



ELC Sustainable Travel Interchange, December 2019 Public Consultation Event Feedback – Final Report

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Appendix A: Summarised Public Consultation Feedback And Attendance Sheets

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 WYG, working alongside East Lothian Council (ELC), undertook a public consultation session associated with the site selection for the proposed Haddington Active Travel Hub / Sustainable Transport Interchange.
- 1.2 The event was held at Haddington Town House on Monday 16th December 2019 between 5:00pm-8:30pm. The purpose of the session was to introduce the study, review the initial 10 site options identified and selected by ELC, discuss the relevant merits of the preferred site on Whittingehame Drive and present design elements to be considered (such as cycle hire facilities and electric car charging stations).
- 1.3 The event was promoted via posters, the ELC website, Facebook page and the local East Lothian Courier Newspaper.
- 1.4 The consultation was undertaken as a 'drop-in' style event with 4 WYG and 6 ELC technical staff present to answer questions. A variety of material was provided to support the understanding of both the study process to date and the process going forward.
- 1.5 Consultees were encouraged to provide comments, recommendations and any other suggestions using feedback forms. For those unwilling or unable to complete a feedback form on the evening, an alternative was provided in the form of an online based Survey Monkey questionnaire. Online comments from the consultation were gathered for 4 weeks after the initial event (scheduled to conclude by 20th January 2020).
- 1.6 Material supplied on the night was also posted for members of the public¹ to view via ELC's own website and social media channels such as Facebook. Feedback received via email during the time frame was also included in the analysis.

¹ Minor drafting errors were corrected between the displayed board version and those being posted on the council website. The changes consisted of an incorrect X symbol on the sifting table and site labels 4 and 8 being flipped (although the street name references were correct throughout).

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2 Attendance, Responses and Relevance to Study Area

2.1 The public consultation event was attended by a total of 303 people who were asked to anonymously sign in on arrival, providing only their street name². It was observed that during the busiest period of the event some consultees did not sign the register³. WYG estimate the total number of attendees to be in the region of 315-320.

2.2 A review of the attendance register revealed that feedback was received from a total of 138 local streets across the Haddington area as well as from other East Lothian communities such as Gifford and Musselburgh. In total 390 feedback responses were received by 22nd January 2020, which included 133 comment forms gathered during the event as well as 257 from the online surveys and email correspondence.

2.3 The streets which had the highest response rate were the High Street (20) and Market Street (14). A map of consultees' street of residence within the town is shown in Figure 1.

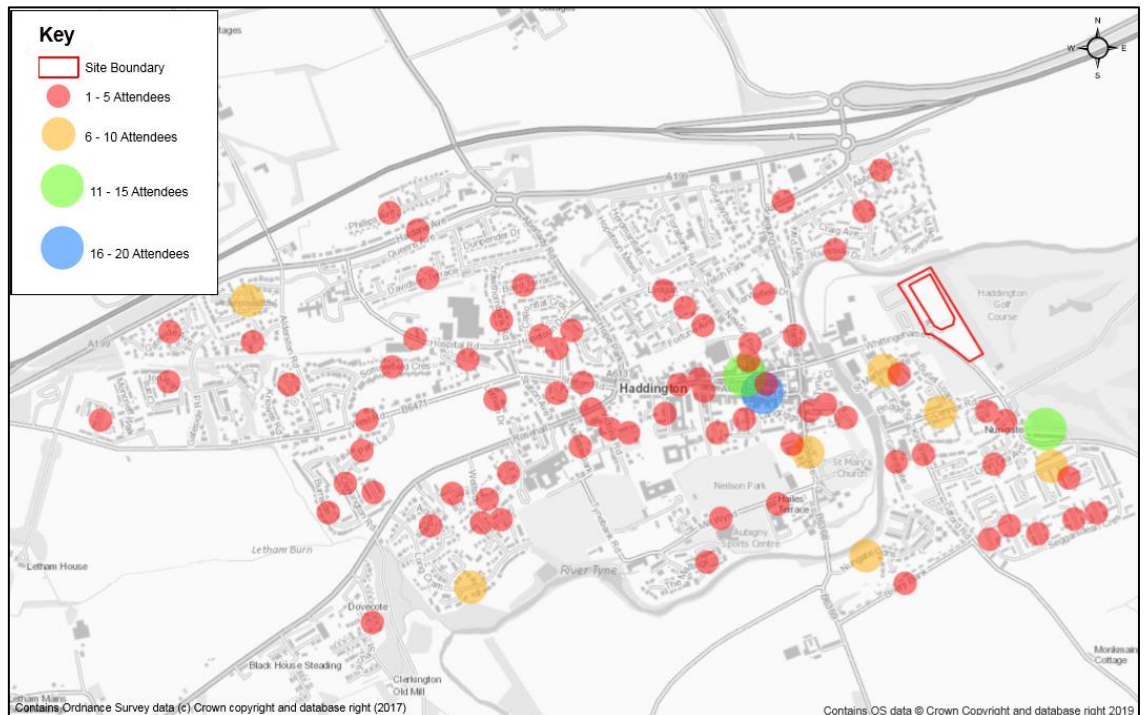


Figure 1: Consultees Street of Residence

² To assist in identifying the geographic spread of consultees across the town and surrounding area.

³ Whilst difficult to accurately determine, WYG estimate the number to be no more than 15-20 people.

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3 Analysis of Event Feedback

3.1 Following the conclusion of the consultation event, comments were logged and comprehensively analysed by WYG. The responses in some cases were lengthy and mentioned several things, some of which were unrelated. Therefore, to allow the comments to be processed, a number of 'key themes' were identified to represent the most commonly occurring issues. The key themes of concern that were identified by WYG are;

- A lack of understanding regarding how far ELC have progressed with the site selection process;
- Concerns that the Whittingehame Drive site is too far from the town centre to attract people to park, with suggestions that another site to the west of Haddington would be preferable;
- Concerns about inadequate enforcement of current parking across the town, with suggestions that this should take priority over new parking supply;
- Concerns about inappropriate parking and excessive use of ELC's own car park within the town;
- Concerns that the Whittingehame Drive site is poorly accessible for the elderly or those with mobility impairments;
- Concerns that developing the proposed site would negatively impact local business;
- Concerns that residents are too dependent on cars and that ELC should instead focus on reducing travel by car;
- Concerns that the scheme would introduce dangers for children crossing to the skatepark or football ground; and
- Concerns that the scheme will only shift parking problems elsewhere.

3.2 In addition to the key themes of concern, it was noted that in some cases consultees had also offered positive comments and suggestions. These again, have been summarised by WYG and include:

- Support of ELC looking to develop active travel and cycling infrastructure in Haddington to address problematic parking;
- Some consultees felt the introduction of additional bus services or park and ride facilities to nearby rail stations would better serve the town than additional parking;
- Agreement that the scheme would move long stay parking out of the town centre; and

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- Agreement that the scheme would reduce parking pressures on the key local streets such as Market Street, Hardgate, Church Street and High Street.

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4 Review of Feedback Received

- 4.1 While it is estimated that more than 300 people attended the event, this accounts for a relatively small proportion of the local area’s population. Therefore, it is not possible to fully determine an overall picture of public opinion regarding the scheme on this basis.
- 4.2 Feedback forms and online surveys for the event were structured into 4 questions;
1. Do you agree that a Sustainable Travel Interchange would assist in improving existing parking issues within the town centre?
 2. What do you like about the proposals for a Sustainable Travel Interchange on Whittingehame Drive?
 3. What do you dislike about the proposals for a Sustainable Travel Interchange on Whittingehame Drive?
 4. What additional design measures should be considered in relation to the proposed Sustainable Travel Interchange?
- 4.3 A collated summary of all question responses is provided in Appendix A. It is noted that very similar results and commentary were provided across the feedback forms submitted both during the event and via the online surveys collected for 4 weeks after the event.
- 4.4 Question 1 offered consultees a direct opportunity to comment on how successful they feel providing the Travel Hub on Whittingehame Drive would be. From the 390 total responses, a175 (45%) consultees thought the existing parking issues would not be solved by developing the site. 126 (32%) consultees thought these issues would be solved and 89 (23%) failed to provide a definitive answer.
- 4.5 A breakdown from the Question 1 feedback was analysed for both the feedback forms gathered during the event and the completed online surveys to check for any distinct differences. It was concluded that there were similar percentages of those in favour and those against throughout both types of feedback.
- 4.6 Although there appears to be mixed opinions with regards to the scheme, a large number of consultees who stated that the Whittingehame Drive site would not improve parking issues also highlighted that the idea of the Sustainable Transport Interchange, or reserve car park, would be positive for the town. However, they did suggest it would be best located to the west of the town to better capture vehicle demand. In many cases, responses received for this question were lengthy and unrelated, with some taking it as

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an opportunity to voice their displeasure with other general issues in Haddington. A total of 6 responses were removed as a result.

- 4.7 Questions 2 and 3 considered what consultees liked and did not like about the proposed site location at Whittingehame Drive. 289 (74%) of the participants gave a negative response and 101 (26%) gave a positive response. Many highlighted that the provision of a Sustainable Travel Interchange would be a benefit to the town, though suggested the Whittingehame Drive site is not the best location and would not cater for user groups such as the elderly or mobility impaired traveling the 600m distance to/from the town centre.
- 4.8 Question 4 allowed consultees to suggest any other measures or alternatives which should be considered alongside the Sustainable Travel Interchange. The most common suggestion noted was better management of existing parking resource through increased enforcement and monitoring from traffic wardens. Several respondents to this question highlighted once again that the proposed development would be better located to the west of the town.
- 4.9 Many responses to this question also demonstrated an unfamiliarity with the specifics of the proposed scheme, with some consultees highlighting issues which would appear irrelevant, relating to the existing parking issues within the town.

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5 Lessons Learnt and General Observations

5.1 The engagement process follows a tried and tested approach successfully deployed by WYG and other organisations across the UK. In this instance, it is WYG’s opinion that a full and complete understanding of the ethos of the project and the progression of ELC’s thinking on site selection among attendees has not yet been achieved. During the event the following issues were noted that will require consideration at the future event:

- Due to lengthy dwell time within the venue, some consultees had a lack of suitable time to digest all the presented material resulting in many consultees showing hesitancy to fill in feedback forms. This is likely to have reduced the number of responses received overall during the event.
- Some consultees did not sign in, or were not able to sign in, again primarily due to the lengthy dwell time of those concluding their review and choosing not to leave the venue. However, this was noted to be a minimal occurrence over the course of the evening.
- Consultees would benefit from the presentation material being made available online in advance of the event.
- From close examination of written feedback responses approximately 30 of the total 133 responses received were observed to have the same handwriting style. This indicates that consultees often submitted more than 1 response, most with negative feedback.
- In collating online feedback responses via SurveyMonkey it was found from the 257 responses only 79 unique IP addresses were present, some associated with greater than 15 responses. It remains unknown if these responses represent valid entries from locations with many users such as an office environment.
- It is unknown how many consultees have submitted feedback during the event and via the online survey, potentially resulting in duplication of responses.
- The table format and size of the initial room within the venue quickly became overcrowded meaning some residents became frustrated waiting to see the exhibition materials. To prevent additional frustrations and avoid health and safety risks due to queuing on the venue stairs, the team made the decision to shift all material to the larger adjacent room which by chance had just become available. Care should be taken for future events with a forecast of attendance made and venue capacity chosen to suit forecast attendance rather than convenience of location. The time of year and limited venue options is noted to have played a key role in this.

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- Dwell times of some attendees were noted to be unusually high, some staying for the entire duration of the event.
- Event material was vandalised. WYG note that this is the first occasion where they have observed this occurrence. In this respect, future events will require consideration of how the exhibition material is displayed.
- A different event format may have been effective in managing consultees' understanding of the scheme. This could include a co-design process using a small group of community representatives in a further workshop-style event or a presentation Q&A-style approach, which will allow for a greater understanding of the limits of the study. ELC's current funding arrangement and planning/design process is to be fully explained prior to working with the stakeholders in order to develop a more acceptable and desirable scheme.

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6 Suggested Next Steps

6.1 Taking cognisance of the feedback received, it is WYG's opinion the following actions are considered:

- Providing more detail and clearer presentation of the emerging design;
- Present the additional material requested during this event, including evaluation of the other sites identified;
- Support the event using a presentation or other material which is more accessible and easier to digest for attendees; and
- Provide some background information on planned improvements to the Town Centre going forward.

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7 Event Summary

- 7.1 The event was overall well attended with most consultees engaging with the process through discussion with WYG and ELC Staff, feedback forms submitted during the event and online responses after the event.
- 7.2 Parking within a constrained area such as Haddington will always be a highly emotive topic and it was clear that the consultees who attended had a diverse set of views and ideas on a possible solution.
- 7.3 The engagement process adopted on the evening follows a tried and tested approach successfully deployed across the wider UK. However, in this instance, and on reflection it is WYG's opinion that a sufficient understanding among attendees of either option was not achieved at this particular event.
- 7.4 It is clear from the event feedback that there is no obvious mandate to progress either of the options in their current form and that some alteration or further explanation will be required as well as the adoption of an alternative engagement approach.

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Appendix A - Summarised Public Consultation Feedback and Attendance Sheets