



When the Mayor launched a conversation on 29 January about the regeneration of the Town Centre he clearly stated that it would lead to a full consultation process lasting up to a year.

This is where it starts

The Town Council has *not* decided, in public or in private, to pedestrianise either the Town Centre or the Esplanade; but it does want to work with others in restoring the sense of the Town as a destination with the High Street as one of its attractions

The most attractive Town Centres are flexible spaces where people are happy to live, meet, spend their leisure time and enjoy their experience of shopping.

But ours has become overwhelmed by traffic, drastically reducing the space for people and pleasure; and is also dangerous, dirty and dominated by air that is neither fresh or healthy.

And all this with the additional challenges from out-of-town retail stores, increasing internet shopping and local deprivation that the High Streets of coastal towns everywhere now face.

We know that in many other coastal towns in this country and internationally, becoming pedestrianised, or at least car-free, has increased their attractiveness as a

destination of choice with increased footfall and growing businesses.

So this publication summarises the *challenges* facing our High Street, the *evidence* from those other places and the *benefits* of a car-free trading space as a central feature of Destination Ventnor.

It also sketches two of the range of *possibilities* for achieving that radical change.

What we don't yet know is whether one of them would work in Ventnor – or whether the town would welcome it.

Which is why we've planned the extensive consultation meetings listed on the back page: we want to hear from and listen to all those with a stake in the town's future before deciding what comes next in the continuing conversation.

And something does have to come next; more of the same will not restore Ventnor as a major visitor destination.

<https://vimeo.com/252388596>

We want every Ventnor resident to have the opportunity to have a say about the future of the Town Centre. There are several ways to do that.

Reply Card: included with this publication is a pre-paid reply card. Please complete the details on the back and post it – there's no need for a stamp.

Website: following the link to the consultation on the Home Page of the Town Council's website at www.ventnortowncouncil.org.uk will take you to a short form to complete.

Email: email your response directly to townclerk@ventnortowncouncil.org.uk

Letters: write to us at Ventnor Town Council, Salisbury Gardens, Dudley Road, Ventnor, Isle of Wight PO38 1EJ.

Meetings: join one of the consultation meetings listed on the back page for more detailed discussions of the possibilities.

The Case for Pedestrianisation

Challenges

Ventnor is a fortunate town for many reasons: wonderful natural surroundings; character; heritage and history; diverse shopping, restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs; a vibrant cultural life and broad visitor economy. It is an attractive seaside resort to live, work, trade, run a business, have fun and, importantly, to visit.

Yet the Town Centre faces serious challenges if it is to survive economically over the next 20 or so years:

Consumer trends across the Island and UK show the popularity of out-of-town retail stores and the ever-increasing use of online and mobile commerce to satisfy shopping demands.

The trend over the last 30 years has seen shoppers walk away from our high streets nationally, and that includes most seaside towns on the Island.

UK Tourism reported during 2016 that holidays to foreign destinations exceeded domestic tourism.

The idea of *going into town* for pleasure, social interaction, cultural interest and retail enjoyment – as opposed to the task of *shopping* – seems lost in Ventnor's recent history. Early photographs of the town show evidence of a vibrant and bustling town centre that was a strong magnet for residents and visitors alike.

In more recent times however, Ventnor has suffered a decline in its magnetism, trading performance and viability as a tourist destination of choice. Customer footfall has fallen in our High Street and traders continue to struggle year-on-year with declining visitors.

The buying power of many local families has fallen – impacting our High Street in terms of budget spending which only the large national retailers can accommodate. If not addressed soon, the familiar and friendly independent retail businesses could disappear from our High Street.

Ventnor is dependent on the revenue and seasonal employment opportunities from tourism. The importance of providing an attractive and up-and-coming visitor destination is essential: a vibrant High Street is a critical element of that.

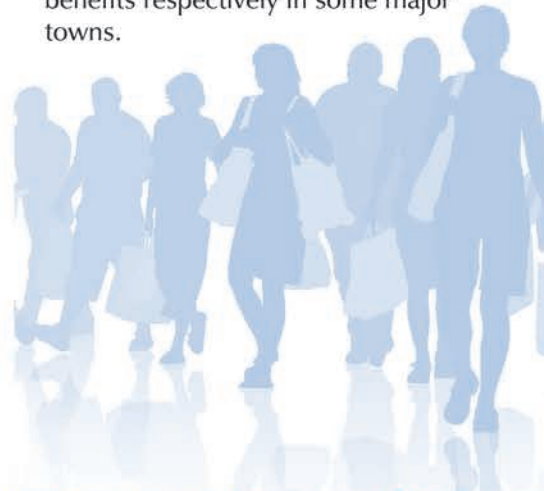
Evidence

Of the 30,000 pedestrianisation schemes introduced to date across the UK and Europe, nearly 200,000 Case Studies have been undertaken by government departments, urban planning authorities and universities.

All have looked into the effects of car-free towns and cities in relation to trading benefits, profitability, business rates, rents, social benefits and pollution – particularly harmful Nitrous Oxide fumes from vehicles parking, starting up and flowing through high streets and residential areas.

The following findings are consistent across the Case Studies:

- Well-planned improvements to public spaces, specifically making shopping high streets car-free areas, boost footfall and trading between 10% and 40%.
- Perceptions of an area – to businesses and consumers – matters: Studies have linked the quality of public spaces to people's perceptions of attractiveness of an area, contributing towards their quality of life and influencing where they shop.
- Better streets and spaces raise self-esteem and social inclusion for residents and promote investor confidence in seaside towns such as Ventnor.
- Evaluations of pedestrian improvements in major UK towns show a 25% increase in footfall on Saturdays and predicted £1.4million benefits respectively in some major towns.



Ryde



Cowes

- Business owners often over-value the importance of parking and car access to their sales. Case Study evidence suggests that restricting traffic does not reduce the number of customers or their spending habits.
- Case Study research that focused on removing on-street parking in high streets across the UK found that it did not significantly affect retail sales. On average, pedestrian shoppers spent more time in the high street browsing and spent more on purchases.
- Charging road users and securing the revenue for car-free areas enhances business performance in the long-term as there is consistent evidence that customers like pedestrian environments and dislike traffic, noise and pollution.
- There are Case Study examples of where public investment has been associated with substantial increases in employment in retail, hospitality and trades.



- Cultural quarters in the UK have also seen increases in employment, albeit less dramatic ones. Although few studies attempt to model the impact on tourism, one such example found that there was an increase of 300% in visitors and investment by the private sector suggested commercial gain.
- In terms of property prices and rental yields, there is substantial evidence that improvements to the public realm, especially car-free shopping areas, increases property prices by as much as 20% within pedestrianised areas.
- Rents have been shown to increase in certain areas but that is landlord controlled. As well as reflecting direct economic value, rents reveal preferences to locate and shop in particular locations.

Benefits

Because of the benefits it provides pedestrianisation has become:

- a fact of life across the UK;
- part of modern-day retail and hospitality strategy; and
- an integral part of modern town planning and economic regeneration.

Economically, Ventnor's High Street is uniquely placed to become a new shopping experience that is lively, dynamic and exciting; capable of stimulating business development and improving retail performance.

Socially, it could regain its attraction for visitors and refresh the sense of belonging, civic identity and pride of its residents. It would also enable residents to enhance their social networks and relationships, function more effectively, and improve their lifestyles and well-being as well as being more socially inclusive and environmentally friendly.

As the way we shop has changed, so have our expectations of the high street. Shoppers now seek to *experience* something different and the Ventnor business community is easily capable of delivering that special *experience*, provided the right town infrastructure is in place.

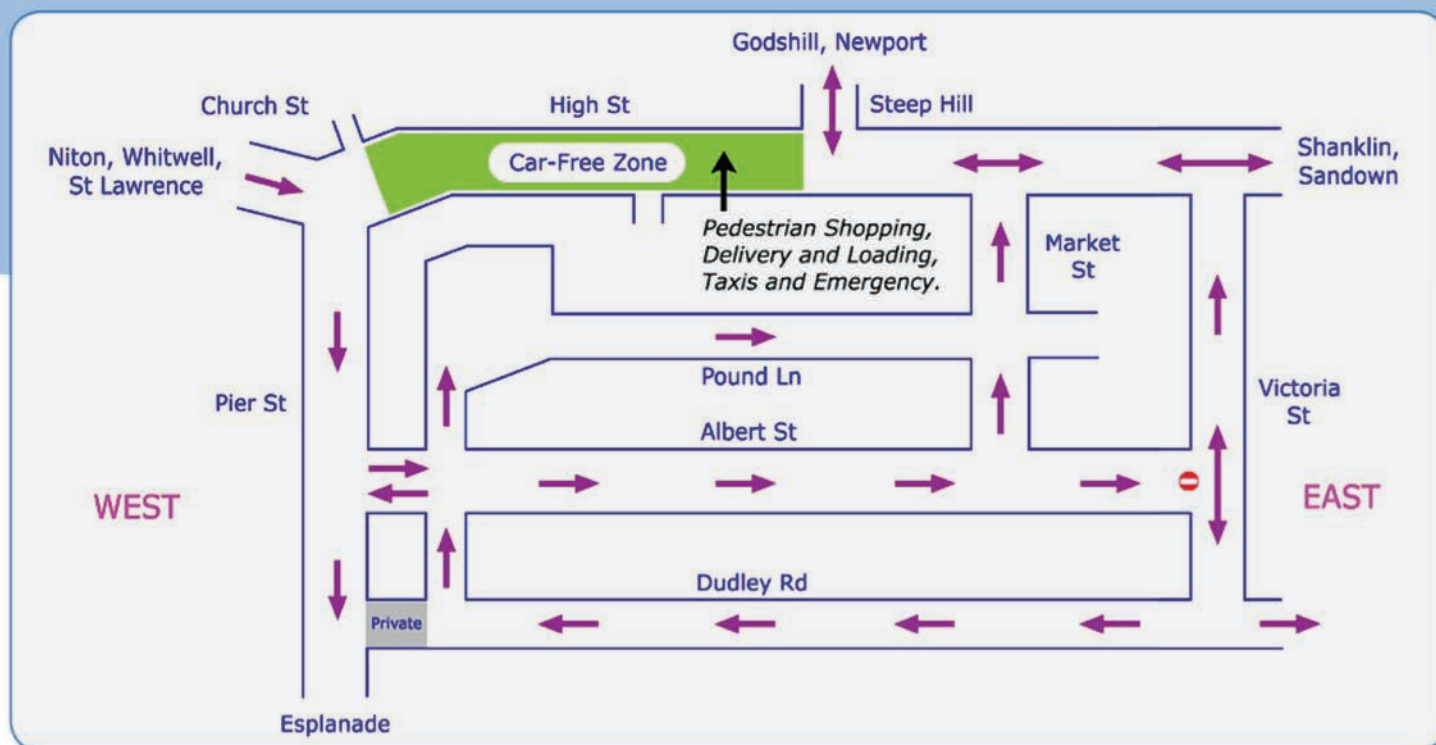
As the evidence confirms, redesigning high streets as car-free shopping environments delivers a wide range of benefits, including:

- greater safety for shoppers;
- better protection for mothers with children;
- improved accessibility for the disabled and impaired;
- opportunities for socially inclusive and culturally advantageous activities and seasonal events;
- health improvements for those actually living and working in the High Street;
- relocated bus stops offering a more convenient and comfortable service; and
- a more attractive high street that matches today's consumer market.

For Ventnor, it offers a rejuvenated and successful seaside towns that draw people in as destinations of choice.



Gibraltar



Possibilities

Making high streets car-free areas is now a successful part of modern town planning throughout the UK and Europe.

In terms of our High Street, it would be possible to introduce some form of well-planned pedestrianisation scheme which fitted the unique character of Ventnor, enhanced trading opportunities, and attracted the modern shopper, thereby providing a more relaxed, conducive and pleasant shopping experience for all types of customer. Such pedestrianisation schemes do not have to be fully car-free.

Any scheme to pedestrianise Ventnor High Street would require consideration of alternative traffic flows, signage and traffic light management in order for the scheme to work. In conjunction with that, current on-street parking available to town residents needs to be maintained where possible; and public car parks in and around the town would need to be signposted and have the capacity to handle any additional vehicles, especially during the summer season.

Inevitably the 12 to 15 spaces currently available for *chance parking* in the High Street would have to go.

The above diagram of Ventnor High Street and surrounding town areas indicates that there are two possible options in terms of alternative traffic flows, that would allow the pedestrianisation of the High Street, and potentially minimise disruption to residents using available on-street parking.

Option 1:

Traffic moving from West to East through the town would enter Church Street and move down Pier Street, along Albert Road and up Victoria Street, with the option to either go in the direction of Newport or towards Shanklin. Traffic for the Esplanade from the West side would simply continue on down Pier Street to Shore Hill. Traffic from the East side would move down Victoria Street, pass along Dudley Road and then take a left at Albert Street for the Esplanade. Synchronised traffic lights would be required at certain key points of the town.

Option 2:

The second option would be to allow Albert Street to become a two-way road system with appropriate synchronised traffic light management, thereby allowing traffic to flow from West to East and East to West through the town, but not the Town Centre. Outward bound routes would remain the same as in the first pedestrianisation option. This option, although more complex is also achievable.

Consultation Meetings

Meeting For	Date	Time	Venue
Residents' Meetings			
St Lawrence Residents	8 May	6pm	St Lawrence Village Hall
Lowtherville Residents	9 May	6pm	St Margaret's Hall
Bonchurch Residents	10 May	6pm	Trinity Church Hall
Ventnor East & West Residents	11 May	6pm	St Catherine's Church
Business Meetings			
Retailers	15 May	6.30pm	Baptist Church
Professional Services	16 May	6.30pm	St Catherine's Church
Esplanade Businesses	17 May	8.30am	Mill Bay
Hospitality Providers	18 May	5pm	Baptist Church

Related Documents

A range of related documents, including some of the many Case Studies we've researched, are available on our website at www.ventnortowncouncil.org.uk

During the consultation, a link on the home page will connect directly to the pedestrianising section of the site.

