

# LOUGHBOROUGH

## TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN (TIP)

February 2021



## Appendix One

Loughborough Town Deal  
MEL Research Consultation Report

## Project details

<b>Project title</b>	Loughborough Town Deal Consultation
<b>Client</b>	Charnwood Borough Council
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# Executive Summary

## Background

In late 2019, Loughborough was invited to submit an Investment Plan to bid for Town Deal funding from the Government's £3.6bn Town Fund. The Town Deal (TD) programme *seeks "to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture"*. In total, 100 towns and cities around the country have been invited to bid for funding. The Town Deal offers an opportunity to shape the future of Loughborough by supporting local communities and businesses.

A Loughborough Town Deal Board has been formed and is responsible for drawing up a Town Investment Plan which will provide a vision for building on the town's unique strengths to transform its economic growth prospects.

M·E·L Research were commissioned to undertake a consultation with residents living in Loughborough and the surrounding areas (such as Leicester, Melton Mowbray etc) and local businesses. Their feedback will help the Council produce a full Investment Plan compliant with Government guidance and expectations by October 31, 2020.

## Methodology

Charnwood Borough Council commissioned M·E·L Research to conduct a mixed methods consultation using qualitative and quantitative techniques. We delivered six online focus groups between 16<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. To aid recruitment to the online focus groups, M·E·L Research leased email addresses and telephone contact data (with the exception of the focus group with students) from a GDPR compliant consumer database provider, Sample Answers. Students were recruited directly via Loughborough College and Loughborough University. Charnwood Borough Council also promoted the focus groups on their website, via social media and by notifying their email subscribers that the focus groups were taking place.

A recruitment screener questionnaire was developed to ensure the right mix and number of participants were recruited for the focus groups and that participants were residents of Loughborough (with the exception of the non-residents group). In total, 28 residents, 11 businesses and 11 students took part in the focus groups, plus 5 non-Loughborough residents.

M·E·L Research also designed an online survey to help quantify the key findings from the qualitative research. The online survey went live on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and closed at midnight on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020. In total, 258 responses were obtained. It should be noted that online survey was open to anyone with an interest in commenting on the Investment Plan. Therefore, the results should be treated as a 'snapshot' of views only as they may not reflect the views and be representative of all residents and businesses living in Loughborough or surrounding areas.

## Key findings

### Views around ambition for the Town

- The majority of focus group participants felt that shorter-term improvements to the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Loughborough communities and businesses was much more important than focusing on building its profile and reputation in the medium to long-term.
- Interestingly, respondents who completed the online survey took a more balanced view, with an average of 54% suggesting a focus on medium and longer-term projects and 46% supporting a focus on shorter-term projects.

### Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis

- The majority of people agreed with the SWOT analysis that was included in the draft preposition in both the focus groups and the online survey.
- The SWOT analysis was explored in detail during the focus groups and indicated the following:
  - The University, its location and heritage (e.g. Great Central Railway and the Bell Foundry) were considered key strengths of the town.
  - In terms of weaknesses, people commented on the appearance of the town, feeling unsafe (particularly after dark) and poor accessibility (e.g. distance from train station to town centre).
  - Strengthening links between the University and employers was considered beneficial to help with future innovation.
  - Over-development and loss of green space was deemed as a potential threat.
- Feedback was also provided on how the Town Deal could be used to benefit residents and the wider community. People mentioned support to help them overcome the various challenges with COVID-19 (such as redundancy support, lower business rates) but also ensuring the town was a more attractive place to live, work and visit.
- All residents and businesses that took part in the consultation were provided with a copy of the draft vision statement and asked to give their initial views. Feelings were mixed. Some (particularly students) gave positive views and thought it was ambitious but realistic. Residents and businesses generally felt it needed to be shorter, more specific, and easier to understand.

### Use of Town Deal Funding

- The majority of participants felt that the funding should be spent on large, new infrastructure projects which focus on the town centre and urban core.

## Draft Investment Plan

- The Investment Plan explored four key themes; Physical regeneration; Equipping people, communities and businesses for the future; a 'Smart, Green' Loughborough; and Loughborough as an 'innovation city, global national and regional destination.
- A high proportion (68%) of survey respondents agreed with the Council's overall approach to formulating the Town Deal programme (e.g. focusing on physical regeneration, etc)
- Whilst people felt all four themes were important, physical regeneration and achieving a Smart, Green Loughborough were considered vital for future generations.

## Conclusions

The consultation results highlighted that residents, businesses and students were primarily pre-occupied with shorter-term measures, reflected in recovering from the associated impacts of COVID-19. However, many in the online survey also recognised the need to look to the future and felt the Town Deal should focus on the medium and longer-term. As such, to make Loughborough a 'destination of choice' for future generations, people felt the Town Deal needed to capitalise on the things that made the town unique, such as its University, location (proximity to other cities and rural areas) and long-standing heritage.

Respondents also highlighted the town's weaknesses, suggesting the town centre was looking 'tired- and run down, had little choice of retail and food outlets, and was considered by some to be unsafe at night. Several consultees also mentioned that employment opportunities were also limited (especially as the University was considered the only major employer in the town) and graduates typically moved away to find employment opportunities.

Another key element of the Investment Plan Proposition was the future 'Vision' for the town. This received mixed views with some stating they were in favour of the statement as it was ambitious but realistic. Others were less convinced and felt it needed to be shorter, more specific, and simpler to understand. Residents and businesses also questioned its focus and felt too much emphasis was placed on its sporting heritage, but too little on future economic growth and recovery.

When looking at the draft Investment Plan, it was clear that helping residents and businesses overcome the challenges of COVID-19 (e.g. redundancy support, lowering business rates etc) was key in the short term. However, looking to the future, people were also concerned about the environment (Smart, Green Loughborough) and making sure Loughborough was a more attractive plan to live, work and do business (physical regeneration)

Overall, most respondents support the plan. Those in the focus groups wanted to see the document written in 'Plainer English' as they felt it was too corporate and, because of the language used, much of it did not immediately resonate with them.

# Introduction

## Background

In late 2019, Loughborough was invited to submit an Investment Plan to bid for Town Deal funding from the Government's £3.6bn Town Fund. The Town Deal (TD) programme *seeks "to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture"*. In total, 100 towns and cities around the country have been invited to bid for funding. The Town Deal offers an opportunity to shape the future of Loughborough by supporting local communities and businesses.

A Loughborough Town Deal Board has been formed and involves representatives from Charnwood Borough Council (CBC), Loughborough University, Loughborough College, Love Loughborough, Leicestershire County Council, the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, Charnwood Together Economy and Skills Group, local businesses, and Loughborough MP Jane Hunt. The Board is responsible for drawing up a Town Investment Plan which will provide a vision for building on the town's unique strengths to transform its economic growth prospects.

M·E·L Research were commissioned to undertake a consultation with residents living in Loughborough and the surrounding areas (such as Leicester, Melton Mowbray etc) and local businesses. Their feedback will help the Council produce a full Investment Plan compliant with Government guidance and expectations by July 31, 2020.

## Methodology

Charnwood Borough Council commissioned M·E·L Research to conduct a mixed methods consultation using qualitative and quantitative methods.

### Qualitative research

We delivered the following six online focus groups between 16<sup>th</sup> June and 25<sup>th</sup> June 2020. To understand how views differed by life stage (and age), we organised separate sessions for each as shown in the following table.

Online focus group	Date and time
Group 1: Students	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 / 2:30pm-3:30pm
Group 2: Households with children	16 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 / 6:00pm-7:00pm
Group 3: Retired/'empty nesters'	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 2:30pm-3:30pm
Group 4: Singles/professionals	17 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 / 6:00pm-7:00pm
Group 5: Loughborough businesses	18 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 / 5:30pm-6:30pm
Group 6: Non-Loughborough residents	25 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 / 6:00pm-7:00pm

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, all focus groups were delivered virtually using 'The Clickroom' platform. Participants logged onto the platform using their PC or tablet.

In addition, CBC delivered a separate virtual session using Zoom on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020. This session was open to everyone (including those who were not able to attend the online focus groups delivered by M·E·L Research). Please note: the findings from this session are not included in this report.



## Quantitative research

M·E·L Research designed an online survey to help quantify the key findings from the qualitative research. The online survey went live on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2020 and closed at midnight on 5<sup>th</sup> July 2020. In total, 258 responses were obtained (Please refer to Appendix C for profile of respondents). It should be noted that online survey was open to anyone with an interest in commenting on the Investment Plan. Therefore, the results should be treated as a 'snapshot' of views only and may not reflect the views and be representative of all residents and businesses living in Loughborough or surrounding areas.

The online survey included questions on the following topics:

- Future ambition (allocation of projects/activity to improve profile/reputation or support shorter term economic and social recovery from COVID-19)
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for Loughborough
- Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Future vision of Loughborough
- How could the Town Deal Investment be spent?
- Views on the Draft Investment Plan's thematic areas (Physical regeneration, Equipping people, communities and businesses for the future, a 'Smart, Green' Loughborough and Loughborough as an 'innovation city, global national and regional destination)

## Recruitment – Online Focus Groups

To aid recruitment to the online focus groups, M·E·L Research leased email addresses and telephone contact data (with the exception of the focus group with students) from a GDPR compliant consumer database provider, Sample Answers. Students were recruited directly via Loughborough college and Loughborough University.

Charnwood Borough Council also promoted the focus groups on their website, via social media and by notifying their email subscribers that the focus groups were taking place.

A recruitment screener questionnaire was developed to ensure the right mix and number of participants were recruited for the focus groups and that participants were residents of Loughborough (with the exception of the non-residents group).

Recruited participants were sent an email to confirm the focus group details (e.g. time, background reading etc), that the focus group would be transcribed and a 'thank you' gift (£30 Love2Shop E-Gift card) would be sent out after the focus group. In total, 28 residents, 11 businesses and 11 students took part in the focus groups, plus 5 non-Loughborough residents. Please refer to Appendix C for a profile of participants.

This qualitative research was conducted with a small number of participants, in differing age groups and life stages. By its very nature, qualitative research does not necessarily provide representative views of the wider target audience as depth of understanding is more important than statistical robustness. As such the qualitative findings provide an indication of people's views and perceptions, which should be considered alongside the statistical results from the quantitative survey.

## Analysis and reporting

Transcripts from the six residents' focus groups were generated by the online Click Room software, with prior permission obtained from participants and with assurances provided on anonymity. These transcriptions have been reviewed alongside the moderator's notes, with key themes extracted and participant quotes used to highlight key points and findings.

For the quantitative survey results, owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on graphs and charts within this report may not always add up to 100% and may differ slightly when compared with the text. Where there are differences, the figures provided in the text should always be used. Where figures do not appear in a graph or chart, these are suppressed as equating to 3% or less. The 'base' or 'n=' figure referred to in each chart and table is the total number of respondents responding to the question with a valid response.

When looking at the analysis of the open-ended questions, a single comment could have contained more than one theme and as such the total presented in the table may be higher than the number of responses.

The consultation findings below are presented in the order they appear in the Loughborough Town Deal – Investment Plan Proposition May 2020. Therefore, they may not appear in the same order as the online survey or focus group topic guide.



# Findings

This section details the key findings from the six online focus groups and online survey. The findings are presented in following order:

- Ambition for the Town
- Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats
- Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic
- Future vision for Loughborough
- Draft Investment Plan (including how the funding could be spent)

## Ambition for the town

The first section of the ‘Loughborough Town Deal Investment Plan Proposition’ document asked residents, businesses, and students to provide feedback on their views about the ambition for the town. All participants who took part in the consultation (online survey or focus group) were presented with the following two statements and asked to state which one they felt was the most important to them.

- 1) Having the Town Deal build on Loughborough’s regional, national, and global county profile and reputation with a medium to long term outlook.**
- 2) Improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Loughborough communities and businesses – especially accelerating recovery and rebooting the economy and social life after the COVID-19 lockdown?**

The majority of focus group participants felt **statement two** was the most important, and when asked for their reasons, most participants felt the statement resonated with them more at this point in time. Uncertainty for what the future had in store was a key aspect here. Whilst most attendees recognised the need to plan for the longer term, their current focus was dealing with the short term (and overcoming the challenges associated with the COVID-19 outbreak). Typical comments included:

“At the moment, I don’t think people can make long term plans. The situation is very uncertain.”

“I think the second one is the most important. There will need to be a huge effort to help the town recover.”

“I think the second option relates more directly with the people of Loughborough. It means something to people.”

A number of participants felt the two statements were interlinked (but part 2 should come first) to help support economic growth and ultimately building the future profile and reputation of Loughborough.

Typical comments included:

“I agree we need a mix of both... short term to get things going, but medium term is vital if we are to have sustained success and growth.”

“I think option 2 needs to happen for there to be any chance of option 1 happening in the future.”

A similar question was also included in the online survey. Respondents were asked to state what proportion of activity, based on four activity bands, should be allocated to focusing on the *‘global, national, regional and county profile and reputation for the medium and longer term projects’* and what proportion should be allocated to focusing on *‘shorter term economic and social recovery from COVID-19’*.

Interestingly, the respondents who completed the online survey took a more balanced view, with medium and longer-term projects achieving an average score of 54%. This compares to an average score of 46% for shorter-term projects. Figures 1a and 1b below also shows the distribution of scores for each of the two options.

**Figure 1a: Short term projects**

Activity Range	Count	Percentage
0-25%	55	21%
26-50%	115	45%
51-75%	65	25%
76-100%	21	8%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>AVERAGE:</b>	<b>46%</b>	

**Figure 1b: Medium and longer term projects**

Activity Range	Count	Percentage
0-25%	25	10%
26-50%	110	43%
51-75%	83	32%
76-100%	40	16%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>AVERAGE:</b>	<b>54%</b>	

## SWOT analysis of Loughborough

The second section of the proposition document focused on the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats for Loughborough.

### Strengths

Participants who took part in the online focus groups were asked to discuss the strengths of Loughborough. The most common response across all focus groups was the ‘University’ as it is rated in the top 10 and is well-known for sports. It is also said to be one of the town’s largest employers and helps to create a more diverse population (e.g. more young people) in the town.

“Loughborough has a diverse population. There is a mixture of traditional locals, people who have moved here, current and ex-students etc.”

Another key strength of Loughborough, highlighted by participants, was its location. There were several mentions of its close proximity to other major cities in the East Midlands region (including Derby, Leicester, and Nottingham).

Some residents and local businesses also stated the relatively short journey time (80 minutes) and frequency of trains to Central London which they find beneficial for businesses but also for better employment opportunities. Despite its proximity to urban areas, some participants also found the green space of surrounding areas, such as Charnwood Forest and Hills, appealing.

Finally, a small proportion of residents also highlighted the heritage/history associated with the town as a strength. In particular, they cited the Great Central Railway, the Bell Foundry, and the market as popular visitor attractions.

## Weaknesses

The online focus groups also discussed the weaknesses of Loughborough.

Several participants felt the town centre was looking run down and untidy, with lots of graffiti and litter, and a lack of street maintenance and cleaning. They also mentioned that the retail mix in the town centre was a concern, with too many empty shops, limited variety of retail and food options, with too many charity or coffee shops, as shown in the following quotes:

*“The town centre is becoming unattractive with broken pavements and the usual chewing gum problem.”*

*“I would like to see more shops and less vacant buildings within the town centre.”*

*“The town centre is poor, there is next to no shopping.”*

*“There’s too many charity and coffee shops in the town centre. There’s nothing else.”*

A small number of participants also mentioned feeling unsafe at night in Loughborough town centre (particularly non-Loughborough residents). They felt that homelessness, drug abuse and other forms of ASB were particular issues that needed addressing. One of the non-Loughborough participants said, *“The last few times I went to Loughborough at night, it felt a little rough.”*

Some residents and businesses mentioned the lack of accessibility in the town centre as some roads were said to be cut off from others and the railway station was a 20-minute walk to the town centre. They also felt traffic congestion was an issue in some parts, such as Epinal Way. Others suggested that Loughborough town centre may benefit from a programme of works that are similar to Leicester Mayor’s ‘Connecting Leicester’ Scheme, which they said focuses on making Leicester City Centre a more accessible place for cyclists, pedestrians and those using public transport.

A few students and residents felt Loughborough needed a wider choice of major employers (apart from the University) to encourage more graduates to stay and not re-locate to other cities (such as London) for employment. A student who attended one of the focus groups said, *“Retaining University talent is the weakness I feel, we need to incentivise students to stay.”*

Whilst opportunities were not specifically covered during the focus groups, participants were asked to provide suggestions on how the Town Deal could be used to benefit the people and communities (including deprived areas) who chose to call Loughborough their home.

The most common theme that came out across the six focus groups was making the town a more attractive place to live, work and visit. They said this could be achieved by planting more greenery/trees, opening more upmarket and independent shops (rather than 'clone-town' high-street chains), developing its cultural and events offer (e.g. by holding an annual festivals, live music) and by creating social spaces (such as an eating quarter) where communities could congregate.

Some participants mentioned the Town Deal could help encourage new or more businesses to re-locate to the town. This would also help improve future job prospects for residents and students. The Town Deal may also help new or existing businesses build stronger links with the University or college by enhancing/creating Science or Technology Hubs for example.

Examples of the types of comments relating to the above themes were:

*"More greenery/colour is needed in the centre to liven the area up."*

*"An expansion of businesses is important as it can also improve job opportunities."*

Some participants also mentioned specific ideas to help the disadvantaged communities in Loughborough. These included: better schools, improved education on career paths/opportunities, funding initiatives to help get people back to work (such as free skills sessions/workshops, volunteering or subsidised business rents) and increased funding for local charities to help tackle homelessness and ASB issues.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) of Loughborough was also explored in the online survey. All respondents who completed the survey were presented with a summary of the Council's SWOT analysis (see Figure 2 overleaf). It should be noted that the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats outlined below are recognised as not the only ones facing Loughborough, but the Town Deal Board has considered them to be the most significant in helping to develop their Town Deal strategy.

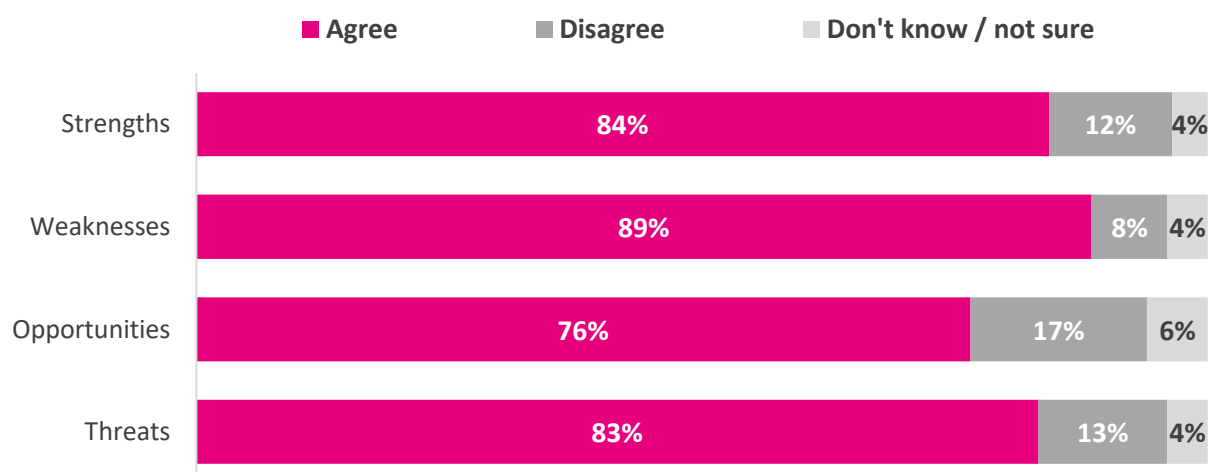
Figure 2: Summary of SWOT analysis

<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger, higher skills, better jobs and growing faster than regional and county averages</li> <li>• Global quality university with relevant assets and capabilities for future town development &amp; wellbeing</li> <li>• Superb international gateway, national and regional location and access</li> </ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of out-commuting for some higher earners, and of seasonality when university is closed</li> <li>• Town centre needs continual evolution and pace of development has sometimes been slow</li> <li>• Four central neighbourhoods on edge of town centre are among most-deprived 20% in England</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage University, Enterprise Zones and other assets and relevant capabilities to make Loughborough a genuine global, national and regional knowledge hub</li> <li>• Use Town Deal and associated opportunities to make Loughborough work well as a cohesive, inclusive place</li> <li>• Reasonable suite of long-standing plans and projects which can be made investment-ready relatively swiftly</li> </ul>	<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential national and regional post-lockdown economy reduces domestic demand, levels of private investment, and appetite for innovation – with specific university dimensions that particularly impact the town</li> <li>• Business closures and/or rationalisation increase need for reskilling and enterprise support beyond local capacity and resources to deliver</li> <li>• Social distancing and new public health requirements accelerate contraction of high street and reduces footfall in the medium term</li> </ul>

Figure 3 indicates that the majority of respondents agreed with the Strengths (84%), Weaknesses (89%), Opportunities (76%) and Threats (83%) that the Council identified in their draft Proposition document.

Figure 3: Agreement with SWOT Analysis

Base: 252-255



It is clear from the survey results that respondents recognised similar strengths (University), weaknesses (need for regeneration/development) opportunities (building stronger links with the University) and threats to those identified during the focus groups.

The online survey then asked respondents to suggest other strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that the Council may wish to consider. All valid comments (pertinent to the question and the purpose of the survey) have been analysed. A total of 46 respondents provided a valid comment. Please note, a single comment could have contained more than one theme and as such the total presented in the table may be higher than the number of responses.

Looking at the strengths first, the most common themes were related to the distinctive town heritage (19 mentions, 31%), this was closely followed by its location (15 mentions, 25%).

**Figure 4: Strengths of Loughborough**

Strengths - Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Distinctive town heritage/town centre	19	31%
Location (access to green areas, other parts of region etc)	15	25%
University is an asset/strong educational offer	9	15%
Existing town planning/infrastructure (compact town, accessible etc)	9	15%
Culturally diverse community/community spirit	6	10%
Good transport links	3	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100%</b>

Looking at the Loughborough's weaknesses, a total of 89 respondents provided a valid comment. The most common themes related to a lack of shops and things to do in Loughborough (17 mentions, 11%). This was closely followed by poor transport links (14 mentions, 9%) and lack of a community spirit particularly between residents and students (14 mentions, 9%).

**Figure 5: Weaknesses of Loughborough**

Weaknesses - Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Limited variety of shops, leisure activities, facilities etc	17	11%
Poor transport links	14	9%
Lack of community spirit/poor cohesion and inclusion	14	9%
Lack of opportunities and jobs/lack of businesses	12	8%
Town not attractive enough (shortage of open spaces, empty shops etc)	12	8%
Issues with traffic and parking	11	7%
Too much reliance on the University, seasonality)	8	5%
Poor cycle paths/footpaths/transport infrastructure etc	8	5%
Poor town planning/infrastructure	8	5%

Do not agree with local policies and visions	8	5%
Lack of available/affordable housing	7	5%
Too much ASB	6	4%
Too much student accommodation/too many students	5	3%
Lack of support for homeless and vulnerable	5	3%
Over development/Loss or lack of green spaces/Environment issues	4	3%
Not enough support for local independent businesses	3	2%
Lack of school places/limited education opportunities	3	2%
Negative views/perceptions of the town	2	1%
Unable to retain graduates	2	1%
Other	4	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>153</b>	<b>100%</b>

Looking at future opportunities for Loughborough, a total of 56 respondents provided a valid comment. The most common themes related to increasing investment/innovation in the town centre by partnering with the University (14 mentions, 15%). This was closely followed by developing or encouraging 'green' initiatives (13 mentions, 14%), improving the appearance of the town (12 mentions, 13%) and taking advantage of the town's location/proximity to green space (12 mentions, 13%). Each of these factors were also believed to help increase the popularity of the town during the focus groups.

**Figure 6: Opportunities for Loughborough**

Opportunities - Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Invest/innovate/ partnering with University	14	15%
Develop and encourage more green initiatives/green transport	13	14%
Improve appearance of town/regeneration/infrastructure	12	13%
Taking advantage town's location/proximity to green space etc	12	13%
Encourage and attract new and diverse businesses	7	7%
Greater variety of shops, leisure activities, facilities etc	5	5%
Increased support for independent businesses	5	5%
Retain young highly skilled workforce	5	5%
Improve cohesion and inclusion	5	5%
Improve skills/education	5	5%
Build on town's heritage	4	4%
Other (e.g. using empty shops for hubs, working spaces etc)	7	7%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>100%</b>

Finally, online survey respondents were also given the opportunity to comment on potential threats for Loughborough. A total of 59 respondents provided a valid comment. The most common themes related to overdevelopment/loss of green space (20 mentions, 19%). This was followed by people not finding the



town centre attractive or appealing to visit (8 mentions, 8%). Other concerns related to a 'community' divide particularly amongst students and local residents (7 mentions, 7%) and a lack of international visitors/students in the future (7 mentions, 7%).

**Figure 7: Potential threats to Loughborough**

Opportunities - Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Over development/loss of green space	20	19%
Town not appealing (e.g. empty shops etc)	8	8%
Community divide/Poor cohesion and inclusion	7	7%
Lack of international visitors/students not coming back	7	7%
Limited variety of shops, leisure activities, facilities etc	6	6%
Inability to retain young highly skilled workforce	7	5%
Poor transport links/lack of green transport	6	6%
Reduction of jobs/employment	6	6%
Poor town planning/Infrastructure	6	6%
Issues with traffic and parking	5	5%
University is a threat (e.g. Over reliance, seasonality)	5	5%
Too much ASB	5	5%
Poor local policies/management	5	5%
Too much student accommodation/too many students	4	4%
Lack of available/affordable housing	3	3%
Too many bars/restaurants	2	2%
Other	2	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic

In formulating a 2030 proposition for Loughborough, the Town Deal Board discussed the likely characteristics and challenges for leading towns through the 2020s. This included recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

All respondents who completed the online survey were asked to provide their ideas of measures the Council could take to support the recovery from the pandemic (which will also benefit the town's long-term future). All valid comments (pertinent to the question and the purpose of the survey) have been analysed. A total of 208 respondents provided a valid comment.

The most common themes related to support for local people which included help in case of redundancy and encouraging residents to start up their own business (51 mentions, 11%). This was followed by attracting a wider variety of businesses (44 mentions, 10%) and promoting green technology and initiatives (43 mentions, 10%).



**Figure 8: Suggested methods to aid recovery from the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Support for local residents (e.g. redundancy)	51	11%
Encourage/ attract new/greater variety of businesses	44	10%
Green technology and initiatives (e.g. more green space)	43	10%
Support most vulnerable (e.g. digital)	33	7%
Activities and events/ facilities	33	7%
Business support (e.g. business rates, loans, etc)	32	7%
Support cycling and walking	30	7%
Parking (free/subsidised etc)	24	5%
Reskilling courses/literacy classes/summer schools	21	5%
Improve IT infrastructure (to help online shopping, home working etc)	20	4%
Improve public transport / transport infrastructure	18	4%
More housing/transform unused retail space into houses	17	4%
COVID-19 safety measures, support, or information	16	4%
Address ASB and greater policing of COVID 19 measures	14	3%
More outside space for cafes, pubs, events etc	14	3%
Transform unused retail space into hubs, co-working spaces etc	11	2%
Improve appearance of town/make use of town's heritage	9	2%
Re-open the economy/Stop the pandemic panic	6	1%
Other	10	2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Vision

All residents and businesses that took part in the consultation (either by participating in the online focus groups or completing the online survey) were provided with a copy of the draft vision statement, asked to read it, then give their initial views.

**"We consider Loughborough has the assets and capabilities of a leading small city. In the 2020s we can be globally known for both elite and participatory sports excellence; the Midland Engine's premier small city knowledge and science hub; at the centre of the region's tri-city area (of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham); and Leicestershire's county town. To make the most of those roles and functions, Loughborough should offer residents, communities, and business the opportunities, experiences and well-being to participate fully in Loughborough's life and development."**

The focus group participants had mixed views on the statement. Some, particularly students, were in favour of the statement, they felt it was sensible but ambitious. They also felt it covered everything it needed to, and they would not change anything. Typical comments included:

“I think it is fairly accurate.”

“I think it states everything it needs to.”

“It seems sensible, its playing to Loughborough’s strengths, particularly the location and University.”

The resident and business groups were less positive about the statement. They felt it needed to be shorter, more specific, with examples of how things would be achieved, and contain less jargon (several people were unsure what the ‘Midlands Engine’ was, for example). Others felt it was too generic and could be written about any English town or city. Example comments included:

“It was like word-soup.”

“I would be good to use simple language that people can relate to.”

“I think a couple of specific examples of the kinds of projects it would support would go a long way.”

“Anyone could write that about a lot of places”

Residents and businesses also questioned the focus of the vision. They felt it needed less emphasis on the sporting heritage and more on the things that would help drive the local economy, such as encouraging business to re-locate, raising awareness of the town’s cultural offer. Residents and businesses also disagreed with the use of the word ‘city’ and felt Loughborough should remain a town. This was reflected in the following comments:

“Let’s try to get away from the University - that will stay and look after itself. This needs to be about the town.”

“Loughborough is a town, not a ‘small city.’”

Respondents who completed the online survey were also asked to give their thoughts on the draft, including things they would add or remove.

All valid comments (pertinent to the question and the purpose of the survey) have been analysed. A total of 184 respondents provided a valid comment.

38 mentions (12%) related to positive feedback with residents stating they felt the vision statement was bold, ambitious, and comprehensive; similar feedback was given by students during the focus groups.

In terms of negative feedback, the common theme related to too much emphasis on the University (16 mentions, 5%) and the use of the word ‘City’ (12 mentions, 4%). This was also highlighted in the online focus groups with some participants stating Loughborough should remain a town.

A number of participants (including those who were largely happy with the vision) also provided some suggestions on additional things it could include or focus on. The most popular suggestion related the need for more activities/facilities to increase visitor numbers (25 mentions, 8%).

**Figure 9: Comments on the draft vision**

Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
<b>Positive/bold/ambitious/comprehensive</b>	38	12%
<b>Negative comments</b>		
Too much emphasis on University/insufficient focus on residents	16	5%
Disagreed with mention of 'City'	12	4%
Just marketing/nothing measurable or specific	11	4%
Hard to read/wordy	9	3%
The focus of the vision is too narrow (e.g. sports)	8	3%
<b>Mixed views</b>		
Agree with vision, but document hard to read	5	2%
<b>Suggestions</b>		
Activities/facilities to encourage town visits	25	8%
Encourage and attract new and diverse businesses (including manufacturing)	21	7%
Improve community links (e.g. residents and students)	20	6%
investment/innovation in sustainable technology	19	6%
Environmental / Green initiatives (more green space)	14	4%
Support cycling/walking/ wellbeing	14	4%
Establish better connections between the University/ businesses	13	4%
More focus on the town as a whole	13	4%
More focus on unique town heritage	13	4%
Make use of the town's location/proximity to rural areas	10	3%
Improve appearance of town/Regeneration	9	3%
Improve public transport / transport infrastructure	8	3%
Support vulnerable residents	7	2%
Parking/traffic issues	6	2%
Retain/train young highly skilled workforce	5	2%
Build more available/affordable housing	4	1%
Other	12	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Use of Town Deal funding

## Focus on large scale projects

If CBC's proposal for funding is successful, they will receive up to £25 million over a number of years to spend on the Town Deal programme. As part of the consultation, residents and businesses were asked for their views on how the funding should be spent.

Firstly, focus group participants were asked for their views on whether the money should be spent on a few larger scale investment projects or lots of smaller projects.

The majority of participants felt that most of the funding should be spent on larger projects as it yields a greater return on investment and likely to have a far greater impact on the whole community (particularly infrastructure projects).

However, there was some difference of opinion across the groups. Some residents and businesses felt as the budget was relatively modest, it would be better spent on the deprived communities/individuals who need it more.

*"Larger projects will make more of an impact, especially in the town centre."*

*"Smaller projects will yield more widespread change."*

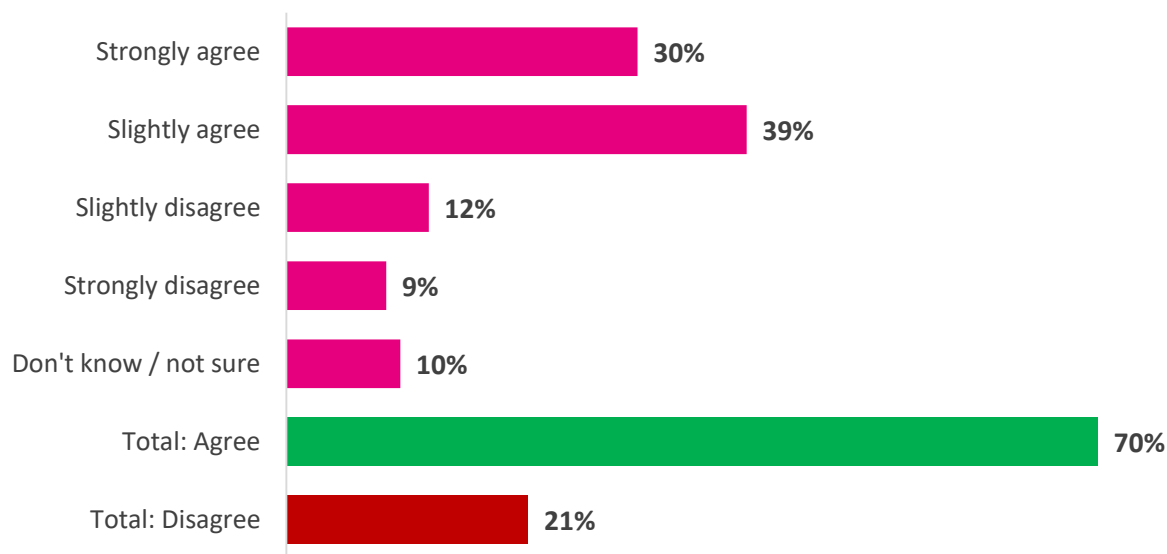
*"I think the money should be spent on smaller projects such as tackling the litter issues or installing CCTV. That would help the whole community".*

In contrast, some businesses and residents (especially those living outside Loughborough) felt they needed more information to be included in the Proposition document, particularly relating to individual projects. One participant said, *"I think we need to understand more about the project and the benefit it will bring before we can comment"*.

The findings from the focus groups were further supported in the online survey results. Figure 10 shows that seven out of ten (70%) respondents agreed that the programme should focus on 3 to 4 schemes. This compares to around a fifth (21%) who disagreed and 10% who were unsure or did not know.

**Figure 10: Agreement with focussing on large projects**

**Base: 246**



### Focus on Town Centre and urban core

The majority of the participants across the six focus groups agreed that the Town Plan should focus on the town centre as it will help to attract visitors and inward investment to the area. Typical comments included:

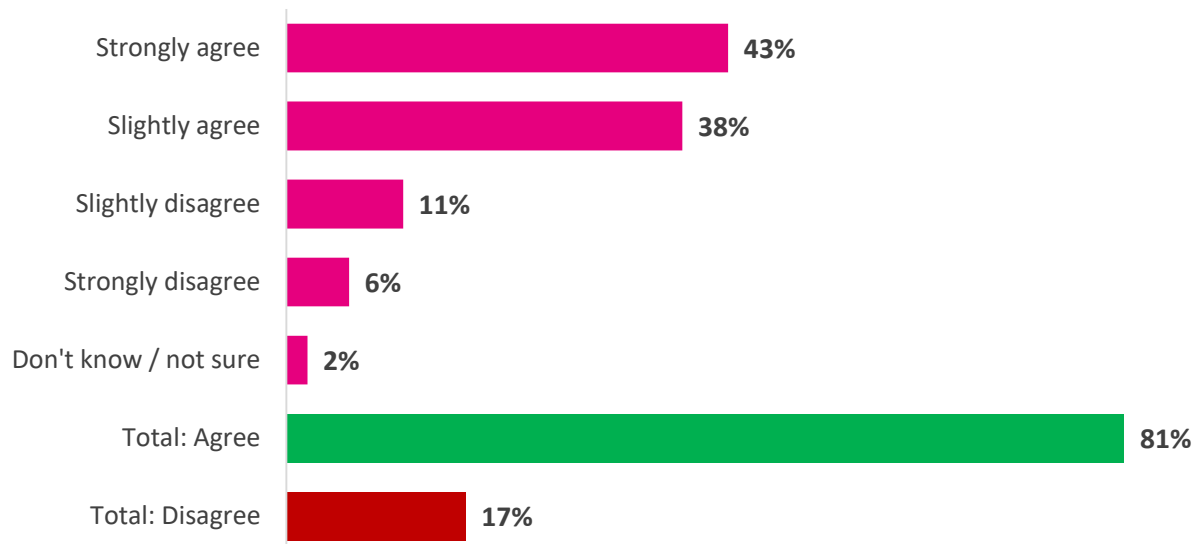
“I think the town centre should be the main focus as everyone uses it so often.”

“We need to use the opportunity to create an environment that attracts inward investment.”

The findings from the focus groups were further supported in the online survey. Figure 11 shows that over eight out of ten (81%) respondents agreed that the programme should focus on the town centre and urban core. This compares to nearly a fifth (17%) who disagreed and 2% who were unsure or did not know.

**Figure 11: Agreement with focussing on town centre and urban core**

**Base: 249**



## Balance between physical and people facing schemes

All focus group participants were asked how the Town Deal funding should be balanced between physical schemes and infrastructure, such as buildings, open spaces, etc, and people facing schemes (e.g. upskilling, re-training etc).

Most focus group participants felt most of the funding (50-60%) should be spent on improving the infrastructure. There were several mentions of increasing open space in the town centre and making sure buildings were COVID safe. They also felt that re-developing the town centre would help to encourage people to take more pride in their town. A few people also felt that there were already other funding pots which could be used for re-skilling or re-training residents. Typical comments included:

“I think buildings and open spaces are the most important at the moment.”

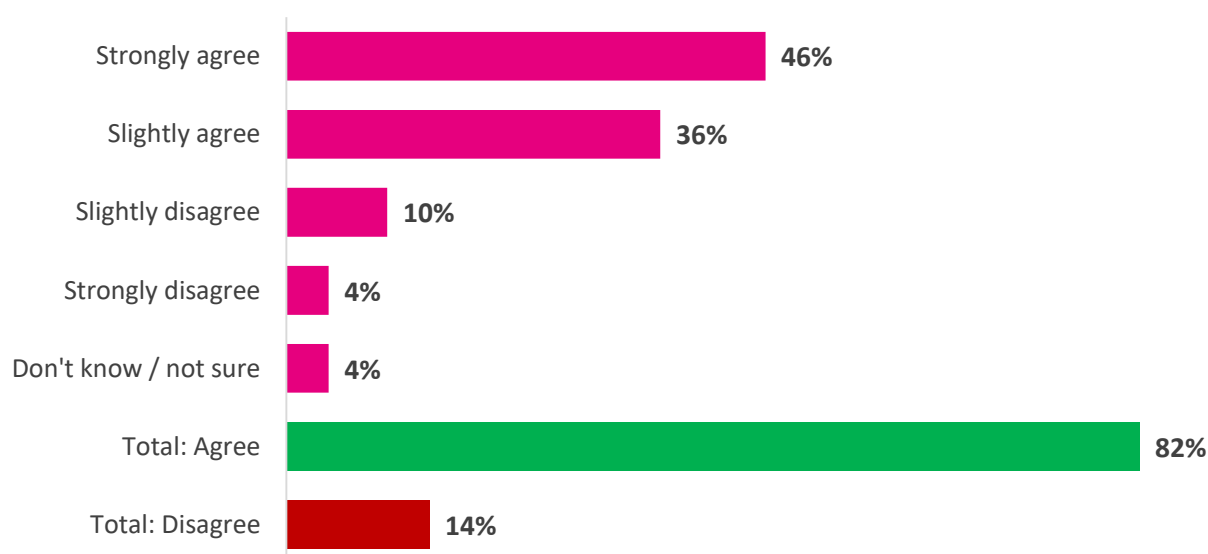
“If people see regeneration, they take more pride and suddenly people have a better outlook.”

“I think there will be other money available for skills, training etc after COVID but less money for Infrastructure. That’s why I think more should go there”.

Some participants felt a proportion of the funding (40-50%) should also be allocated to people-facing schemes to help residents re-train or find alternative employment if they have been made redundant as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding was further supported in the online survey with 82% agreeing that there should be a balance between physical regeneration and support for individuals and communities. This compares to 14% who disagreed and 4% who were unsure or did not know.

**Figure 12: Agreement with balancing physical regeneration and targeting individuals/communities**

**Base: 247**



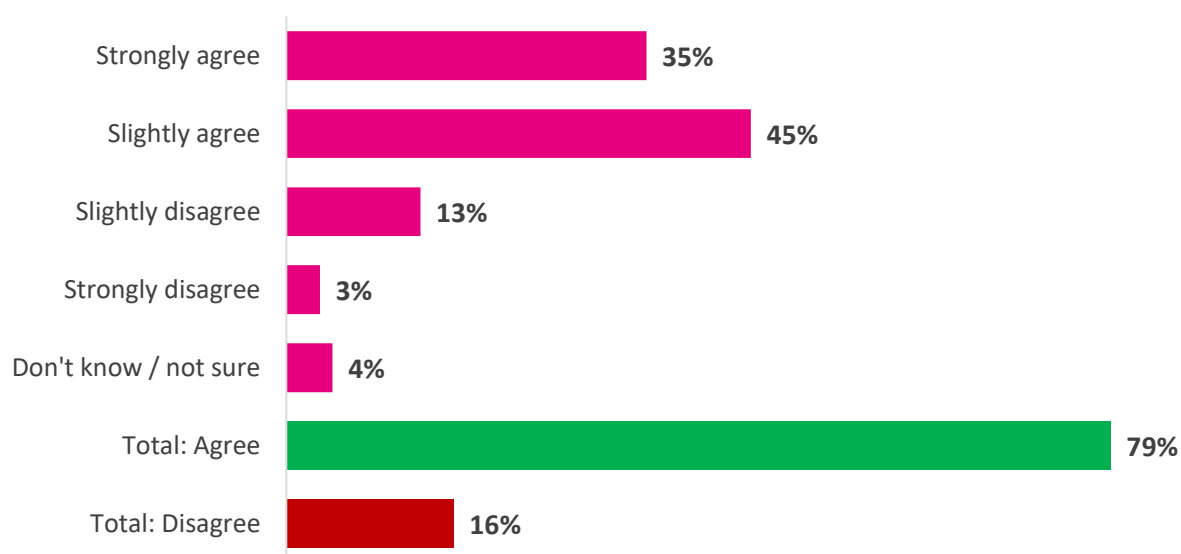
## Balance between existing and future facing projects

The majority of focus group participants felt that the funding should be prioritised on new projects to help the long-term future of Loughborough and make sure it is a thriving town for those who live, work and visit.

This was further supported in the online survey with nearly eight in ten (79%) stating that the criteria for investment and overall shape of the programme should focus on medium and long term initiatives. This compared to 16% who disagreed and 4% who were unsure or did not know.

**Figure 13: Agreement with focussing on medium and long term initiatives**

Base: 248



Online survey respondents were also asked for their suggestions about what should be included in the Town Deal investment criteria.

All valid comments (pertinent to the question and the purpose of the survey) have been analysed. A total of 134 respondents provided a valid comment. One response could have contained more than one theme and as such the total presented in the table may be higher than the number of responses.

It should be noted that the majority of comments provided for this question related to specific services or facilities where the Town Deal funding could be spent (as opposed to suggestions on the investment criteria).

The most common themes related environmental/green initiatives (31 mentions, 17%). This was closely followed by improving sport or exercise provision (16 mentions, 9%) and improving public transport/infrastructure (16 mentions, 9%).

**Figure 14: Suggestions for additional investment criteria/shape of the programme**

Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Environmental / Green initiatives	31	17%
Improve sport / exercise provision (e.g. skatepark)	16	9%
Improve public transport / transport infrastructure	16	9%
More support for local shops / businesses / community groups and rejuvenate high streets	15	8%
Improve connectivity with other areas	14	8%
Support cycling/walking	12	7%
Sustainable support / service provision deprived communities / vulnerable/ younger residents	12	7%
Improve access to learning/ skills development/job creation	11	6%
Support permanent residents, rather than temporary student population	9	5%
Develop on the heritage and culture of the area	7	4%
Activities to encourage town centre visits	7	4%
Improve housing provision	6	3%
Need more detail on proposals	4	2%
Become a technological hub	3	2%
Happy/agreement with proposal	1	1%
Other	17	9%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100%</b>

## Draft Investment Plan

The draft Investment Plan outlined the following four areas of focus:

- Physical regeneration and how Loughborough functions as a place
- Equipping people, communities, and businesses for the future
- A Smart, Green Loughborough
- Loughborough – ‘innovation city’, global national and regional destination

The focus group participants were asked to provide discuss what each of the four areas means and how important it was to them.

### Physical regeneration

Firstly, focus group participants were asked to discuss ‘physical regeneration’. Residents and businesses felt the physical regeneration was important for Loughborough to help encourage more people to visit, live and do busines in the town. In order to ensure Loughborough is more appealing, people suggested revitalising old buildings, constructing new ones, and looking at initiatives to help reduce the quantity of



empty shops. They also felt it needed more green space, an entertainment hub with more bars and restaurants and more activities for young people, such as a skate park.

Suggestions were also made to improve connectivity, with some residents suggesting they found the town difficult to navigate and access from the train station. They also suggested improved cycle lanes. Others found the town unsafe after dark, particularly the Market Square area. Typical comments from residents and businesses included:

“I would like to see more cycle lanes across the whole of Loughborough.”

“I suggest making the Market Square a nice place to be, after dark.”

“Town centre is very built up, brick, endless paving. It needs more green space.”

### **Equipping people, communities, and businesses for the future**

Focus group participants felt equipping people, communities and businesses for the future was important particularly for the deprived communities. Some of the suggestions mentioned related to:

- Developing a digital skills hub between the University and local employers (particularly as digital skills are becoming increasingly popular)
- Strengthening links between schools, Loughborough University, and local employers to ensure future courses are fit for purpose
- Attracting new/small businesses to help encourage innovation and networking. A few businesses felt having a venue similar to Leicester Hackspace may be beneficial particularly for digital, electronic, mechanical, and creative projects/start-ups.

Some example comments from participants included:

“I think things like Digital Skills Hub is something that is only going to become more important.”

“Open workshops or drop in areas within the town, a friendly face rather than just webinar or online.”

### **Smart, Green Loughborough**

Having a ‘smart, green’ Loughborough was considered the most important of the four themes, particularly amongst students, younger residents, and those with children. Residents felt green transport, such as cycle lanes, electric cars, and park & rides, were particularly important. They also felt the town centre could be ‘greener’ both in terms of appearance by planting more trees and bushes, but also more environmentally friendly by encouraging people to work from home. Typical comments included:

“Green and smart technologies should be a top priority.”

“Charging ports and encouraging electric cars and e-bikes is a great idea.”

“Green transport very important if we are to reduce carbon emissions by 2050.”

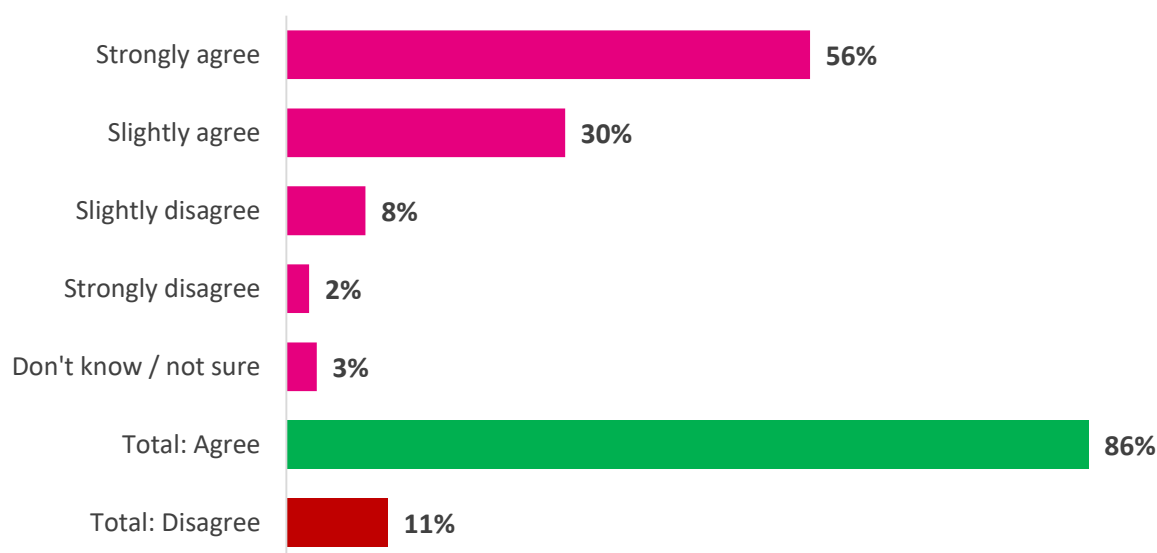
“I think especially with CV19, green travel is now even more important. Cycle paths, etc.”

“Loughborough town centre needs more trees lining the streets and walkways.”

The importance of adopting a ‘Smart and Green Loughborough’ was further reflected in the online survey. All respondents were asked to what extent they agreed with the Council’s suggested approach for strengthening Loughborough’s digital capabilities and green credentials. Figure 15 shows that the majority of respondents agreed (86%) This compared to 11% who disagreed and 3% who were unsure or did not know.

**Figure 15: Agreement with strengthening Loughborough’s digital capabilities and green credentials**

**Base: 248**



### Loughborough ‘innovation city’, global national and regional destination

Focus group participants felt this theme was a key area of focus for the Town Deal. In order to encourage more people to live, visit and work in the town centre, more needed to be done to raise awareness of the town’s heritage and popular visitor attractions (such as the Carillon Tower, the Bell Foundry and the market). They felt whilst ‘Love Loughborough’ does a good job of promoting the town centre, what is needed is to publicise what makes it unique; to help give it its own identity. Typical comments included:

“Loughborough needs to promote itself as a unique area to live and work in.”

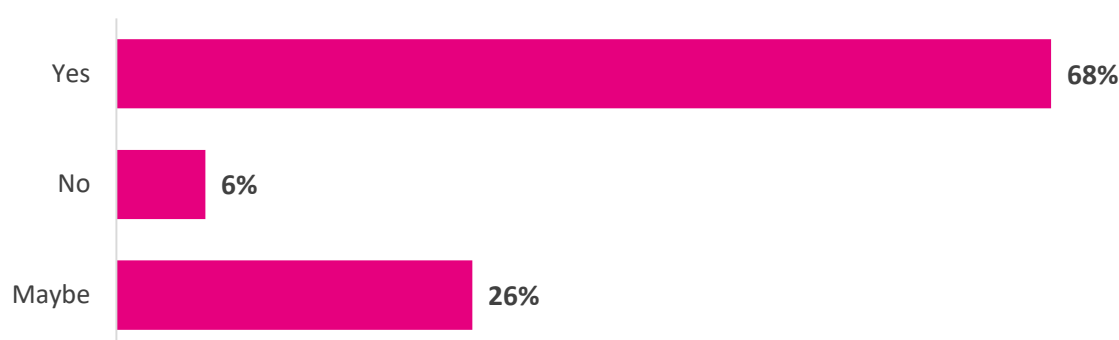
“It really needs to work on point 4. It doesn't have an identity beyond the sporting centre of excellence.”

“Loughborough needs to build on what it is known for.”

Respondents who completed the online survey were also invited to provide feedback on the above four themes. Firstly, they were asked if they agreed with the Council's suggested approach (20 schemes which related physical regeneration, Smart, Green Loughborough etc). Figure 16 shows that nearly seven out of ten respondents (68%) agreed. 6% said 'No' and over a quarter (26%) said 'Maybe'. This suggests that respondents needed more information on the projects to make an informed answer (also highlighted during the focus groups).

**Figure 16: Agreement with Council's suggested approach**

**Base: 248**



Online survey respondents were subsequently asked if they was anything else CBC should consider when formulating the Investment Plan.

All valid comments (pertinent to the question and the purpose of the survey) have been analysed. A total of 141 respondents provided a valid comment.

The most common themes related to improving the area for younger residents (20 mentions, 13%) closely followed by improving transport connectivity within the town centre (and making it easier for people to get around (17 mentions. 11%)

**Figure 17: Comments on Draft Investment Plan**

Key themes	No of mentions	% of respondents
Improve the area for younger residents (e.g., entertainment)	20	13%
Improve sustainable transport connectivity within the town centre / make it easier for people to get around	17	11%
Green infrastructure, development, and technology	12	8%
Improve housing provision	11	7%
Increase / improve green spaces / areas for wildlife to flourish	11	7%
Not enough information / detail provided in documents	9	6%
Make it attractive for working professionals / job creation / students finishing University to stay in the area	9	6%
Improve transport infrastructure links	8	5%
Improve prospects of people / areas (deprived areas)	8	5%

More details on education provision / improve local skills / qualifications	7	4%
Improve parking provision	6	4%
Plan should be expanded / more ambitious	5	3%
Improve sporting / exercise provision	5	3%
Improve flood defences	5	3%
Happy with it	5	3%
Build on the town's heritage	4	3%
Encourage social value, volunteering with residents, ownership of local area	4	3%
Encourage buying locally / provision for local producers to expand/showcase	3	2%
Include development of the arts, cultural and creative sectors	3	2%
Improve health care / care for the elderly	3	2%
Include the wider area (not just the town centre)	2	1%
Other	16	10%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>100%</b>

# Conclusions

To conclude, the consultation indicates that residents, businesses, and students were pre-occupied with the short term and the associated impacts from COVID-19. However, they also recognised the need to look to the future with 56% of online respondents stating the Town Deal should focus on the medium and longer term.

To make Loughborough a 'destination of choice' for future generations, people felt the town needed to capitalise on the things that made it unique such as the University, its location (proximity to other cities and rural areas) and long-standing heritage.

Respondents also highlighted a number of the town's weaknesses which included the fact that the town centre was run down, had little choice of retail and food outlets, and was considered unsafe at night. Several consultees also mentioned that employment opportunities were also limited, especially as the University was considered the only major employer in the town and graduates typically moved away to find employment opportunities.

Another key element of the Investment Plan Proposition was the future 'Vision' for the town. This received mixed views with some stating they were in favour of the statement as it was ambitious but realistic. Others were less convinced and felt it needed to be shorter, more specific, and simpler to understand. Residents and businesses also questioned its focus and felt too much emphasis was placed on its sporting heritage, but too little on future economic growth and recovery.

When looking at the draft Investment Plan, it was clear that helping residents and businesses overcome the challenges of COVID-19 (e.g. redundancy support, lowering business rates, etc) was key in the short term. Although, when looking to the future, people were also concerned about the environment (Smart, Green Loughborough) and making Loughborough a more attractive plan to live, work and do business (Physical regeneration) for its future generations.

# Appendix A: Topic Guide

## Investment Plan proposition, June 2020

### Welcome

- Introduce self and M·E·L Research, an independent market research company
- Consent to take part, transcription, etc.
- No right or wrong answers
- No names given in the report or for quotes
- Discussion will last around 1 hour

CHECK ALL PARTICIPANTS HAVE ACCESS TO BACKGROUND MATERIALS THAT CLARE EMAILED.

### Loughborough's strengths

- So just to start, what would you say are Loughborough's strengths? Why do you say that?
- What is Loughborough known for regionally? And nationally? And what about globally?

#### PROMPTS FOR FACILITATOR:

- Globally significant for elite sports
- Host a UK top-10 University
- Renowned as a knowledge, science, and technology hub
- England's first Life Sciences Opportunity Zone
- Transport links – HS2, East Mids airport
- What about Loughborough's weaknesses? What would you say these are? Why is that?
- How could the Town Deal best use these strengths for the benefit of the people and communities who chose to call Loughborough their home?
- The town has two neighbourhoods in the 10% most deprived in England. How could the Town Deal support those that are disadvantaged?

What sort of town is needed to build on its regional, national, and global strengths **(PROBE FOR: GLOBAL REPUTATION FOR ELITE SPORTS ETC LISTED ABOVE)**

- How do you think innovation and technology should play a part in any regeneration schemes? Why is that?
- Those born this year will be 30 in 2050 - What sort of place does Loughborough need to become to be the place of choice for living, working, and visiting for our next generations?
- Which is more important to you?

Having the Town Deal build on Loughborough's regional, national, and global county profile and reputation with a medium to long term outlook.

**OR**

Improving the economic, social, and environmental well-being of Loughborough communities and businesses – especially accelerating recovery and rebooting the economy and social life after the COVID-19 lockdown?

- Why is that? Where does the balance lie?
- How important is it to plan for the future?

## Future vision

**ASK PARTICIPANTS TO TURN TO PAGE 4 (FUTURE VISION) OF BACKGROUND READING FOR VISION.**

- What are people's initial views on the statement? Why is that?
- What, if anything, is missing from the vision?
- What would you change? Why?

Over the 2020s, to advance an ambitious vision, we believe Loughborough needs to deliver the following (NOT in any priority order).

**PLEASE ASK PARTICIPANTS TO REFER TO PAGES 4 & 5 (DRAFT INVESTMENT PLAN) OF BACKGROUND READING FOR MORE DETAIL.**

**TAKING EACH ONE IN TURN:**

- Physical regeneration and how Loughborough functions as a place (such as flood risk/drainage schemes etc)
- Equipping people, communities, and businesses for the future (e.g. skills, helping deprived communities etc)
- Smart, Green Loughborough (e.g. super-fast Broadband, smart green transport etc)
- Loughborough – 'innovation city', global national and regional destination (such as Midlands Connect rapid transit to Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Airport, HS2 etc)
  - What do you think it means?
  - How important is <<physical regeneration etc>> to you now? What about the future?
  - Is there anything missing?

## Use of the funding

**PLEASE ASK PARTICIPANTS TO REFER TO PAGES 4 (USE OF FUNDING) OF BACKGROUND READING FOR MORE DETAILS.**

- The current thoughts are that the £25m budget could be spent on undertaking two to three larger scale investment projects, rather than lots of smaller projects. What proportion of the budget do you think should be allocated to each? e.g. 90% or more to larger projects? Why is that?
- To what extent do you agree that the Town Plan should mainly focus on Loughborough town centre? Why is that?

- How important is it to you that it also connects to Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and the airport/HS2 hubs? Why is that?
- How should the fund be balanced between physical schemes and infrastructure (e.g. buildings, open spaces, transport, technology) and people-facing schemes (e.g. up-skilling, re-training for individuals impacted by the COVID-19 lockdown)? Why do you say that?
- Where should the majority of spend be based? Is it on new future-facing initiatives (medium or long term projects) or should it be used to help top up existing projects? Why do you say that?

**EXAMPLES OF CURRENT PROJECTS IF ASKED: THE GENERATOR ARTS FACILITY, THE BELL FOUNDRY IMPROVEMENTS, ENHANCING THE GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY FACILITIES.**

- **IF TOP UP EXISTING PROJECTS:** How could the Town Deal identify projects/schemes to ensure they were viable longer-term?

## Any other comments

Lastly, is there anything else you wish to add that we have not already covered today? Do you have any further comments on the draft Investment Plan/themes?

Thank you. For taking part, your feedback is really valuable if you have not already, please can you let Clare Rapkins at M·E·L Research know your preferred incentive (Love2Shop or donation to charity).

**THANK & CLOSE.**



## Appendix B: Online Survey



### Loughborough Town Deal Survey June 2020

Charnwood Borough Council has been invited to submit a Town Investment Plan to access Town Deal funding for Loughborough from the Government's £3.6bn Town Fund.

The Town Deal programme seeks **"to increase economic growth with a focus on regeneration, improved transport, better broadband connectivity, skills and culture"** for each eligible place.

The Loughborough Town Deal Board involves representatives from Charnwood Borough Council, Loughborough University, Loughborough College, Love Loughborough, Leicestershire County Council, the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership, Charnwood Together Economy and Skills Group, local businesses and Loughborough MP Jane Hunt. The Board is responsible for drawing up a Town Investment Plan which will provide a vision for building on the town's unique strengths to transform its economic growth prospects.

Following a period of research and an initial consultation, a draft proposition has been drawn up, which outlines what a final Investment Plan might contain, both in terms of its objectives and the types of projects which might be included. We have summarised the key issues in the document to assist with the consultation process.

The draft proposition identifies Loughborough as a special and genuinely distinctive place. Alongside being a great place to live, work and visit, it has authentic global, national and regional roles that can help with economic and social recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic as well as longer term benefits for our communities. The proposition prioritises investments in four thematic areas.

- 1) Physical regeneration and how Loughborough functions as a place
- 2) Equipping people, communities and businesses for the future
- 3) Smart, green Loughborough
- 4) Loughborough – 'innovation city', 'global national' and regional destination

The full proposition draft is contained here: <https://www.loughboroughtowndeal.co.uk/reports/336>. We strongly advise you read this information before making comments. Responses to this consultation can be submitted until **midnight on 5th July 2020**.

M·E·L Research, an independent market research company, has been commissioned to undertake the analysis and reporting of the survey results. All comments will be reported anonymously.

M·E·L Research Ltd is an accredited Market Research Society (MRS) Company Partner and abide by the MRS Code of Conduct and Data Protection Act 2018 (incorporating GDPR). All information you provide will be treated in the strictest of confidence and you will not be personally identifiable in any research report. Details of how M·E·L Research process personal data can be found at <https://melresearch.co.uk/page/privacypolicy>. This includes your right to withdraw consent at any time. Please click 'next' below to indicate your consent to continue.

For more information or help completing this consultation, please contact:

Mike Roberts, Communications Manager, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfield Road,  
Loughborough, LE11 2TX  
01509 634705 / [Mike.Roberts@charnwood.gov.uk](mailto:Mike.Roberts@charnwood.gov.uk).

## 1. Ambition

Loughborough has an important, special and highly distinctive place in the UK's roll-call of large towns.

It is known and globally significant for elite sports. Loughborough hosts a UK top-10 university and England's first Life Sciences Opportunity Zone. In the Midlands Engine, Loughborough is unparalleled outside the metros and large cities as a knowledge, science and technology hub at scale.

Loughborough also hosts two Enterprise Zone campuses.

By the 2030s, Loughborough will be home to over 80,000 residents.

The Town Deal has to answer the questions, after COVID-19, 'what sort of town is needed to build on these global, national, regional and county strengths?' and 'how can it best leverage these strengths for the benefit of the people and communities who chose to call Loughborough their home?'

The Town Deal will focus on being an ambitious programme that builds on Loughborough's global, national, regional and county profile and reputation for the medium and longer term. However, the Town deal will also need to focus on shorter term economic and social recovery from Covid-19 as a priority within the context of an ambitious, outward-looking investment plan.

What proportion of activity do you think should be allocated to each. Please indicate a percentage out of 100 in the two boxes below.

Focus on the global, national, regional and county profile and reputation for the medium and longer term projects

% out of 100

Focus on shorter term economic and social recovery from Covid-19 as a priority projects

% out of 100

% Total

Should add up to 100%

**Your total from the above two boxes should add up to 100%**

## 2. Loughborough – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT)

Loughborough is the largest town in the Leicestershire with a population of around 66,000.

Near the centre of England, within 30 minutes of the three largest East Midlands Cities, close to the airport and regional HS2 station, and with over 50 trains a day to London, the fastest of which makes the journey in under 80 minutes

Our resident population is younger than county, regional and national averages with, in general, higher average skills levels, more senior jobs, and higher residential and workplace earnings per week than the region and county

Our population is forecast to grow at faster rates than county and regional averages surpassing 80,000 residents in the 2030s.

Loughborough University is a top 10 UK university with over 18,000 students enrolled and 3000 staff.

There is more background in the full proposition document but a summary of Loughborough's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats is outlined below:

<b>STRENGTHS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Younger, higher skills, better jobs and growing faster than regional and county averages</li> <li>• Global quality university with relevant assets and capabilities for future town development &amp; wellbeing</li> <li>• Superb international gateway, national and regional location and access</li> </ul>	<b>WEAKNESSES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of out-commuting for some higher earners, and of seasonality when university is closed</li> <li>• Town centre needs continual evolution and pace of development has sometimes been slow</li> <li>• Four central neighbourhoods on edge of town centre are among most-deprived 20% in England</li> </ul>
<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage University, Enterprise Zones and other assets and relevant capabilities to make Loughborough a genuine global, national and regional knowledge hub</li> <li>• Use Town Deal and associated opportunities to make Loughborough work well as a cohesive, inclusive place</li> <li>• Reasonable suite of long-standing plans and projects which can be made investment-ready relatively swiftly</li> </ul>	<b>THREATS</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential national and regional post-lockdown economy reduces domestic demand, levels of private investment, and appetite for innovation – with specific university dimensions that particularly impact the town</li> <li>• Business closures and/or rationalisation increase need for reskilling and enterprise support beyond local capacity and resources to deliver</li> <li>• Social distancing and new public health requirements accelerate contraction of high street and reduces footfall in the medium term</li> </ul>

**Q1 To what extent do you agree or disagree with the identified SWOT aspects?**

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q1a. Strengths	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Threats



**Q2 What other strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats might there be?**

### 3. Recovery from Covid-19 pandemic

In formulating a 2030 proposition for Loughborough, the Town Deal Board has discussed likely characteristics and challenges for leading towns through the 2020s. This includes recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst there are no definitive answers and assured forecasts for this, we believe it is reasonable to assume implications of the crisis will include:

Long-term increased levels of home working and home learning

Need to give residents and visitors confidence that social distancing and other public health measures make trips in towns and neighbourhoods safe and secure

Continuation of the shift to online purchasing and deliveries seen during the lock down, with consequent acceleration of pressures on bricks and mortar retail

Enduring interest in green and active living improvements secured during the lockdown

Greater focus on resilience compared to growth in economic and social priorities

Reconfirmation of commitment to levelling up opportunities for communities not currently participating in or benefiting from Loughborough's success; and for those whose lives and futures have been seriously damaged during the lock down.

In broad terms, we are suggesting a Town Deal that lays the foundations for long run success of Loughborough as a leading town but also contributes quickly and tangibly to short term recovery – especially for those most at risk of enduring hardship.

**Q3 Please can you give us your ideas of measures we can take to support the recovery from the pandemic which will also benefit the town's long-term future?**

## 4. Vision

A vision for Loughborough is set out below:

**"We consider Loughborough has the assets and capabilities of a leading small city. In the 2020s we can be globally known for both elite and participatory sports excellence; the Midlands Engine's premier small city knowledge and science hub; at the centre of the region's tri-city area (of Derby, Leicester and Nottingham); and Leicestershire's county town.**

**To make the most of those roles and functions, Loughborough should offer residents, communities and business the opportunities, experiences and well-being to participate fully in Loughborough's life and development"**

NB: The Midlands Engine is a coalition of Councils, Combined Authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP), Universities and businesses across the region, actively working with Government to build a collective identity for the Midlands, to present the Midlands as a competitive and compelling offer that is attractive at home and overseas.

**Q4 Please give us your thoughts on our draft vision (in particular what things would you add or remove for the vision outlined above).**

## 5. How could Town Deal investment be spent

The Board have carefully considered criteria for proposing Town Deal programme investments and the shape of the overall programme. The approach will combine projects that assist short-term recovery and rebooting of economic and social life, whilst building momentum for long-term success as a leading distinctive place of national significance and quality. It is currently being proposed that Town Deal funding could be invested in the following ways:

3 to 4 larger schemes but a sum (perhaps £3-£4m) for a number of small and micro-projects;

We expect government to confirm this as mainly a capital expenditure programme, but a revenue element for things like setting up town events and activity, or for re-skilling and re-training has merit;

The majority of the programme should focus on the town centre and urban core but there should be support for wider connectivity and relevant projects allowing access to Leicester, Nottingham, Derby and the airport/HS2 hubs;

We will top up existing schemes where these are viable long term and have been stalled by the lock down – but most of the programme should support prime future-facing, medium and long term initiatives;

There should be a balance between physical regeneration and investment and initiatives targeted at individuals and communities – especially for those communities that need greater support or who have suffered major lock down setbacks;

Successful places in the future will need advanced digital capabilities and strong green credentials. The programme should seek to mainstream this in its overall approach.

**Q5 To what extent do you agree with our suggested criteria for investment and the overall shape of the programme?**

	Strongly agree	Slightly agree	Slightly disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not sure
Q5a. 3 to 4 large scale schemes	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus on Town Centre and urban core	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Focus mainly on medium and long term initiatives	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Q5d. Balancing physical regeneration and investment with that targeting individuals and communities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening Loughborough's digital capabilities and green credentials	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Q6 What else might you like to see included?**

## 6. Draft investment plan

There are currently 20 existing ongoing schemes and ideas that are in development and could be considered for the Loughborough Town Deal. For reasons of scale, it is clear the Town Deal will not be able to fund all of these. Some example projects are listed below. **They are NOT in priority order.**

**Physical regeneration and how Loughborough functions as a place:**

Core physical resilience – Environment Agency flood risk and drainage schemes  
Town Centre schemes:  
Opportunity sites (e.g. Baxter Gate, Aumbery Gap, Devonshire Square, Ashby Road)  
Public Realm – quality, public health aligned townscape, street scene and open spaces  
Town Hall/Markets Square events space and Love Loughborough Place Management  
Urban Living residential and lifestyle development  
Station Quarter – improving gateway areas and connectivity to town centre  
Limehurst Depot and Canal Side developments (including canal and rivers trust)  
Connectivity – particularly town centre parking, circulation, public transport interchange and mobility  
A rapid transit spine – station – town centre – college – university/LUSEP – West Loughborough

### Equipping people, communities and businesses for the future:

Skills  
Digital skills hub  
Reskilling and future jobs programme  
Business  
Business Support and accelerator  
Innovation and incubation centres in the town itself  
Communities  
Housing and living environment improvements in deprived neighbourhoods  
Youth Sports Trust

### Smart, green Loughborough:

Digital Loughborough infrastructure and services – superfast broadband, next generation networks, internet of things (IoT) sensors, observatory, open data centre and related apps  
Smart, green transport plan – including cycle and pedestrian priority corridors, greener public transport, e-bikes and EV charging points, canal and river side

### Loughborough – ‘innovation city’, global national and regional destination:

Sport and Active Healthy Living Exemplar  
Loughborough Area of Innovation, innovation eco-system and LATI+ – with strong linkages to tri-city eco-systems and Midlands Engine  
The Generator, Creative Loughborough and Charnwood Arts  
Industrial Heritage quarter  
Grand Central Railway restoration and education centre  
Bell Foundry  
Museum and memorial  
Midlands Connect rapid transit to Derby, Leicester, Nottingham, Airport, HS2 and beyond

**Q7** Based on the information provided above, do you agree with the overall approach we are suggesting to formulating the programme?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No  
☐ Maybe

**Q8** Is there anything else we should consider? What other opportunities would potentially compliment our long list of themes, projects and programmes?



## About you

**Q9** Which one of the following best describes how you are responding?

- ☐ Resident (lives in Loughborough)
- ☐ Resident (lives outside Loughborough in Charnwood)
- ☐ Resident (Lives outside Charnwood)
- ☐ Own a business based in Loughborough
- ☐ Work for a business based in Loughborough
- ☐ Work for a community or voluntary organisation (based in Loughborough)
- ☐ Own or work for a business, community or voluntary organisation (based outside Loughborough)
- ☐ Other

If other, please provide details

**Q10** If you are making a response on behalf of a business or community or voluntary organisation, please provide a name of the body you are representing. Please note, these responses will not be anonymised in our summary report.

**Q11** Please can you provide your home postcode:

**Q12** Please can you provide your business or organisation postcode:

**Q13** Where did you find out about this consultation?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> CBC website         | <input type="radio"/> Charnwood Borough Council email                  |
| <input type="radio"/> CBC Twitter         | <input type="radio"/> alert (i.e Charnwood Now / Business Bulletin)    |
| <input type="radio"/> CBC Facebook page   | <input type="radio"/> Local radio                                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Loughborough Echo   | <input type="radio"/> Local TV   |
| <input type="radio"/> Leicester Mercury   | <input type="radio"/> My organisation                                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Leicestershire Live | <input type="radio"/> Business/Community business outside Loughborough |
|   | <input type="radio"/> Other (please specify)                           |

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please click on the "Submit" button below.**

If you'd like more information about who we are and how we use the information provided please see our privacy policy at: [melresearch.co.uk/privacypolicy](http://melresearch.co.uk/privacypolicy).

# Appendix C: Respondent Profiles

## Focus group attendees

To provide further insight into respondent views, six focus groups were conducted. This qualitative element explored in greater detail views on the Loughborough Town Deal and how it could help Loughborough become a better place to live, work and visit in the future.

Table 1 presents the profile of participants showing a board mix of residents and businesses attended the focus groups.

**Table 1: Participant profile - residents**

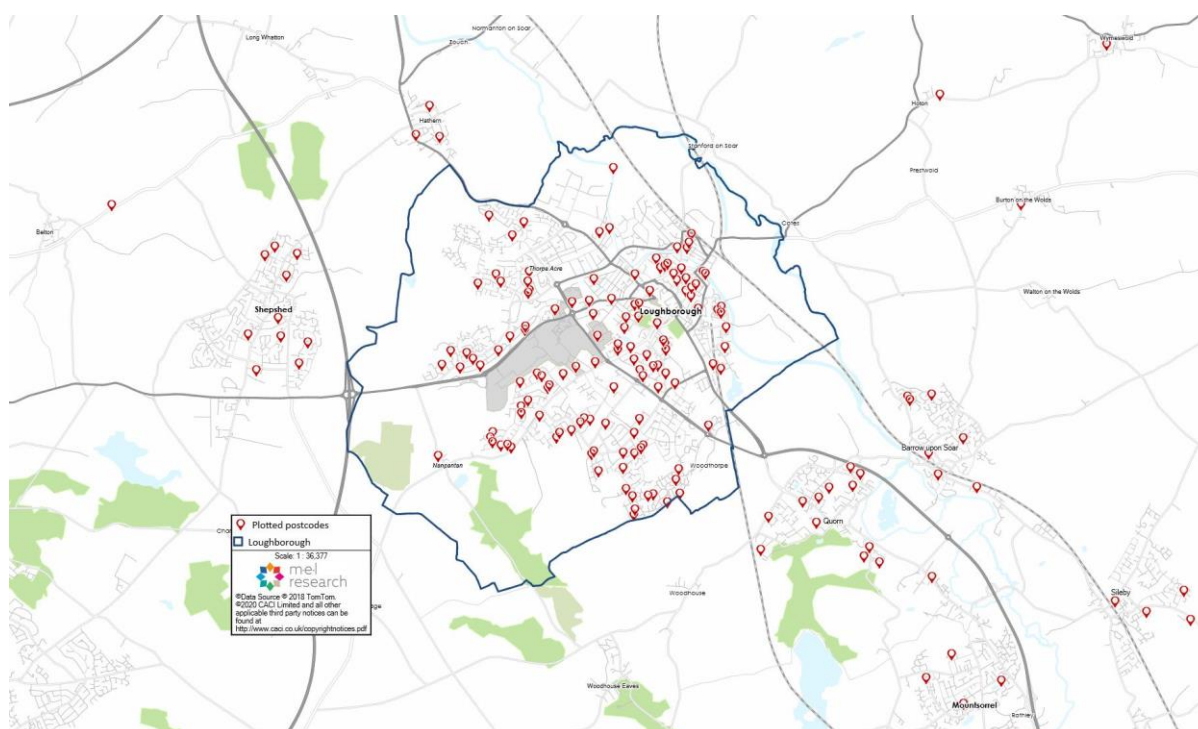
Age group	Count
18-24	12
25-34	4
35-44	10
45-54	5
55-64	8
65+	6
Gender	Count
Female	28
Male	17
Ethnicity	Count
White	39
BME	5
Prefer not to say	1
Tenure	Count
Buying on a mortgage	18
Owned outright	17
Rented from a private landlord	6
Rent from Housing Association / Trust	1
Student Accommodation	2
Prefer not to say	1
Working status	Count
Employed	18
Full time education	12
Retired	11
Unemployed	2
Prefer not to say	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>

**Table 2: Participant profile - businesses**

Size of business	Count
Micro/small business	10
Medium sized business	1
Length of trading	Count
<1 year	1
1 - 20 years	6
21+ years	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>

## Online survey respondents

**Map 1: Geographical spread of online survey respondents**



**Table 3: Profile of online survey respondents**

Respondent type	Count	Percentage
Resident (lives in Loughborough)	165	64%
Resident (lives outside Loughborough in Charnwood)	68	27%
Resident (Lives outside Charnwood)	6	2%
Own a business based in Loughborough	13	5%
Work for a business based in Loughborough	14	5%
Work for a community or voluntary organisation (based in Loughborough)	10	4%
Own or work for a business, community, or voluntary organisation (based outside Loughborough)	7	3%
Other	7	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>256</b>	<b>100%</b>

How found out about consultation	Count	
CBC website	10	4%
CBC Twitter	15	6%
CBC Facebook page	61	24%
Loughborough Echo	12	5%
Leicester Mercury	0	0%
Leicestershire Live	4	2%
Charnwood Borough Council email alert (i.e. Charnwood Now / Business Bulletin)	85	34%
Local radio	2	1%
Local TV	0	0%
My organisation	13	5%
Business/Community business outside Loughborough	2	1%
Other (please specify)	46	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>100%</b>

