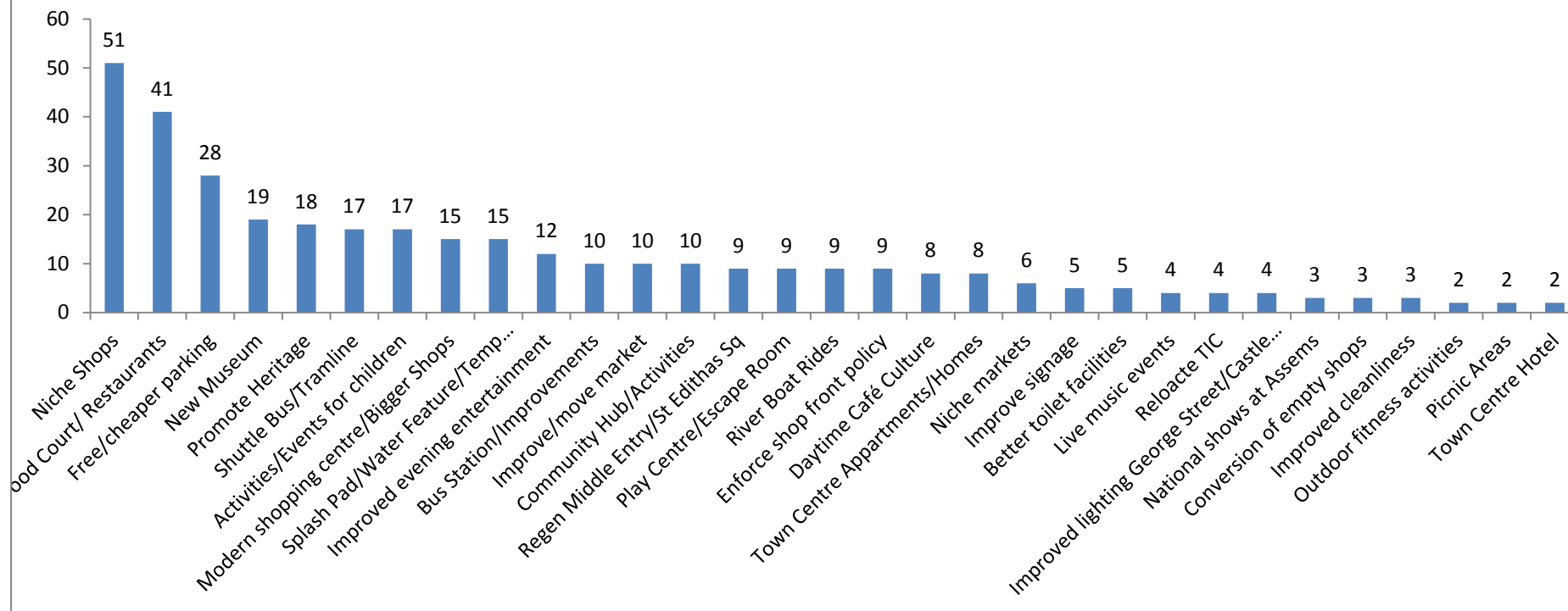
Better quality lighting throughout the town centre and Castle Grounds

Improved street scene, including cleanliness

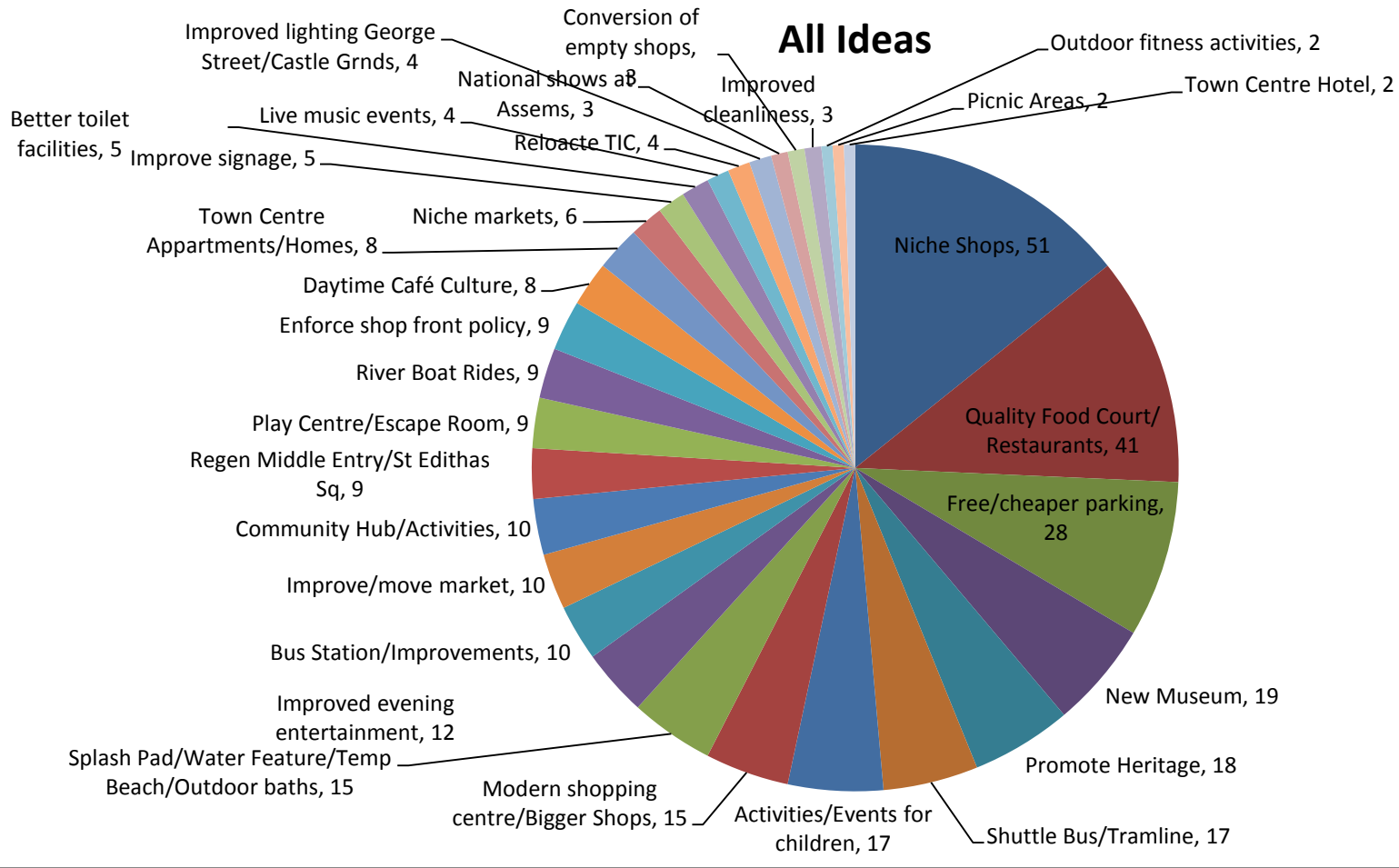
Stricter policies on shop fronts and signage

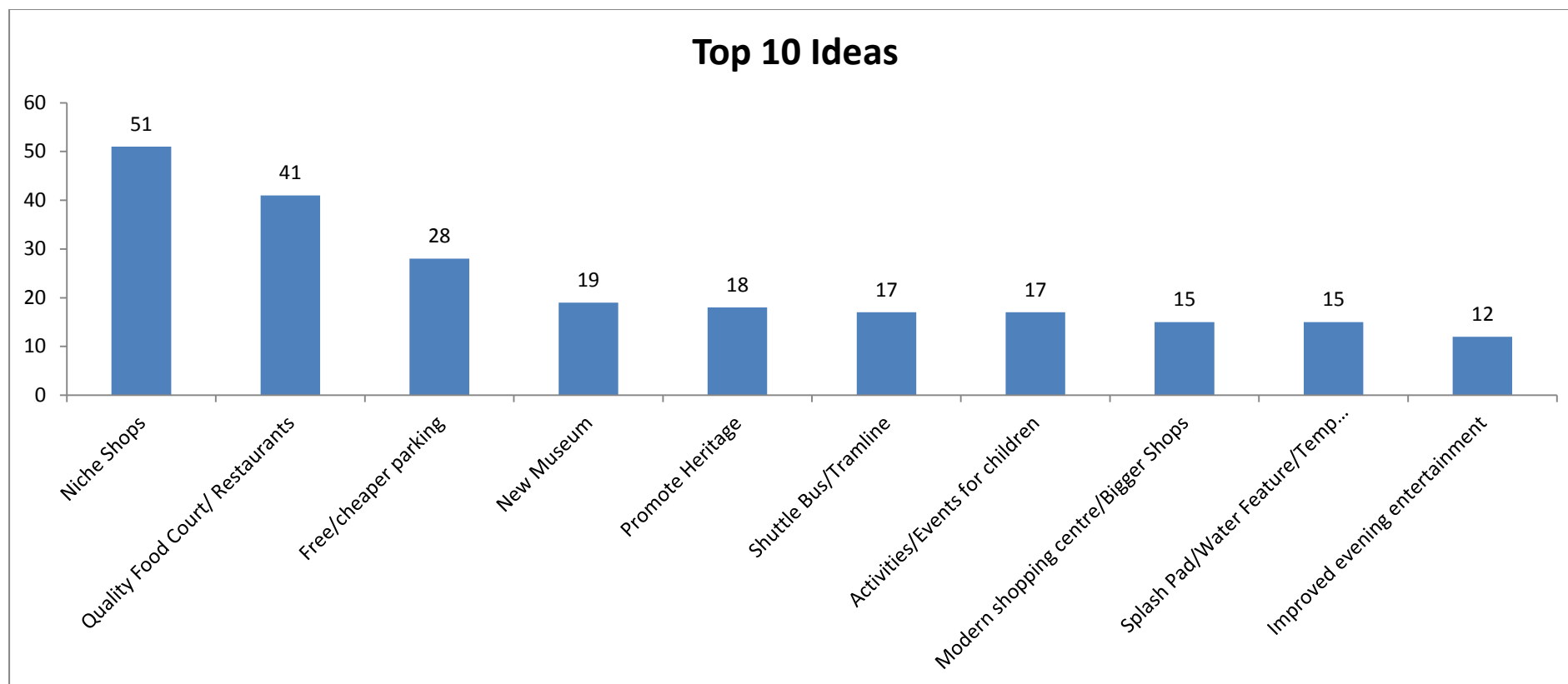
Better public toilet facilities

### All Ideas

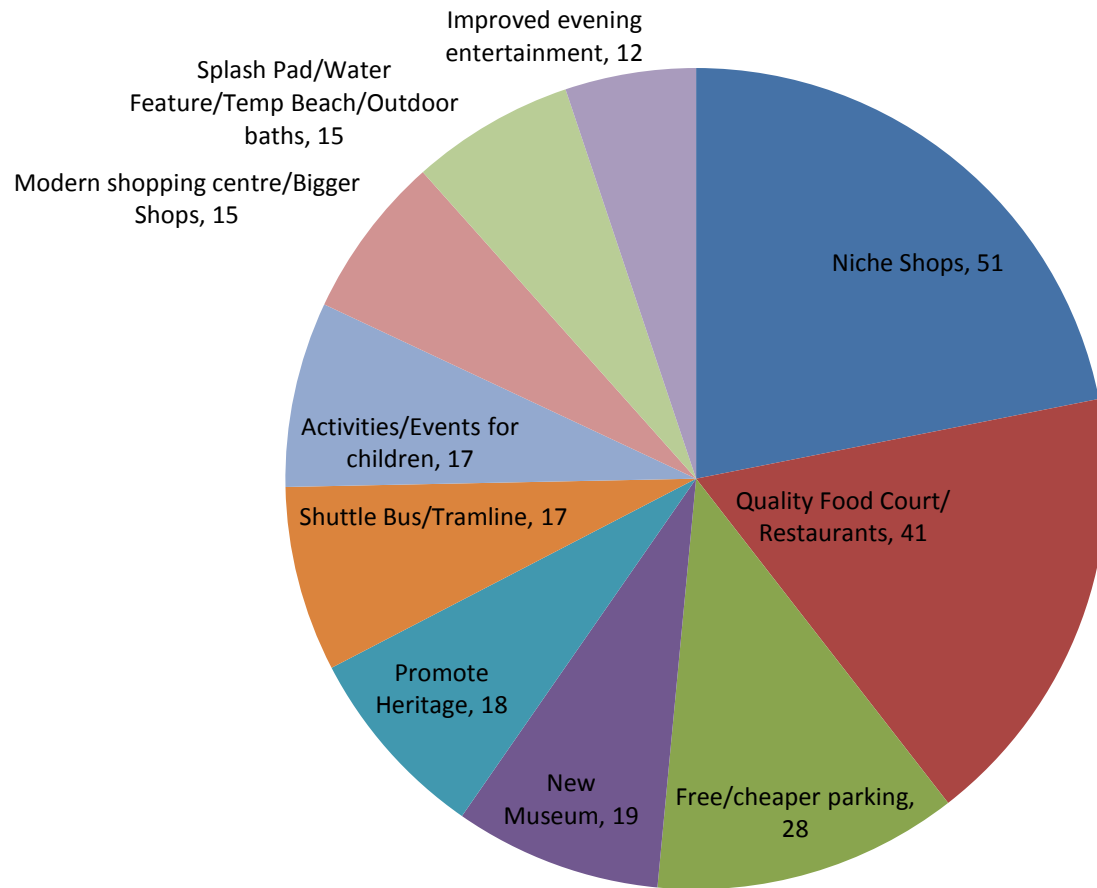


# All Ideas

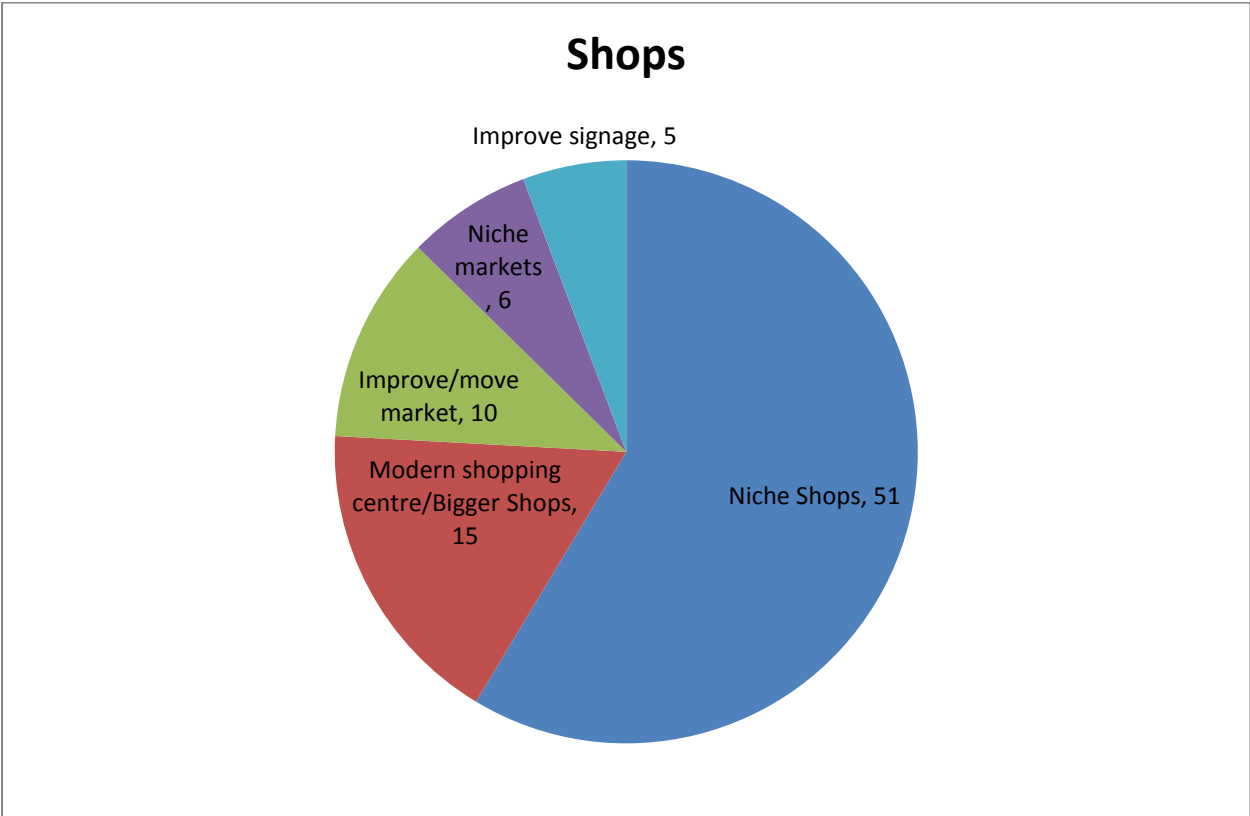
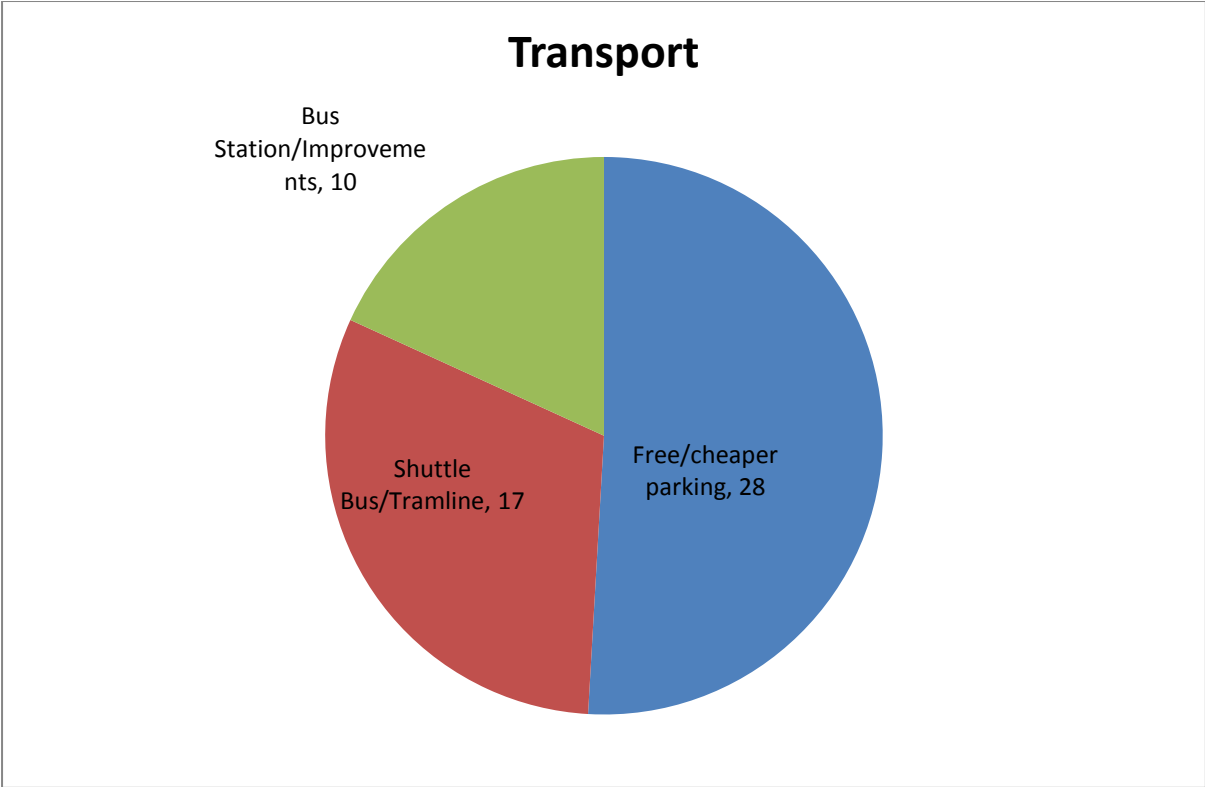




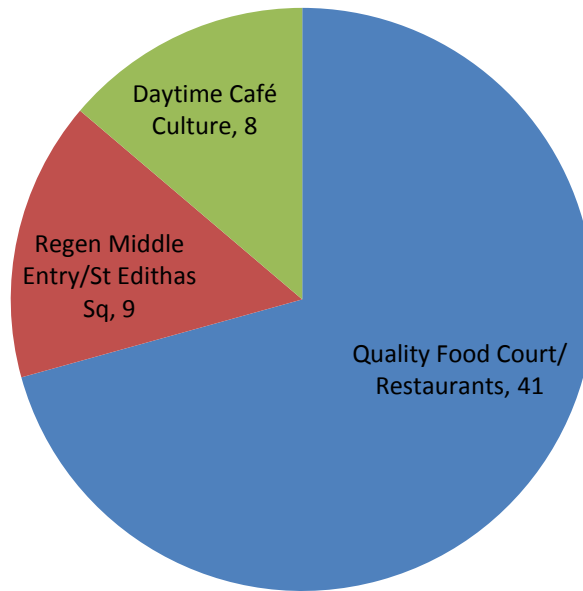
## Top 10 Ideas



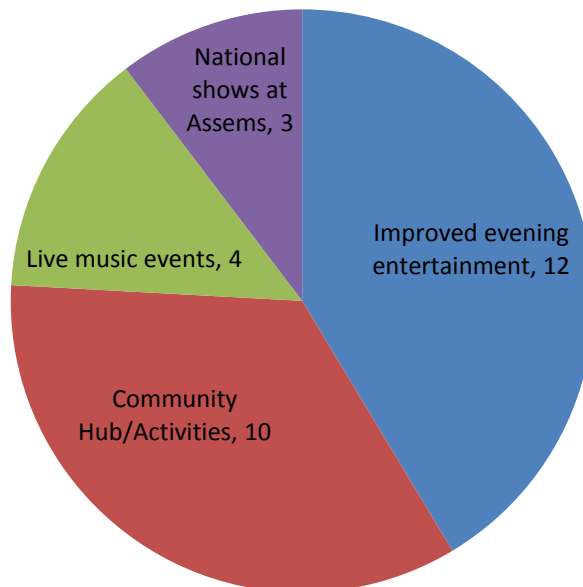




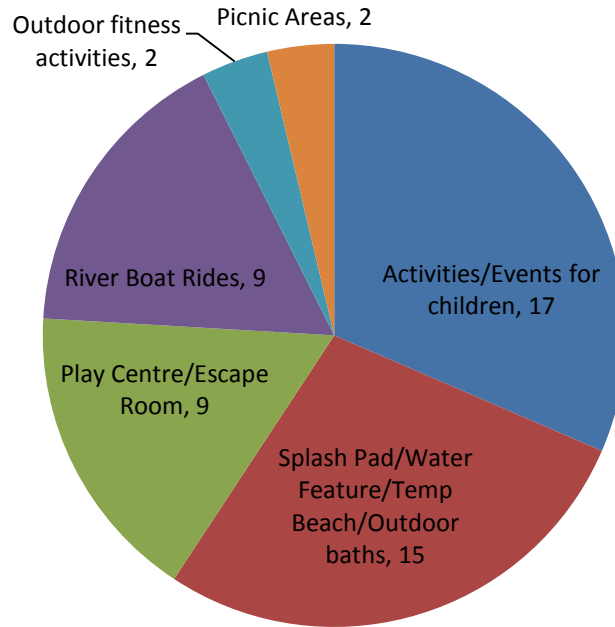
## Restaurants



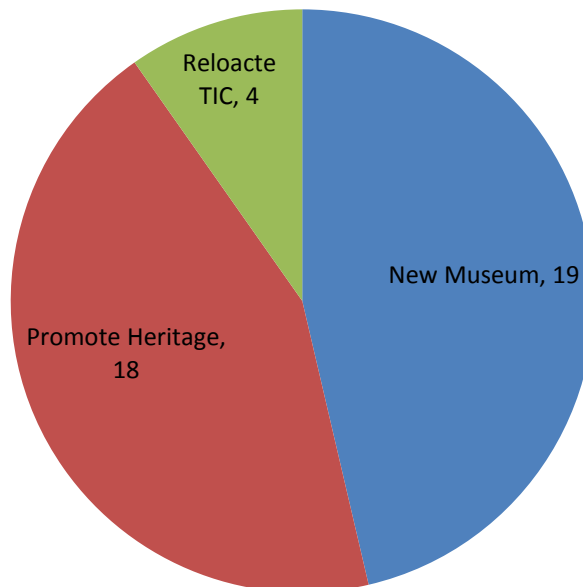
## Entertainment



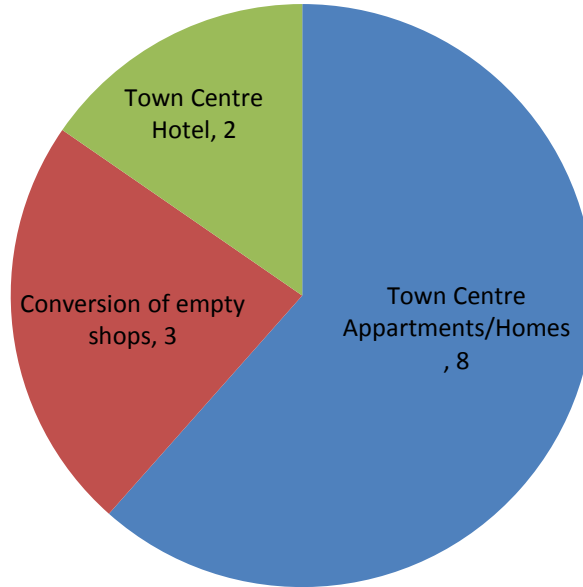
## Family Attractions / Castle Grounds



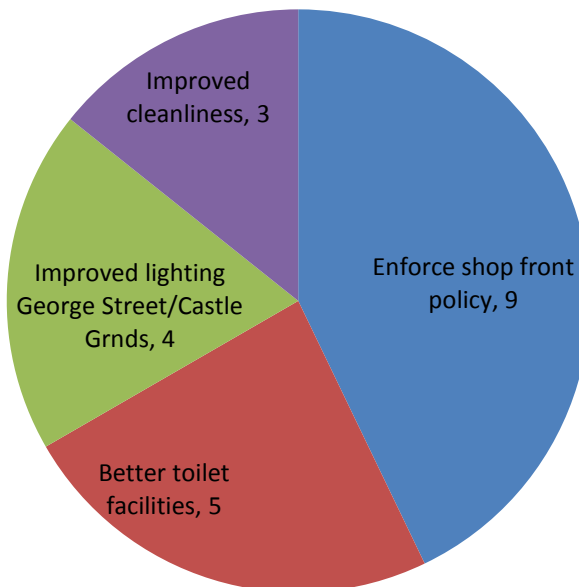
## Heritage



## Accommodation



## Infrastructure



## Budget Consultation 2020/21

Respondents to the budget consultation 2020/21 were asked for their views on the strategic priority 'To create a new and developing vision for the continued evolution of Tamworth, including a Town Centre fit for the 21st century'

This priority was seen as important by 80% of respondents and certain themes can be identified from the comments received:

- **Residential/business mix in town centre**
- **Respect green spaces and protecting heritage**
- **Types of shops in the town centre**
- **Town centre infrastructure**
- **What progress is being made?**

The comments received are shown under each theme.

### **Residential/business mix in town centre**

*I believe the council need to look to increase residential and business space in the town and reduce retail since it is in decline. Need to enhance evening economy*

*To embrace both the commuter town and the logistics hub people need to want to live here. I think this is extremely important to the prosperity of Tamworth*

*Tamworth town centre looks tired and dated. It needs to reduce its retail sector as people now shop at the retail parks or online. The centre needs to incorporate more housing and places for people to gather, relax, exercise and socialise.*

*Regeneration is fine if it is done with more emphasis on local shops employing the needs of the local people not trying to attract national or multi-national chains etc. Smaller shops would release the upper storeys as potential housing on an affordable basis.*

*Other towns are creating urban villages by building houses in the middle of the town. Tamworth Borough Council should consider the benefits of this for our wonderful town.*

*To boost the local economy more emphasis needs to be placed on the town centre which has been neglected ever since the first units opened on Ventura Park. Connecting the two areas is the key to achieving a rebalance. Perhaps with Ventura being the main shopping space and the town centre being the main social area.*

## **Respect green spaces and protect heritage**

*Respect for the environment the inclusion of green spaces is a must*

*Invest in our existing historical buildings to help them serve the borough*

*This must not be at expense of our heritage. More attention needs to be made to our historic buildings and how they are treated. The blatant destruction or covering up of some of our best heritage features needs to stop. Council officials need to tour town and report any planning infringements and stop them*

*We need a vibrant town centre with local business at the heart of this to encourage visitors to Tamworth. Given the History of Tamworth we can promote the town further as a visitor destination but we do need to improve the town centre.*

## **Types of shops in the town centre**

*Sadly the town is all but dead, prams mobility scooter and down and outs. Nothing but home bargains and phone or card shop or 3. Not to mention at the last count 7 Turkish barbers..... Mirror Lichfield, embrace the castle and castle grounds and we could get close!!*

*The rent in the town needs to be more sustainable to allow people to afford to move in and create independent businesses that are not charity or phone shops. We need nice restaurants, independent coffee shops and more activities in the town like food festivals and craft markets.*

*The town centre used to be vibrant with lots of independent traders. It has become quite depressing since Ventura was opened. We need more stores in the town.*

*We need less hairdressers and charity shops and more local up and coming new businesses. We also needed lower business rates to entice new ideas and opportunities.*

*More shops instead of going out of town centre. Sick of charity shops, food shops, special shops. We need something like Primark and B&M in the town not on Ventura.*

*Tamworth generally is a very nice town centre, particularly with the added attraction of the Castle and the grounds etc. I like to support local businesses and would much prefer to shop locally. Unfortunately the lack of choice in the town centre means that I do have to travel to Birmingham or Solihull for a better shopping experience. I think the Council should look at other market towns that are doing well, e.g. Lichfield, Ludlow etc. and follow their example. Encourage more individual businesses to trade, farmers markets etc. Where shops are empty (not Council owned) can you consider imposing some form of penalty on the landlords to encourage them to lower their rents etc. to encourage more businesses/retail to come into the centre?*

*Impossible to achieve this vision with most retail properties being occupied by solicitors, estate agents, charities & inferior retail outlets such as 'pound shops'.*

*The town centre needs to be a place that people want to go to. If more people go there rather than Ventura then shops can come back. Admittedly they will be different and be smaller, individual shops as the town centre can't compete with big shops but unless we can encourage people to go to the town centre by making them feel safe and having things to do the town centre will die*

*We believe that the market should continue to trade in the main street as it is at the moment and not be moved elsewhere. Moving it would take the life out of the town centre.*

### **Town centre infrastructure**

*The best way to increase people using the Town Centre is to stop charging for parking (one of the reasons people go to Ventura instead) - also you could run some sort of shuttle bus - or town road train to join Ventura and the centre and the castle and everything it offers - or you could provide 'Boris bikes' between the two (and other key location).*

*Yes the funding for the town centre is very important. Better car parking facilities and lower prices would help.*

*I was under the impression that the Gungate area was staying as Car parking!*

*The bus service is abysmal as regards the time table ending at 5.30pm on Sundays and hourly in the evening. Good luck trying to get visitors to attend Assembly Rooms!*

*In my opinion you should stop parking fees in and around the town; this will encourage the people of Tamworth to come into the town.*

*I am of the opinion that the most important factor is to end the complete pedestrianisation of the area to enable people to have more movement throughout the whole area. Apart from market days the lack of people in the centre is detrimental both to businesses and the public perception of Tamworth as a town worth visiting.*

### **What progress is being made?**

*This has been a priority for two decades. When are you actually going to achieve it?*

*Gungate area was earmarked for development, but did funding fall through? Bus station? Toilets*

*Why is it taking so long? Gungate has been an issue since 2007, Assembly rooms is 32 months into a 14 month project Tamworth is being overtaken by events... you're too slow to act and even slower to implement,*

*The Council has been supposedly developing the town centre for a number of years but very little actually seems to have been done,*

*There is NO sign of any progress in the town centre it is very run down and grotty.*

### **Other comments received under this priority included**

*Tamworth is a fantastic town, the nucleus is there and needs to be built on, and the council can encourage this and should lead from the front, and work with anyone willing to help.*

*So why don't you stop out of town expansion then?*

*Empty shops need to be utilised to make the town centre attractive to visitors. Support should be given to businesses that are struggling to survive. The space vacated by Drucker's would be an ideal community hub.*

*What's not helping the town centre right now is having a big commercial area with a free parking... because people don't want to pay and don't want to use a bike either. Also, renting*

*a business in the town centre is too expensive for an independent, and that's really sad because independent businesses are the best (they actually create more value in the local area than big brands).*

*Stop allowing rent increases then!! All parking fees should be reduced.*

*To increase development, more people, with cash to spend, must be encouraged to enter the town centre. A central bus station back in Corporation Street would be ideal (with toilet facilities). A small reduction in the provision of disabled parking and free parking in more areas of the town. Official parking for bikes and powered two wheel vehicles in a central location, perhaps behind Barclays bank and other odd corners. It must be obvious that we used to have all this but it was replaced by the Tamworth Enterprise building; its practical use escapes me for the moment, also an expensive, disruptive and late building in the library area.*

*This is and should be something we can do. We have the space and have a good place in our "ownership". We have some good hard working teams in Tamworth, let's get on with it*

*The town centre has been dead for some years and needs serious vision to kick-start it; it needs more parking and flagship store chain and more interesting shops.*

*The town centre is the shop window and needs to be revitalised.*

*Do something about rubbish then.*

*Its great Tamworth has the support from central government High Street Fund. The Castle Grounds gardens are the jewel in the crown.*