

Masterplan Framework Survey Results

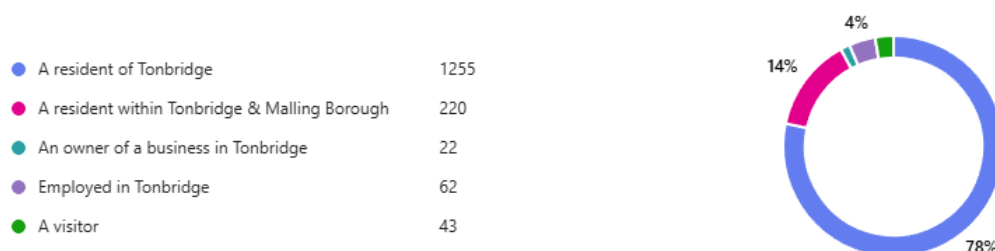
including written responses from

Tonbridge Civic Society & Tonbridge Historical Society

1458 responses received between 14th July and 31st August 2025

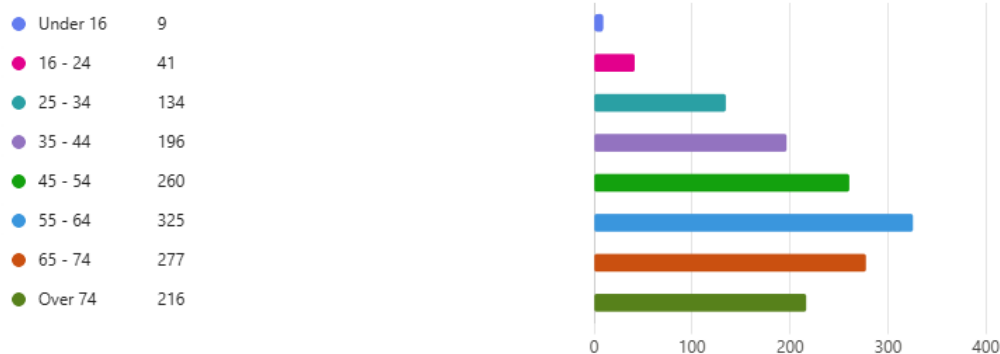
1. Are you:

[More details](#)



2. What is your age?

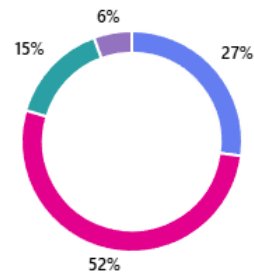
[More details](#)



3. How often do you go to Tonbridge town centre?

[More details](#)

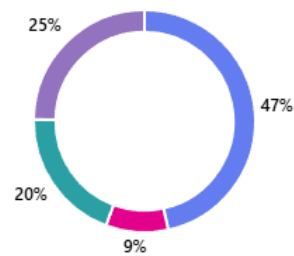
Daily	395
More than once a week	765
More than once a month	217
Infrequently	81



4. What are your main reasons for visiting the town centre?

[More details](#)

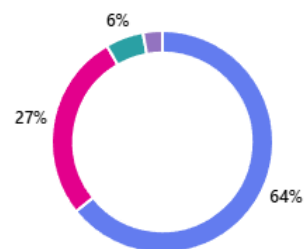
Shopping	1316
Using the Angel Centre	257
Using health services	554
Recreation	699



5. Do you agree that a new GP surgery, to provide more capacity for an existing town GP practice, would be beneficial?

[More details](#)

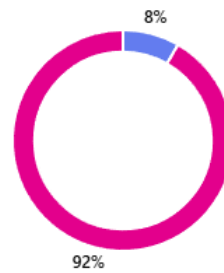
Strongly agree	937
Agree	399
Disagree	81
Strongly disagree	41



6. Part of Sovereign Way East Car Park has been identified for either residential development or a new GP surgery. What do you feel would be most beneficial for the town centre in this location?

[More details](#)

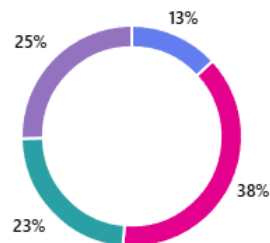
● Residential	121
● New GP surgery	1337



7. Sovereign Way North Car Park has been identified for residential development to assist the council to meet its high housing targets. Do you agree that this site is the most appropriate for residential development?

[More details](#)

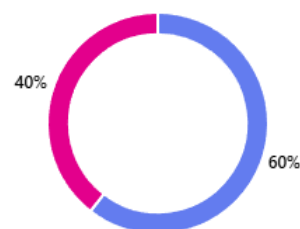
● Strongly agree	191
● Agree	557
● Disagree	341
● Strongly disagree	369



8. Vale Road Car Park has been identified for either residential development or approximately an 80-bed hotel. What do you feel would be most beneficial for the town centre in this location?

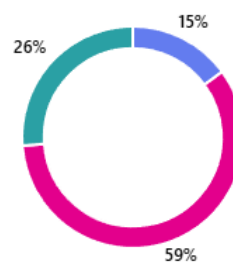
[More details](#)

● Residential	881
● Hotel	577



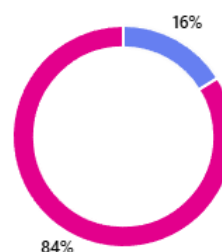
9. Once the new Angel Centre is completed on the site of the Sovereign Way Mid Car Park, what should the old Angel Centre site be used for? [More details](#)

Residential development	218
Mixed-use development (residential/commercial/hotel)	858
Other	382



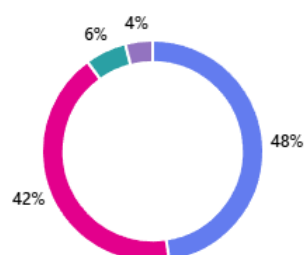
10. Should the Angel West Car Park be developed for residential/mixed-use or should this remain as parking? [More details](#)

Residential/mixed-use	236
Remain as parking	1222



11. Do you agree with the plan to create a riverside park along the south bank of the river tributary within the masterplan area? [More details](#)

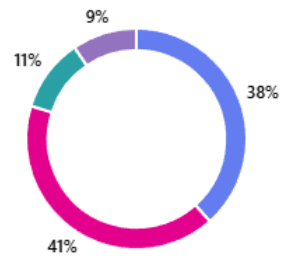
Strongly agree	694
Agree	618
Disagree	88
Strongly disagree	58



12. Taken overall, do you agree that the regeneration proposals for the east of High Street area will be good for Tonbridge?

[More details](#)

● Strongly agree	560
● Agree	604
● Disagree	156
● Strongly disagree	138



Tonbridge Civic Society - Response to Masterplan for East of High Street

Summary

The Society welcomes the efforts to regenerate the area to the east of the High Street. The redevelopment of Sainsbury's, combined with central government demand for large numbers of new housing, means the Society is open to reimagining the area.

In its specifics, we strongly support the idea of a linear park alongside the river, and - subject to appropriate design - additional residential development. A new health centre building presumably should be a welcome boost to patient numbers, and the prospect of a new hotel seems positive, given previous studies indicating a relatively low number of hotel beds for a town of Tonbridge's size and location.

Regarding the replacement for the Angel Centre, we acknowledge and support the idea that the new building should be a key component. However, we lack information on what it will contain and so remain concerned that the civic facilities will be squeezed out, just as they have been sidelined in the current building.

And while we welcome the consultation for many other areas - notably parking, connectivity, traffic management and flood issues - there isn't sufficient information to take a well-reasoned view.

The below comments are made in the knowledge that comments are being sought on the masterplan, and use of land, rather than specifics. However, there are many elements where what is being posited as detail to be filled in later have a direct impact on whether they are desirable in the first place.

Residential

The site in question is one of maybe only two substantial areas left in central Tonbridge that can and likely should support a substantial number of houses. (The other is the land owned by Network Rail.)

It is not realistic to proscribe the specific mix of housing at this stage, but there are a few principles we would hope can also be adopted.

Firstly, a mix of residential types. The majority of recent development in central Tonbridge has been 1-2 bedroom flats. Additional types should be considered.

Secondly, affordable housing. We have seen examples where affordable housing has not been included in exchange for S106 funding, potentially outside the town.

Thirdly, height. We note that an initial report suggested a four-storey limit, while now we are seeing six or seven storeys being considered. The greater the height, the higher the risk of more slabsided buildings without proper engagement with surroundings.

Ensuring that developments have frontages that engage with the surroundings at ground level should be a priority.

Fourth, the Society has always campaigned for high-quality design and we very much hope that this can be written into the plan at this stage, rather than hoping this is something that can be filled in down the line in negotiation with developers.

Parking

More than 40 years ago, the Society disagreed with the existing plan for the site because of the large amount of parking and so we are generally supportive of attempts to use the site in more imaginative ways.

That said, such a change in use will need to be carefully considered. We note that the multistorey car park option is now viewed as unviable, making it more likely that gross numbers of parking spaces will be reduced. We are uncertain from the numbers in the report just how many spaces are on the current site compared with the proposal. Being clear on this seems important, not least because of the inevitable negative public response to any reduction in parking spaces.

And given the pushback and general scepticism from residents around many car parking proposals (such as around the Upper Castle Fields proposal), we would encourage further research to ensure solid data around actual usage patterns.

We tentatively support the 1:1 ratio for car parking spaces for the new residential developments, given the recent trend for town centre developments to proceed on much lower ratios. We believe the latter mean that residents of those developments park their cars in town centre car parks given the lack of alternatives, notably car clubs, in the town.

Generally, public transport provision and cycle routes remain poor, pushing many nearby residents into cars even for short journeys. Addressing this should be a priority and run alongside or ahead of reducing car parking spaces.

Retail

We note a general lack of focus on retail within the plan, other than mention of possible ground floor commercial units. Given the constrained space of the site, and the adjacent High Street and surroundings, this seems reasonable. That said, if the W01 site were to be developed it would seem natural for there to be some retail in the mix joining the High Street area to the new development.

Flooding

The site is in a flood zone according to the flood maps, so any development will have to accommodate this.

Healthcare

Building greater healthcare capacity in the town is a welcome part of the plan. We note that Warders - who would presumably take the space - is itself advocating for engagement on the plan. We assume the plan involves moving an existing facility so have some concern whether current patients will automatically see the benefit. The details here might be crucial, notably about parking.

Hotel

Adding a hotel into the masterplan is one of the less certain parts of the masterplan, not least that it would be dependent on a third party for its execution. In general, steps that enhance Tonbridge as a destination should be welcomed, given its wide range of attractions and facilities. The proposed site is in an appropriate place close to both the High Street and the station.

Leisure

The council has pushed through its plan to replace the Angel Centre, despite some strong opposition within the town. The Society agrees that something must be done with the current Centre but regrets some of the secrecy around the process. At the time of writing, we know a report has been written about the possibilities of the centre but we cannot see it or know its conclusions because of claims of 'commercial confidentiality'. Echoing the point made above, even if a further consultation is to take place regarding preferred usage of the site, decisions are already being made that will constrain the scope of the facility.

While we welcome the focus of the plan on the new facility, we have two further concerns:

- First, the smaller footprint of the proposed site. Given one of our main demands for the Angel Centre is to retain and reinvigorate the centre's civic facilities, we worry that a smaller building will be focused on the sporting side of the leisure centre, and the spaces in the new building will be either too small or too specialized to be repurposed for civic purposes.

- Second, we understand and cautiously welcome the urgency of the plan process. However, we want to be sure there is certainty about the demolition of the current Angel Centre and the use of land. Towns frequently have to live with vacated buildings for years, sometimes decades, because of the difficulty and expense of demolition and site clearance.

Public Realm

The proposal for a linear park alongside the water is to be welcomed. In general, there is much more that can be done with the river in the town, and that particular piece of

riverside (between the High Street, the current Angel Centre, and Sovereign Way) needs to be enhanced. We would want a much more open route between the High Street and the park. The current walkway joining the High Street to the north end of Angel Lane is not a welcoming place.

Connectivity / Traffic

Given its central location, the site should be a simple place to walk through. However, routes are blocked by the large surface car parks and a range of impediments.

It would be good to encourage and open up walking routes to make it easier to move north/south and east/west, including direct routes so that schoolchildren and residents can safely walk from Vale Road to the High Street and vice versa. We would encourage further research to fully understand desire lines and actual usage patterns.

We would also like to see a proper traffic management plan early in the planning process. Avenue Du Puy and Sovereign Way are crucial routes around the town, and if WO1 was to be developed we would have concerns about Angel Lane.

Tonbridge Civic Society

September 2025

Tonbridge Historical Society - Response to Masterplan for East of High Street

Firstly, can I say thank you for updating the Tonbridge Historical Society [THS], at the recent Teams meeting, regarding the Tonbridge Town Centre Masterplan that is currently out for public consultation.

As we discussed, THS sets out below its key response to the masterplan for inclusion within the public consultation responses.

THS is not against any town centre development provided the proposed development respects the towns historical background and landscape. This once in a generation opportunity gives the council the chance to reinvigorate as well as addressing some of the issues that currently affect the town centre. The exact composition of any development is predominately for others to bring forward. Although THS fully supports the inclusion of a modern and town focused Angel Centre with community facilities as well as enhancing the riverside experience in this part of the town.

Tonbridge sits at the western end of the historic Medway floodplain and little meaningful archaeological excavations have been undertaken within the area south of the Big Bridge and the location of the railway. This once in a generation chance gives the town the opportunity to carry out a meaningful archaeological investigation relating to the towns prehistoric, Roman, medieval and more modern history including the coming of the railway. Something that has not happened in the past. Just because the lack of any previous archaeological excavations or finds this should not be taken as there is nothing of interest to find nor inhibit the need for any archaeological excavations in the future.

The proposed town centre development locations form an adjacent ribbon of proposed developments including the proposed developments at the Old Gas Works and River Centre Car Park, running north to south, through the town and all south of the Big Bridge. The borehole and trial pit logs indicate the existence of various organic matter included within various silt layers, a tree trunk sized stump, crushed seashells at river gravel levels and the top of the Tunbridge Wells Sandstone bedrock at various levels ranging from 3.2 - 3.5metres, 5.8 - 6.1metres and 9.00metres below the current ground level respectively. THS await the outcome of the proposed geo-archaeological and archaeological investigations for these sites which may provide a greater understanding in relation to the proposed town centre locations.

THS would suggest that serious thought and consideration is given to having an archaeological watching brief during the execution of any site investigation work to provide an early indication of the ground conditions and the potential for a more comprehensive archaeological investigation. The proposed new Angel Centre scheme could be considered as an early example of this approach. Some form of community

engagement programme could be considered but would need more detailed examination later in the process.

Finally, THS would like to draw to your attention to an article in British Archaeology, issue 192, September/October 2023 - 'Archaeology and Construction' which reports on a recent MOLA led research programme that illustrates, well planned archaeological works that are given the right time and resources allocated from the outset contributed up to £1.3bn in construction savings through reduced delay costs during 2017-18.

THS trust that you find its response informative in the preparation of the Public Consultation report to the Council and look forward to participating in the future.

Kind regards

Tonbridge Historical Society