

# **Response to comments made in June 2022 (phase 3 of public engagement in response to final Vision document)**

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Consultation comments are shown in bold and a response follows. Note that feedback given has been amalgamated and summarised for the purpose of this response document.

## **Parking**

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### **The proposals do not address the level of opposition to parking in The Square**

This is a highly divisive issue. On the one hand chaotic parking in The Square creates hazards and obstructions. On the other hand it does slow down traffic speeds which makes it safer (there have been no significant accidents reported) and allows people to quickly use the shops while passing through. (See pp 20-21 of the Vision).

During the June and earlier consultations, a range of views on parking in The Square have been given. Some want more. Some think there should be none. Some accept parking there, but are concerned about problems and dangers it can cause.

In considering an approach for the Vision, we had to accept that it is impossible to remove all or most traffic from The Square as there are no alternative through-routes to the north especially for heavy vehicles. Continued through-traffic is therefore unavoidable.

We also believed it was important to allow deliveries to retailers in The Square and provide a designated time-limited loading bay. With space provided and only needed for part of the day, the same space could be used for restricted and better controlled parking at other times.

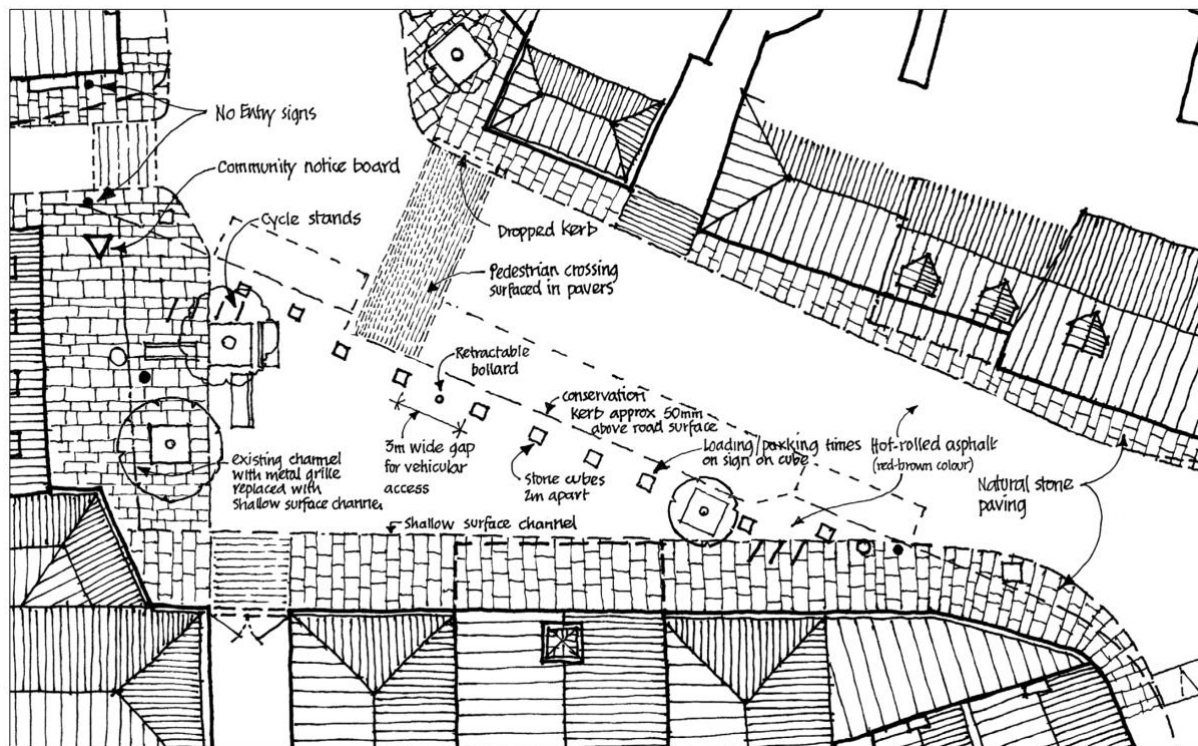
We considered options that included both more parking and reduced parking (see pp 23-30 of the Vision). Both pose problems. In the end, the Vision has sought to achieve a balance - providing more structure to the parking than currently exists, designing out the worst excesses, improving the quality of the environment for pedestrians and making it safer to cross the road.

### **Congestion in The Square will remain with parking allowed and two-way traffic flow due to the width of the road**

This concern is accepted. To address the issue, it is now proposed to take a small indent of

about 0.5m into the pedestrian area of The Square, so the road can be a little wider to help ease the flow of traffic compared to the current situation, as shown below.

The proposed road width in The Square (opposite Wiveliscombe House) is approx 7-8m wide. Design guides<sup>1</sup> state that fast traffic speeds need wider roads, while slow traffic speeds can have narrower roads. In a 20mph zone a 5.5m road width can accommodate two lanes of traffic. This leaves 2-3m width for parking (including an indent).



### **Parking limits/controls need to be enforced**

Parking offences on the public highway are enforced as a civil matter by the local authority (Somerset County Council). If they involve dangerous parking it is a criminal matter enforced by the police. No one else can enforce parking regulations (i.e. not the Town Council, Neighbourhood Watch, community organisations etc). Penalty notices have to be fixed to the vehicle so remote enforcement by CCTV is, with a few exceptions which do not apply to The Square, not an option<sup>2</sup>.

In general, parking charges and fines levied contribute to the cost of running the service. The limited amount of on-street parking spaces in the town centre means that the cost of round-the-clock parking enforcement in Wiveliscombe (as opposed to the sporadic service currently

<sup>1</sup> DfT, 2007, Manual for Streets

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/341513/pdfmanforstreets.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Guidance for local authorities on enforcing parking restrictions, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-enforcement-of-parking-contraventions/guidance-for-local-authorities-on-enforcing-parking-restrictions#fn:34>

provided) would exceed the income generated. Funding is unlikely to be provided to cover costs of higher levels of enforcement.

The other approach, which the proposals seek to achieve, is to control parking through design. This includes building out the pavements at the points where obstructions from parking most often occur and formalising some of the currently informal parking that takes place.

Ultimately it will have to include some reliance on common sense and people's better nature. Unfortunately, some people may continue to ignore the parking rules, but we anticipate the problems could be reduced with better design. Practical steps should still be taken to try to eliminate the problems as far as possible, which may include some additional enforcement, especially when design changes are made.

### **There should be disabled parking outside the Coop**

This is the intention. Designation of spaces helps discourage non-badge holders from parking in those spaces. However, it should be noted that blue badge holders are able to park on single and double yellow lines (but not loading bays) for up to three hours<sup>3</sup>.

### **Parking on West St should only be at night**

Under the proposals West St will provide a combination of time restricted spaces, unrestricted spaces and one delivery space. Removing these from daytime use would a) reduce the amount of parking available to shoppers and likely impact on the numbers of people visiting Wiveliscombe to shop, b) prevent daytime deliveries to businesses, c) potentially lead to faster and more dangerous traffic speeds.

## **Car Parks**

### **Croft Way and North St car parks should have their capacity increased, should have designated time limited shopper areas, and should charge for residents parking**

While the car parks are vital to the town centre they present many complex challenges affecting the whole town which were mostly outside the scope of the town centre place-making project.

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<sup>3</sup> The Blue Badge scheme: rights and responsibilities in England, 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england/the-blue-badge-scheme-rights-and-responsibilities-in-england#where-can-i-park>

## **Pavements, kerbs and pedestrianised area**

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### **Need dropped kerbs from bus stop to White Hart**

The raised platform will provide an almost flat surface from the pavement across the roadway (the lip will be approx 3-5cm high). It will also be a 20mph zone which will make road crossings safer for pedestrians. Two informal crossings will be put in place from the north side to the south side of The Square. Currently there is no proposal for a crossing from the bus shelter to the White Hart but that can be considered during detailed design.

### **People will still park over the dropped kerbs / crossings**

The likelihood of this happening will be reduced by design measures to make it clear that it is a crossing point (e.g. colouring / texture of the crossing, build outs and the placement of cubes).

### **The pedestrianised area should be larger**

This could only be achieved by removing any area for parking and deliveries in The Square. See above for why this has not been proposed.

### **Widening the pavements and having build-outs will make traffic manoeuvres difficult**

See page 42 of the Vision. Detailed design will include exact measurements (they are currently drawn from OS maps) and compliance with the appropriate regulations.

Experience shows that difficulty manoeuvring also leads to lower traffic speeds, more attentive drivers and fewer accidents. Conversely, free flowing traffic tends to be faster and lead to more accidents.

In terms of the pavement build-outs the principle of these is to prevent parking in the most dangerous places (e.g. blind corners) and to give pedestrians more space in those places where the pavements are currently at their narrowest. Detailed planning will consider the tracking (turning paths) of various types of vehicles to ensure that the build-outs do not create dangerous obstructions (see page 39 of the Vision).

### **There should be a crossing to the public toilets**

The toilets were slightly beyond the area considered by the Vision. Nevertheless this request is something that should be borne in mind at later stages of design development. It is worth noting that the 20mph limit will start by the toilets which will make crossing the road slightly easier.

## One-Way on West Street

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**The one-way should run in the opposite direction (i.e. east to west from The Square towards the garage) as this will provide shoppers in search of a parking space with a more logical flow**

The reasoning for west to east is set out on page 42 of the Vision. In summary the advantages of west-east over east-west are:

- With west-east, the through-route becomes High Street > The Square > North Street, and there is no need to accommodate traffic turning right from North Street on a tight turn into West Street. If turning into West Street from North Street was required, it would be a more complex junction and may need to be signed as too tight for large vehicles.
- Coop lorries are instructed to approach the store from West Street. Fuel tankers supplying Jones Garage also need to approach from the west. Therefore, both require the one-way to be west to east.

Ultimately, a shopper in search of on-street parking in the centre would be able to maximise their chance of finding a space by approaching the town via West Street, going through The Square, down High Street and, finally if needed, to Croft Way car park.

**As traffic entering The Square from High St will be unable to exit via West St, where will it turn in order to return down High St?**

Local and regular drivers to Wiveliscombe should soon understand and adapt to the new one-way system in West Street. Those wishing to loop round the town centre should approach by West Street and not the High Street, so would then have no need to turn round.

Through traffic (from the south or east) heading for North Street or beyond should be directed up High Street and on through The Square, so taking the same route as would be currently expected.

Large vehicles approaching from Church Street and delivering to West Street or The Square will need to be directed (by signs) to go along Croft Way and up West Street. Those delivering to North Street or beyond will need to be directed up High Street from the traffic lights.

Similarly, car drivers going to the town centre from the traffic lights should be directed to Croft Way car park. Only those travelling from the north should be directed to North Street car park.

The above steps should avoid the need for drivers wanting to turn round in or near The Square. Where a need for this still arises, then drivers will need to find a safe place to turn round. One suitable location should be North Street car park, by entering from The Square side and then exiting to go along the same way back to The Square.

### **The west to east one-way plus the parking proposals on West St will inhibit turning into private drives and Jews Lane**

During the design process we have considered all the various access points onto West Street. While we believe that, in general terms, access to individual properties will not be affected by the proposals, detailed design at later stages will consider the exact circumstances and will need to ensure access is maintained. Adjustments to the parking layout in West Street could assist in allowing sufficient turning space for vehicles.

### **The one-way should extend the whole length of West St**

Extending the one-way system beyond the retail area would have little added benefit. On the downside, however, all traffic associated with the garage and accessing Jews Lane would have to go through The Square. The downsides therefore outweigh the upsides of this proposal.

### **The one-way should only be in force Mon-Sat 9am to 6pm**

Aside from not knowing, at this stage, if this is legally possible a part-time one-way system would likely lead to considerable confusion. It would need to start earlier than 9am to accommodate peak traffic flows in the rush hour and possibly end later. The benefits of two-way traffic between say 7pm and 7am would be limited. Two-way traffic on West St would also mean that the proposed parking arrangements would have to be altered, with a likely reduction in the number of available parking spaces.

### **The delivery bay should be all day, not just mornings**

Consultation with traders confirmed that morning delivery times should be sufficient. The few afternoon deliveries will still be able to use other parking spaces, if available, or may have to resort to double parking as at present.

### **Time restricted parking on West St encourages shoppers to go elsewhere**

With car parking under pressure in Wiveliscombe, removing parking restrictions would probably result in most spaces being taken up with cars parked for the whole day. This would deter shoppers more than the time limit. All day parking is available in the car parks, subject to availability of spaces.

## Other traffic issues

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### **Bus stop should be in Croft Way or the car park, not The Square**

It is important to promote and encourage people to use the bus as it is an essential service for many and it reduces the town's climate impact. Maintaining the visibility and convenience of the service is therefore vital. Relocating the service to Croft Way would reduce the visibility and convenience of the service. It would also make it hard for people with disabilities to reach the town centre due to the distance and gradients. The Langley Cross bus would still have to use The Square.

### **20mph zone should cover the whole of Wiveliscombe**

This was beyond the scope of the Vision and this project but could still be considered and promoted by others.

### **Need signage to confirm who has right-of-way when cars are parked in narrow parts of North St**

Priority when confronted by temporary obstructions is a matter for the Highway Code and cannot be signed.

### **Raised platform in The Square is unnecessary (will cause noise, damage cars, infuriate drivers). Will quickly fall into disrepair**

The raised platform will be designed to avoid damage to vehicles and will be graded (1:15) to avoid extra revving of engines. As explained on page 41 of the Vision, the surface material will be Hot Rolled Asphalt (HRA) incorporating a 'Harden Red' chipping. This is very robust and favoured by highways authorities.

## Design

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### **New aggregate should be in keeping with the town**

As noted above the aggregate will include red chipping which has a soft burgundy colour. While not sourced from it is reflective of the natural Devonian stone surrounding Wiveliscombe.

### **Cubes will mean lorries have to park on the road**

The aim of the cubes is to ensure that The Square is a protected area for pedestrians so yes, lorries will have to park on the road. Delivery bays will be marked out.

### **Cubes will impede pedestrian movements**

See page 32 of the Vision. The cubes will be a design feature that defines the use of different parts of The Square. They will not be so prevalent (2m spacing) that impede pedestrians.

### **A circular bench should be put around the tree - a talking bench**

This can be considered at the detailed design stage.

### **All the listed buildings should be restored by the owners**

See page 31 of the Vision. Proposals are emerging for the restoration of the Town Hall although this will continue to be a slow process due to the limited availability of funding. The project group will pursue any joint opportunities to support the work of the Town Hall Trust where possible, including to restore the portico.

Private owners are responsible for maintaining other listed buildings. Steps are being taken to encourage this.

### **Trees should be of type that has blossom, native, value to wildlife e.g. crab apple, rowan, wild cherry, hawthorn**

See page 32 of the Vision. This level of detail has not yet been considered but its sentiments are supported and will be kept in mind.

## **Town Hall**

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### **Town Hall should become an accessible community venue.**

The Wiveliscombe Town Hall Trust ([www.wiveliscombetownhall.org.uk](http://www.wiveliscombetownhall.org.uk)) is responsible for bringing the Town Hall back into use. They plan for it to be a community venue for the performing arts. Accessibility will be important. The plans will be subject to available funding, which is limited.

### **Restoring the Town Hall will be a waste of money**

Funding for the restoration of the Town Hall is likely to be from other sources and will not be a costed component of delivering the Vision. Our consultation found there was strong support for restoring the Town Hall and the project group will assist its restoration where possible.



## **Making it Happen**

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### **The Vision should not be phased - it should all be done in one go**

While we agree with the sentiment the reality is that funding is unlikely to be available to do all the works in one go. Phasing will therefore be important as a means of making some improvements as quickly as possible while more costly elements take longer to fund.

### **The Vision is just a facelift with little benefit**

The engagement exercises that underpin the Vision have established that most people believe something should be done to improve The Square.

## **Misc**

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### **Town centre bus stops**

The one-way system in West Street removes the need for most buses to stop on the Coop side of The Square, but this would still be needed for the Langley service. Currently, there is only an informal stop on the Coop side, which is hindered by current parking along The Square. This would remain a problem with the Vision proposals. The project group believe the best solution would be a bus stop for the Langley service to be located instead near the top of the High Street or at the town end of North Street.

### **Too many waste bins in the centre, need more in other parts of Wiveliscombe**

This is outside the scope of the Vision and this project. Currently, litter bins are a duty for Somerset West and Taunton Council, with some powers also available to the Town Council.

### **Jubilee Gardens is a waste of space - needs to be rethought**

This view is not widely held, as evidenced by the engagement exercises that underpin the Vision. Support for green and community spaces was high, so any proposals to completely rethink Jubilee Gardens would likely receive strong opposition.

### **Cycling 2-way along West Street with one-way system**

It is thought there is not sufficient road width to allow this. For cyclists wishing to go down to West Road from The Square, it is not a big detour to go round via the High Street and Croft Way. If wished, cyclists could walk against the traffic flow with their bikes down the one-way section proposed for West Street.

### **Voluntary colour scheme to enhance the town centre buildings**

This could be considered further during later stages. Most town centre buildings already have a similar colour palette, although there are some individual differences, often associated with branding of shops or features of the building design.

### **More unrestricted parking for residents in West Street**

This would conflict with allowing short term parking for shoppers. Lack of parking space is a common problem in parts of Wiveliscombe, including for those living in the town centre. It could not be solved by allowing unrestricted parking for residents in West Street. There is unrestricted parking space nearby, including in the car parks, and at one end of West Street, which the vision proposes to retain. Parking is not restricted in the evenings or overnight.

### **Need to look further at parking in High Street**

The project group accepts there is a need to better consider the proposed location of parking spaces in the High Street, which will be undertaken at later stages of the project. Access will need to be maintained for cars to turn into the archways to Printers Mews and Lion House.

### **Loop or one-way system all the way round High Street, The Square and West Street**

Some benefits could arise from a longer one-way system around the town centre. However, there would be downsides and problems too. One-way in The Square was not popular in earlier consultation on options for town centre improvements, with more opposing than supporting this option. If west to east, as suggested, it will require vehicles wishing to travel down North Street to turn left out of West St. This is a sharp turning that would be difficult for lorries and probably too difficult for some. The town centre needs to be retained as the main access through the town, including to and from the north. The project group believes a one-way option involving The Square is not practical for this reason.