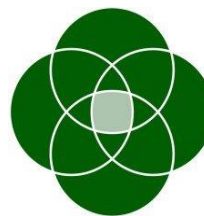




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West of England



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Transport &  
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# Evaluation of Brighton Old town Street Improvements 2013-15

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The Centre for Transport and Society, University of the West of  
England, Bristol

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# 1 Executive Summary

In 2013, Brighton and Hove Borough Council commissioned the Centre for Transport and Society (CTS) at the University of the West of England (UWE) to evaluate the planned Old Town Traffic Improvement Scheme. Following a public consultation and a planning inquiry some but not all of the original elements of the scheme were implemented; Ship Street was closed to traffic in 2014 and East Street was pedestrianised on a trial basis at weekends only from May 2015. The evaluation used three methods: traffic counts, on-street surveys and interviews with key stakeholders. The key findings were:

- There was relatively little removal of through traffic; total traffic volumes fell by just 4%, although this included a big increase in van traffic that was probably unrelated to the Scheme.
- Traffic volumes on Black Lion Street and Middle Street increased following the closure of Ship Street.
- There was a statistically significant increase in visitors arriving by bicycle (on the weekdays) but in other respects the pattern of travel to the area did not significantly change; roughly a third of visitors arrive by car.
- Only around 3% of visitors parked on the streets of the Old Town before and after the changes, so fears about the impact of loss of parking appear to have been unfounded.
- There was no statistically significant change in the overall spending by visitors on the weekday. Spending was higher at the weekend but it is not possible to say what impact the Scheme might have had on that.
- 54% of the public surveyed agreed that “it was right to make the changes”; only 4% disagreed.
- Only 9% agreed that East Street should be reopened to traffic at weekends (i.e. the trial should be terminated); 54% disagreed.
- 34% agreed that the trial should be extended to weekdays as well; 23% disagreed.
- Public perceptions of the Old Town were generally positive. Compared to a baseline survey on a weekday in 2013, they were more positive on the Saturday in 2015 when East Street was pedestrianised, but less positive on a comparable weekday in 2015. The reasons for these differences cannot be stated with confidence but some possible explanations are discussed in Section 7.3
- The changes were supported by some businesses, mainly located on East Street, and opposed by other businesses, mainly within the Lanes.
- The objectors broadly supported the aims of removing unnecessary traffic but criticised the process and the relatively low-cost implementation (compared to New Road, for example).
- All sides viewed the planning inquiry as unnecessarily confrontational. The Council officer who appeared as the sole witness believed that in hindsight this was a mistake; in future planning inquiries on this scale, a range of witnesses with expertise covering different aspects of the proposed implementation should be called to give evidence.
- A picture emerged from the interviews of a process that was piecemeal and appeared uncoordinated, particularly following the public inquiry, where some of the original proposals were not supported by the inspector and a compromise was agreed on East Street.
- The Council currently has no up-to-date strategy on its website covering the Old Town or long-term pedestrian improvements. Proposed changes were presented to councillors in a series of reports but these are detailed operational documents, not long-term strategies. It is recommended that an area-wide plan or a Council walking strategy be produced setting future public realm improvements into a broader context.

## 2 Background to the Evaluation

In 2013, Brighton and Hove Borough Council commissioned the Centre for Transport and Society (CTS) at the University of the West of England (UWE) to evaluate the planned Old Town Traffic Improvement Scheme. This project aimed to “deter unnecessary traffic whilst still allowing essential users access to the site”.<sup>1</sup> A consultation exercise was conducted during 2012, which proposed two options. The consultation found majority support for a traffic reduction scheme, although opinion amongst the businesses in the Old Town was evenly divided.<sup>2</sup> Following the consultation the Council’s Transport Committee decided in October 2012 to proceed with a third option (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

The proposals were controversial and following several objections were subject to a planning inquiry, described below, which recommended in favour of some of the changes but not others. Following the inquiry, some further changes were made to address some of the inspector’s concerns, following which, the Council decided to implement a more limited scheme, also shown in Figure 1, in two stages:

1. Ship Street was closed to traffic in August 2014
2. East Street was pedestrianised at weekends in a trial scheme starting May 2015

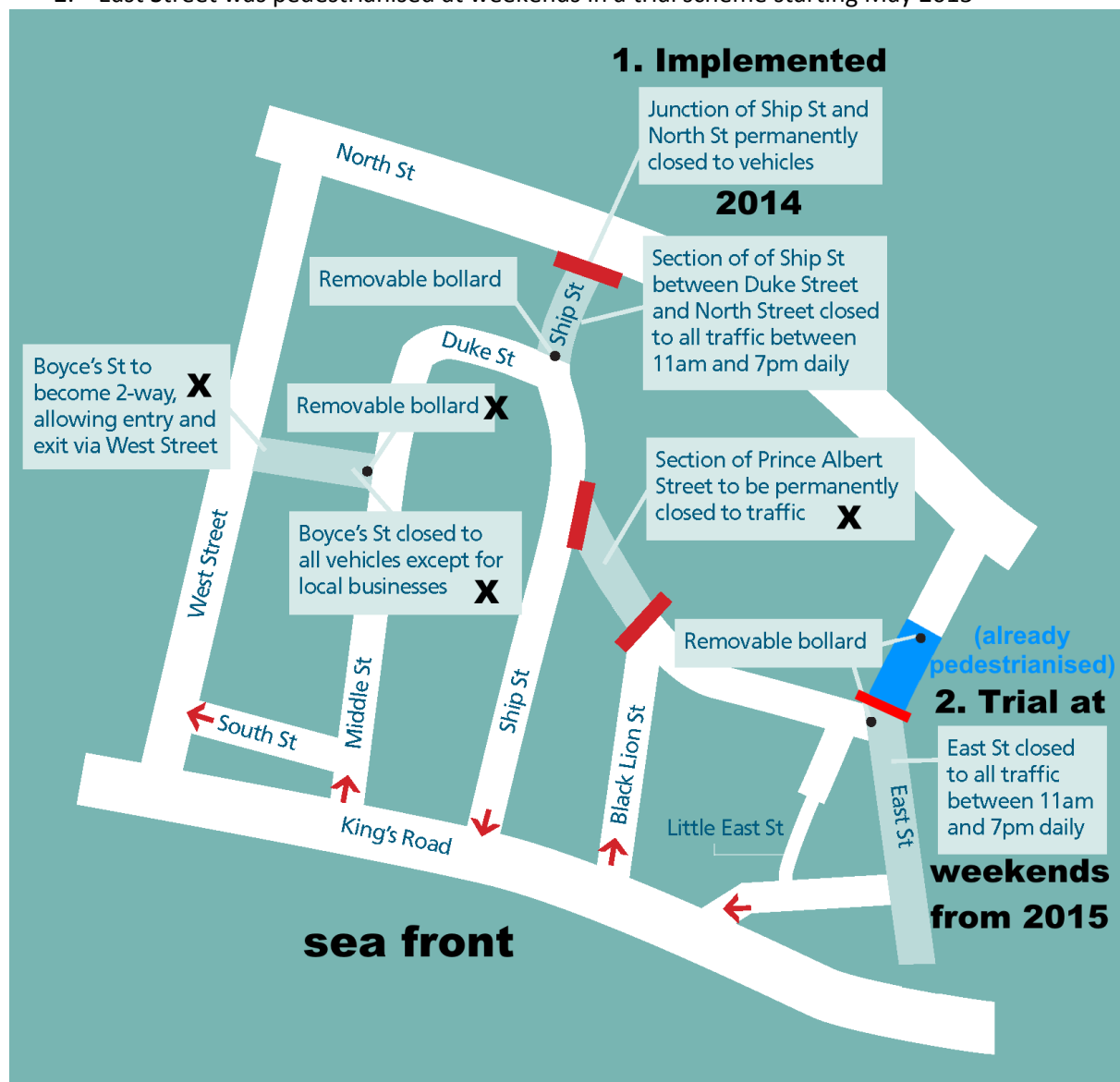


Figure 1 2012 Proposal for Brighton Old Town showing elements implemented and not implemented (X)



The aims of this evaluation are to explore:

- The effect of any changes on the modal share of travel to the Old Town
- Pedestrian perceptions, before and after the changes
- The effect on businesses in the Old Town
- Effects on traffic and movement in the Old Town
- The process of decision-making and implementation of the scheme

### 3 Methodology

Three methods were used: traffic counts, a before and after street-based survey and interviews with key stakeholders. Traffic counts were conducted on Ship Street, Middle Street and Black Lion Street in 2013. [To be completed]

On-street surveys of pedestrians in the Old Town were conducted on a single day in June 2013 and on two days in late June 2015 by a team from East Sussex County Council, using questionnaires designed by UWE. The day in 2013 was a weekday with good weather; to ensure comparability, the weather was also good on the two survey days in 2015. One of those days was a weekday, which provided a closer comparison to the baseline survey. The other day was a Saturday, chosen to assess the impact of the trial pedestrianisation of East Street, which only takes place at weekends.

The questionnaires (see attachment 1) were designed to assess:

1. Why respondents were in Old Town, and
2. how they travelled there.
3. Their views were of the area
4. Their understanding of, and views on the changes to the road layouts

A structured random sampling method was used. The instructions to the surveyors were as follows:

*“... approach every 5<sup>th</sup> person who passes you in either direction. At times which are very busy you may increase this to, every 10<sup>th</sup> person, for example, but you should always use the same*

*method. If someone declines to participate, you should continue to follow the same method i.e. the 5<sup>th</sup> person or 10<sup>th</sup> person to pass you next”*

The stakeholder interviews were conducted in person with business owners who favoured and opposed the scheme, the Council officer overseeing the scheme (who no longer works for the Council) and the lead councillors responsible for transport in 2013 and 2015. The aims of the stakeholder interviews were to explore the impact of the changes on businesses and to provide an understanding of the implementation process – which was problematic at times – in order to draw lessons for public realm schemes in the future.

## 4 Traffic Counts

### 4.1 Traffic Counts

The traffic counts were conducted from 9am until 5pm on a weekday in June 2013 and a weekday in November 2015. The counts were conducted on the three entry points to the Old Town in 2013 and the two remaining entry points in 2015 after Ship Street was closed to motor traffic. As these were manual traffic counts, no attempt was made to differentiate between local and through traffic. Pedestrians were not included because the multiple entry and exit points to the Old Town would have required too many resources to conduct a valid count.

	Ship St.	Black Lion Street			Middle Street			Total		
	2013	2013	2015	Change	2013	2015	Change	2013	2015	Change
Cars	270	254	326	+28%	377	528	+40%	901	854	-5%
Vans	104	140	160	+14%	140	320	+129%	384	480	+25%
Lorries	21	35	32	-9%	146	73	-50%	202	105	-48%
All	408	429	518	+21%	663	921	+39%	1500	1439	-4%

**Table 1 Motor Traffic Counts before and after the changes**

Some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting Table 1 as the daily variability in traffic levels was not known and the traffic counts were conducted at different times of the year, unlike the street surveys. It suggests that there was some displacement of traffic from Ship Street onto Black Lion Street and Middle Street. The overall volume of motor traffic entering the Old Town fell by just 4%. The fall would have been greater without the big increase in van traffic, which cannot be attributed to the Traffic Improvement Scheme; the general economic improvement over those years and changing patterns of deliveries to businesses and residential properties are the most likely causes. National road traffic estimates show a 6% increase in the volume of van traffic in 2014 compared to 2013 with the increase appearing to accelerate from 2012 onwards.<sup>4</sup> The big fall in the volume of lorries may also reflect changes in delivery practices and there could also be a seasonal effect, although it is likely that the closure of Ship Street removed some lorries that previously passed through the Old Town.

## 5 Survey Findings

Using the approach described above the survey team collected 280 valid and usable questionnaires in 2013, 219 on the weekday in 2015 and 218 on the weekend. The socio-demographic characteristics of those who completed the survey are shown in Attachment 2. The weekend visitors were noticeably different from those surveyed on the week days; a higher proportion had travelled from outside Brighton, a higher proportion were employed full-time and there were relatively few

pensioners at the weekend. The proportion of Old Town residents was highest in the baseline survey (31%) and lower in the 2015 surveys (11% on the weekday and 16% at the weekend). The majority of Old Town residents did not have access to a car in their household, whereas most visitors, particularly from outside Brighton, did.

## 5.1 Today's visit to Old Town

### 5.1.1 Reason to be in Old Town

Participants who were not residents were asked the reasons for their visit – multiple answers were possible. Their responses are shown in Figure 4 below.

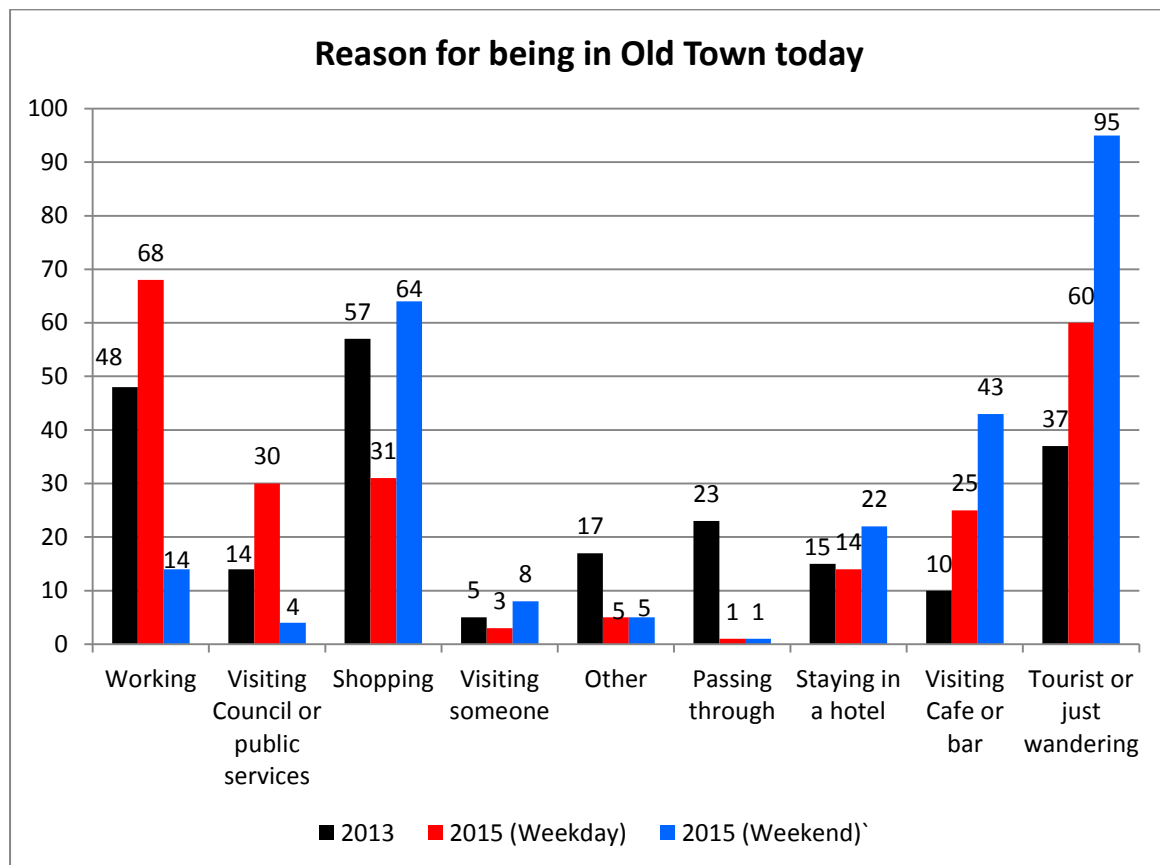
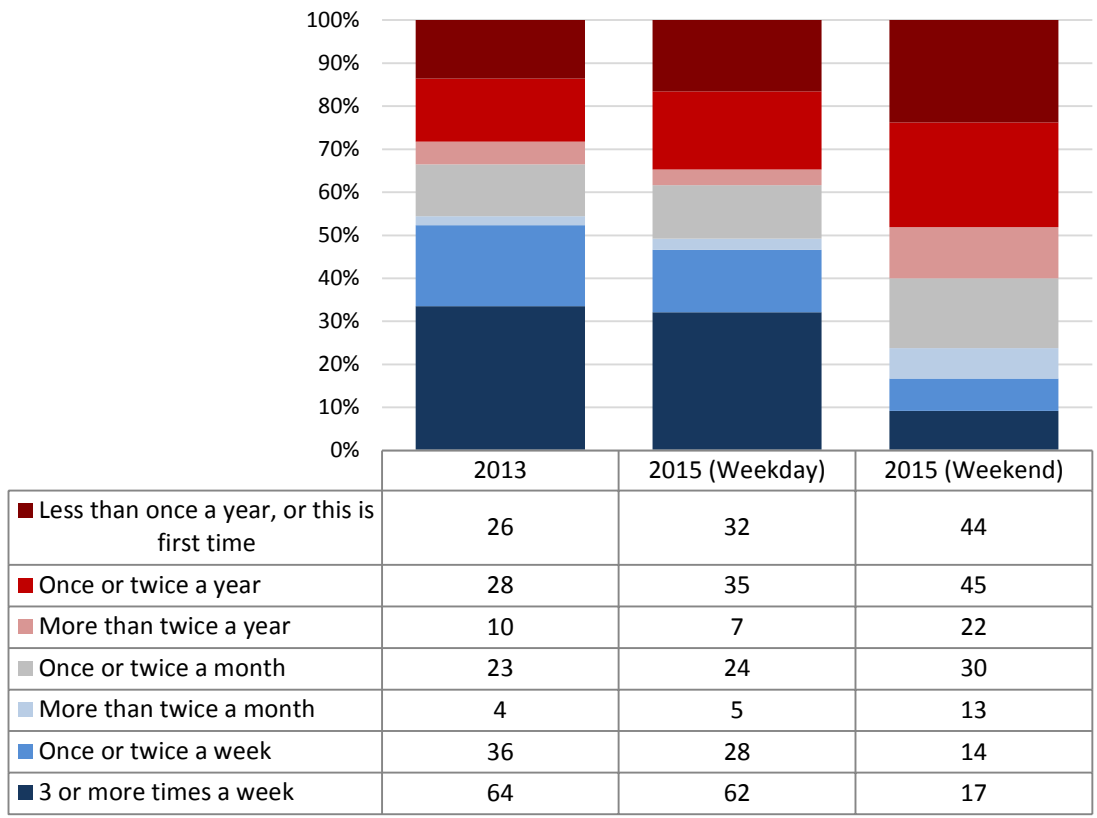


Figure 4 Reason for visit to Old Town today

As expected, weekday visitors were more likely to be working or visiting public services whereas most weekend visitors were engaged in tourism or 'just wandering'. The subsamples of each category are relatively small, so differences between the 2013 and 2015 weekday samples may be due to random variation.



### Frequency of visits to Old Town (non-residents)

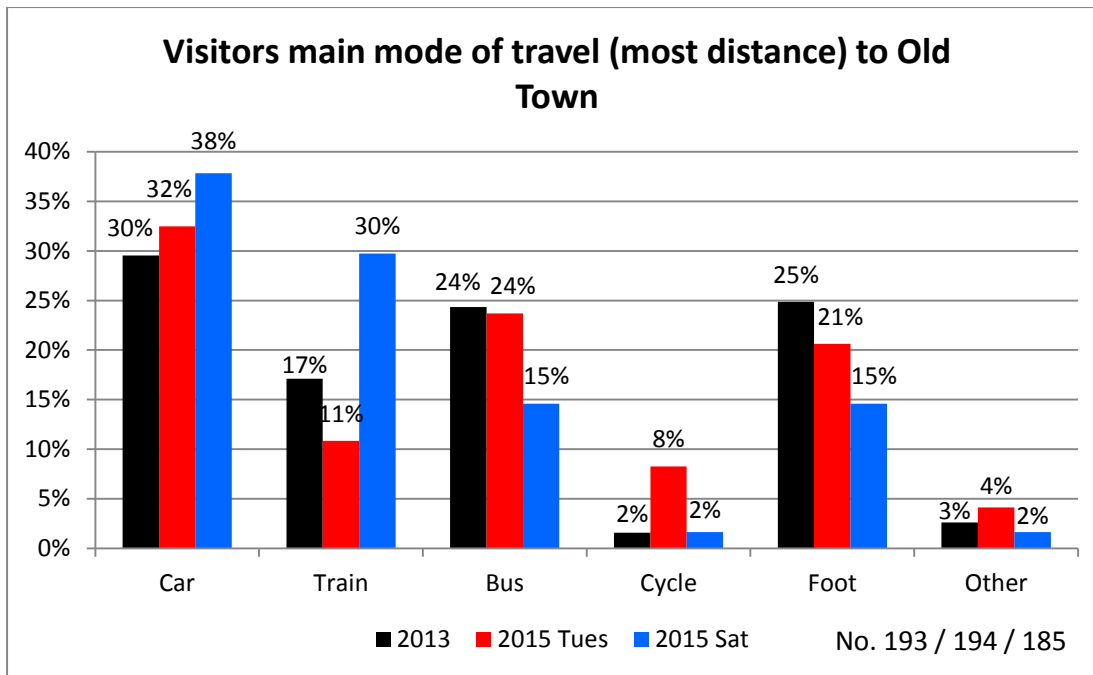


**Figure 5 Non-residents frequency of visits to Old Town**

Around half of weekday visitors are in the Old Town at least weekly, whereas this is the case for less than 20% of visitors at the weekend. Around half of weekend visitors only visit once or twice a year, or are on their first visit.

#### 5.1.2 Travel to ‘Old Town’

Non-residents were asked how they had travelled to the Old Town that day (the ‘*main mode for most of the distance travelled*’). Responses are shown in Figure 6.



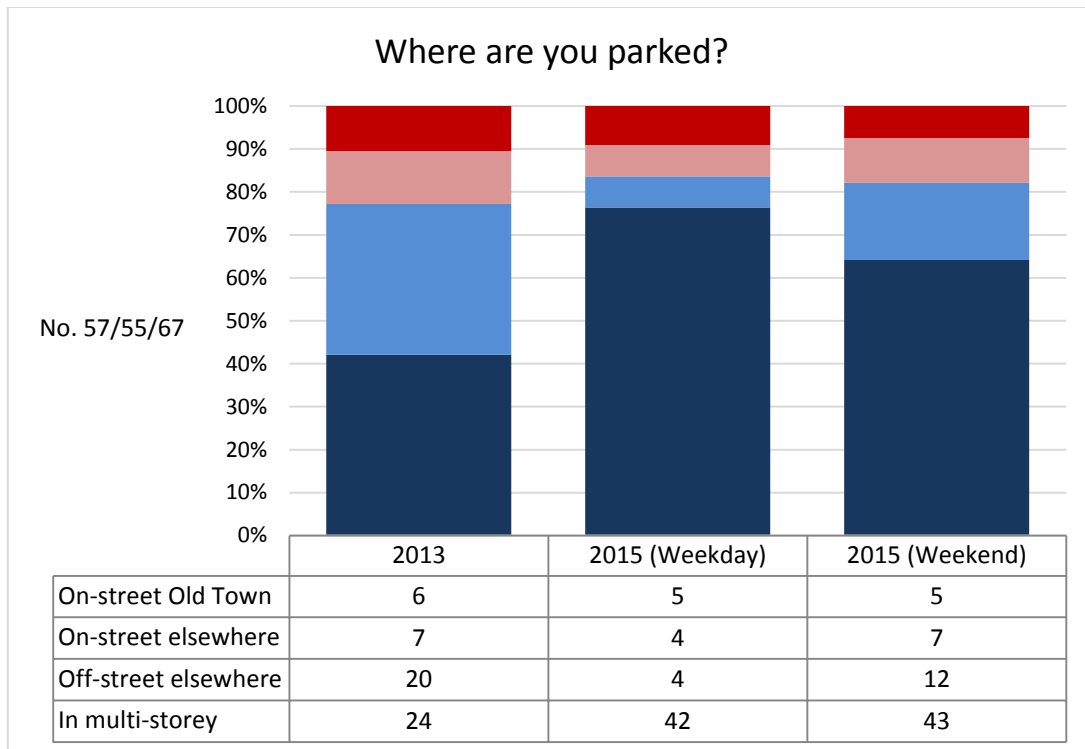
**Figure 6 Main mode of travel to Old Town today**

Some caution needs to be exercised when interpreting Figure 6 because of the small sizes of most of the categories; comparing the weekdays the apparent difference in car travel between 2013 and 2015 was not statistically significant, nor was the apparent difference in walking. Only two of the differences were statistically significant:

- The higher level of cycling during the week
- The higher level of train travel at the weekend

The first of those may be a consequence of the traffic changes; the higher level of train travel at weekend is probably unrelated; it mainly reflects the greater distances travelled by weekend visitors.

Those who had driven to the Old Town, were asked where they had parked. The proportion of people who parked on the streets of Old Town was very small: 5 or 6 people in all three surveys. The higher proportion of people parking in the multi-storey car parks in 2015 may have been influenced by the temporary closure of Black Lion Street (see map in Figure 1) with access only allowed to the multi-storey car park. This could have persuaded more drivers to enter the multi-storey car park instead of searching for an on-street space (although most of them would have to leave the Old Town if they wanted to find an on-street alternative).



**Figure 7 Parking location for visitors**

### 5.1.3 Spending in Old Town today

All participants in the survey (residents and non-residents) were asked if they had spent money with shops or other businesses in the Old Town on the day of the survey, and if they were willing to share the information on how much they had spent. On all three days of surveys over half had either already spent money, or were planning to do so.

Those respondents who answered yes to this question were asked how much they had spent. The responses are shown below. No distinctions were made between purchases of goods or services. On the weekday surveys over half the purchases are under £20, although there were a few larger purchases ranging up to £700. The average spend at the weekend was £66, compared to £32 on the weekdays – there was no significant difference between 2013 and 2015. The distribution of these responses is shown in the final section of Appendix 2.

## 5.2 Attitudes towards Old Town

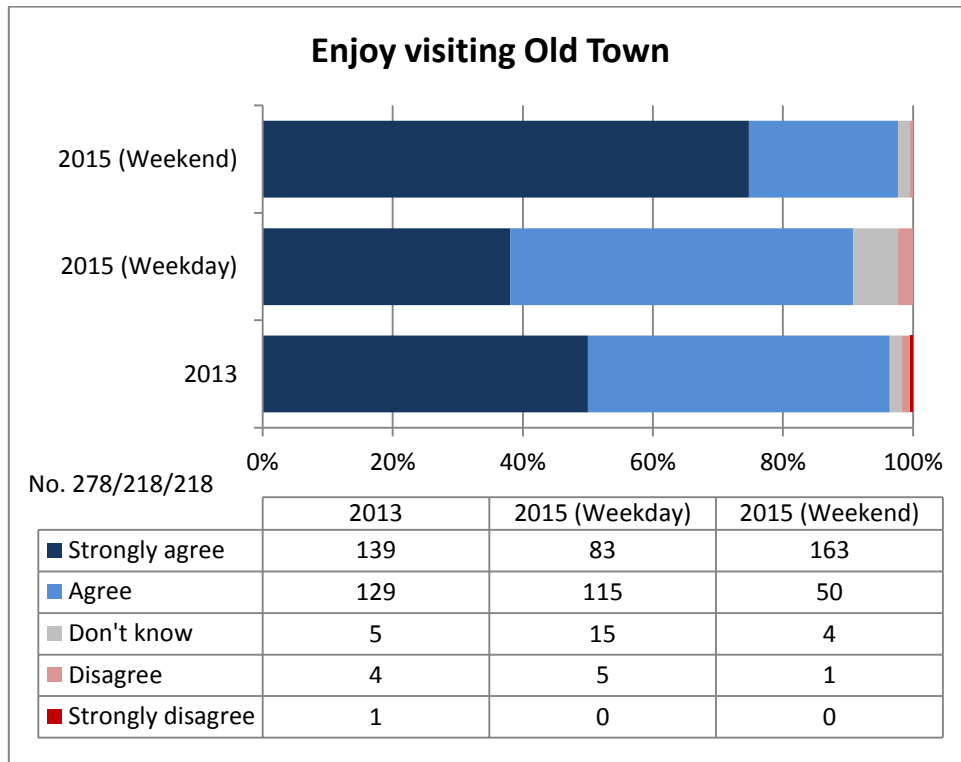
All participants in the survey were asked to rank a series of five statements about Old Town, on a four point scale ranging from ‘Strongly agree’ to ‘Strongly disagree’, with the additional option of ‘Don’t know’. The five statements included three considering the various merits of the area, and two that focussed on the local environment.

**Table 2 Statements about Old Town**

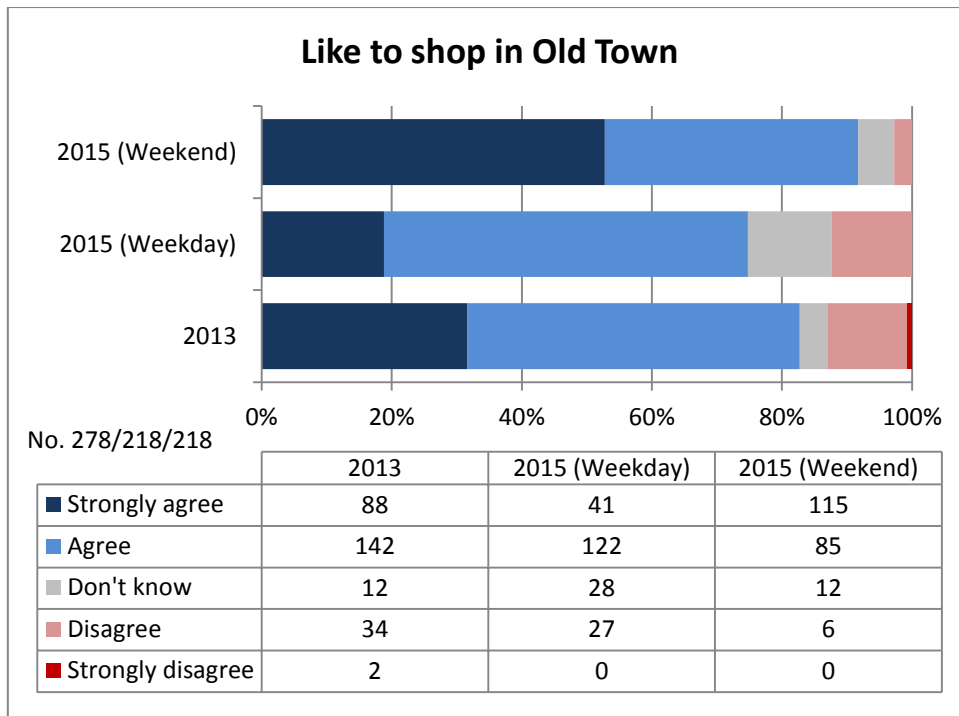
- 
- 1 *“I enjoy visiting the Old Town”*
  - 2 *“I like the Old Town as a place to shop”*
  - 3 *“I like the Old Town as a place to eat or drink”*
  
  - 4 *“There is too much traffic in Old Town”*
  - 5 *“The Old Town is a good place for pedestrians”*
-

### 5.2.1 Enjoyment of the Old Town

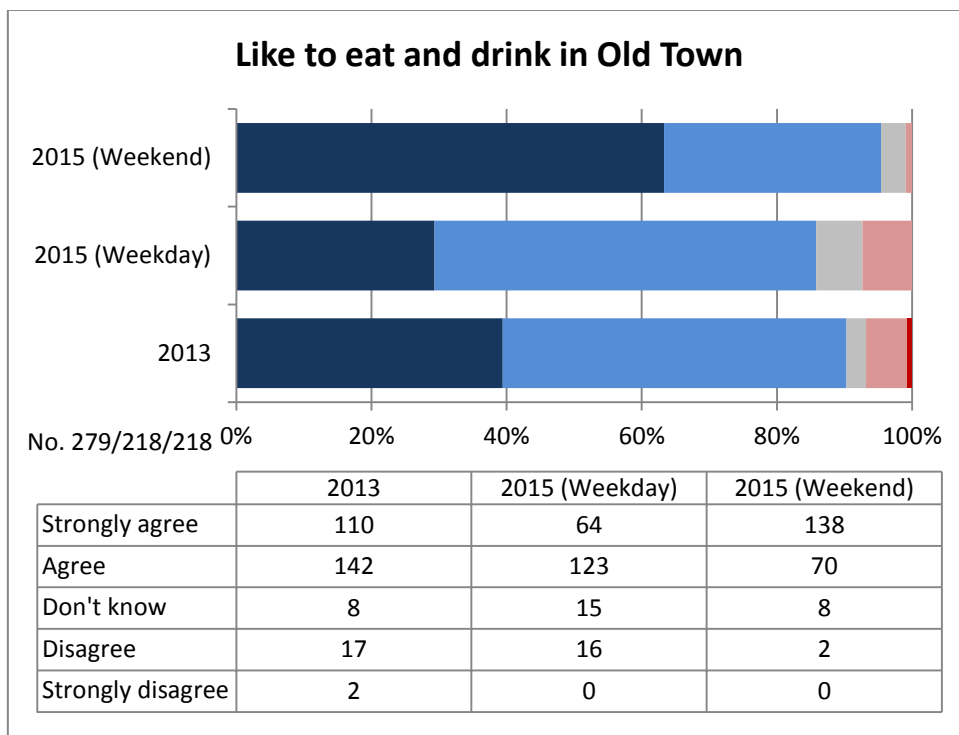
Answers to the first three of these questions show broadly positive views about the Old Town, particularly on the weekend when East Street was pedestrianised. Comparing opinions on the two weekdays, responses were less positive in 2015 than in 2013, whereas they were more positive at the weekend than on either of the weekdays – all of those differences were statistically significant. Their implications are discussed in Section 7 below.



**Figure 8 Views on visiting Old Town**



**Figure 9 Views on Shopping in Old Town**



**Figure 10 Views on Eating and Drinking in Old Town**

## 5.2.2 Views on traffic / walking environment

There was some more variation in the response to the statements about traffic and the desirability of walking in the area. On the weekdays opinion was evenly balanced on whether there was 'too much traffic in the Old Town' whilst most people did not agree with this statement on the weekend survey (when the East St closure was in place) - see Figure 11 below. Most people across all the surveys agreed that the Old Town was a good area for pedestrians.

Figure 11 Views on traffic levels in Old Town

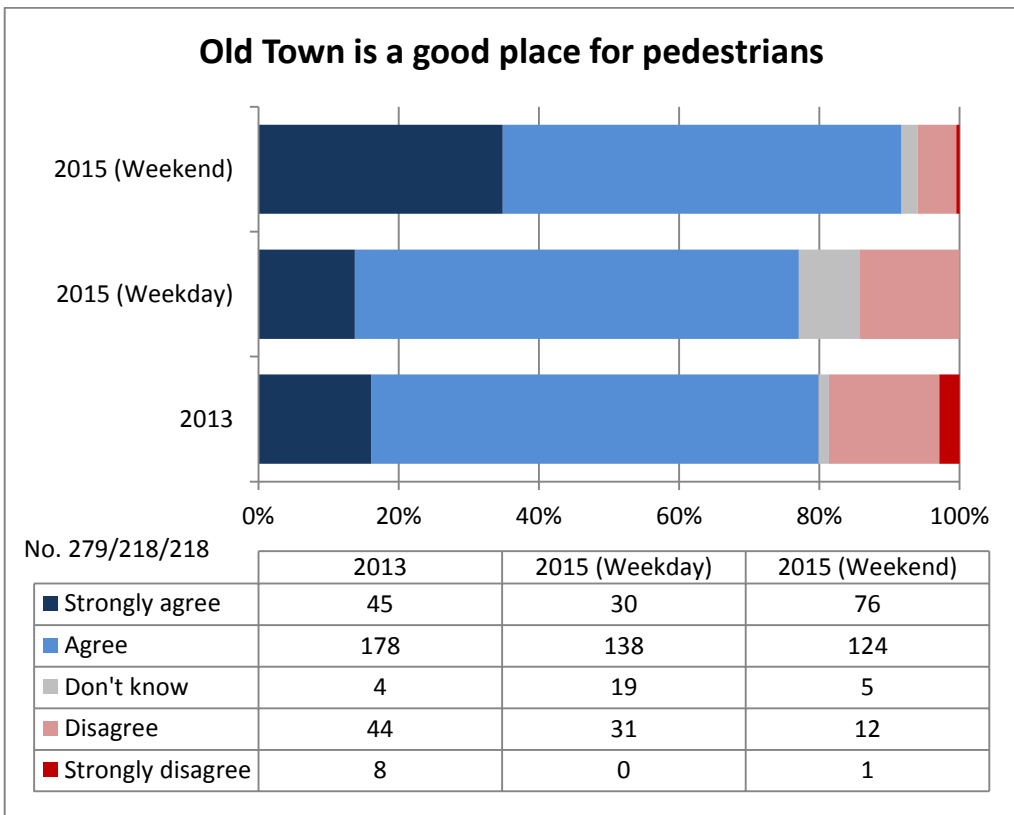
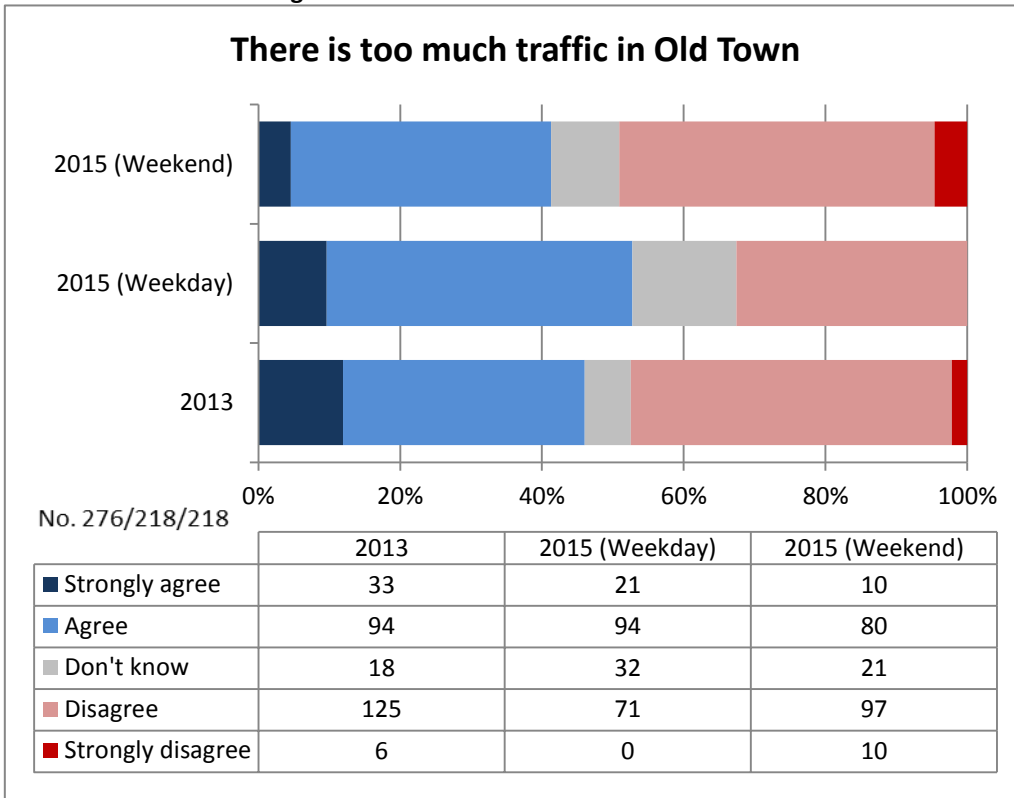


Figure 12 Views on how pedestrian-friendly Old Town is

The differences between 2013 and 2015 were not statistically significant for either of these two questions. On the weekend when East Street was pedestrianised, more people strongly agreed that the Old Town was a good place for pedestrians – that difference was statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

Across the three surveys, 60% of residents agreed that there was too much traffic in the Old Town compared to just 43% of visitors; the difference was statistically significant at the 99% confidence level.

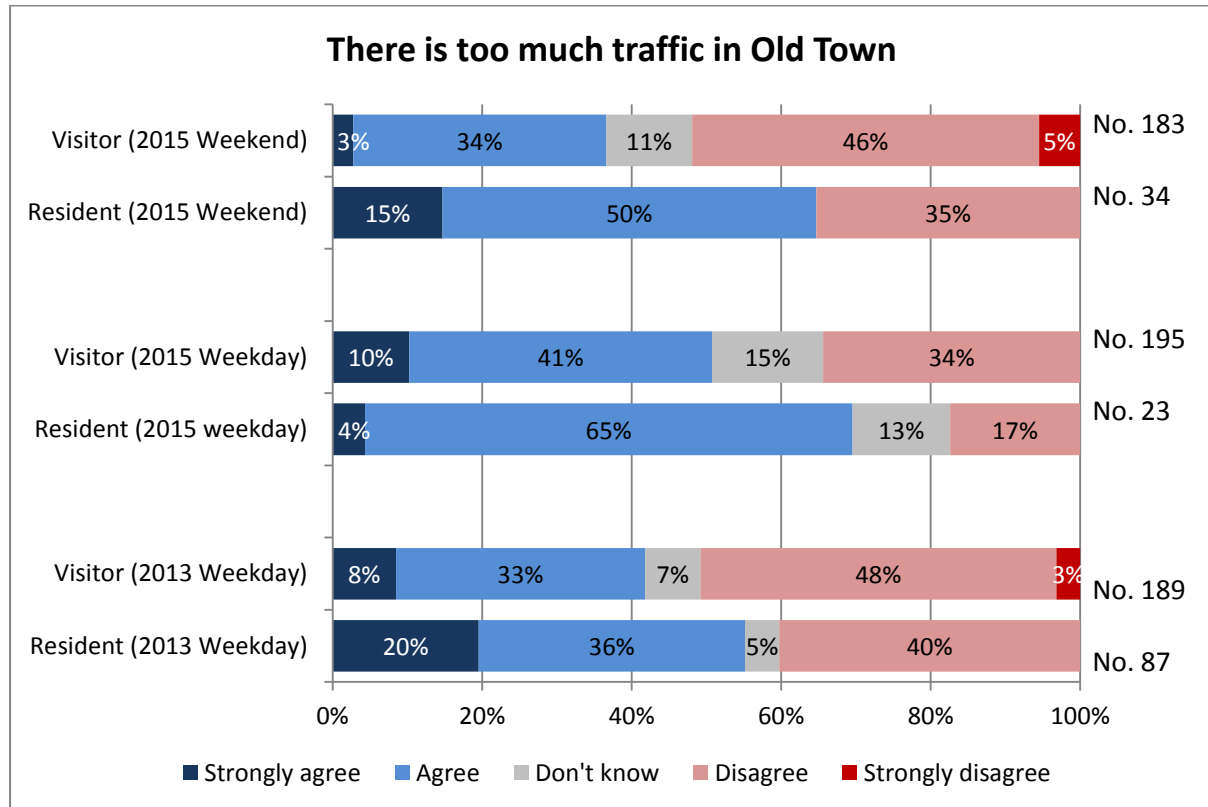


Figure 13 Views on traffic from residents and visitors

### 5.3 Statistical Analysis

Statistical tests (ordinal regressions) were performed on the responses to the questions about perceptions of the Old Town.

	2013	2015 week	2015 Sat.	Total
I enjoy visiting the Old Town	96.4%	90.8%*	97.7%**	714
I like the Old Town as a place to shop	82.7%	74.8%*	91.7%**	714
I like the Old Town as a place to eat or drink	90.3%	85.8%*	95.4%**	715
The Old Town is a good place for pedestrians	79.9%	77.0%	91.7%**	715
There is too much traffic in the Old Town	46.0%	52.8%*	41.3%*	712

Table 3 Proportion of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with statements (Ordinal regression with Likert score as the dependent variable: \*p <0.05, \*\* p <.001)

Controlling for : resident/visitor, gender, employment status and car availability, the differences (compared to the 2013 baseline) shown in **bold** in Table 6 remained statistically significant. This analysis suggests that perceptions of the Old Town were better on the Saturday, which is not surprising, but they worsened on the 2015 weekday, which was unexpected. Two possible explanations for those findings are discussed in Section 7.3.

## 5.4 Response to the changes to the streets of Old Town.

### 5.4.1 Awareness of changes (2013)

In 2013, before the scheme was implemented, awareness of the proposed changes was low, both amongst visitors, and more surprisingly, amongst local residents (see below).

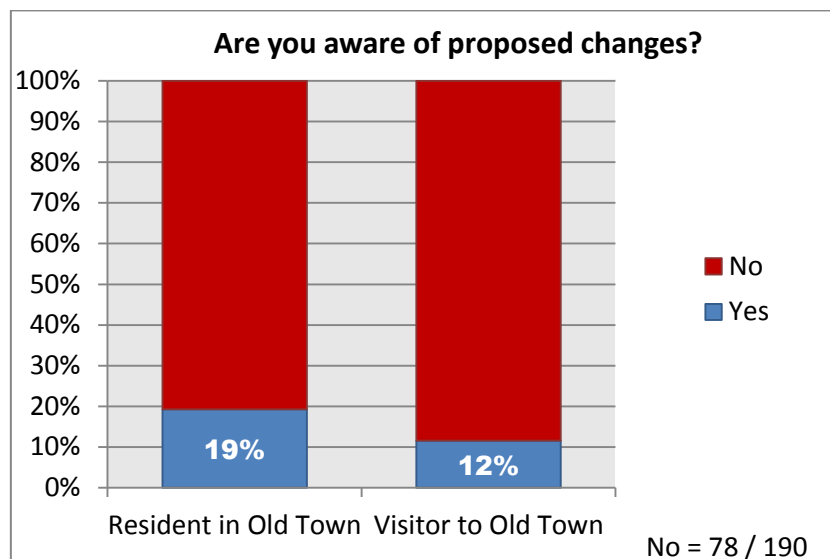


Figure 14 Awareness of change

### 5.4.2 Agreement with proposals (2013)

Those who said they were unaware of the proposals were shown a copy of the map produced by the Council which illustrated the proposed changes (Figure 1 without the annotations in black). All respondents were then asked whether they thought the Council was right to propose these changes. Support was stronger amongst visitors than local residents, although a majority in both categories supported the proposals, as shown in Figure 15.



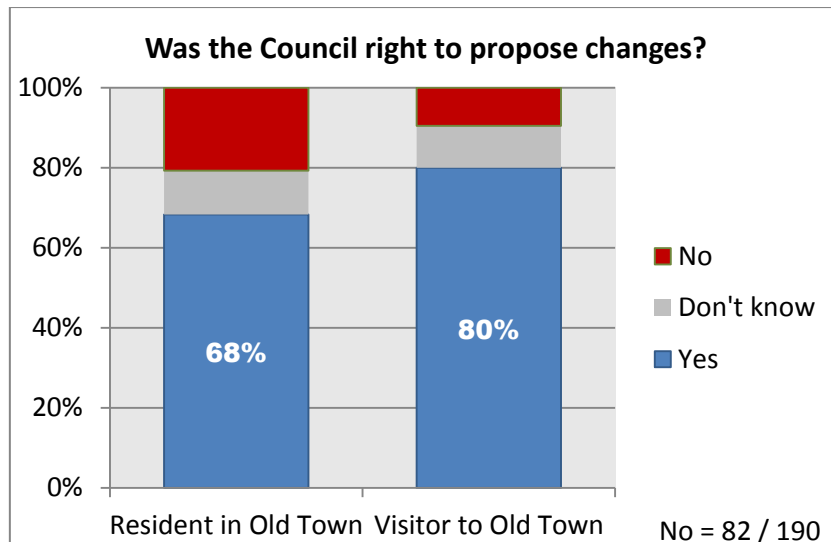


Figure 15 Approval for changes

It may be noted in passing that the surveyors were wearing jackets bearing the logo of East Sussex County Council. Although East Sussex are no longer responsible for highways in Brighton, it is possible that a few respondents might have been unconsciously influenced in answering this question (known as ‘the good subject effect’ in the literature).

### 5.4.3 Opinions on changes made to roads in Old Town (2015)

In the two surveys undertaken in 2015, respondents were asked whether they agreed with the changes made to date. A majority of respondents agreed; very few expressed disagreement, although a substantial number were unsure. There was stronger agreement on the Saturday, when East Street was closed to traffic.

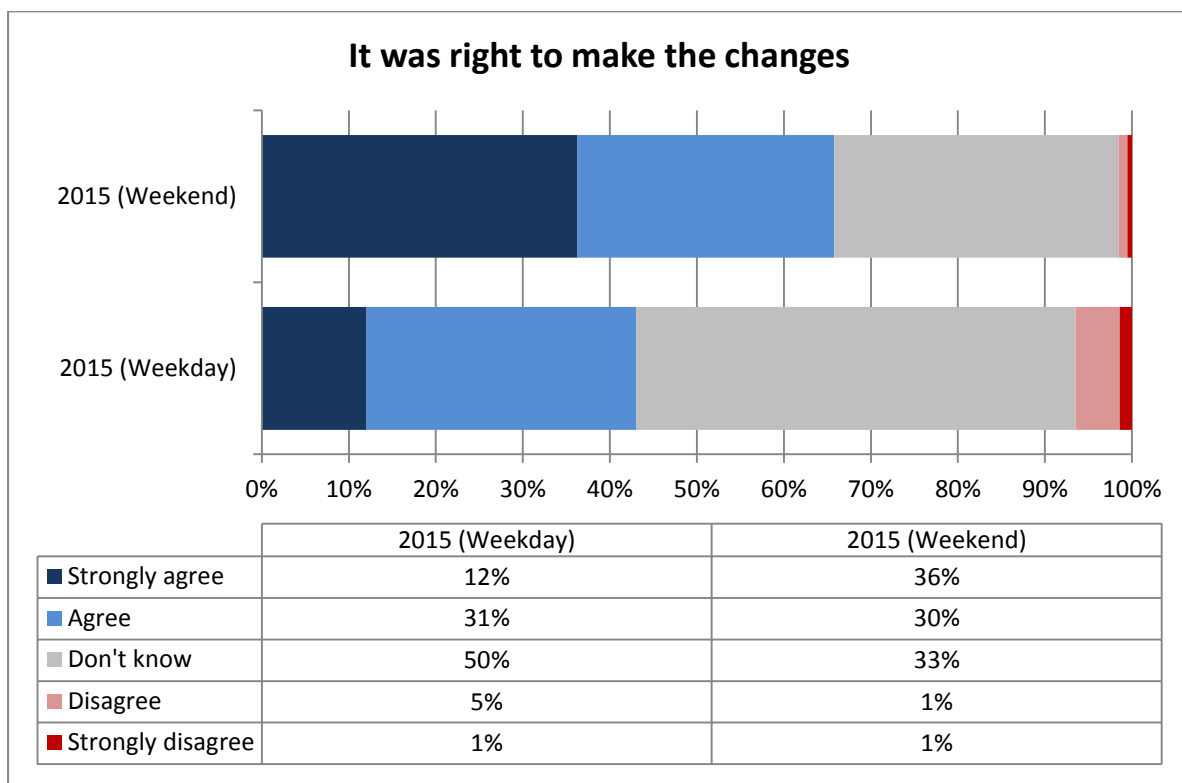
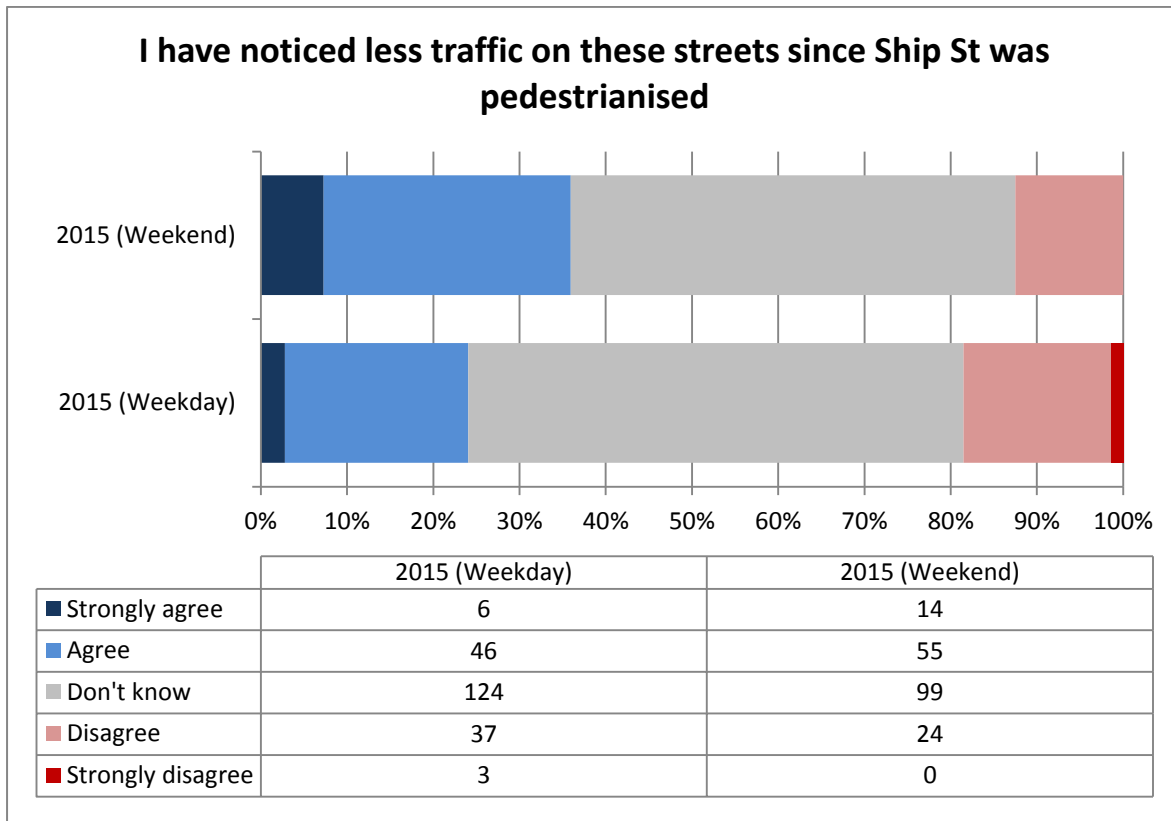
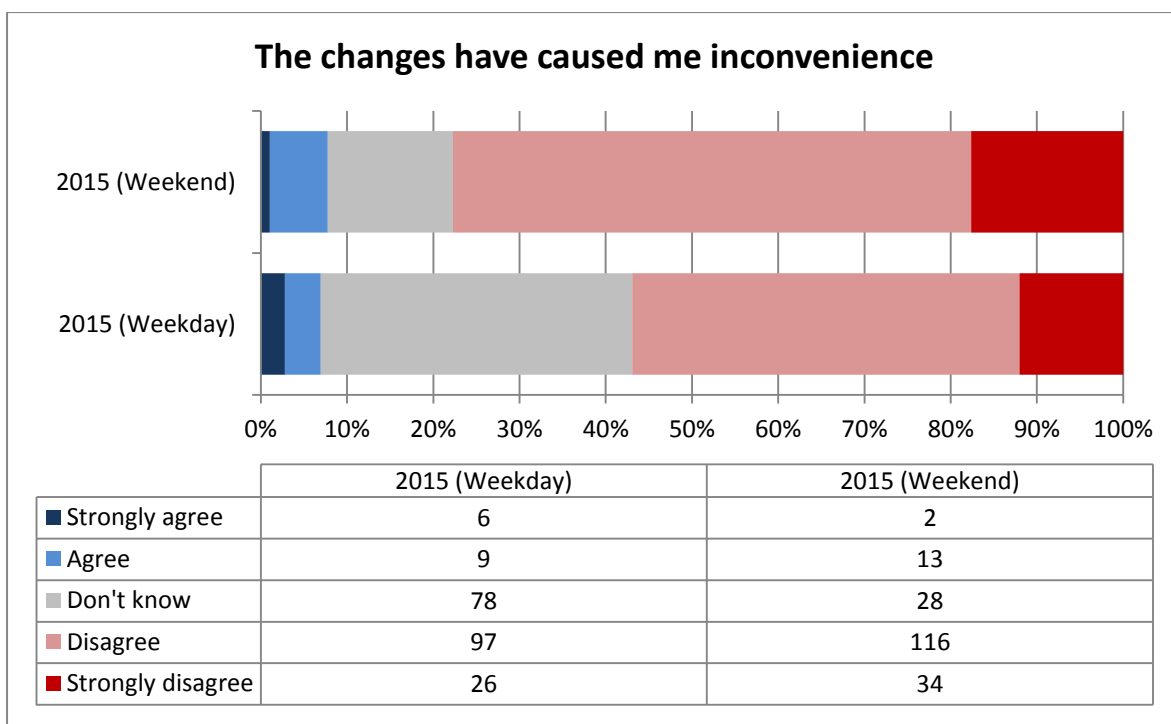


Figure 16 Support for the changes



**Figure 17 Perception of level of traffic**

30% of respondents agreed that they noticed less traffic on the streets of the Old Town since Ship Street was pedestrianised. Agreement was slightly stronger amongst the weekend respondents, who may also have been influenced by the closure of East Street.



**Figure 18 Inconvenience caused by changes**

Only 7% of respondents stated that the changes had caused them any inconvenience. 35% of weekend respondents and 22% of weekday respondents agreed that 'the changes have made me more likely to visit the area'.

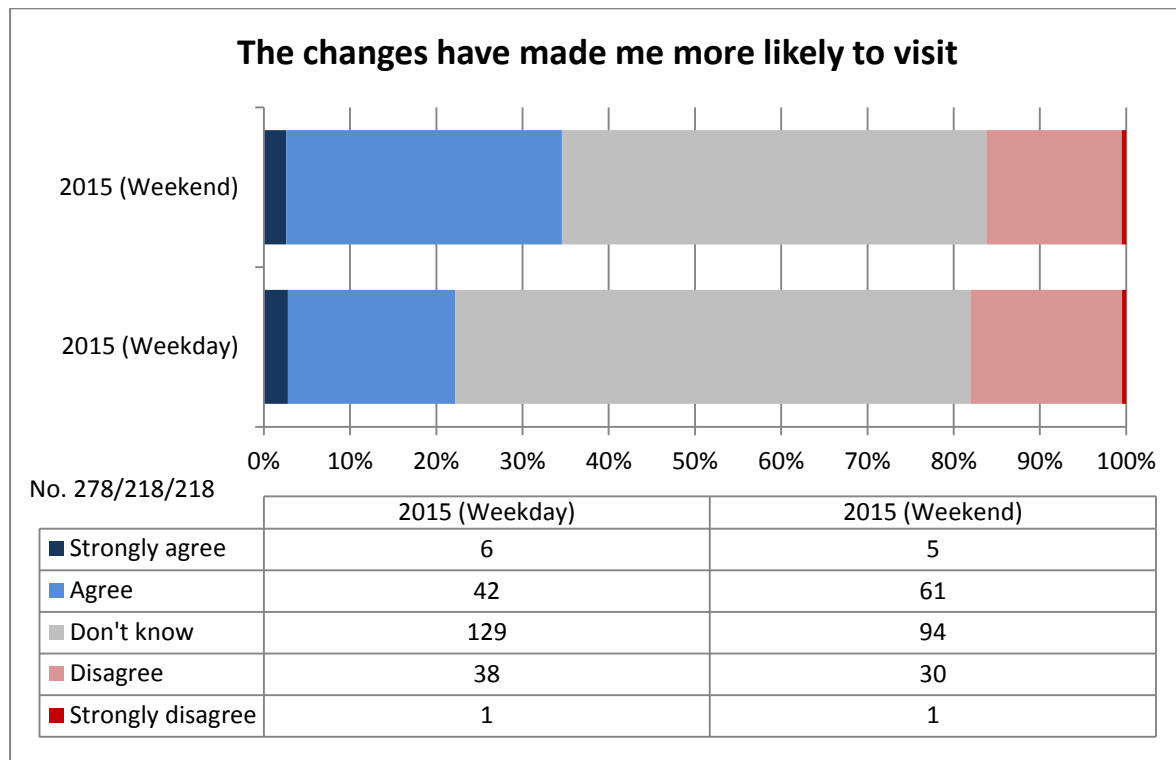


Figure 19 Likelihood of visiting after changes

#### 5.4.4 Opinions on extending the scheme

Views were also sought on whether the (pilot) changes in East Street should be retained (weekend survey only), or extended to weekdays as well (both surveys). 34% agreed that the pedestrianisation of East Street should be extended to weekdays, compared to 23% who disagreed. Most people disagreed with the suggestion that East Street should be reopened to traffic at weekends – only 9% agreed.

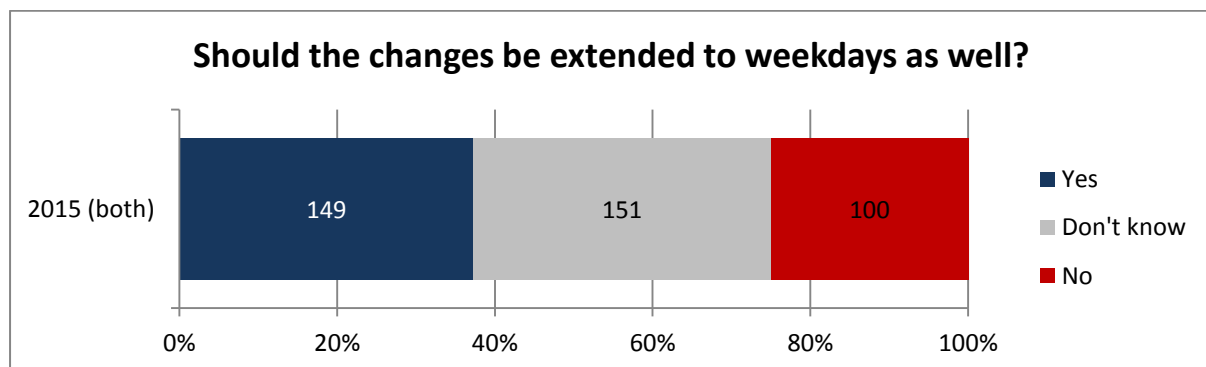


Figure 20 Support for extending the scheme to weekdays

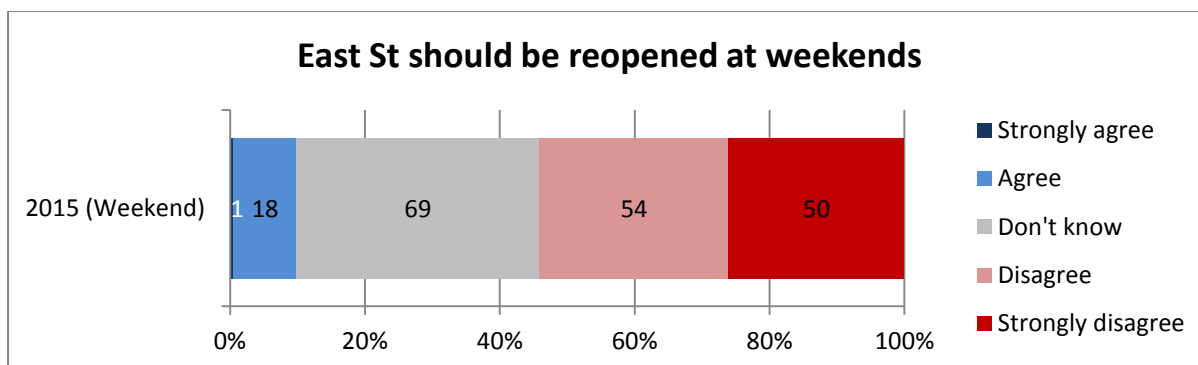


Figure 21 Support for East Street reopening

## 6 Interview Findings

The semi-structured interviews conducted with stakeholders explored their views about the proposals, the changes that were made and the process followed. The planning inquiry obliged both supporters and opponents of the scheme to think about, and articulate the detail of their positions; it also prompted several reflections on the implementation process.

One issue which emerged in many of the interviews was uncertainty surrounding the policy context and the reasons why the Council was proposing the changes. The earlier pedestrianisation of The Lanes area of the Old Town was seen to be very successful and there was praise for a shared space scheme, which was implemented in New Road, just outside the Old Town. There was also broad acceptance of, and support for the other pedestrian and weekend closure schemes in Brighton which were seen to contribute to the atmosphere and ambience of the city. Opponents to this scheme did though counter that restaurants and cafés siting tables and chairs along East Street would impede pedestrians, particularly those in wheelchairs or with children.

When asked about the Council’s motivations for these changes, some interviewees mentioned existing walking and pedestrianisation strategies, and a ‘legibility strategy’ for the city. The original report to councillors<sup>3</sup> referred to a ‘Walking Network Strategy’ but that document is not available online. A ‘Draft Walking Strategy’ dated 2003 was the only document identifiable from an online search in 2015. The proposed changes were presented to councillors in a series of reports to committees, but these were detailed operational documents rather than broader longer-term strategies.

There was general support amongst interviewees for addressing traffic issues in the area (which is adjacent to major tourist attractors such as the seafront, Brighton Pavilion and The Lanes shopping area), with concerns expressed around pedestrian safety, and traffic ‘rat-running’ through the area. Involvement in tourism-related initiatives might also have encouraged some of the businesses in East Street to support a scheme in their street. In fact the most visible business support came from those involved more directly in the tourist economy such as restaurants, cafes and bars, with less involvement from national chain retailers or specialist shops.

The perception of the process as piecemeal and uncoordinated was exacerbated by the planning inquiry and its aftermath. Some of the changes, such as the closure of Ship Street, were able to proceed shortly afterwards, whereas others involved further changes and negotiation; the decision to trial pedestrianisation of East Street at weekends only was a political compromise, which emerged during a council meeting, and may have resulted from suggestions by businesses opposed to the 7-day scheme.

For these opponents, the apparent lack of a grand vision or plan for the whole area was an important element of their argument against the proposals. They claimed that such a vision was needed to address the needs of tourists, residents and businesses across the area. It was generally accepted across the interviews, however, that to implement a more widespread plan would of course require more extensive funding, and even to carry out changes to the same extent as seen in New Road would require significant amounts of money – something which everyone acknowledged the local authority did not have.

Those in favour of these changes were more accepting of the step-by-step approach taken so far. From the local authority perspective the limited monies available for such schemes meant taking opportunities as and where they were available, making ‘incremental changes’. Supporters of the East Street closure saw this approach as “*kind of stepping stones*”, although they too were still looking for wider public realm improvements. Another perceived complication arising from the fragmented approach related to the consultation process; repeated consultation exercises for each proposed scheme were seen to lead to confusion, and perhaps to deter some people from engaging with the process. For some interviewees, consultation had not worked well for these proposals, with the big picture in some form of ‘master planning’ exercise with the public missing, and the detail (teasing out issues with specific groups) not fully exploited.

Resistance to schemes that might impede or remove traffic from a business and retail environment are common – particularly from business representatives and owners.<sup>5</sup> The principal opponents of the proposed changes were an organisation called the ‘Lanes Traders’ (who said they had around 70 members, representing businesses in The Lanes pedestrianised area), as well as people living in a large block of flats at the southern end of East Street and representatives of the taxi trade. A group of businesses in East Street – which does not form part of the constituency of the Lanes Traders – were the main supporters of its pedestrianisation. The groups differed in the type of business represented, with jewellery and other specialist shops in The Lanes as opposed to mostly chain retailers and restaurants / cafes in East Street. Thus the Council was faced by opposing business groups on either side of the argument. Deliveries and customer parking were key opposition issues, although for the Lanes Traders this was in respect of deliveries to them, not the businesses in East Street which had the advantage of varying degrees of rear access to their premises. The closure of Ship Street also created a detour for business owners who had previously driven into the area from the north, a point made by the Lanes Traders’ spokesperson. Other arguments against the original proposals included the ability of clients to reach services (such as solicitors) based in the Old Town, with changes to Prince Albert St seen to be particularly problematic, and the displacement of traffic onto surrounding streets. Access was also a key issue for both the residents in the flats and for the taxi trade. These issues were all raised in the planning inquiry.

For both supporters and opponents, the planning inquiry process was seen as unnecessarily adversarial, confrontational and a poor use of scarce funds which would have been better used in implementation. Interestingly one interviewee said it gave the impression that the Council was trying to do something “*wrong and underhand*”. The Council officer who was the sole witness for the authority at the inquiry believed with hindsight that this was a mistake – that other officers, such as the highway engineers and road safety specialists should also have given evidence.

Although not all of the proposed changes have been implemented, some interviewees suggested that the public perception was that the streets in the area were already pedestrianised (see Figure 22), and at the height of the tourist season some people said that it was difficult to drive on some of these streets because of pedestrian numbers, with younger people adopting that view in particular.



**Figure 22 Prince Albert St**



**Figure 23 Little East Street**

There is a political dimension to the implementation process. Brighton and Hove Council has changed its political composition several times in recent years, with minority administrations common. The schemes proposed here emerged under a Conservative-led administration, were promoted by a Green-led administration, and are now in the hands of a Labour-led administration. Interviewees were asked specifically if they thought that the scheme had become politicised along the way, and if it had been used for political purposes. Voting on council committees broadly followed party lines and this would have changed as administrations changed power but one interviewee observed that this wasn't "*the type of scheme that you could necessarily make obvious politics from*". Conversely there was also a view that opposition parties might seek to use an issue such as this to defeat minority administrations. The divisions in the local business community added a complicating factor. There is now an expectation amongst interviewees that the results of the East Street trial will be reported and that consultation processes will improve for future proposals.

Following the implementation of the trial weekend closures in East Street there was strong support for the changes from businesses who were able to site tables and chairs on the street, although other retailers were also taking advantage of space in the street. Even those who did not specifically benefit (chain retailers and local specialist shops) did not express concerns over deliveries or access for customers. Support was not unanimous though; some premises in Little East Street expressed concerns about safety for their customers because of traffic diverted from East Street during the weekend closures (see Figure 23).



**Figure 24 East Street in 2013**



**Figure 25 East Street during trial pedestrianisation**

In response to this the Council had made some modifications and enhancements to Little East Street. Two café businesses interviewed in November 2015 gave positive feedback on the scheme, with support expressed for extending the closure to seven days a week.

## **7 Discussion**

### **7.1 Traffic and displacement:**

The only evidence of modal shift comes from the higher proportion of people cycling to the Old Town on the weekday, although with relatively small numbers, not too much weight should be attached to that finding. The traffic counts suggest that the volume of through traffic removed by the closure of Ship Street was relatively small, when measured across the whole day (the Council's original estimate of the through traffic was based on a two-hour count in the morning rush hour, when the proportion of through traffic may have been higher). The impact was probably greater than the 4% fall registered, however, because other factors were increasing local traffic, particularly vans. There are several possible reasons for this; the general economic improvement since 2013 may have increased the number of deliveries to businesses and also contributed to building and renovation work in the Old Town. There also appears to have been some substitution of van journeys for lorries, which fell by a greater proportion.

There was clearly some displacement of local traffic from Ship Street onto Black Lion Street and Middle Street. There is a primary school on Middle Street, which may explain an observed peak of car traffic there around 3:00pm.

Some interviewees, particularly the opponents of the changes, pointed to traffic displacement onto surrounding streets. Some taxi journeys, which used to follow Ship Street, are now obliged to travel further, via Kings Road. The Ship St closure also removed a signal-controlled turn from North St, which increases the flow and speed of the buses using it (already perceived to be travelling too fast by the spokesperson for the Lanes Traders). Some more significant road schemes are still being developed in the city, including one affecting a main road close to the Old Town. The implications for the area remain to be seen, but once again they highlight the importance of an area-wide plan.

### **7.2 Economic impacts:**

As noted in other studies, some businesses often oppose schemes that restrain motorised access to a street;<sup>5</sup> Brighton Old Town was no different from many others in that respect. Concerns around deliveries and customer access to premises were raised, but most of these issues appear to have been allayed through the timing of closures, provision of additional loading bays and perhaps changes in behaviour by some traders (e.g. scheduling deliveries before street closures). The limited scope of this study has not allowed a detailed analysis of trading patterns before and after the changes, or economic indicators such as business rental values. Because the weekend closure of East Street only emerged after the baseline study, the opportunity to measure its economic impact was lost; spending was considerably higher on the Saturday in 2015 but whether the pedestrianisation of East Street contributed to that difference, it would not be possible to say. Two café / restaurant businesses on East Street suggested that they have seen additional custom on the weekend closures; that effect was likely to be greater in the summer than the winter months. Other business representatives in East Street said they were not experiencing or expecting significant changes in custom as a result of the weekend closure trial. Although there is very limited parking in East Street, the traders in The Lanes see seven-day pedestrianisation of East Street (and further restraint on through traffic) as a threat to the viability of their businesses, whilst traders in other parts of the Old Town see street changes as an opportunity to gain additional custom.



### 7.3 Public Perceptions:

The general public questioned on the streets were broadly favourable to the changes and more of them favoured seven-day pedestrianisation of East Street than opposed it. Visitors and residents generally express favourable views about the Old Town but Table 3 (see page 7) presents an unexpected pattern of changes since the baseline study.

During the week, perceptions of too much traffic have worsened since 2013. The statistical tests controlled for the different types of people answering each survey, which do not explain the difference. Two other explanations are possible. On some of the streets i.e. Middle Street and Black Lion Street, that perception is accurate (although across the Old Town as a whole the volume of traffic has not substantially changed); some people may have been influenced by conditions on those two streets when responding.

A second possible explanation is suggested by psychological studies which have demonstrated that people tend to make judgements in relative rather than absolute terms,<sup>6</sup> so the more positive perceptions of the pedestrianised environment on East Street at the weekends may have unconsciously worsened people's perceptions during the rest of the week.

### 7.4 Conclusions

The scheme as implemented was not the one initially proposed; it resulted from a series of compromises. It appears to have delivered some improvements valued by the general public and the businesses most immediately impacted and the worst fears about its impacts have not materialised, so from those perspectives, the Council's decision to initiate the scheme was vindicated. There was very little opposition in principle to the overall aims to "deter unnecessary traffic whilst still allowing essential users access to the site". The opposition concerned specific aspects of its implementation and the process followed. There was strong public support for the weekend trial on East Street – hardly anyone favoured its removal – and more support than opposition for extending it to the rest of the week.

The very small proportion of people parking in the immediate area illustrates how fears about on-street parking removal are often exaggerated. The volume of through traffic removed by the closure of Ship Street was relatively small, which implies that traffic displacement onto surrounding streets will also have been fairly small. This suggests a paradox: that road closures are easier to implement where volumes of through traffic are already low, but the benefits of traffic removal in such circumstances will be correspondingly limited.

Even with considerable support for pedestrianisation and traffic removal amongst the public and within some parts of the business community, there were still delays, changes and obstacles to delivering the partial scheme. Whilst step-by-step implementation may be more realistic when local authority funding is constrained, this may risk disappointing a public that has already seen more extensive (and expensive) schemes implemented in the city. Even some of those opposing these specific changes declared they were in favour of more extensive, better quality interventions.

One conclusion which would be relevant for the future is that an area-wide plan, visibly maintained on a Council's website, can help to address some potential criticisms and strengthen the case when projects are examined at a planning inquiry. If funding only allows for piecemeal changes, these can at least be set in a broader, longer-term context.



## Appendix 1: Questionnaires

### Brighton Old Town Street Survey

Most of the questions below, printed in black, were identical in all three surveys. Those questions that were only asked in 2013 are printed in blue, those that were only asked in 2015 are printed in red.

Excuse me, can you spare a few moments to answer a survey about the streets of the Old Town? It's part of a study by University of the West of England. I'd like to ask you some questions about how you travelled here and your views about some changes planned for these streets. It will take no more than 5 minutes.

*[Further information sheet available if requested: do not give automatically, to avoid litter]*

**1. What is the purpose of your journey to the Old Town today?**  
(multiple choices allowed)

I live here	<i>(skip to question 5)</i>	
I am passing through on my way to somewhere else		
<b>If so: where to?</b>		
I am staying in a hotel or guest house in the area		
Work		
Shopping		
Visiting cafes/pubs/restaurants		
Tourism/sightseeing/just wandering		
Visiting the Council offices or other public service		
Visiting someone		
Other reason? Please specify:		

*Note: if the respondent is unaware of what you mean by 'the Old Town' – say: "it's the streets in this immediate area" and show them map No. 1*

**2. How often do you visit the Old Town? (one choice only)**

3 or more times a week,	
Once or twice a week,	
Less than that but more than twice a month,	
Once or twice a month,	
Less than that but more than twice a year,	
Once or twice a year,	
Less than that or 'this is the first time'	

**3. How did you travel here today?**  
(main mode for most of the distance travelled: **one** choice only)

Car or van as a driver	
Car or van as a passenger	
On foot	
Train	
Bus	

Park and ride	
Motorcycle, scooter or moped	
Cycle (including electric bike)	
Taxi	
Other	

**4. If travelled in a car or van: Where is your vehicle parked?**

On the street in the Old Town	
On the street somewhere else	
In a multi-storey car park	
Somewhere else off-street	

**5. Have you bought anything from any of the shops or other businesses in the Old Town today?**

Yes	
No	
Not yet but I intend to	

*Skip to question 7*

*Skip to question 7*

**6. If 'yes': Can you remember how much you spent?**

£	
Can't remember or prefer not to say	

**7. I'm going to read out a few statements. Could you please say for each one whether you: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
I enjoy visiting the Old Town					
There is too much traffic in the Old Town					
I like the Old Town as a place to shop					
I like the Old Town as a place to eat or drink					
The Old Town is a good place for pedestrians					

**2013 Survey only**

**8. Are you aware of the changes which the Council is proposing to make to the streets in this area?**

Yes	
No	

*If 'no', say: "they are proposing to extend the pedestrianised areas as you can see on this map", show map 2 and explain that these changes will be considered by an inspector at a public inquiry next month.*

**9. Do you believe the Council was right to propose these changes?**

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

**2015 Survey only:**

**Over the past two years the Council has made some changes to the roads in this area. Ship Street is now closed to motor traffic (apart from deliveries in the morning) and East Street is closed to motor traffic between 11am and 7pm at weekends only. Did you know this area before those changes were made?**

Yes	
No	

**Do you believe that the pedestrianisation of East Street should be extended to weekdays as well?**

Yes	
No	
Don't know	

**I'm going to read out four statements. Could you please say for each one whether you: strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree?**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
It was right to make those changes to the roads in the Old Town					
The changes have caused me inconvenience					
I have noticed less traffic on these streets since Ship Street was pedestrianised					
East Street should be reopened to traffic at weekends*					
The changes have made me more likely to visit the area					

**\*only asked in the weekend survey**

**10. Do you, or anyone in your household own or have continuous use of a car or van?**

Yes	
No	

*If no, skip to question 12*

**11. If yes: Is a vehicle available for you to drive, some, or all of the time?**

Some of the time	
All of the time	
No	

**12. Would you mind telling me which of the following age bands you fall into?**

Under 20	
20 – 29	
30 – 39	
40 – 49	
50 – 59	
60 – 69	
70+	

**13. Which of the following best describes your job status? (*one choice only*)**

Employed (full-time)	
Employed (part-time)	
Self-employed	
Student	
At home or caring for family	
Retired	
Unemployed	
Other (please specify):	

**14. Would you mind telling me your home postcode if you know it?**

Postcode:	
-----------	--

**15. If unaware or does not want to reveal: Do you live in Brighton and Hove?**

Yes	
No	

**16. Observed gender:**

Male	
Female	
Difficult to be sure	

**Thank you very much for your time.**

## Appendix 2: Characteristics of Respondents

**Table 4 2013 General characteristics of participants**

<b>Gender</b>	Male: 114 (41%)	Female: 165 (59%)	
<b>Age</b> (see also fig 2 below)	Under 20: 7 (3%)	20-60: 198 (60%)	Over 60: 75 (27%)
<b>Place of residence</b> (see also fig 3 below)	Old Town: 87 (31%)	Elsewhere: 193 (69%)	
<b>Occupation</b> (see also fig 4 below)	Working: 175 (63%)	Retired: 57 (20%)	Other: 48 (17%)

**Table 5 2015 (Weekday) General characteristics of participants**

<b>Gender</b>	Male: 114 (52%)	Female: 104 (48%)	
<b>Age</b> (see also fig 2 below)	Under 20: 8 (4%)	20-60: 159 (73%)	Over 60: 51 (23%)
<b>Place of residence</b> (see also fig 3 below)	Old Town: 23 (10.5%)	Elsewhere: 196 (89.5%)	
<b>Occupation</b> (see also fig 4 below)	Working: 158 (72%)	Retired: 39 (18%)	Other: 22 (10%)

**Table 6 2015 (Weekend) General characteristics of participants**

<b>Gender</b>	Male: 126 (58%)	Female: 91 (42%)	
<b>Age</b> (see also fig 2 below)	Under 20: 4 (2%)	20-60: 181 (83%)	Over 60: 33 (15%)
<b>Place of residence</b> (see also fig 3 below)	Old Town: 34 (15.5%)	Elsewhere: 184 (84.5%)	
<b>Occupation</b> (see also fig 4 below)	Working: 190 (87%)	Retired: 16 (7.5%)	Other: 12 (5.5%)

### Age

The age distribution is shown in in Figure 26 below. The surveyors only approached people who appeared to be 18 or over, which may partly explain the small numbers in the 18 to 20 category

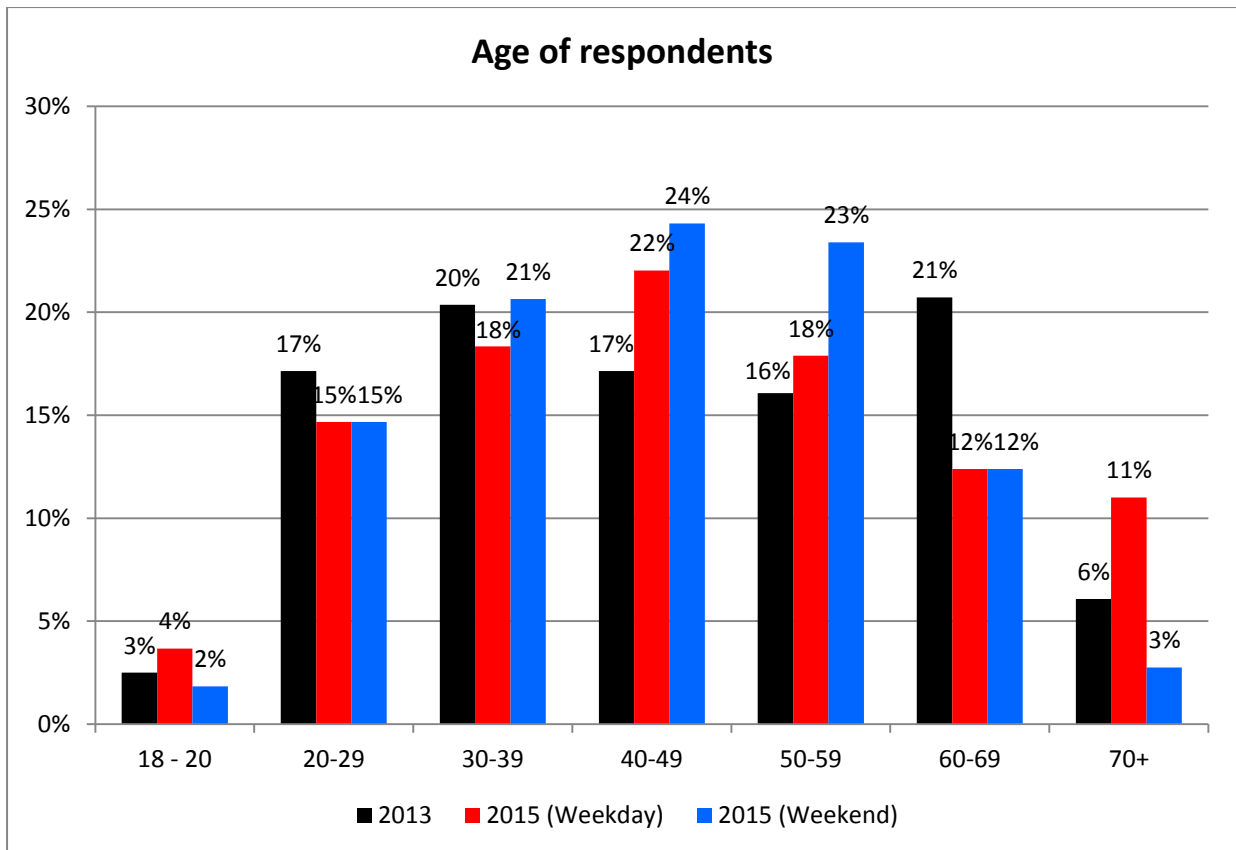
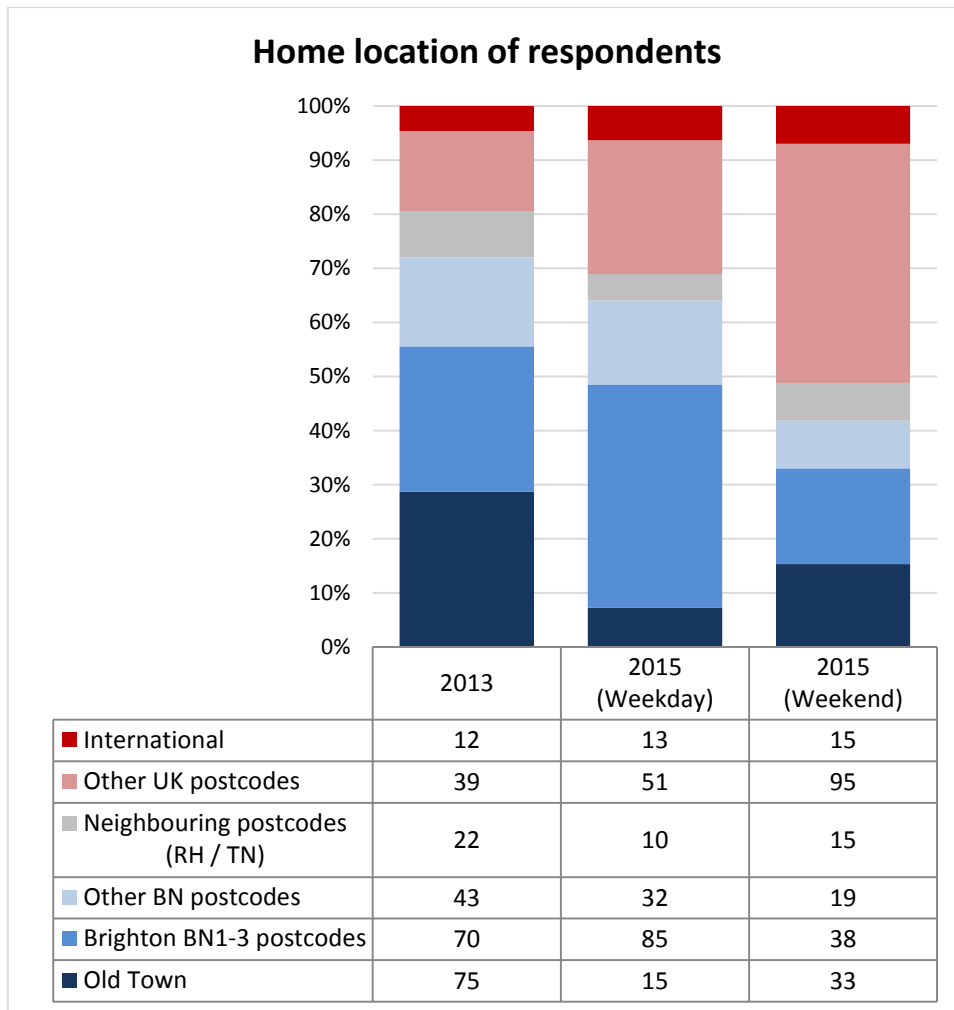


Figure 26 Age of respondents

### Place of residence

Participants were asked to state if they were residents of the Old Town area, which almost a third of the respondents did. People were also asked for their home postcode, which identified that most lived in the Brighton area (BN postcodes). Of the neighbouring areas RH includes Burgess Hill and areas to the North; TN includes Uckfield, Heathfield and areas to the East. The Old Town proportions in Figure 27 show those who gave a BN1 postcode and also ticked "I live here" when asked why they were in the Old Town (a small number, presumably second home owners, ticked "I live here" but gave other postcodes).

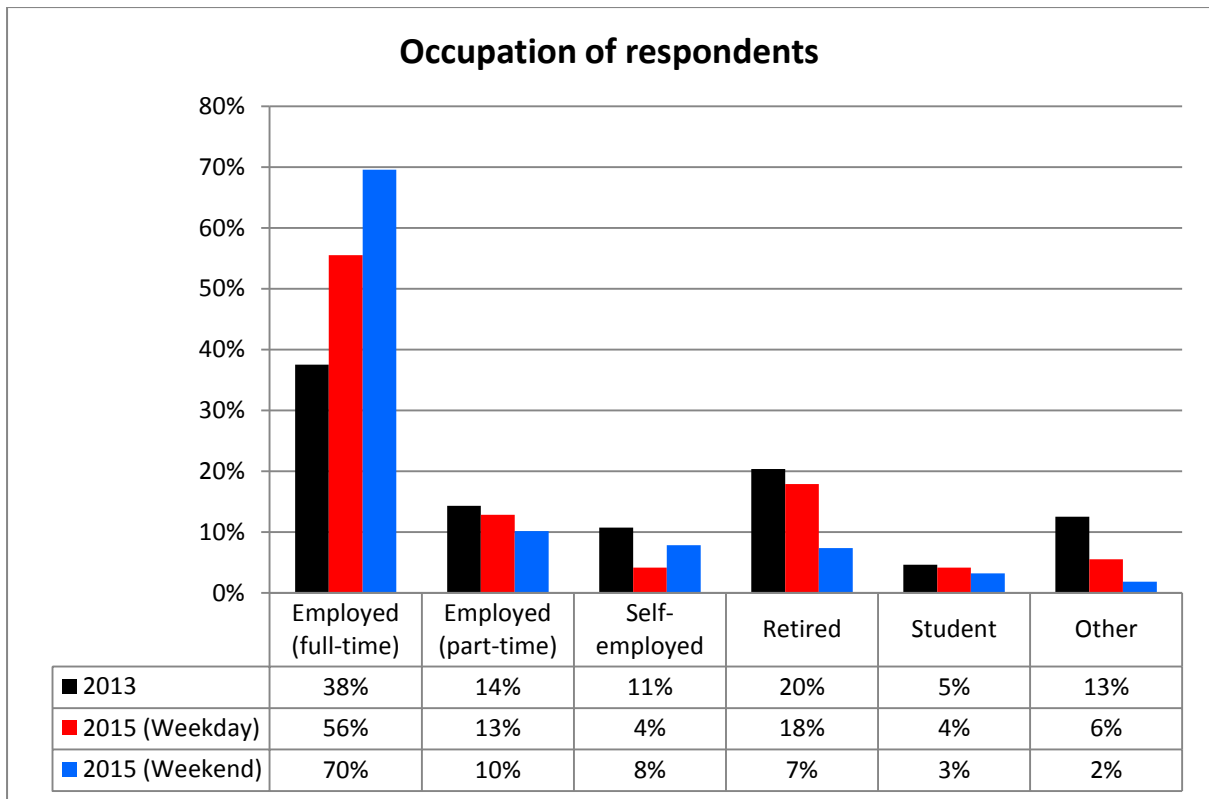


**Figure 27 Home location of survey respondents**

The 2013 survey included more Old Town residents, whereas the weekend survey included more people from outside the area. The latter will have some implications for the mode of travel shown below.

### Occupation

The occupational breakdown is shown in below in Figure 28.



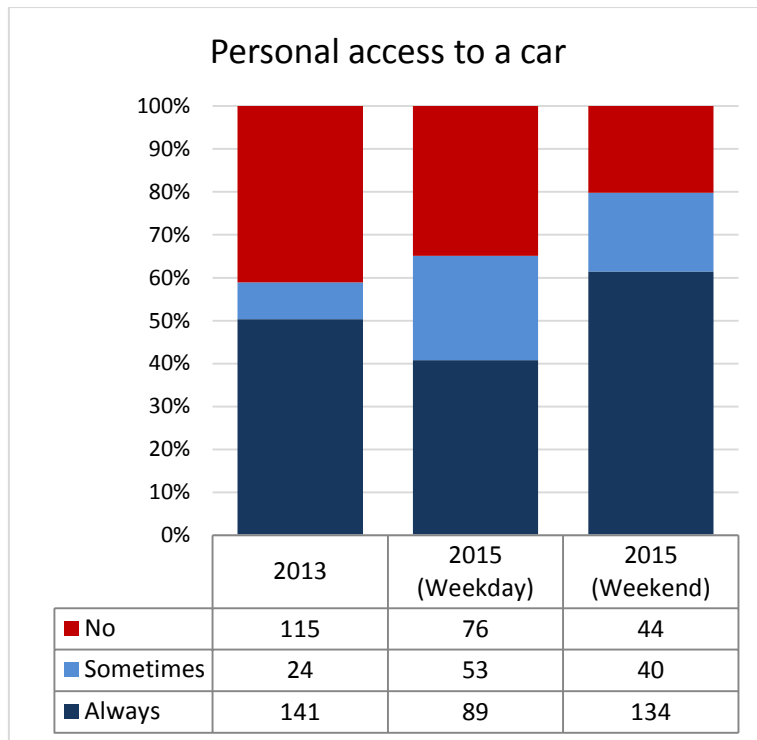
**Figure 28 Occupation of residents**

Comparing just the weekday samples, the higher proportion of people employed full-time in 2015 was statistically significant at the 99% confidence level. This may reflect the general economic improvement over those two years. There was a statistically significant association between the employment status and postcode of domicile; people from outside the B1-3 postcodes were more likely to be employed full-time.

### **Access to a car**

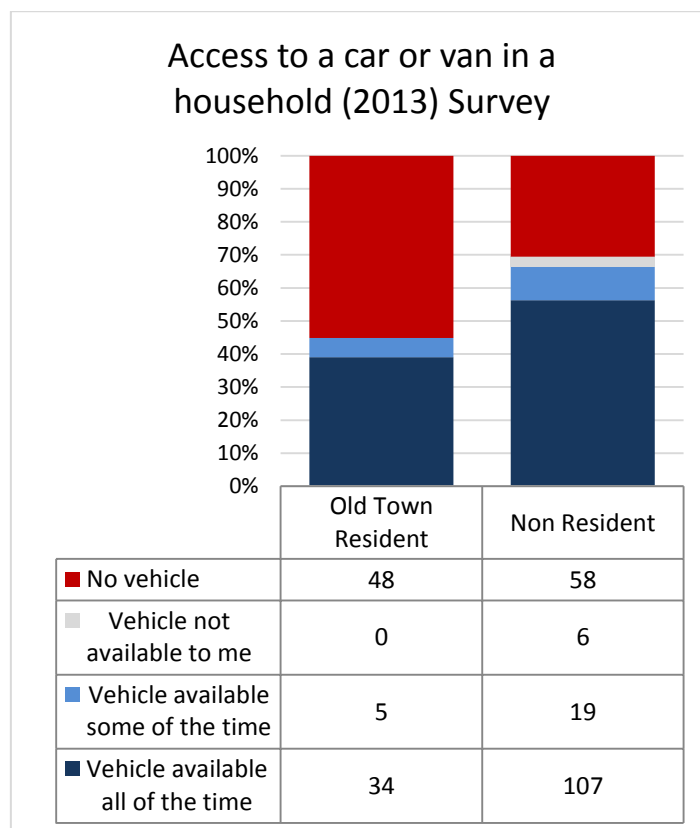
Participants were asked about car availability in their household, and whether that car was available to them personally to use. Figure 29 shows the answers to those two questions combined. The higher level of car ownership amongst weekend visitors, who are also more likely to be employed full-time, would seem to suggest a higher proportion of affluent visitors from outside the immediate area visit at weekends.





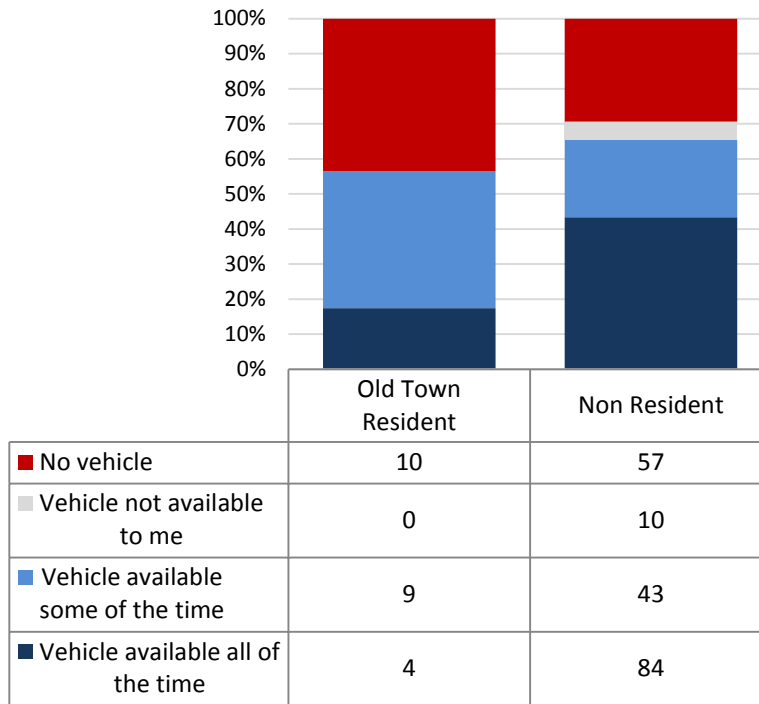
**Figure 29 Vehicle available to be driven**

Consideration was also given to whether there were differences in car access between the residents of Old Town and visitors (See figure 8 – 10 below). Residents were less likely to have access to a car than visitors, particularly weekend visitors, for the reasons discussed above.



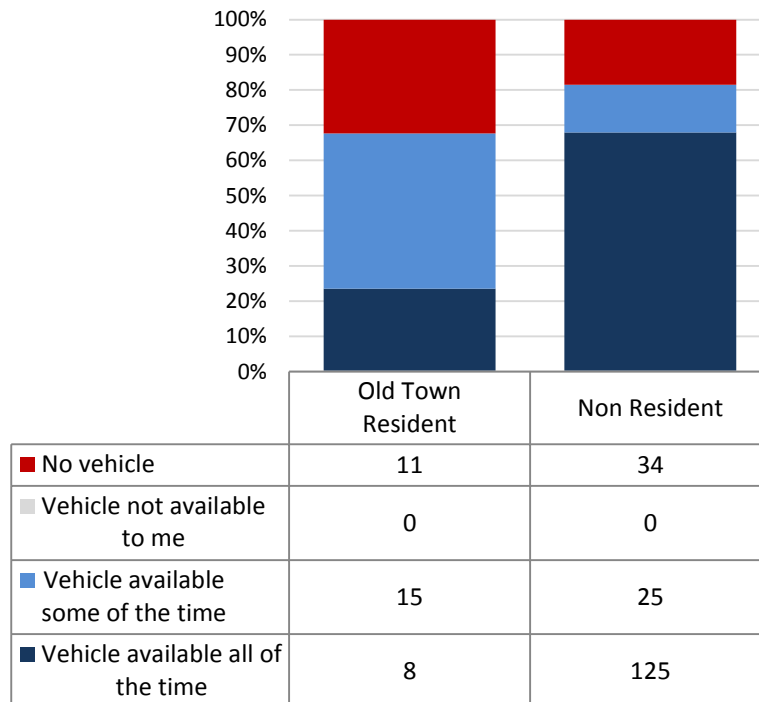
**Figure 30 Access to car or van 2013**

### Access to a car or van in a household (2015) Weekday Survey

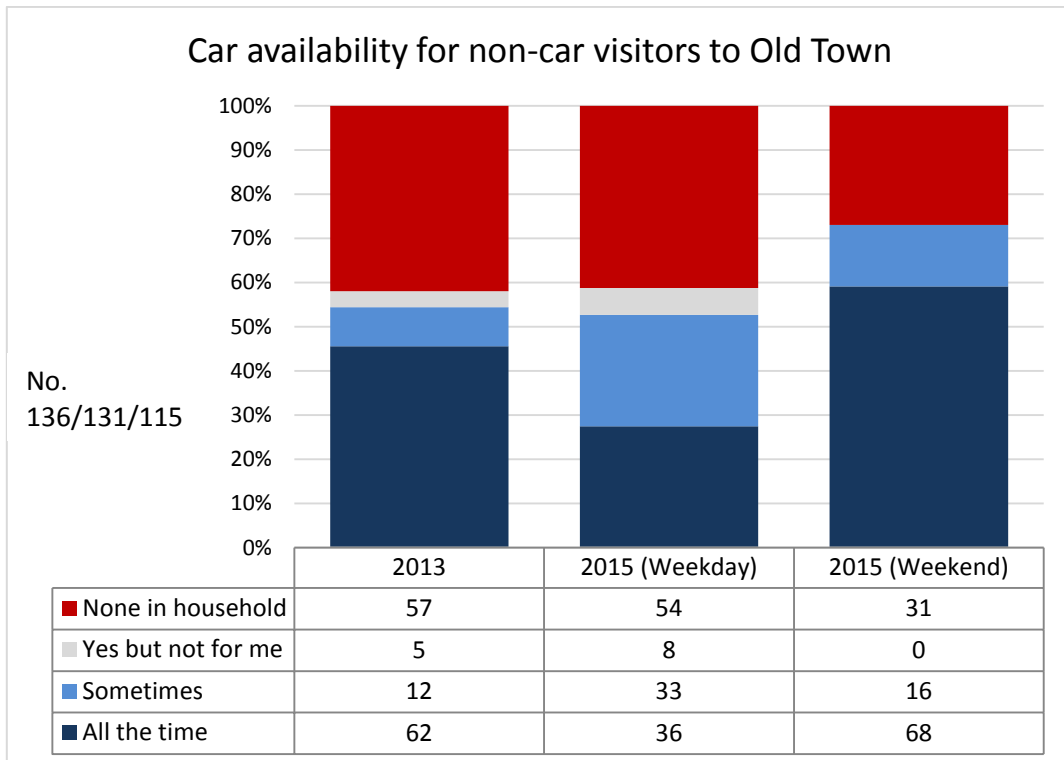


**Figure 31 Access to a car (2015 Weekday)**

### Access to a car or van in a household (2015) Weekend Survey

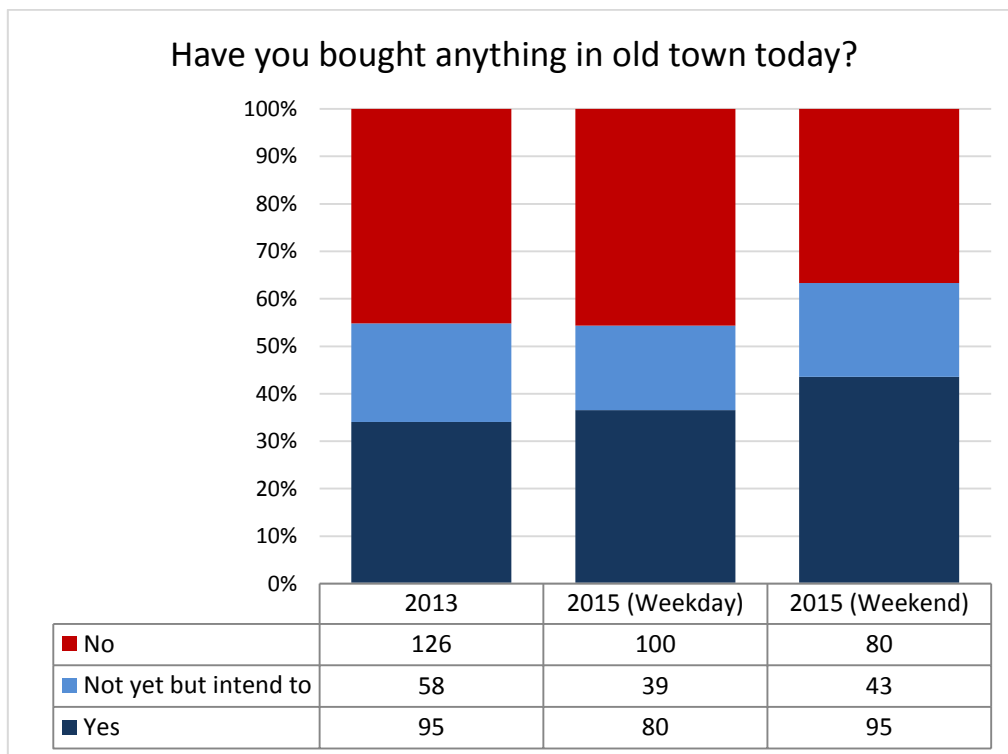


**Figure 32 Access to a car (2015 Weekend)**

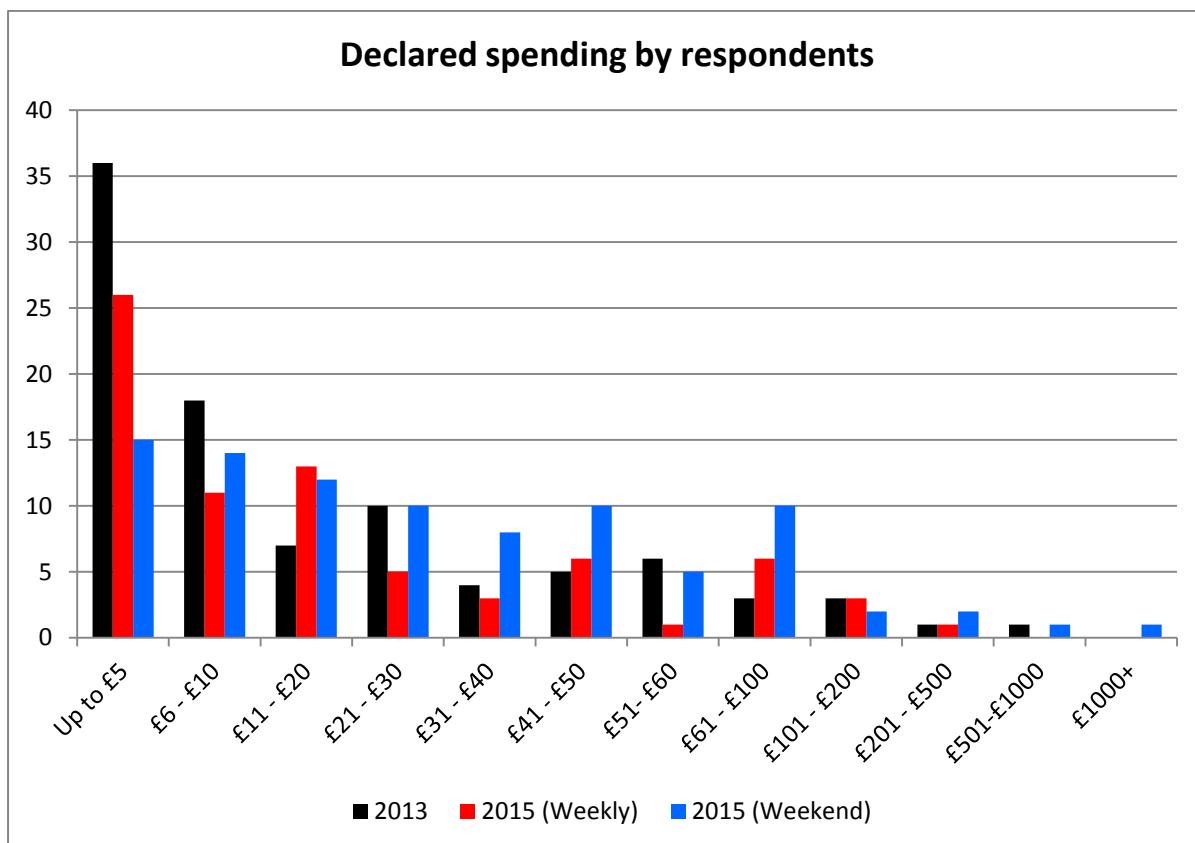


**Figure 33 Availability of car for people travelling by other modes**

## Spending by Visitors



**Figure 34 Purchase intentions in Old Town today**



**Figure 35 Declared spending by respondents**

<sup>1</sup> Brighton and Hove City Council (2012) Old Town Traffic Improvement Proposals Leaflet. [Online:] [www.brighton-hove.gov.uk](http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk). Accessed October 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Brighton and Hove City Council (2015) Old Town Traffic Improvements. [Online:] <http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/parking-and-travel/travel-transport-and-road-safety/old-town-traffic-improvement-proposals> Accessed November 2015.

<sup>3</sup> Brighton & Hove City Council (2012) TRANSPORT COMMITTEE Agenda Item 23 Subject: Old Town Transport Plan October 2<sup>nd</sup> [Online:] [http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000695/M00004097/AI00029517/\\$20120921174254\\_002624\\_0009859\\_ReportTemplateCommittee.docA.ps.pdf](http://present.brighton-hove.gov.uk/Published/C00000695/M00004097/AI00029517/$20120921174254_002624_0009859_ReportTemplateCommittee.docA.ps.pdf) Accessed January 2013.

<sup>4</sup> DfT, (2015) Road Traffic Estimates in Great Britain: 2014 Table TRA0101 Road Traffic (Vehicle Miles) by Vehicle Type in Great Britain, Annual from 1949 [online]. [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk): Department for Transport. [Accessed November 2015].

<sup>5</sup> See literature review in: Melia, S. and Shergold, I. (2016) Pedestrianisation and Politics: Evidence Gaps and a Case Study of Brighton's Old Town. In: Universities Transport Study Group, Bristol, January 2016. Available from: <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/27971>

<sup>6</sup> See for example: Ariely, D. (2008) Predictably Irrational : The Hidden Forces that Shape our Decisions [online]. London: HarperCollins Pub.