



# **St Albans High Street Recovery George Street Phase 3**

## **Public Consultation Survey Report**

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# St Albans High Street Recovery

## George Street Phase 3

### Public Consultation Survey Report



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## 1 Executive Summary

In response to the challenges of Covid-19, Hertfordshire County Council and partners promoted changes in busy High Street environments to support social distancing. George Street, Market Place and High Street in St Albans were identified for interventions.

George Street was initially closed to through traffic other than deliveries. Measures were temporarily removed to facilitate road works and enable monitoring. An online survey sought feedback from residents and businesses during summer 2021. The principle of a High Street recovery trial on George Street was supported by 62%. More robust measures were reintroduced in November 2022 (Phase 2), with George Street closed to through traffic seven days a week and High Street closed to traffic at weekends. Following further consultation and engagement, a further phase (Phase 3) saw George Street closed to traffic from 11am Saturday through to 7am Monday, with a one-way arrangement in place during the week. High Street was reopened to traffic at the weekend.

A final consultation relating to the measures on George Street took place in November/December 2024. 72.7% of respondents fully support the Phase 3 arrangements and only 12% would like to see it returned to two-way traffic seven days a week. 48% whose main mode is driving would like the return of two-way traffic, seven days a week on George Street. However, 82% whose main or occasional mode is cycling support the retention of the current arrangement. 79% whose main mode is walking are supportive. Overall, people with a long term illness or disability that affects their day-to-day activities are slightly more likely to be supportive of the current arrangements (59%), however Blue Badge holders are more likely to be opposed (60%).

Key things people think are working well are the pedestrianisation, the reduction in traffic and the weekend closure to traffic. Features respondents think are working less well include the cycle lane, driver/cyclist behaviour, signage, lack of access for cars and parking. However, given the different levels in support and opposition to the current arrangement, there is a similar proportion of respondents suggesting the cycle lane is working well as those suggesting it is not working.

When asked about priorities, a number of respondents focused on extending the scope (being more ambitious), public realm improvements and reducing traffic.

The recommendation is the current arrangements for traffic movements is permanently retained, however there are some operational issues (including missing signs) that need to be resolved. If the project board is minded to support this recommendation, further investigation will be undertaken to upgrade the semi-permanent measures with permanent fixtures with a view. Funding opportunities will be sought for future public realm improvements.

## 2 Background & Engagement History

### 2.1 Summary

In response to the challenges of Covid-19 and to help enable the more vulnerable members of society access key High Street services, Hertfordshire County Council, with the support of District and Borough councils across Hertfordshire, promoted a series of changes in busy High Street environments where additional space to walk and cycle would help to support social distancing, in line with the Government's emerging guidance at the time. George Street in St Albans, as a historic street with narrow footways, was one street identified for such an intervention, alongside High Street and Market Place.

George Street was initially closed to through traffic other than deliveries in order to provide additional space for social distancing and subsequently the hospitality businesses in the street. The measures were temporarily removed to facilitate road works and enable monitoring to take place. More robust measures were reintroduced in November 2022 (Phase 2) and the road closed to through traffic seven days a week. Following further consultation and engagement, a further phase (Phase 3) saw George Street closed to traffic from 11am Saturday through to 7am Monday, with a one-way arrangement in place during the week.

### 2.2 Stakeholder Engagement – Summer 2021

Through summer and autumn 2021, public and stakeholder engagement took place to seek feedback on the temporary Covid-19 measures and gauge opinion for a possible 'High Street Recovery' trial to support retail and hospitality in the wake of the pandemic. An online survey sought feedback from residents and businesses during summer 2021. The principle of a trial was supported by 62% of respondents for George Street. St Albans BID (Business Improvement District) indicated they would be supportive of proceeding to a formal trial. Further detail is available via [this link](#).

### 2.3 ETRO Engagement and Consultation: Phase 2 – from November 2022

A formal consultation on the ETRO began in autumn 2022 to give consultees an opportunity to comment on the proposal. From November 2022 to May 2023, an official 6-month objection period took place during which the project team received nine objections. Two further responses were also received that were classified as comments.

In parallel, between November 2022 and September 2023 the project's online feedback survey has been active. 1,060 responses were received. 38.4% of respondents were supportive of the Phase 2 measures as they currently stood (George Street's timed closure to motor vehicles all week; High Street's weekend closure). An additional 13.1% were supportive of the all-week George Street measures but wanted to see High Street

accessible to motor vehicles at weekends. 42.5% preferred both streets being reopened to motor traffic. Further detail is available in the [report](#).

## **2.4 ETRO to PTRO Phase 3 and Consultation – From November 2023**

As a consequence of the 2022-23 public engagement exercise, ambitions were scaled back to focus on Market Place and George Street. In November 2023, the traffic restrictions on Market Place were made permanent. George Street reverted to a weekend only closure to traffic, with a one-way arrangement during the weekend High Street reopened to traffic at the weekend.

A PTRO for George Street was consulted on in early 2024 and sealed in April 2024 in line with the expiration of the ETRO. This incorporated revised loading arrangements including no loading or waiting on the south side of the street and a mandatory (instead of advisory) cycle lane on the north side of the street. The permanent order for George Street was introduced with the intention to consult again later in 2024 to obtain a final view from the community and stakeholders on whether they wished the trial arrangements to be made permanent or revert to the street's original layout.

The Phase 3 measures affecting George Street were consulted via an online survey between 18 November and 16 December 2024. A letter was sent to 1,375 properties in the immediate vicinity. A press release was distributed that led to articles in BBC news, The Herts Advertiser and the St Albans Times. Emails were sent to local stakeholders. Social media posts were arranged. Small A4 posters were on display with QR codes linked to the survey in the vicinity of George Street.

## **3 Phase 3 Consultation Result**

### **3.1 Overview**

804 responses to the online survey were received. 73% of respondents (582 responses) were in support of keeping the current arrangements (see Figure 1).

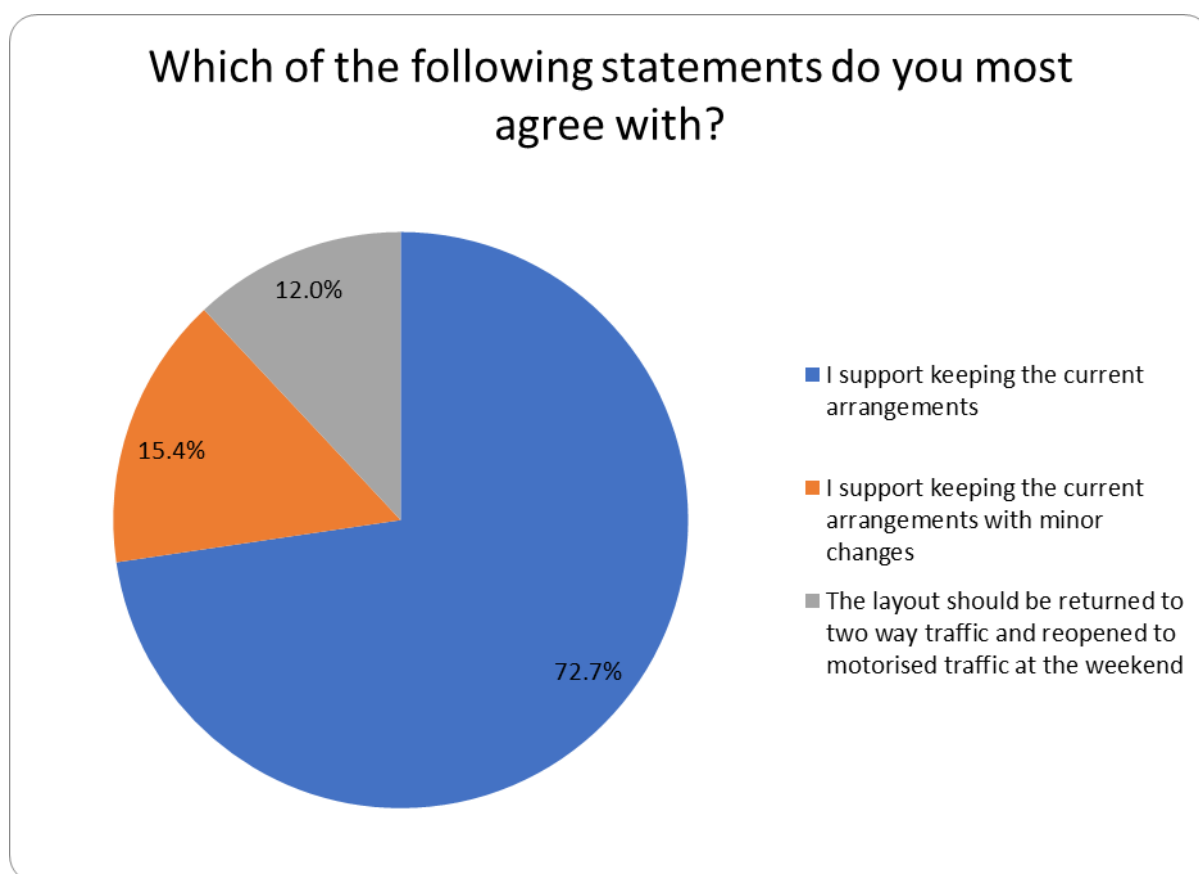


Figure 1 – Overall support for the Phase 3 measures (n=801)

### 3.2 What features are working well on George Street

Respondents to the online survey were asked what features they felt were working well on George Street. 579 responded to the question.

Manual coding was used to pick out specific elements from the submitted comments on what people felt was working well. 162 people (28%) specifically commented about **reduced traffic**, 178 (30.8%) about the **weekend closures** and 226 (39.1%) about **pedestrianisation**.

Other features receiving significant comment included how it has created a **safer space** (96), created a **pleasant walking environment** (93), how it **supported local businesses** (89) provided the opportunity for **outdoor seating** (88), that it has improved the **community feel** of the area (87), the **one-way traffic** (78) and **planters** (72).

Interestingly, 59 respondents (10.2%) specifically commented that the **cycle lane/cycle access** was a positive.

Other things specifically commented upon, but in smaller numbers, included cleaner air, the gates, accessibility, loading, lights, signs, bollards, congestion and noise.

Key themes emerging from this question (and example quotes) are presented below:

### **Planters**

Many people appreciate the planters, noting that they look good when well-maintained and add to the street's aesthetic appeal.

*"Planters add a nice touch to the street and make it more attractive."*

*"Planters make the street look lovely, inviting and add something to a thriving street."*

*"The planter at the bottom of George Street leading to Romeland is an excellent deterrent in stopping cars driving up the road."*

### **Pedestrianisation**

The closure of the street to vehicles on weekends is highly valued, making it safer and more pleasant for pedestrians.

*"Being able to walk easily up and down George Street at the weekends on the way to places and to check out the shops as opposed to sticking to the narrow pavements during the week. Having the tables out and a lively street scene in town. I love it and wish we had it all week."*

*"Making the street one-way on weekdays and particularly closing it to motor traffic on weekends is fantastic. On weekdays, the one-way system smooths traffic flows, while on weekends, the street becomes a lively, welcoming space for people to walk, shop, and relax without worrying about cars. It is also a real boost for local businesses and creates a cleaner, more enjoyable atmosphere for the local community and visitors."*

*"Enabling pedestrians to enjoy the street free of traffic at weekends. It is such a pretty, historic street, and it's now possible to view and admire all its features, as well as stroll and shop safely. The air is cleaner and fresher now too, at weekends, making St Albans overall more attractive to visitors and residents."*

*"Really nice to be able to walk or cycle on George Street without cars parked all over or squeezing by me. The footway is narrow, it is good to have space for walking and cycling."*

### **One-way traffic system**

The one-way traffic system is seen as beneficial, reducing congestion and making the street safer.

*"George Street is an old, narrow street. It is too tight for two-way traffic, particularly when a good proportion of that traffic is larger in the form of school buses and delivery vans. When two larger vehicles pass at the same time, it pushes both vehicles right to the pavement edge, very close to pedestrians. It was not unusual to see large vehicles mount the kerb in the past. The other problem was the flow of traffic. It was not unusual to see buses and lorries at an impasse at the top of the street as one tried to enter and*



*the other turn in. This could then result in traffic blockages on to High Street / Verulam Road and down in to Romeland and Fishpool Street.”*

*“The one way option works extremely well and gives pedestrians and cyclists more freedom of movement.”*

*“The one way system midweek is useful for local residents (I live in Fishpool street) and being one way prevents extra traffic travelling up Fishpool street knowing they can’t go via George street (already a narrow and awkward road when traffic meets in certain areas).”*

### **Outdoor seating**

The ability for bars and restaurants to use the street for outdoor seating during pedestrianised times is appreciated, creating a lively and social atmosphere.

*“It is also a lively atmosphere in one of the jewels of St Albans being able to sit out in the street during warmer months having dinner or drinks.”*

*“There are a lot of good bars and restaurants in the area and there's a really nice feel to the street during spring to autumn when the street are filled with people on picnic benches outside enjoying their food and drink in the outdoors.”*

### **Reduced traffic**

The reduction in traffic is noted for improving air quality and making the street more enjoyable for walking.

*“George Street is a beautiful street and important for local tourism. Having it free of cars makes it feel even more important for the local area. Yet even if it wasn't such an important road culturally, having cars go up and down is a serious safety concern. The pavements are narrow so pedestrians have to walk on the road and when it's open to cars, vehicles travel too fast.”*

*“The reduced traffic on a road not intended for the volume it was dealing with, with the same positive knock on effect for Romeland and Fishpool Street, has benefitted all residents. It's in line with other cities and makes for a far cleaner, more civilised area.”*

*“The reduced traffic makes for a more pleasant environment and means I spend more time there, I'm a regular customer of several of the businesses on this street and nearby.”*

### **Safety improvements**

The changes have made the street safer for pedestrians, especially families with children.

*“The weekend closure to traffic creates a safe place for families walking to the market, cathedral, dog walkers, shoppers and creates a lovely community feel. The narrow cobbled pavements can be tricky to navigate with prams when dodging business signs/boards and recycling/rubbish bins out for collection - this is easier when closed during weekends when more footfall.”*

*“Current arrangements keep the volume of traffic down in the conservation area, makes the route for children going to the Abbey Primary School less congested and as a result, safer.”*

*“Being able to use the road as a pedestrian (especially with a buggy) makes the street much safer and easier to pass.”*

### **Cleaner air**

Reduced traffic has led to cleaner air, which is appreciated by both residents and visitors.

*“Less traffic means less pollution in our office. Prior to the complete closure we had black soot on our desks every day. Any reduction in traffic works well for us.”*

*“When it took two way traffic, George Street was tainted by fumes and vibrations from a high volume of traffic, as people used it to rat run through St Albans.”*

*“The weekday one way system works well and has the advantage of avoiding traffic idling in George Street when exiting to Verulam Road.”*

### **Community feel**

The pedestrianisation and outdoor seating have created a more vibrant and community-oriented atmosphere.

*“On weekends, the street becomes a lively, welcoming space for people to walk, shop, and relax without worrying about cars.”*

*“The pedestrianised zone on George Street is great and creates a nice atmosphere at the weekends when closed to traffic. It makes the area feel much more like a coherent community. In particular, customers at Dylan's being able to sit outside is a great feature!”*

*“It gives a great sense of community and a buzz in the area. I used to avoid it and now want to go.”*

*“On weekends It has brought a better sense of community into this central area by allowing certain traders to utilise the road space which, in my opinion, also makes the area more welcoming to visitors.”*

### **Support for local businesses**

The changes have helped local businesses by increasing foot traffic and allowing them to use outdoor spaces.

*“The pedestrian access in George Street is brilliant, and improves the historic and social feel of the town. It's vital for when weekends and market days get really busy, increasing the accessibility and safety of the general area. I worked on George Street (Little Viking Vintage) immediately after COVID when the measure was first introduced, and it boosted business. It made the customer's experience far more comfortable, and my commute felt much safer and more enjoyable. George Street as a cut through*

*makes little difference to motorists, but George Street when pedestrianised boosts footfall for the small businesses in the area and creates a social, pleasant experience for visitors and locals alike."*

*"As a business we really like the atmosphere on the weekends where people walk and fill up the street because it give people the opportunity to look at shops."*

*"We have not had one incident of our cellar doors or sign being damaged since this has been implemented and previous to this we had major problems."*

### 3.3 What features are working less well on George Street?

Respondents to the online survey were asked what features they felt were working less well on George Street. 476 responded to the question.

Manual coding was used to pick out specific elements from the submitted comments. 77 (16.2%) specifically commented that they felt the project was **not ambitious enough**. 51 (10.7%) felt the **cycle lane** was not working well. 44 (9.2%) felt **driver behaviour** was a problem and 8.2% felt **cyclist behaviour** was a problem. 35 (7.4%) thought **signage** was not working well. 22 (6.9%) specifically cited the **lack of access for cars** as something that wasn't working well. 30 (6.3%) commented on **parking**.

A small number of respondents commented that they felt the cycle facilities were not adequate and should be made better to protect people cycling (9 comments).

Other comments specifically raised include drivers blocking the cycle lane, lack of enforcement, deliveries/loading, school buses, pavements, congestion, one-way, gates, negative impact on businesses, planters, moped behaviour, safety, uninviting/drab, confusing, seating, U-turns, emergency vehicles, road markings, lighting, street clutter.

Key themes emerging from this question are presented below:

#### Cycle lane

Many respondents mentioned that the cycle lane is dangerous, not heavily used, and often ignored by cyclists. It is also seen as a hazard for pedestrians.

*"The cycle lane is dangerous, especially when the road is pedestrianised. Quite often cyclists shout at you to move out the way."*

*"There is potential conflict between the cyclists riding uphill and cars at the junction with Spicer Street and Romeland. Any motorist driving towards the junction along Spicer Street may see the barrier and swing round quickly, not realising there is a contra-flow for cyclists here. Normally we support cycle lanes but this feels rather dangerous."*

*"The cycle lane in George Street is a danger to cyclists, vehicles and pedestrians. It sits in isolation from any other cycle path and is incongruous and inappropriate in a pedestrianised precinct."*

*"The token cycle lane is: an eyesore; often blocked by delivery vehicles; dangerous when the street is pedestrian-only at weekends (cycles are classed as vehicles) and dangerous when open to other vehicles (unsegregated contraflow)."*

### **Parking issues**

There are frequent mentions of cars parking illegally, blocking the cycle lane, and causing congestion.

*"Parking restrictions on the road are not well enforced. Delivery vans and other vehicles park across the double yellow lines, blocking the cycle lane and restricting access for other vehicles."*

*"It should be possible for residents to park in the present loading area during the evening until the following morning. Loss of bays has increased pressure on residents' parking elsewhere."*

*"The lack of any ability to park there (disabled parking bay or double yellow lines) with a disabled blue badge."*

*"People parking when it's forbidden obstructing gates and access in the event of fire or ambulance needs."*

### **Delivery vehicles**

Delivery scooters and mopeds often ignore the one-way system and drive dangerously, especially during pedestrianised times.

*"The loading bay down the bottom is not used as a loading bay, during the week it is always full of cars who use them as parking spaces. It needs to be kept free for loading only!"*

*"Still getting LOTS of delivery scooters and mopeds TOTALLY ignoring the one way. This is highly dangerous and needs to be addressed asap. Can we install cameras? Fines need to be issued to cull this behaviour."*

*"Parking restrictions on the road are not well enforced. Delivery vans and other vehicles park across the double yellow lines, blocking the cycle lane and restricting access for other vehicles."*

### **Signage**

The current signage is seen as confusing for both drivers and pedestrians, leading to uncertainty about when the road is open or closed.

*"Signage for drivers coming up Romeland who look confused when unable to proceed up George Street. It would be good if the satnav companies updated their directional maps."*

*"More signage to alert pedestrians who may be unaware when the road is closed to traffic that it's still used by cyclists."*

*“Cars coming up Fishpool continue to ignore the one way signs and drive up the road. Perhaps better enforcement/signposting.”*

*“Have clear signage telling people what's happening - again I see cars coming down and people walking in the road.”*

### **School buses**

The presence of large school buses is seen as problematic, causing congestion and pollution.

*“If there was a different route for buses from the school it would be far better for pollution levels.”*

*“School coaches from the boys school cause chaos - the boys should walk down the road as they did when the road was fully pedestrianised.”*

*“The private school needs to be encouraged to stop shopping in a minority of privileged pupils from ridiculous distances, unnecessarily polluting and clogging streets.”*

*“The school buses are far too big for the area. More smaller buses would be a welcome compromise.”*

### **Gates**

The gates are described as uninviting and confusing, giving the impression that the street is closed even when it is not.

*“When the gates are closed street looks dead, signs and gates makes George Street like a ghost street. A lot of our customers complain about this.”*

*“The gates could certainly be more in keeping with the surroundings. They're quite cheaply made - something produced in a forge producing period ironwork would be more in keeping. That said they do the job!”*

*“Gates are not inviting enough to entice people in also maybe add signs for the businesses on George Street.”*

### **Pavements**

The narrow and uneven pavements are a concern, making it difficult for pedestrians to navigate safely.

*“The high kerbs and narrow pavements, ideally if funding is available to widen the pavements leaving space for the cycle lane.”*

*“Currently a few drain pipes on the pavement need replacing, family members have fallen on these. Ideally there should be flush with the pavement.”*

*“Through the week it's an awkward road to walk through. Cars go down pretty fast. Maybe narrowing the actual street could be good.”*

*“Pavements are too narrow and still present a risk to pedestrians, particularly vulnerable users such as the disabled or parents with prams.”*

*“The pavements - lots of bricks are loose and when wet or cold they are so slippery. I feel when 20 weeks pregnant earlier this year. They are a hazard.”*

### **Temporary nature of changes**

The temporary and changing nature of the pedestrianisation and other measures are seen as confusing and ineffective.

*The gates are often left open even when the roads are closed. This leads to confusion among motorists who start to drive down it, then see the signs and don't know what to do.”*

*“There is confusion about when you can and can't drive down the road so now cars aren't sure and have to turn around at the top of George Street and pedestrians don't know when it's safe to walk on the road.”*

*“A lot of what doesn't work is to do with the temporary and changing nature of the area and can be resolved by making the changes permanent. There's a reasonable amount of confusion as to the traffic flow in the area. In particular, you see a lot of cars try and go left down Spicer Street. Signage and street marking could do with being improved.”*

*“Given the number of recent changes that have taken place it is confusing sometimes as to whether traffic is allowed to flow down the street or if it is not allowed through access.”*

*“With the road options changing depending on if it is the week or weekend, this has caused confusion, a child was nearly run over as they thought the road was closed, when it had been opened for the weekend.”*

*“Drivers coming up Fishpool Street get confused. I have seen some go the wrong way down college street when they can't get up George Street, so better signage would help.”*

### **Traffic flow**

The one-way system and weekend closures are seen as causing congestion and confusion for drivers.

*The traffic going to/from the boys school is now a bit of a mess for local residents and pedestrians. Perhaps switching the one way direction of Spicer Street might help.”*

*“Because George St is one way it forces a significant amount of traffic through Welclose St and up Lower Dagnall St. The right turn from there onto Verulam Road is v dangerous.”*

*“People still driving both ways as they are confused. Even when road is closed still delivery drivers pass the gates on motorbikes and driving here.”*

*“One-way system forces vehicles to take alternative routes through narrow conservation area streets. Journeys are longer, larger quantities of harmful fumes are emitted, and damage is caused due to those side streets not being suitable for increased volume of traffic.”*

### 3.4 What changes do you think we should prioritise?

Respondents to the online survey were asked what changes HCC should prioritise on George Street. 468 responded to the question. The survey indicates there are lots of different views on priorities and but no clear overriding message or direction.

Manual coding was used to pick out specific elements from the submitted comments. 100 (21.4% of those that commented) felt the focus should be on **extending the scope** including **revised timings**. 52 of those that commented mentioned **public realm improvements** (11.1%). 45 (9.6%) felt the focus should be on **reducing traffic**.

Conversely, 42 (9%) thought **restoring two-way traffic** was a priority. 40 (8.6%) thought the priority should be on **reopening to traffic all days**.

15 (3.2%) felt the **cycle lane should be removed** and 14 (3%) said there should be a **ban on cyclists**. However, 9 (1.9%) thought the **cycle facilities should be enhanced**.

21 people (4.5%) felt **signage** could be improved, 21 (4.5%) requested more **greenery** and 18 (3.9%) felt **better enforcement** was a priority.

The **school buses** are clearly a local issue for some people – 12 (2.6%) of those that commented felt stopping these was a priority.

Other things raised included enhancing markings, improving pavements, parking issues (including disabled parking), loading bays, camera enforcement, toilets, lighting, street furniture and revising the road layout around George Street.

### 3.5 Additional Comments

At the end of the online survey, respondents were asked if they had any further comments. This is worth examining to further identify and compare against key themes presented elsewhere, but also provide insight into potential wider ambitions elsewhere in St Albans. 261 responded to the question.

Manual coding was used to pick out specific elements from the submitted additional comments. Many of the 261 respondents took the opportunity to provide **general positive** (42, 16.2%) or **general negative** (21, 8.1%) feedback.

The key points raised have not been separated into whether people were supportive or opposed to any particular issues. i.e. 55 (21.2%) of the 261 that commented mentioned **pedestrianisation**, though this would include people who viewed it positively and negatively.

While **pedestrianisation** was the most commented upon topic, **traffic restrictions** (30, 11.5%), **reduced traffic** (27, 10.4%), **business needs** (22, 8.5%), **one-way traffic** (21, 8.1%), **cycling/cycle lane** (19, 7.3%), **safety** (17, 6.5%), **school buses** (5.8%, 15) and **air quality** (14, 5.4%) were also mentioned several times.

Other comments raised relate to decision making, community, parking/loading and public transport.

Key themes emerging from this question (and example quotes) are presented below:

### **Pedestrianisation and Traffic Reduction**

Many comments support the pedestrianisation of George Street, highlighting benefits such as improved safety, reduced pollution, and a more pleasant environment for shopping and socialising. Some suggest extending pedestrianisation to other streets and making it all days.

*"Personally, I think that the pedestrianisation of George Street worked very well, making it a much more likely place for people to visit."*

*"We need to reduce traffic within the city centre, for safety, health and climate reasons."*

*"It's really pleasant being in traffic-free city centres, and only a minor inconvenience to drivers to achieve this."*

### **Support for Local Businesses**

Several comments emphasize the need for council support to help local businesses thrive, especially given the challenges posed by constant changes and traffic schemes. There is a call for more consistent and supportive measures to ensure business viability.

*"Please also consider how difficult it is to run a successful business in St Albans - we need support from the council and not to make it harder."*

*"The constant changes over the last few years have been extremely painful for all businesses."*

### **Public Transport and Cycling Infrastructure**

Improved public transport and better cycling infrastructure are frequently mentioned as necessary to reduce car dependency. Suggestions include more cycle lanes, better bus services and even e-bike schemes.

*"I think better public transport and cycle infrastructure is needed to reduce the number of cars."*

*"Better bus services, cycle hire schemes, wider pavements, planting, slower speed limits, and restrictions on motor vehicles should all be on the table."*

*"Traffic in St Albans is terrible, the more people we take out of cars and into public transport the better!"*



## Environmental Concerns

Reducing car emissions and improving air quality are major concerns. Many comments support measures that prioritize environmental health, such as banning diesel buses and reducing traffic in the city centre.

*"If the scheme helps reduce air pollution then it's another great benefit to residents."*

*"We need to limit traffic in St Albans, the pollution is terrible! We also need to ban diesel buses."*

## Historical and Tourist Appeal

Enhancing the historical and tourist appeal of George Street is a recurring theme. Suggestions include adding information points about the historic buildings and creating more seating areas for tourists.

*"As far as I'm aware the top end is the site of the first battle of the War of the Roses - I imagine an information point would be good."*

*"We need to be able to celebrate the beauty of George St, and not have it become the rat run that it used to be."*

*"The centre of the old town should be prioritised for local residents and tourists."*

## Traffic Management and Road Safety

There are mixed opinions on traffic management, with some advocating for more one-way systems and others calling for the removal of unnecessary road closures. Safety concerns, especially regarding school buses and large vehicles on narrow streets, are highlighted.

*"The two-way traffic system when it was in place caused traffic jams due to the narrow street."*

*"The volume of traffic has reduced since the scheme. The speed of traffic has (slightly) reduced too. The bus situation is better (a bit)."*

*"The sooner that George St returns to two-way working the better for the local residents."*

## Community and Social Benefits

Pedestrian-only areas are seen as having social benefits, creating spaces for community interaction and making the city more family-friendly.

*The positive impact on mental and physical health from reduced traffic and more pedestrian areas is noted.*

*"Pedestrianising the city centre would hugely improve the city and the enjoyment for people to shop and meet."*

## Consultation and Decision-Making

Frustration with the constant changes and lack of decisive action from the council is evident. There is a call for the council to listen more to local residents and make final decisions that are adhered to.

*"Please can a final decision be made soon and stick to it."*

*"LISTEN TO THE RESIDENTS OF ST ALBANS. Many of your decisions seem to be made by people who don't live here and have little understanding of the local situation."*

## Parking and Accessibility

Parking issues, especially for residents and disabled visitors, are a concern. Some comments suggest creating more parking spaces and improving accessibility for those who need to drive.

*"Please consider residents parking when making decisions."*

*"Used to park in George Street to go to the restaurants as less mobile, now can't visit as no parking."*

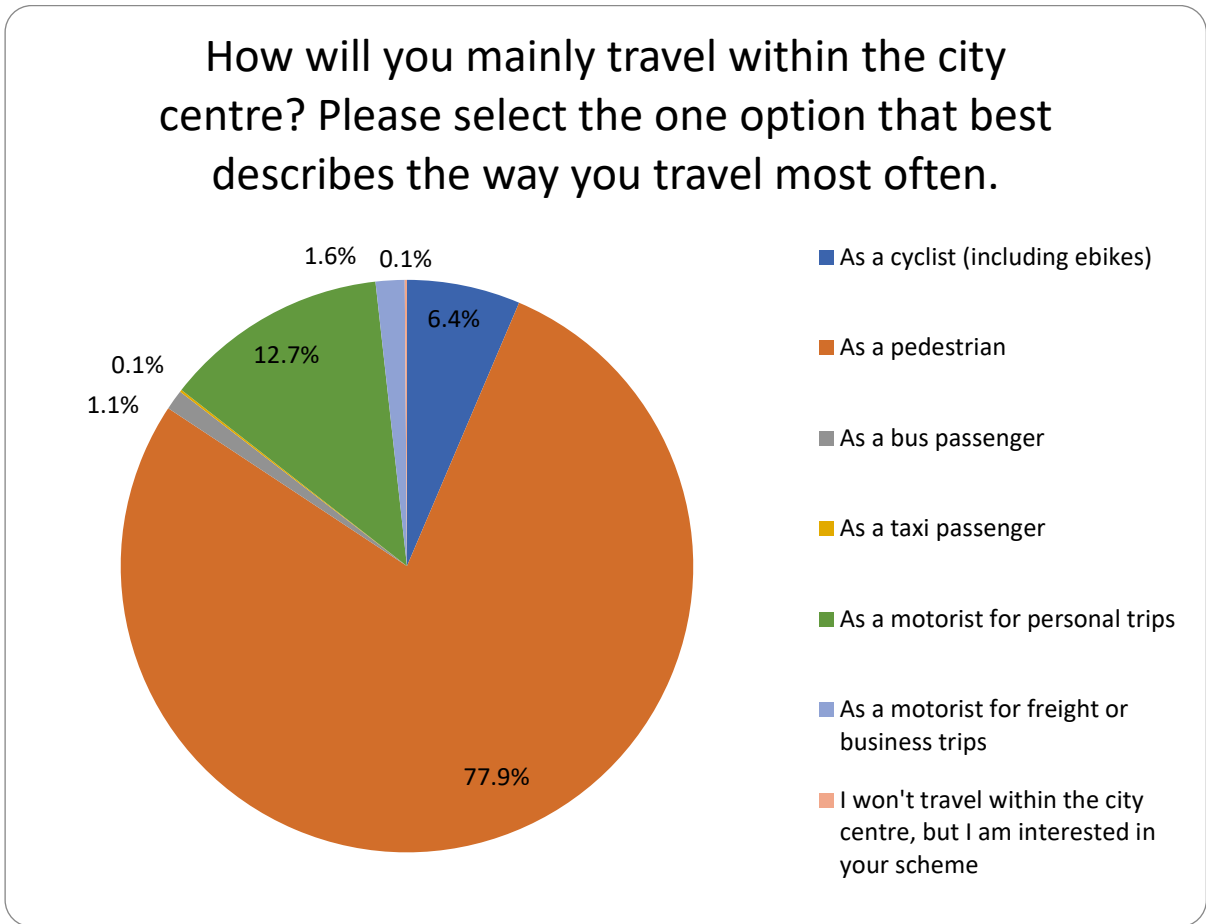
*Maintenance and Basic Services: Several comments criticize the council for focusing on new schemes while neglecting basic maintenance, such as fixing potholes and streetlights. There is a call for better upkeep of existing infrastructure before implementing new projects.*

*"HCC should stop looking at schemes causing issues and concentrate on basic maintenance."*

*"Fix the potholes."*

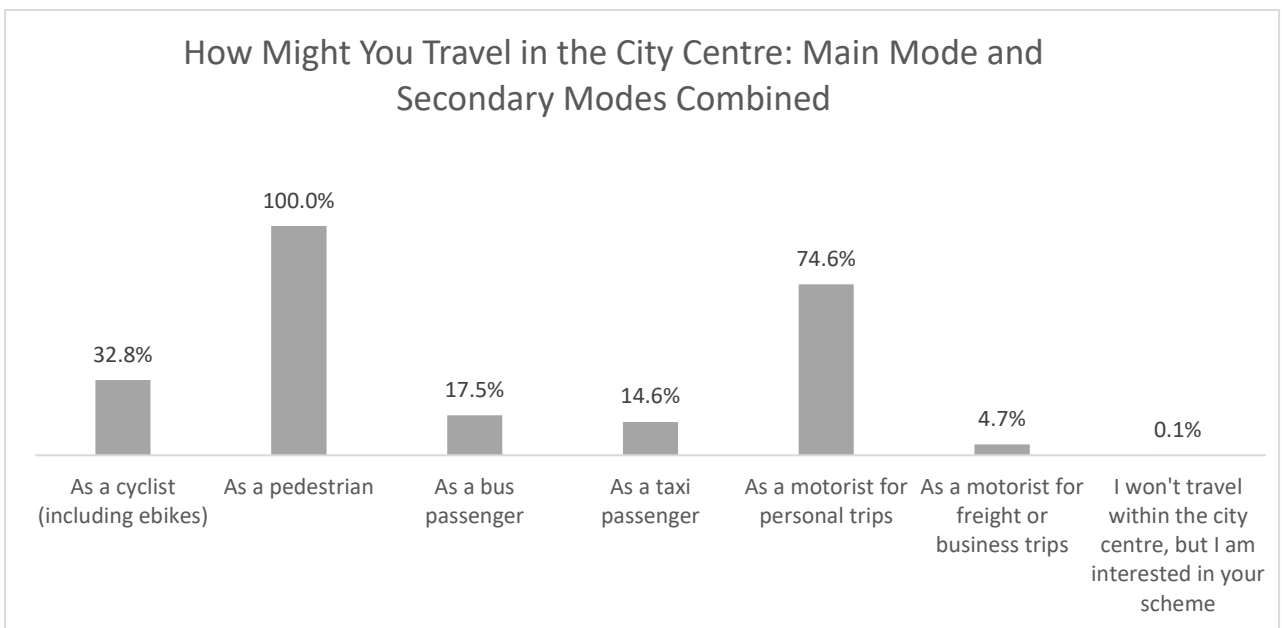
## 3.6 How Respondents Travel in the City Centre

The majority of respondents (78%) ordinarily walk in the city centre. 12.7% drive and 6.4% cycle (see Figure 2).



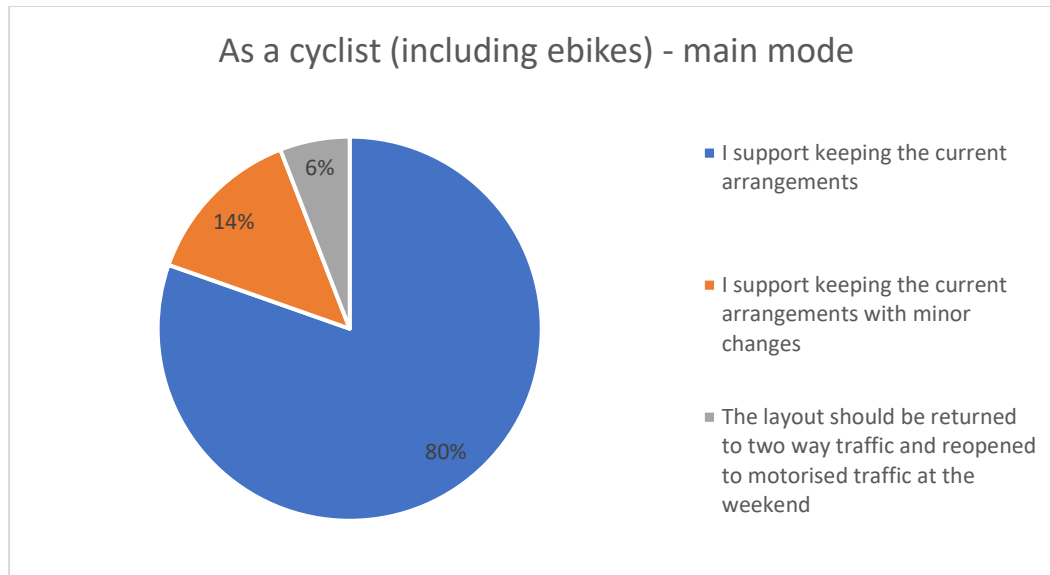
**Figure 2: City Journeys (n=796)**

Secondary modes of travel were also solicited (Figure 3). While everyone travelled (at least occasionally) as a pedestrian, the second most frequently cited mode was as a motorist (74.6%) then as a cyclist (32.8%).



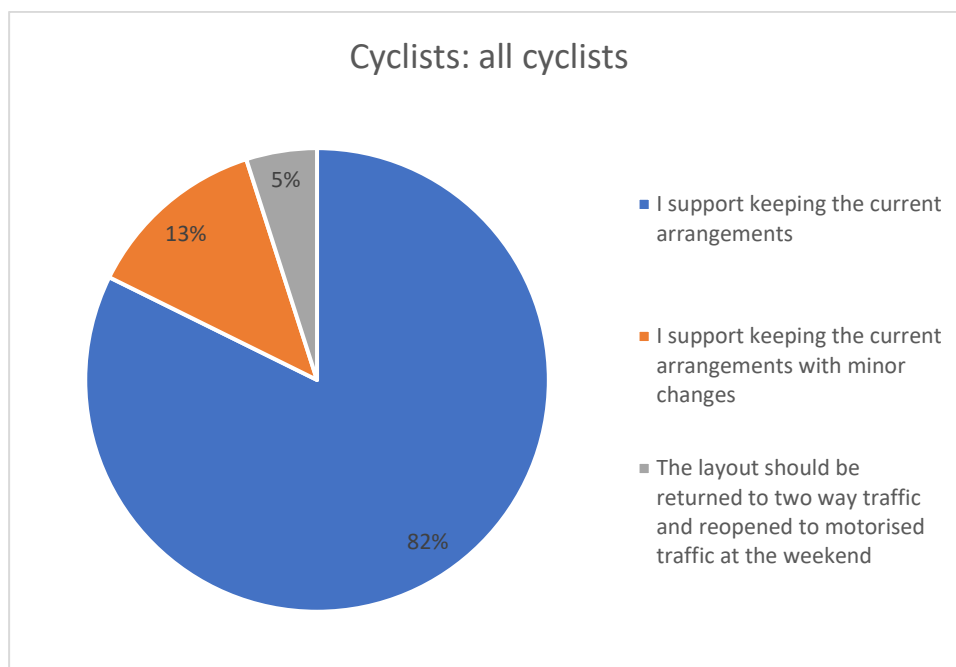
**Figure 3: All Travel Modes Used**

People whose main mode of transport is cycling are proportionally most likely to support keeping the current arrangements as they are, with 80% supporting the current arrangements (Figure 4).



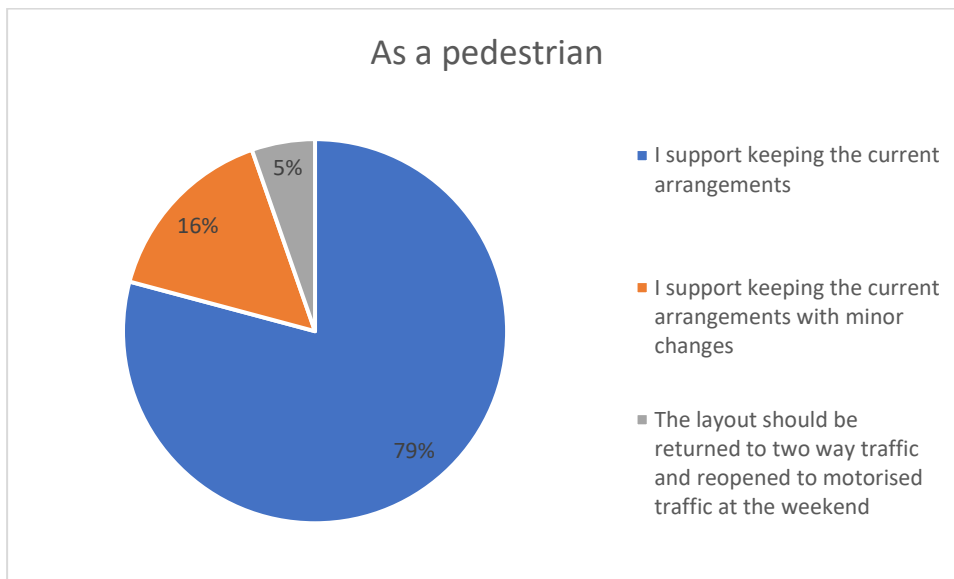
**Figure 4: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Where Main Mode is Cycling (n=51)**

This grows to 82% when factoring in people who additionally say they cycle occasionally (Figure 5).



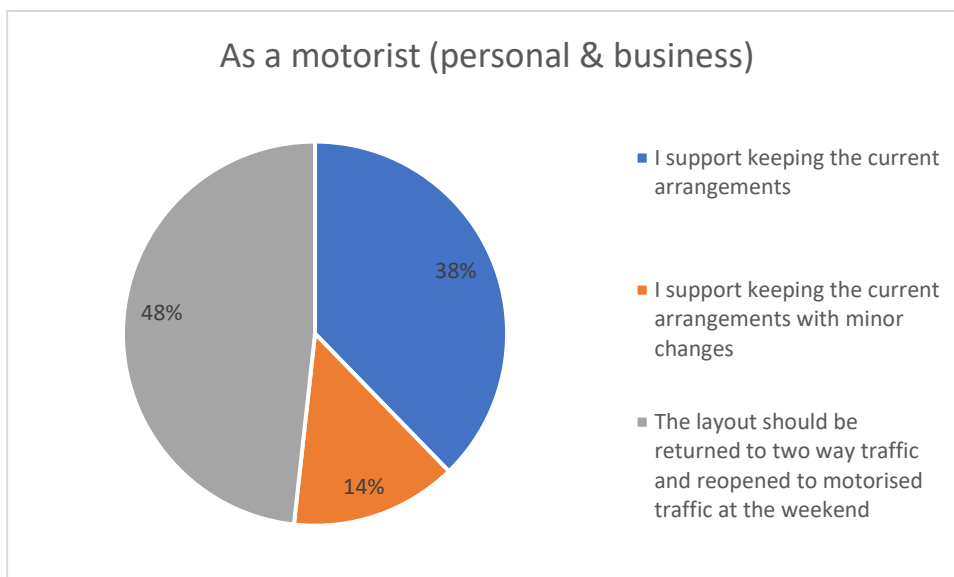
**Figure 5: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Where Main & Occasional Mode is Cycling (n=344)**

People who are most likely to walk to and in the city centre are also supportive. 79% support keeping the current arrangements and only 5% think the layout should be returned to two-way, seven-day traffic (Figure 6).



**Figure 6: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Where Main Mode is Walking (n=620)**

Motorists (main mode) who travel to and through the city centre are least likely to be supportive of the measures, with 48% wanting it returned to two-way seven-day traffic (Figure 7). Only 38% are supportive of keeping the current arrangements, with an additional 14% supporting with minor changes.



**Figure 7: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Where Main Mode is Driving (n=114)**

Bus users (also including people who use buses as a secondary mode) are also supportive, with 79% supporting keeping the current arrangements.

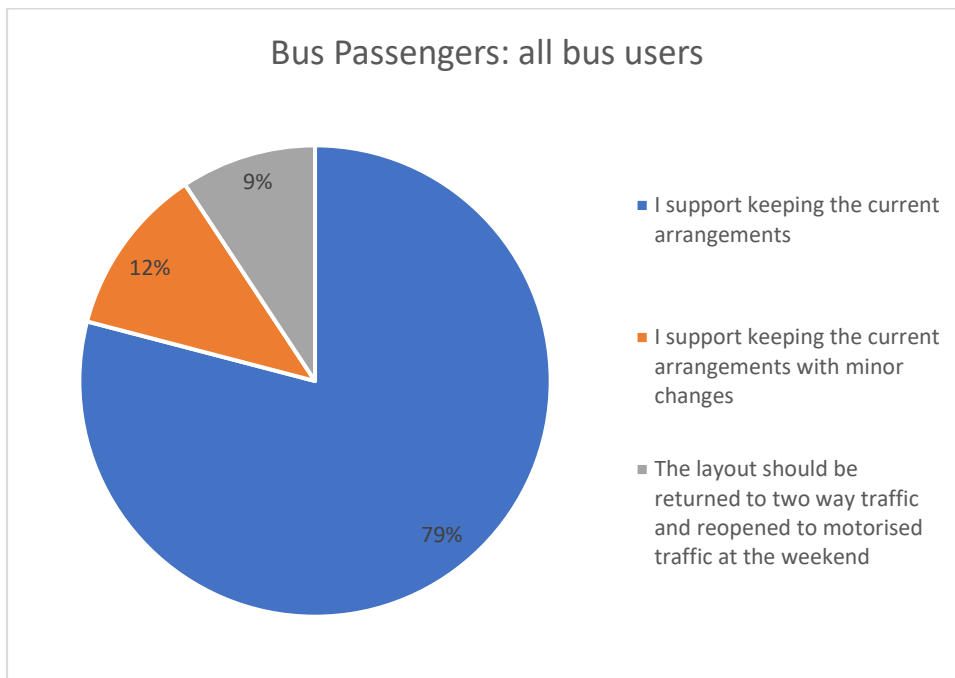


Figure 8: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Where Main & Occasional Mode is Bus (n=130)

### 3.7 Where Respondents are From

While 30% of respondents were from the immediate area around George Street, twice as many were local from elsewhere in St Albans (Figure 9).

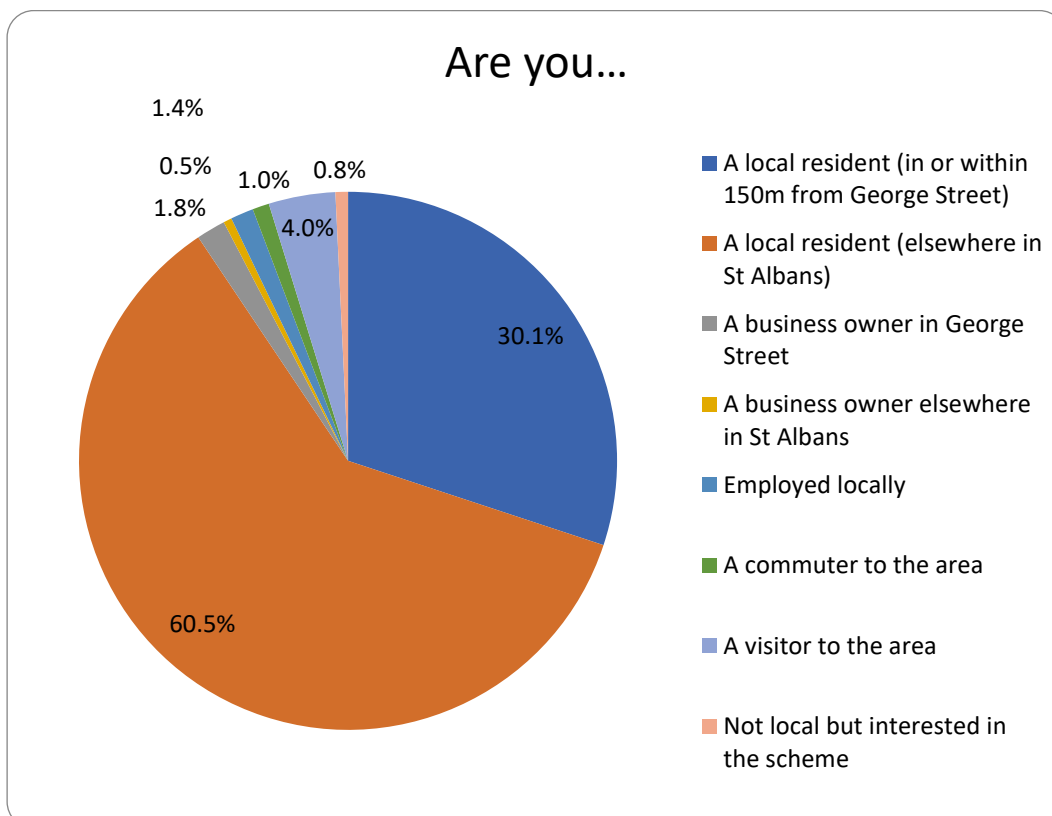
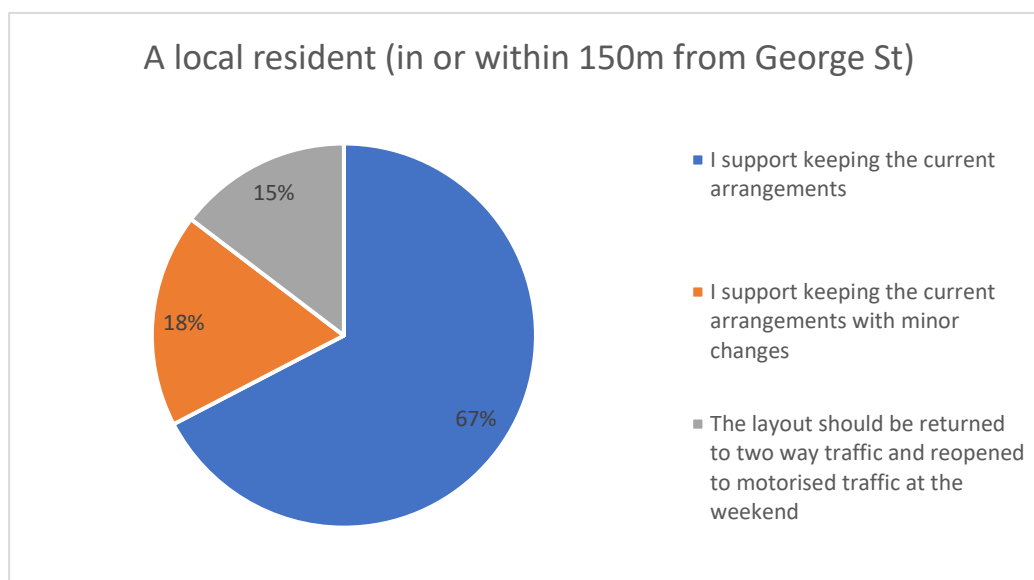


Figure 9: Respondents Were Asked in Which Context They Are Interested in George Street (n=798)

Of those who live closest to George Street, 67% support keeping the current arrangements (see Figure 10). Business owners from George Street are also overall supportive (Table 4): five support keeping the current arrangements; seven support keeping the arrangements with minor changes; two think the layout should be returned to two way traffic and reopened fully to motor vehicles. It is thought that business owners and neighbours are more likely to have specific elements that they would like to see changed or have a specific reason why they are opposed to the current arrangements.

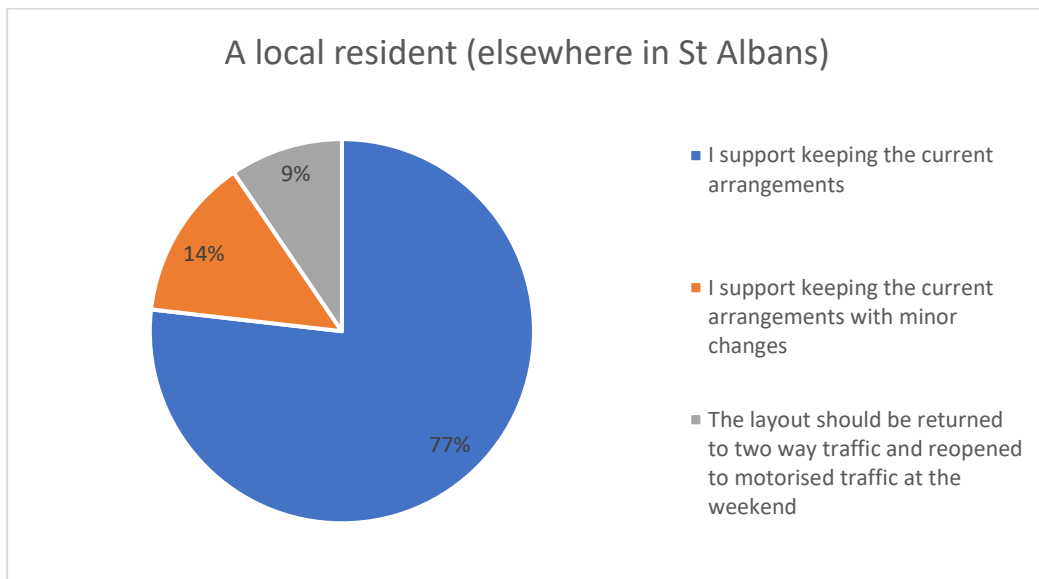
**Table 4: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures by Respondent Type**

Row Labels	Support current arrangements	Minor changes	Two way and reopened	Grand Total
A local resident (elsewhere in St Albans)	371	66	46	483
A local resident (in or within 150m from George Street)	161	43	35	239
A visitor to the area	26	3	3	32
A business owner in George Street	5	7	2	14
Employed locally	6	1	4	11
A commuter to the area	3	3	2	8
Not local but interested in the scheme	5		1	6
A business owner elsewhere in St Albans	2		2	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>582</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>804</b>



**Figure 10: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Living Within 150m of George Street (n=240)**

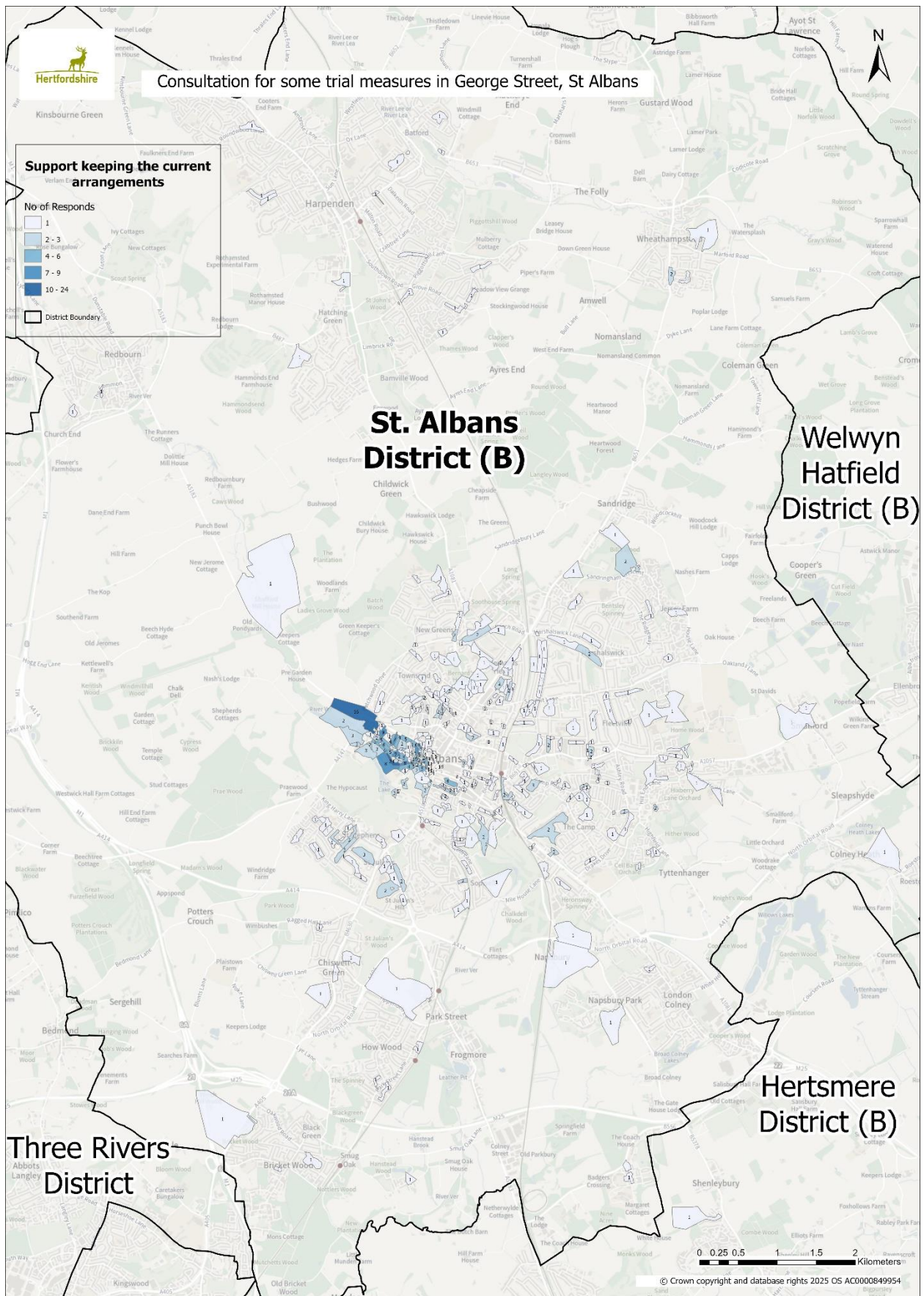
Residents elsewhere in St Albans are more likely to be supportive, with 77% supporting the current arrangements and only 9% being fully against (Figure 11).



**Figure 11: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Living Elsewhere in St Albans (n=483)**

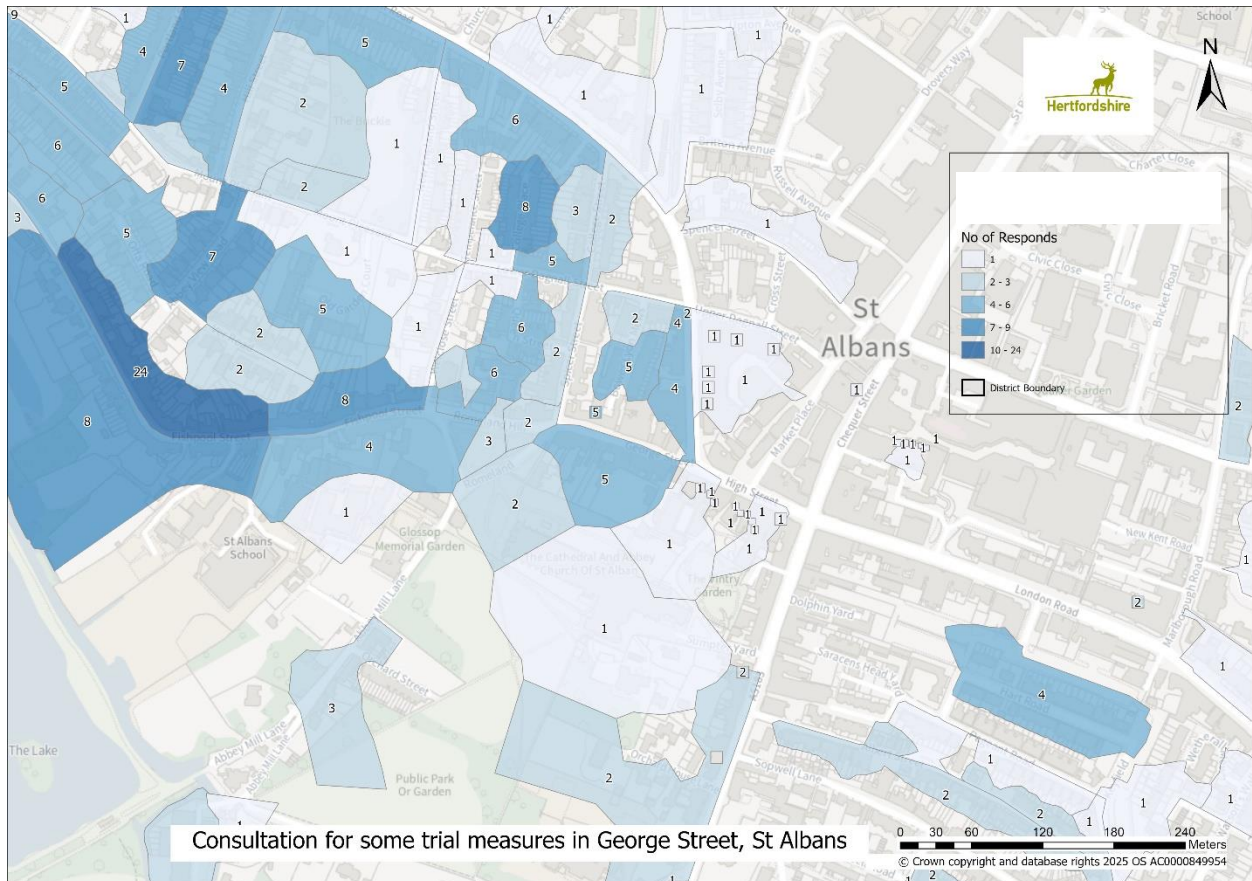
Respondents were also encouraged to include their postcode. Responses in support of keeping the current arrangements are shown in Map 1.





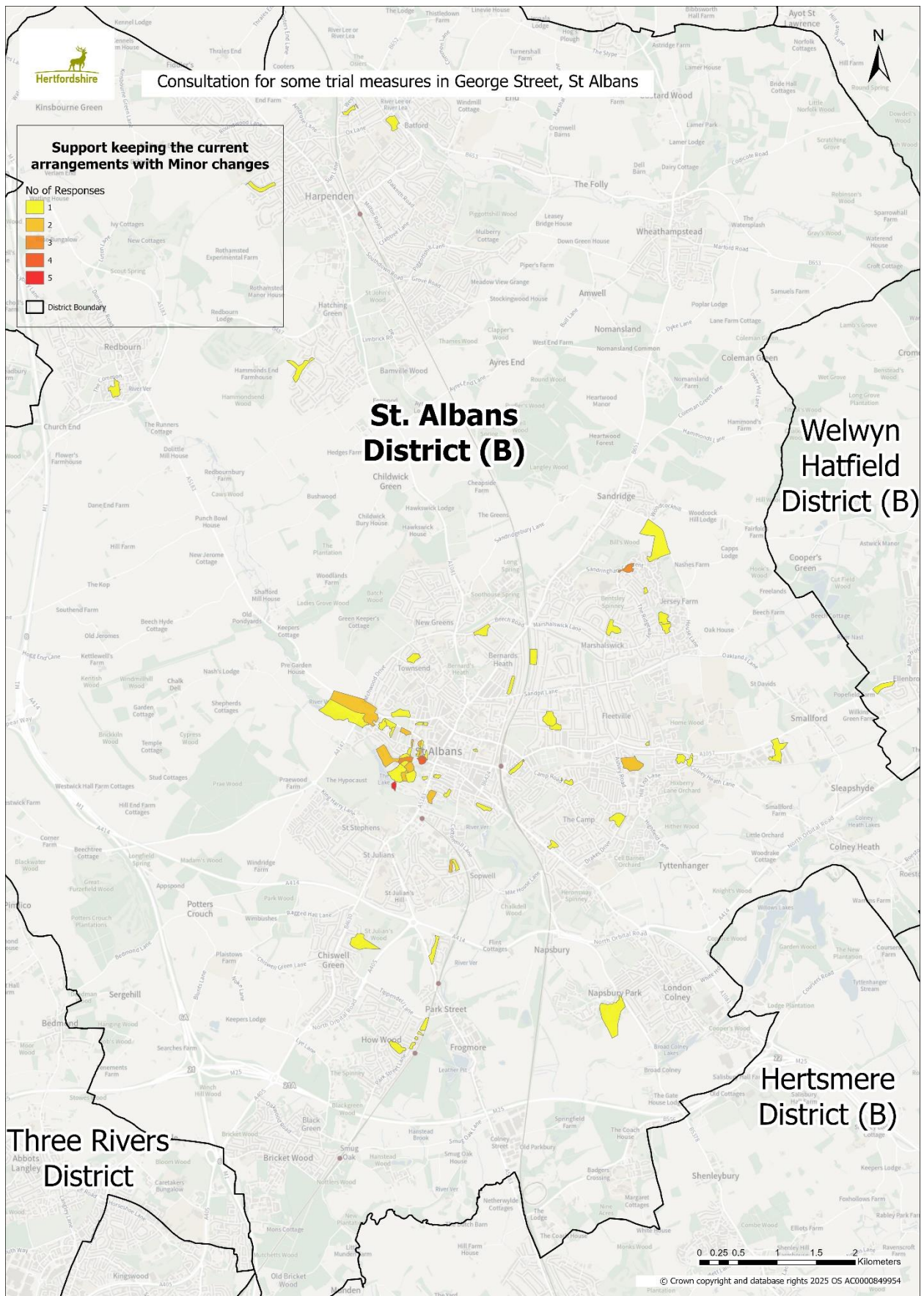
Map 1: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures: St Albans District

Looking in detail it is clear there are pockets of support of the current arrangements from respondents throughout the whole district and sometimes a bit beyond. However it is most relevant to look at the area immediately around George Street (Map 2). High levels of supportive responses were received in the area at the bottom of Verulam Road (Camlet Way/Fryth Mead) and the mid section of Fishpool Street.



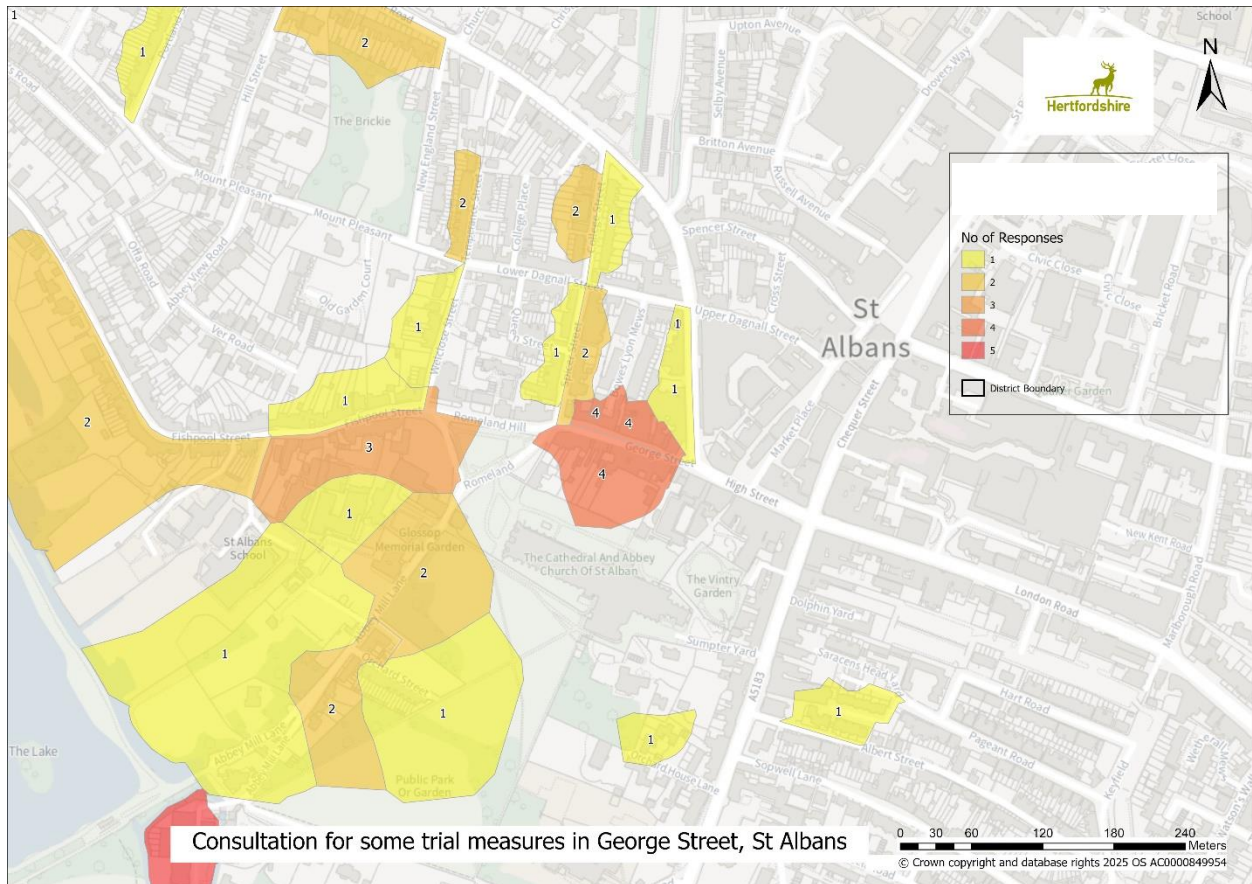
**Map 2: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures: Vicinity of George Street**

We can also look at a similar map for people who are supportive of the current arrangements but would like minor changes. This is displayed in Map 3.



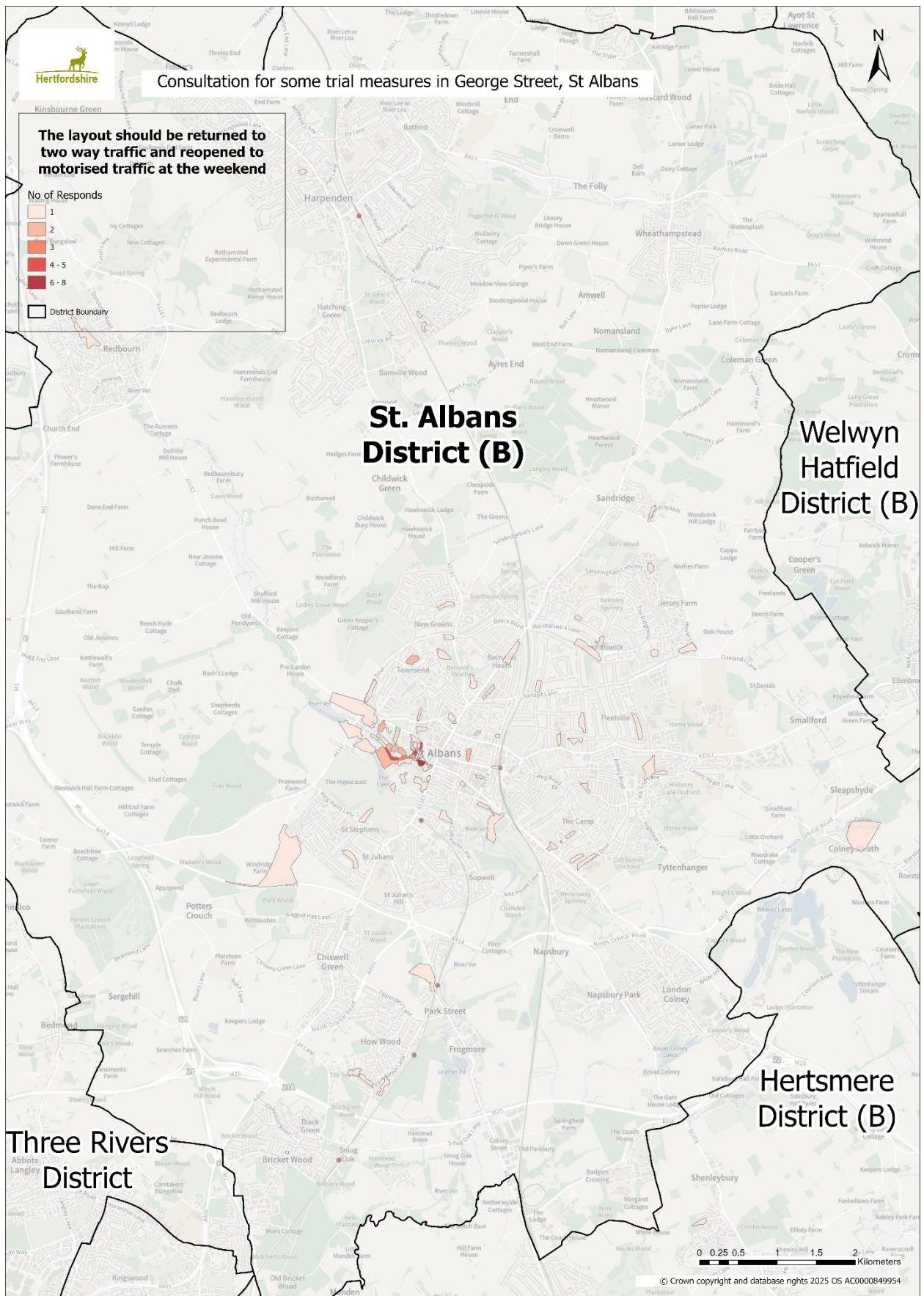
**Map 3: Overall Support with Minor Changes for Phase 3 Measures: St Albans District**

People suggesting there should be minor changes are thinner spread and in the main the focus is around the area immediately around George Street. The inset map is shown in Map 4. Five responses suggesting changes needed to be made were from the far bottom of Abbey Mill Lane. 12 were from George Street itself.



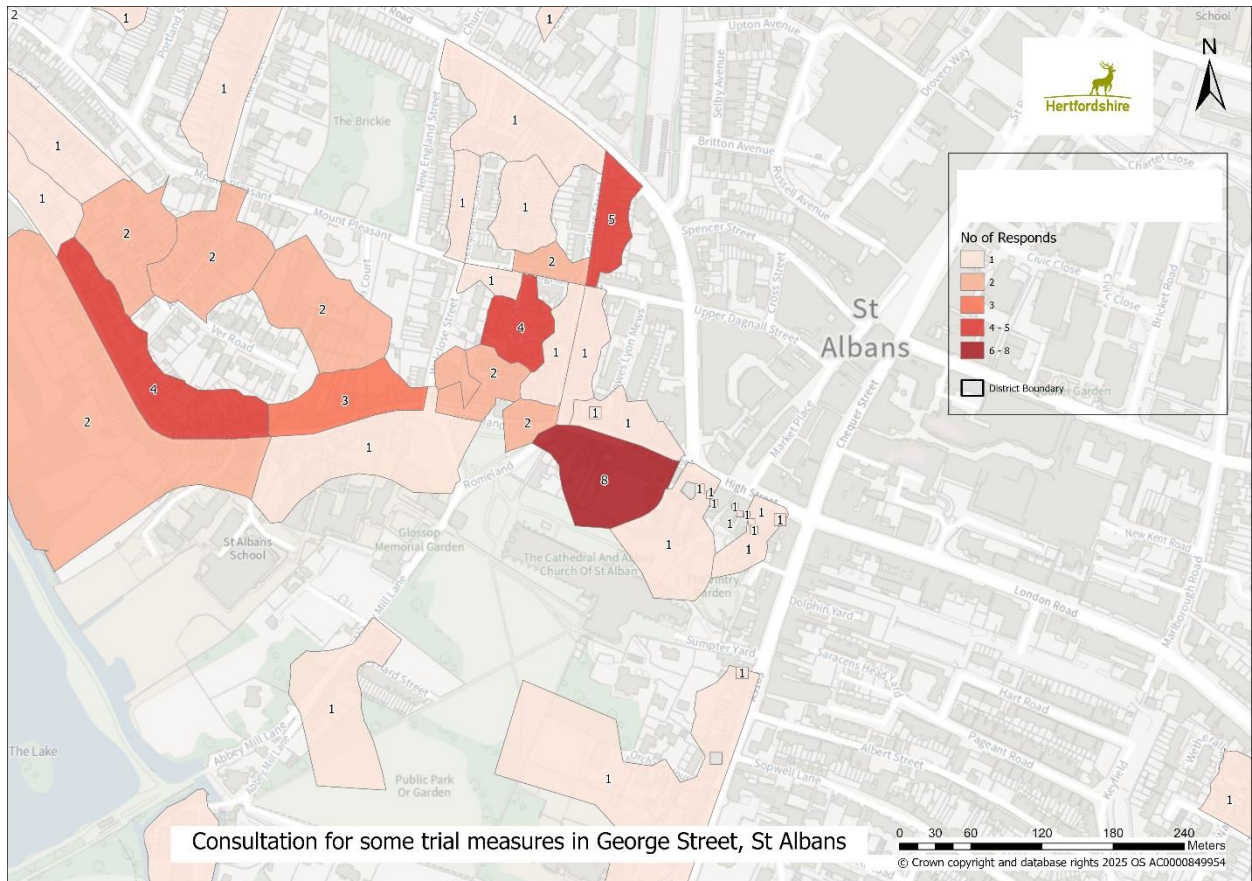
**Map 4: Overall Support with Minor Changes for Phase 3 Measures: vicinity of George Street**

Map 5 shows respondents who wanted George Street returned to two-way traffic seven days a week.



**Map 5: Overall Return to two-way traffic seven days a week: St Albans District**

The main focus is the immediate area around George Street. Looking in more depth at this area (Map 6), 10 responses wanting a return to two-way traffic seven days a week were from George Street itself. Four were from the mid part of Fishpool Street, five from College Street and four from Queen Street.



Map 6: Overall Return to two-way traffic seven days a week: vicinity of George Street

### 3.8 Respondents Who Have a Disability, Mobility Issues or Are Blue Badge Holders

Respondents who have an illness, disability or infirmity that limits daily activities are more likely to have concerns over the current arrangements, though it is worth noting 59% are supportive of keeping the current arrangements (Figure 11).

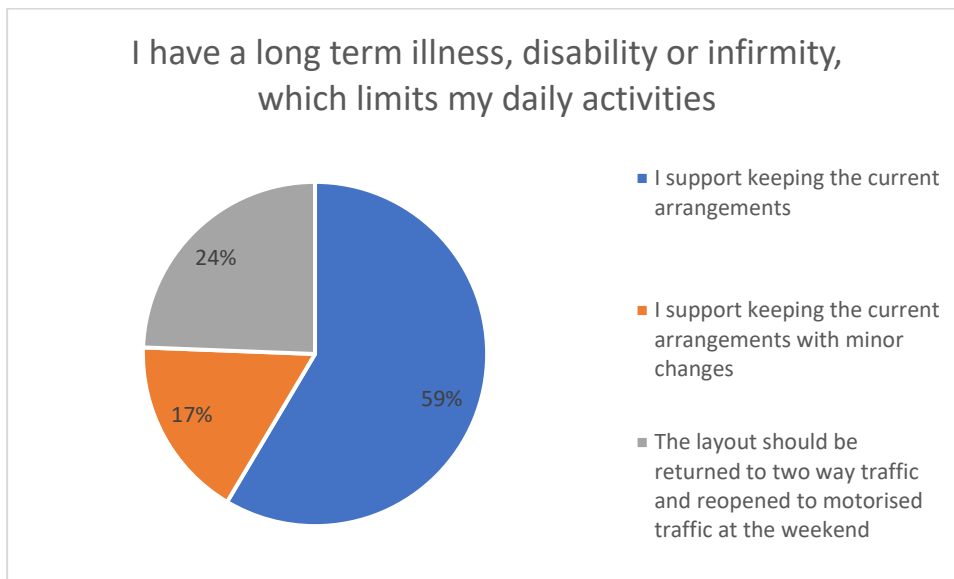


Figure 11: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures People with long term illness... (n=41)

However, Blue Badge holders are more likely to be unsupportive, with 60% thinking the layout should be returned to two-way traffic seven days a week (Figure 12). 36% support the current arrangements. This may be because previously Blue Badge holders could park along George Street before the waiting and loading ban was implemented as part of Phase 3.

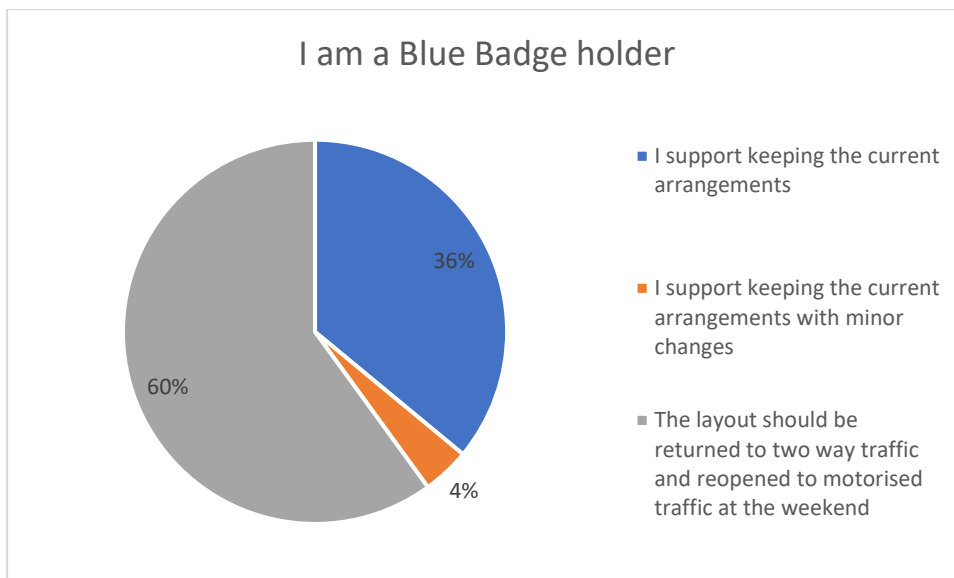
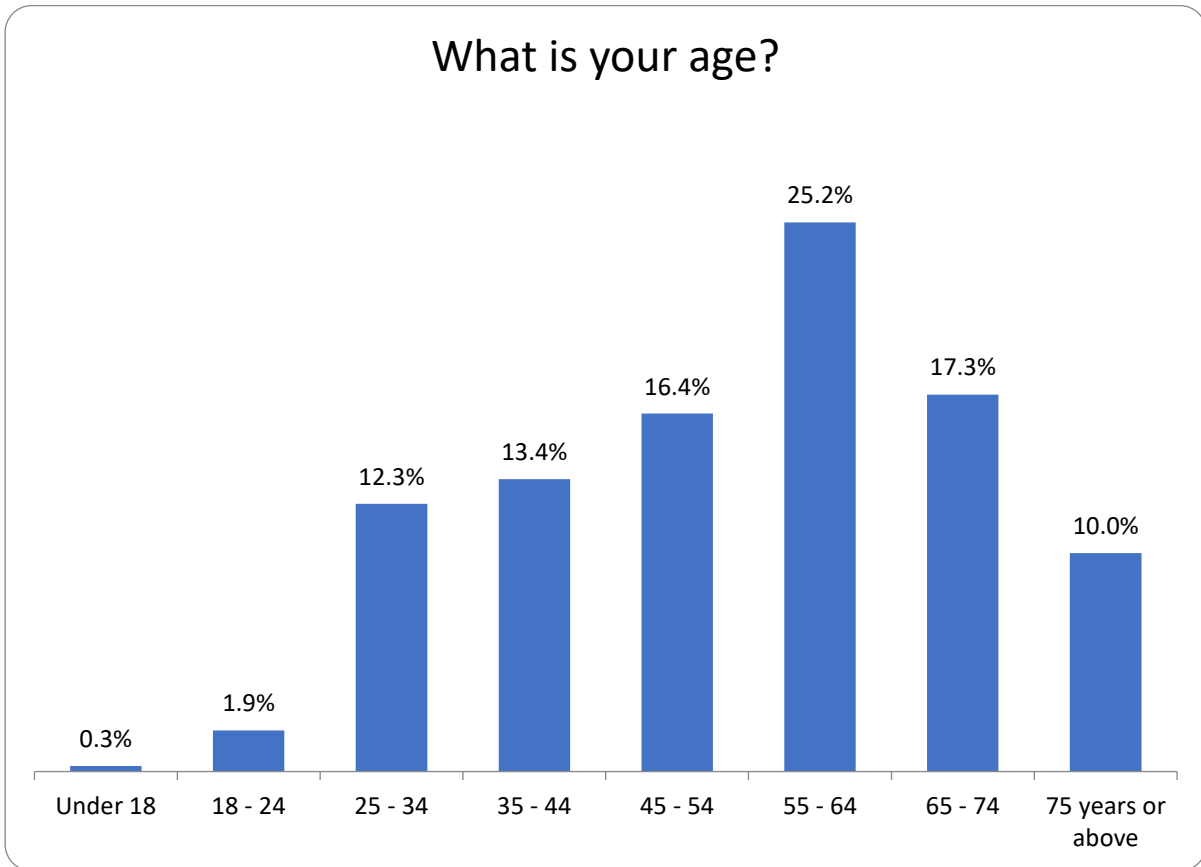


Figure 12: Overall Support for Phase 3 Measures Blue Badge (n=25)

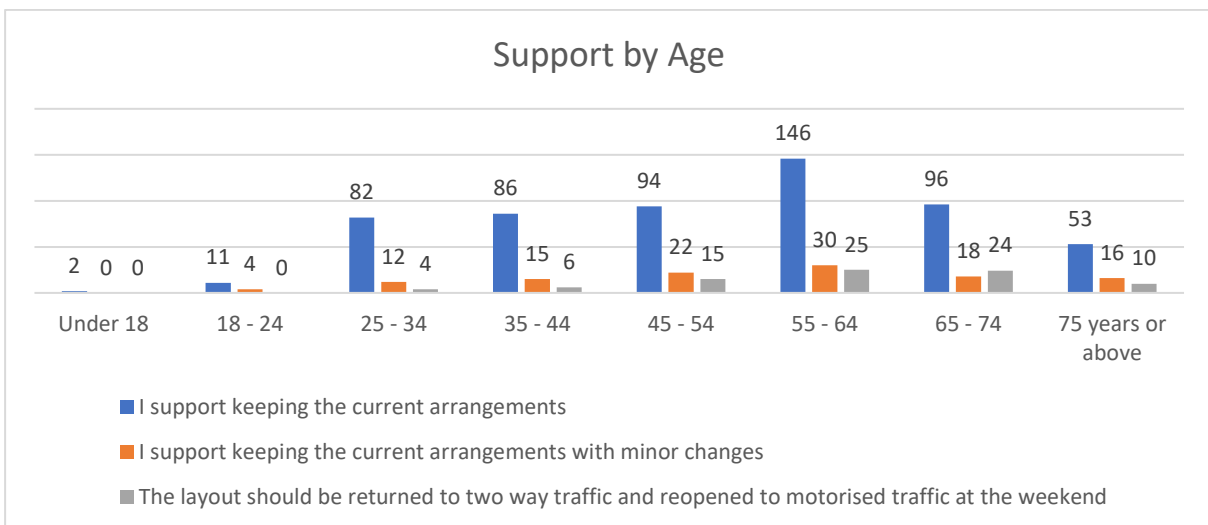
### 3.9 Demographic Analysis

The modal age group for responses is 55-64 (201 responses). Apart from that, there is quite an even distribution of responses from age groups from 25 through to 75 and over (Figure 13).



**Figure 13: Age Distribution of Respondents (n=798)**

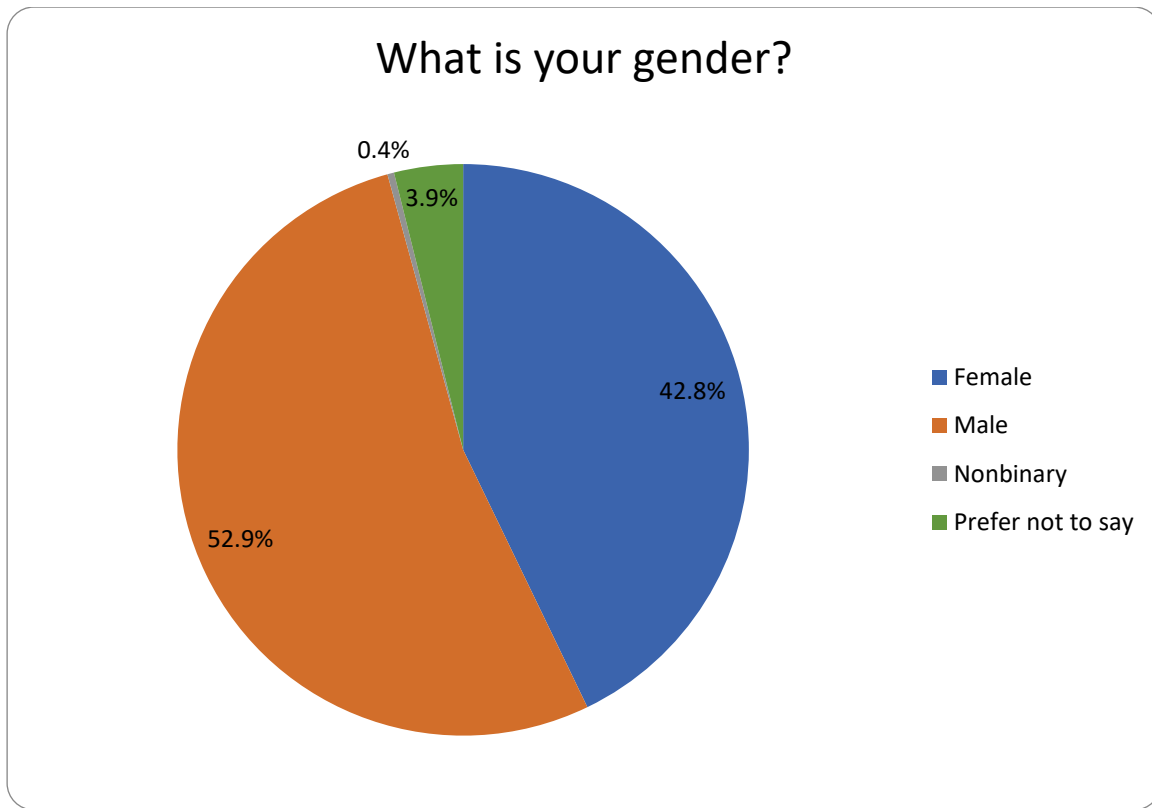
Younger age groups are likely to be more supportive of the current arrangement. The proportion of people wanting the road returned to two-way traffic seven days a week increases through the age groups to a maximum of 17.4% of respondents aged 65-74 (Figure 14). Still, 69.6% of those aged 65-74 are supportive of keeping the current arrangements.



**Figure 14: Overall Support for Phase 3 by Age Grouping**

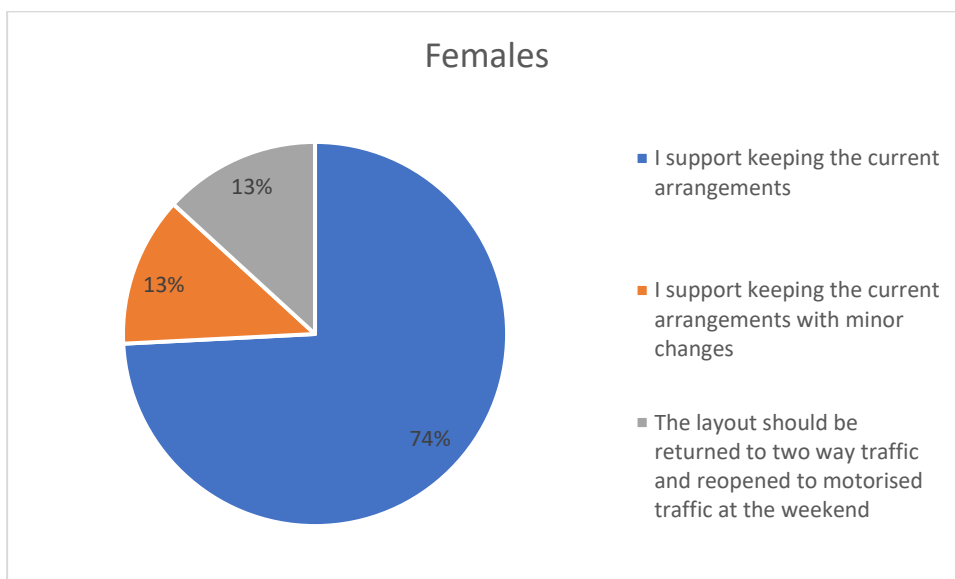


Proportionally more males than females responded to the survey (Figure 15).

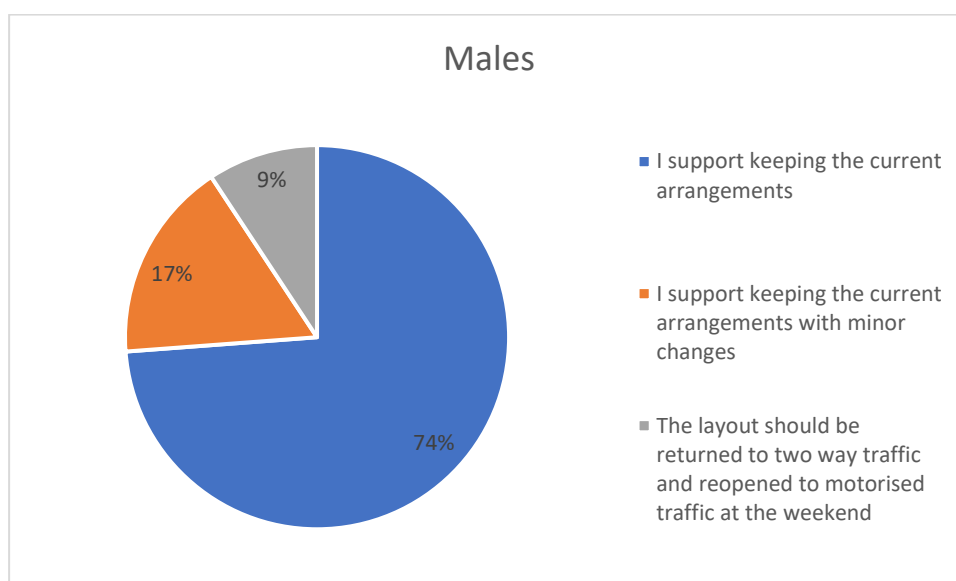


**Figure 15: Gender of Respondents (n=796)**

There is very little difference between male and female responses, with 74% of both genders supporting keeping the current arrangements. Females were slightly more likely to want the road layout returning to two-way traffic seven days a week (13% females compared to 9% males) (Figure 16/Figure 17).



**Figure 16: Overall Support for Phase 3 – Females (n=341)**



**Figure 17: Overall Support for Phase 3 – Males (n=421)**

The overwhelming majority of respondents describe their ethnic background as English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British (Table 5). No ethnic grouping had a majority of respondents who wanted the street returned to two-way traffic seven days a week.

**Table 5: Ethnicity of Respondents**

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?		
Answer Choice	Response Percent	Response Total
English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	79.5%	619
Prefer not to say	8.2%	64
Any other White background	7.6%	59
Irish	1.7%	13
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background	1.2%	9
Indian	0.5%	4
Any other Asian background	0.3%	2
White and Black Caribbean	0.3%	2
White and Asian	0.3%	2
Any other ethnic group	0.3%	2
Chinese	0.1%	1
African	0.1%	1
Arab	0.1%	1
Asian or Asian British	0.0%	0
Pakistani	0.0%	0
Bangladeshi	0.0%	0
Black, African, Caribbean or Black British	0.0%	0

Caribbean	0.0%	0
Any other Black, African or Caribbean background	0.0%	0
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.0%	0
White and Black African	0.0%	0
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0.0%	0
Roma	0.0%	0
Other ethnic group	0.0%	0
	<i>Answered</i>	779
	<i>Skipped</i>	25

## 4 Email & Postal Responses

Two written responses were received by post, both were opposed to reopening George Street to two-way traffic seven days a week. Example quotes from these letters include: “My preference would be for it to be a traffic-free space ... EVERY DAY. It could become a little gem of a public space” and “As a pensioner with mobility problems I enjoy walking in George Street when it is free from traffic – therefore I prefer the present system.”

An emailed response was received from the St Albans Civic Society, supportive of the current arrangements, which concluded: “Our view is that reopening George Street at weekends or to two-way traffic at any time would be counter to the goal of long-term improvement. Reverting to the previous status of two way traffic, is a step backwards and displays a lack of ambition and a failure to take the opportunity that the last three years have provided.”

An emailed response also came from Hertfordshire Fire & Rescue Service, again supportive of the current arrangements:

*As someone that has been involved in this project from the outset I am all too aware of the amount of work that has gone into this element thus far. I would like to commend you and your team for keeping it on track and maintaining a pace of change management that has allowed the project to develop.*

*On behalf of Hertfordshire Fire and Rescue Service I would offer a view on the proposals that, if we are to finalise the project, then the preferred option would be to maintain what is in place, rather than a return to two way traffic along George Street.*

*This is not based on anything other than crews having gotten used to the current arrangements. If we are to retain a one way system, with the area closed off over the weekend periods, there is little or no adjustment to be made for us.*

*If, however, we are to revert to two way traffic at all times, then that may necessitate some changes in our operational response in that crews may use*

*alternative routes to access the West of the City as the area around George Street may well suffer from congestion at certain times.*

*If I were to be asked for a professional opinion I would ask that we keep what is in place. Equally, if a decision is made to change it for whatever reason, we can and will adapt to the new system.*

Flower Box, a business on George Street also provided an email response. They would prefer a return to two-way traffic seven days a week:

Email responses were received from two local residents who have been added to the key stakeholders list because of their investment in the project. One is supportive of the current arrangements, the other would prefer a return to two-way traffic seven days a week.

## 5 Conclusions & Next Steps

The Phase 3 arrangements are working in the view of a large proportion of respondents. While there are people advocating for more ambition on George Street (and elsewhere in St Albans) there are also those wanting a return to a traffic focussed arrangement. The current compromise is well supported, so it is our view that this is retained.

The George Street PTRO has been sealed, as has those for loading bays in Verulam Road and Romeland Hill.

A site visit will be arranged with the sponsor, designer and contractor. This will identify missing signage and a programme will be put in place to install these. Other defects will be identified and added to a programme to correct these. The disabled bay order on Verulam Road will be sealed with lines and sign installed for this.

If, following the signing of the George Street loading bay, there remains issues with vehicles obstructing the cycle lane, a waiting and loading ban could be pursued on the north side of the street.

While some respondents felt safety had improved along George Street, some also raised safety concerns, including some concerning the junction between Spicer Street, Romeland and George Street, vehicles blocking the cycle lane and relating to the behaviour of some people on cycles, mopeds, motorbikes and in motor vehicles. Three accidents have been reported during the last five years that are pertinent to George Street.

1. A “serious” hit and run incident took place on 05/04/2021 at 10am (during the period when the road was open to traffic to facilitate access and loading) during the original emergency measures. This was between a pedestrian and a cyclist.
2. At the junction of Romeland, Spicer Street and George Street there was a “slight” accident between a motor bike and a motor vehicle. This happened on

22/03/2022 and was in the period where George Street had returned to two-way traffic.

3. On 27/12/2023 there was an accident between a motorcycle and a motor vehicle at the turn from Verulam Road into High Street. This took place at 15:29 at a time when George Street would have been closed to traffic, though the motorcycle may have been using George Street illegally.

Consideration should be given as to whether George Street's Place & Movement status should be recategorized from P3M2 (inner urban road with a predominance of retail and other commercial land uses, e.g. high street, local shopping parades, retail parks) to P3M1 (Inner urban road or square at the core of a settlement, predominantly retail, Shared space and often block paving, with no roadside kerb. High people movement but little to no motorised vehicle movement).

Blue Badge holders were the only group of respondents where the majority would prefer a return to two-way traffic seven days a week, based on 25 responses. We have promoted a new and additional Blue Badge bay on Verulam Road with dropped kerbing and level access to George Street. If the board accepts the recommendation, we will seal the Disabled Bay order and instruct the lining and signing of the bay alongside additional works.

Final works will be carried out in 2025/26. These will focus on making "temporary" features permanent, principally kerb extensions in place of plastic bollards and hatchings, planted areas in place of planters and remarking any faded lines.

Like any street, George Street will continue to be imperfect, usage will remain compromised and some people will continue to feel their needs or those of others are not being met. HCC will continue to investigate funding opportunities to further improve George Street in the longer term in ways that are aligned with policy and strategy objectives, and link into the early project validation work that has already been carried out with the ambition to improve the public realm, accessibility and provision for vulnerable road users.

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