

Report Purpose:

Town Centre Regeneration Working Group

Author

Town Clerk

Town Centre Regeneration Working Group (TCRWG) – Consultation Update

On Saturday, 17 May 2025, the Town Centre Regeneration Working Group (TCRWG), in collaboration with the local Member of Parliament, hosted a well-attended public consultation event at Macclesfield Town Hall. The event aimed to gather views on the future development and revitalisation of the town centre. Due to overwhelming interest, a waiting list was implemented to manage attendance. Feedback from the event has been collated and analysed, with common themes summarised in the attached report.

In addition to the in-person consultation, two online surveys are currently live on the Macclesfield Town Council website—one for residents and visitors, and one for local businesses. These surveys will remain open until the end of August 2025.

To date, 124 residents have submitted responses, alongside 3 businesses. A summary of the resident feedback is attached, highlighting key concerns and priorities across all age groups, with a dedicated breakdown for those aged 24 and under.

The consultation findings have already informed two applications for UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) support, submitted by the Town Council and the Silk Museum.

The next step will be to develop a comprehensive action plan based on the consultation outcomes, ensuring that the voices of residents, businesses, and community stakeholders are reflected in the town centre's regeneration strategy.

17th May 2025 Consultation

Retail and Town Centre Economy

- **Empty/Vacant Units:** Numerous concerns about unattractive and unmaintained empty shops.
- **Landlords and Rents:** Calls to hold landlords accountable, reduce rents, and attract different businesses.
- **Retail Mix:** A lot of coffee shops; lack of retail variety; demand for alternative and independent retail.
- **Support for Independents:** Support for pop-ups, local makers, and incentives for small/start-up businesses.
- **Changing Retail Landscape:** Recognition that retail is shifting nationally—importance of experiences over traditional shops.

In-Town Living & Housing

- **Affordable Housing:** Need for affordable, quality, and accessible housing in the town centre.
- **Repurposing Buildings:** Interest in converting commercial/empty units to residential or community spaces.
- **Integrated Living & Transport:** Desire to live near facilities and transport links; reduced need for cars.

Macclesfield Identity & Branding

- **Town Brand:** Strong desire to develop a unique identity (e.g. “Silk Town”, heritage focus).
- **Pride & Promotion:** Calls to better promote the town’s assets (heritage, creatives, experiences).
- **Marketing & Communication:** Improved digital presence, social media, signage, and visibility of events/information.

Culture, Events & Experiences

- **More Events:** Festivals, art, music, and intergenerational activities requested throughout the year.
- **Better Event Communication:** Events need clearer communication and more inclusive promotion.
- **Cultural Spine/Heritage:** Support for a cultural “spine” or strategy that links events and heritage together.
- **Non-Retail Activities:** Strong interest in interactive spaces (escape rooms, art, student-led cafés).

Appearance, Cleanliness & Public Realm

- **Tidy Town:** Calls to clean graffiti, manage bins, dog fouling, and repaint railings.
- **Murals and Planters:** Murals praised, planters welcomed.
- **Neglected Areas:** Particular concern around Chestergate, Sunderland St, and near the station.

- **Street Furniture & Accessibility:** Need for more seating, better paving, and accessible public spaces.
- **Green Spaces:** Call for more green spaces in the town centre or in car parks.

Transport, Access & Parking

- **Public Transport Gaps:** Poor evening/Sunday services; inaccessible routes for some estates.
- **Parking:** Confusion about charges; requests for 1–2 hours free, especially to support town centre use.
- **Cycling/Walking:** Interest in active travel, but concerns about safety and infrastructure gaps.
- **Accessibility:** Pavements, bus stops, and disabled parking all noted as barriers to town access.

Community & Inclusivity

- **Community Spaces:** Need for inclusive spaces for arts, leisure, young people, and events.
- **Youth Provision:** More activities for teens and families; events during school holidays.
- **Inclusive Planning:** Accessibility for disabled people, integration of diverse age groups and backgrounds.

Governance, BID & Communication

- **BID Support (With Conditions):** General support for a Business Improvement District, but concerns about cost, inclusivity, and clarity of remit.
- **Coordination & Collaboration:** Need to break down silos between stakeholders and coordinate efforts.
- **Better Communication with Authorities:** Calls for transparency, visible responsible officers, and easier channels to give feedback or share ideas

Online Consultation

The residents survey so far is as follows so far:

Age Group Distribution

Under 18: 9 responses (7.3%)
18-24: 17 responses (13.7%)
25-34: 22 responses (17.7%)
35-44: 11 responses (8.9%)
45-54: 27 responses (21.8%)
55-64: 19 responses (15.3%)
65 or older: 19 responses (15.3%)

Top Concerns (Overall)

- Competition from online shopping: 71.0%
- Rent or business rates: 70.2%
- Town centre aesthetics or cleanliness: 50.8%
- Competition from other areas: 50.8%
- Low consumer spending: 33.1%
- Lack of events or activities to draw visitors: 29.8%
- Insufficient promotion of the town: 25.8%

Most Requested Improvements (Overall)

- Fewer vacant shop units: 79.8%
- More variety of shops: 75.0%
- More independent shops: 69.4%
- More green spaces where possible: 52.4%
- More outdoor places to socialise: 48.4%
- Improved public transportation links: 46.0%
- More public artwork e.g. murals: 38.7%
- More events and activities: 37.9%
- Better pedestrian areas and walkways: 29.0%
- Improved street cleansing services: 28.2%
- More accommodation for people to live in town and therefore use the amenities: 28.2%
- Increased security and policing: 25.8%

Insights from Age Group 24 and Under

Total responses from 24 and under: 26

Top Concerns (24 and Under)

- Competition from online shopping: 69.2%
- Town centre aesthetics or cleanliness: 53.8%
- Rent or business rates: 46.2%
- Lack of events or activities to draw visitors: 46.2%
- Competition from other areas: 46.2%
- Low consumer spending: 30.8%
- Insufficient promotion of the town: 23.1%

Most Requested Improvements (24 and Under)

- More variety of shops: 88.5%
- More independent shops: 84.6%
- Fewer vacant shop units: 69.2%
- More outdoor places to socialise: 57.7%
- More events and activities: 46.2%
- More green spaces where possible: 46.2%
- More public artwork e.g. murals: 46.2%
- Improved public transportation links: 34.6%
- Improved street cleansing services: 26.9%
- Better pedestrian areas and walkways: 19.2%
- More accommodation for people to live in town and therefore use the amenities: 15.4%
- Increased security and policing: 11.5%