



# **Morley Towns Fund Community Engagement**

**Interim report in preparation for  
Morley Town Board Visioning Day**

**October 2020**

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# Higher level findings

Across all engagement formats to date we have identified the following priorities (in no particular order):

Area	Issues
Town centre retail (Queen Street)	<p>Public realm improvements including integrating greenspace and planting schemes to improve public amenity and creating natural gathering places</p> <p>Incentivising private sector investment to improve shop frontages</p> <p>Schemes to promote high-quality retail, particularly independent stores but also attracting and retaining chains</p> <p>Measures to bring empty units into use or reduce the number of retail units to reflect a reduction in demand</p> <p>Reconfigure Queen Street to concentrate retail in the middle and measures to encourage evening economy at either end</p> <p>Increasing proportion of residential within the town centre including repurposing retail space</p> <p>Use of arts installations and events to increase town centre footfall (residents and visitors)</p>
Morley Train Station	<p>Improved facilities, accessibility, condition, safety (e.g. CCTV), and improving the pedestrian &amp; cycling route to the town centre (signage, public realm, and signage improvements)</p>
Morley Bottoms	<p>Pedestrianisation, road safety improvements, focus for the evening economy and café culture, public realm improvements, incentivising investment</p>

New Pavilion	Enforcement action to prevent dereliction, incentivising investment, potential for multi-purpose including flexible community space, evening entertainment venue, vocational learning, arts
Town Hall	Heritage and arts activities, exhibitions, and installations within and around  Improving public realm surrounding
Market Hall	Refurbishment and strengthening offer
Cycling lanes and facilities	Identification of this need across multiple areas of Morley – increase in cycle lanes (including those that run parallel to roads), cycle storage, cycle hire schemes. Locations included the route between the station and town centre and creating a route from Morley into Leeds
Parks and open spaces	Investing in these areas to further encourage their use including updating play facilities  Installations including outdoor gyms  Encourage use for organised activities  Re-introducing woodland and tree planting
Post 16 education offer	Exploring the potential to increase provision in this area – particularly vocational learning opportunities which link to local employment opportunities  Recognition that this is a gap in provision in Morley which leads to young people leaving the area
Bus travel	Reducing buses idling and creating congestion on Queen Street including the potential to create a depot  Increasing frequency of buses between Morley train station and town centre and potential for integrated ticketing

# About the Morley Town Investment Plan

Morley is one of 101 towns invited to develop proposals for the Government's £3.6 billion Towns Fund. This fund has been created to enable towns to apply for up to £25m of government investment.

The process for accessing this funding is the development of a Morley Town Investment Plan (MTIP). The MTIP will provide a vision for the town, describe how that vision will be achieved, and will detail the individual projects that would be delivered through the plan's implementation.

A key element of the MTIP is to be able to evidence that community engagement has taken place – that communities have been able to identify their own priorities for improvement and have had chance to have their say on proposals put forward by others.

## Community engagement delivery partnership

In September 2020, a partnership of [Locality](#) and [Commonplace](#) was commissioned to undertake a community engagement exercise focussed upon obtaining the views of residents and other stakeholders (business community, Voluntary Community and Faith Sector etc) to support the development of the MTIP. The MTIP will summarise how £25m of government's Towns Fund money, earmarked for Morley, will be spent.



is a national charity and a membership organisation for community organisations, which believes in unlocking the power of community to transform communities and help to create a fairer society. Their delivery model involves providing high-quality consultancy services for community organisations, Local Authorities, and others.

Locality works nationally but is also fiercely local in its approach with staff based all over the country including within Leeds and Bradford. We consider West Yorkshire to be one of our heartland operating areas.

[Locality](#) is the contract lead and will deliver the in-depth, qualitative aspects of the engagement process alongside supporting the development of the Morley Commonplace platform.

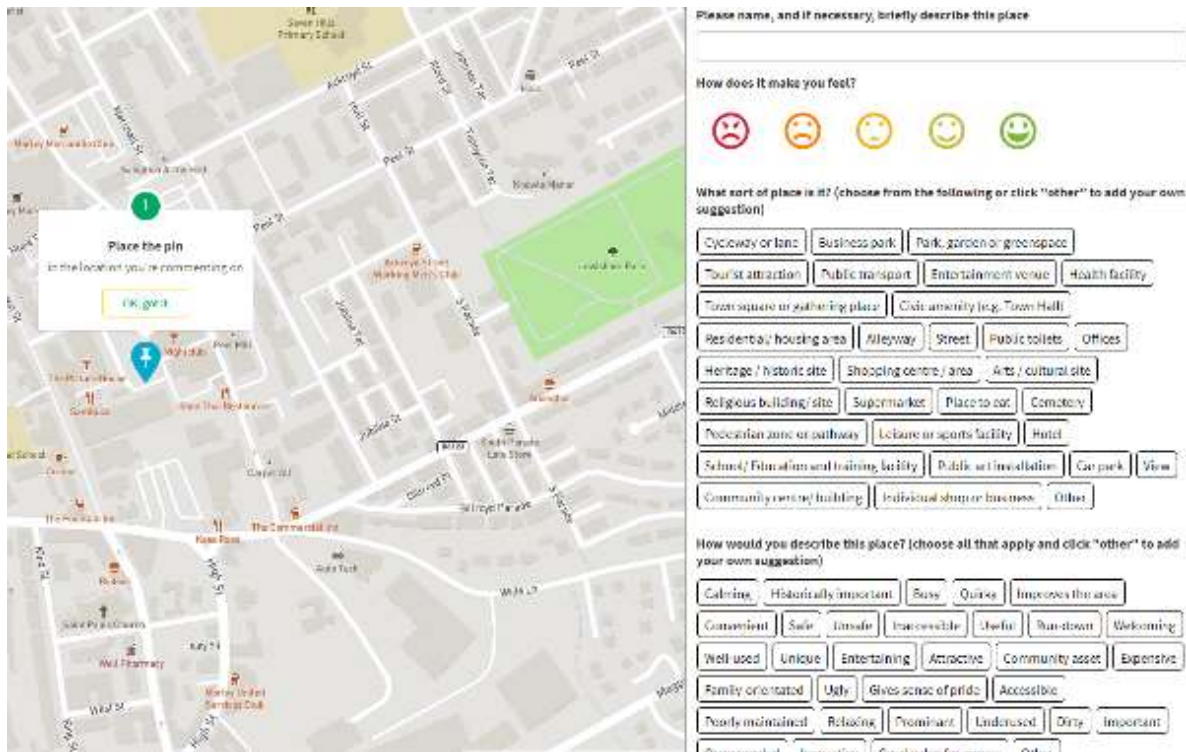


Commonplace provides a specialist digital engagement and consultation service for a wide range of built environment projects. They have delivered over 250 projects, worked with over half the London boroughs, and won awards such as Planning Magazine's Best Stakeholder Engagement organisation. [Commonplace](#) is supporting online engagement using their highly sophisticated engagement tool.

## Engagement work to date

Within September and October 2020, we undertook the following engagement activities:

- [Morley Commonplace Heatmap](#) - An online engagement tool designed for high volumes of responses by providing a map of Morley, which participants can place pins on to identify places of value to them, and places which they are concerned about, which could be priorities for Towns Fund investment. This was supported by a parallel marketing campaign, driving traffic towards the site. Respondents were also asked questions which would support our understanding of the public perception of the strengths and weaknesses of Morley, and their priorities for investment



- **Stakeholder interviews** – Targeting those in leadership positions within Morley or/and those with an in-depth understanding of the town including local politicians, VCFSE (Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise) leaders, members of the business community, and others in positions of leadership. We undertook semi-structured interviews predominantly using web-conferencing technology as well as telephone. In addition to one interviews, we undertook one-to-many interviews, using the interaction between participants to stimulate discussion, resulting in a greater depth of information

We have also considered findings from the following engagement activities:

- **[Morley Mytown](#)** - Analysing the public posts on this Central Government website set up to enable the public to post their thoughts about Morley and their priorities for improvement
- **[Connecting Leeds](#)** – Analysing another Commonplace heatmap commissioned by Leeds City Council (Connecting Leeds), because of the COVID-19 pandemic, to understand what action can be taken to improve safety for essential walking or cycling trips

# Engagement work planned

We will undertake the following activity after the **Morley Town Board Visioning Exercise** (on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2020). In addition to the below, stakeholder interviews will continue throughout November and the Commonplace Heatmap will remain open until Stage 2 (when the second Morley Commonplace site is launched, as below):

- **Resident Interviews** - Engaging with hard to reach / seldom heard from individuals, including young people, older people, and those who are economically disadvantaged or considered vulnerable - individuals who may be less likely to engage through the Commonplace platform. As with the stakeholder interviews, we will explore the opportunities for one-to-many online meetings based upon a workshop format (which we have undertaken previously with groups of young people). We hope to facilitate access to these groups, particularly through contact with VCFSE leaders and council officers who work with them.
- **Better Morley Postcards** – Freepost addressed for return postcards based in key Morley locations, inviting those responding to complete them with their ideas to improve Morley
- **Stage 2 of Morley Commonplace - Project Proposal Consultation** – A second Commonplace site, which will present individual project ideas, grouped under themes agreed by the Morley Town Deal Board. The format will be based upon providing a simple narrative describing those projects, followed by an opportunity for those responding to indicate which project ideas they felt were most important. Again, this will be supported by a comprehensive marketing plan and there will be an emphasis on encouraging contributions from the individuals who contributed at the first stage



# Morley #Mytown

Our engagement activity builds on work already undertaken by MHCLG directly through their [#Mytown](#) campaign and webpage (ongoing engagement portal for residents linked to the Town Deal), which to date has resulted in twenty-seven suggestions being posted. We have analysed these comments and have grouped these into themes in order of priority (based upon identifying the issues most mentioned):

Issues identified	Examples of comments
Public transport	<p><i>If we had longer platforms or more trains calling at Morley then it would be a more realistic mode of transport.</i></p> <p><i>Lifts and ramps for the disabled/ those with luggage/ pushchairs/ wheelchairs at Morley railway station. Improved parking and park and ride to station or bus service to connect to town centre</i></p> <p><i>Train station - Improved security - CCTV and lighting plus a few trees and shrubs would not go amiss to brighten up the area for commuters! It's pretty grim down there at the moment! A small convenience store might help, space permitting!</i></p> <p><i>A pair of proper waiting rooms and some kind of facilities would be a real bonus. Due to the remote location of the station you have to wait for the next train to arrive if you happen to have a call of nature</i></p> <p><i>The walking routes to the train station could be improved to encourage more people to walk to and use the train</i></p> <p><i>The train into Leeds has too few carriages and isn't often enough to accommodate commuters at peak times</i></p> <p><i>Enclosed bus shelters</i></p> <p><i>Bus services are good but often cause a bottleneck in the town centre leading to delays, long queues and frustrated passengers and drivers</i></p>

<p><b>Retail and high street</b></p>	<p><i>A refurb of the indoor market, which is a treasure for the town</i></p> <p><i>Invest in tidying up the shops frontages maybe have them all matching. Same font on signs giving it a classic feel</i></p> <p><i>Maybe more promotion on the new bars as there's a lot of cool bars now opening, and this will bring more people to stay out in Morley on a night out instead of going into Leeds</i></p> <p><i>Re-generate the rundown and closed shops. Morley Bottoms - force landlords to improve their unkempt properties</i></p> <p><i>Morley is inundated with charity shops. This is because they can claim back a percentage of the rent. If rents could be subsidised for the first two years this will help start-up businesses and will hopefully encourage independent retailers</i></p>
<p><b>Road travel</b></p>	<p><i>There should be more double yellow lines on busy roads as currently cars double park everywhere and getting down a one street takes five minutes</i></p> <p><i>Traffic light junctions should also be reviewed as they're outdated and of old and poor traffic design</i></p> <p><i>Potholes also need addressing as many roadways are old and knackered, ... and sunken manholes are unavoidable in many places</i></p> <p><i>Streets like Peel Street need speed bumps to stop people speeding in a 20mph zone</i></p> <p><i>Please build a dedicated cycle highway from Morley into Leeds. This will reduce traffic congestion by giving people a safe alternative to commuting by car and will improve air quality</i></p>
<p><b>Environment and recreation</b></p>	<p><i>Investing a small amount of money on much needed improvements to the satellite parks for the community but then making a much larger investment in Scatcherd Park. Remove the existing playground and install a large wooden adventure playground with an area for toddlers and a trim trail as well as a wildlife pond where people can feed ducks etc. Something sorely missing from this town</i></p> <p><i>At the present time there is a huge, under-utilised area of grass behind and next to the Sport Centre</i></p> <p><i>Public 3G football field</i></p>

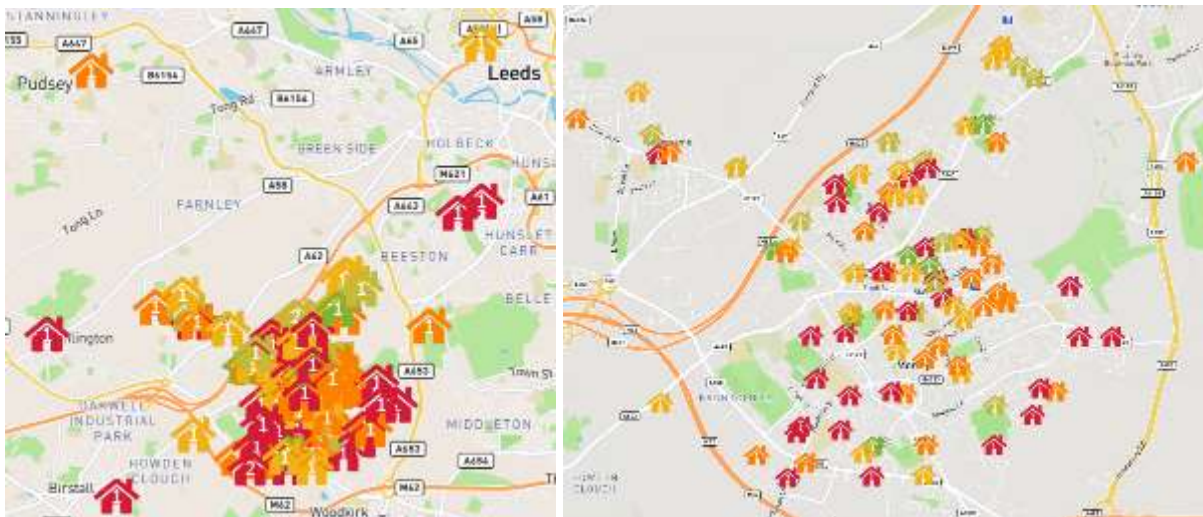
<p><b>Youth</b></p>	<p><i>Youth club for kids to hang around at and do activities rather than hanging about on the streets</i></p> <p><i>Youth clubs are needed. Often young teens (and younger children) are spending more and more time indoors, physically isolated from one another. But many churches in and around Morley have fantastic resources in terms of buildings but are underused and not entirely suited to children/young people activities, but with a little finance could easily be adapted</i></p>
<p><b>Town Hall/ heritage</b></p>	<p><i>I feel Morley needs a small museum to celebrate the town and keep things safe for future generations. The Town Hall seems like the perfect venue for this, Exhibits could be housed in such a way that no on-site staff are needed but it would also be an ideal location for local volunteers to meet and curate things while sharing their knowledge. Local schools and clubs could utilise this resource</i></p>
<p><b>Business start ups</b></p>	<p><i>Small businesses are the lifeblood of towns and we need to encourage more small businesses into the area. One hurdle for small businesses and start-ups is finding affordable premises. These could be built to make Morley a small business and start up hub. This would bring employment and prosperity to the town at an affordable price</i></p>
<p><b>Supporting the vulnerable</b></p>	<p><i>Provide a supportive place where people can access courses to explore their creativity. Proven to be beneficial for overall health and notably mental health.</i></p> <p><i>Increase funding to support family groups, young people's groups (we have a high number of children experiencing mental distress). Clothes exchange, community food nights. Let's restore a real meaning of community in Morley - sharing food, creativity, skills</i></p>

# Commonplace – About those responding

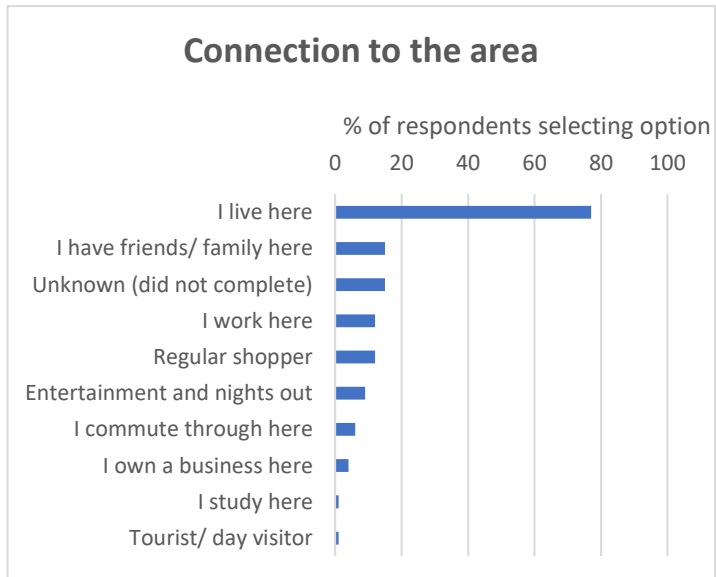
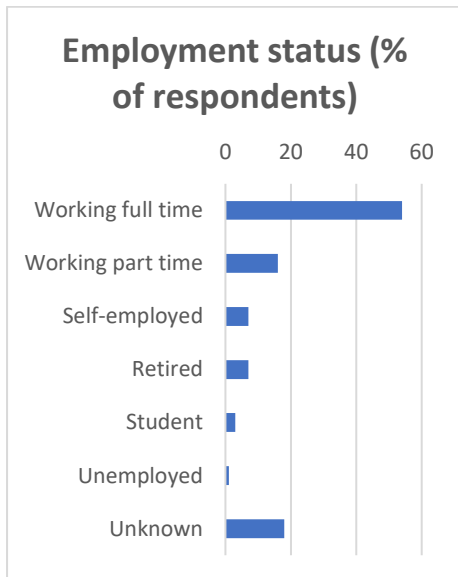
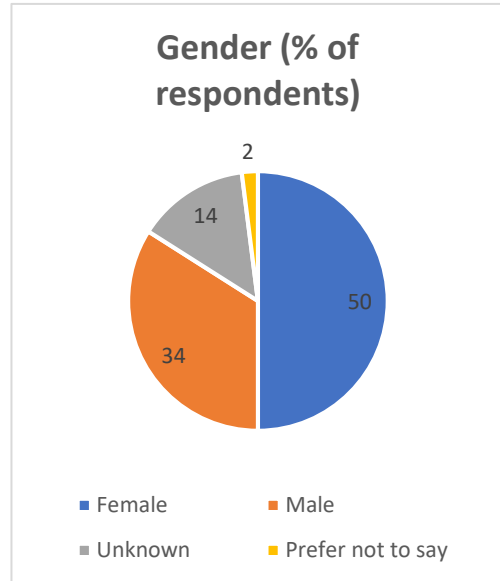
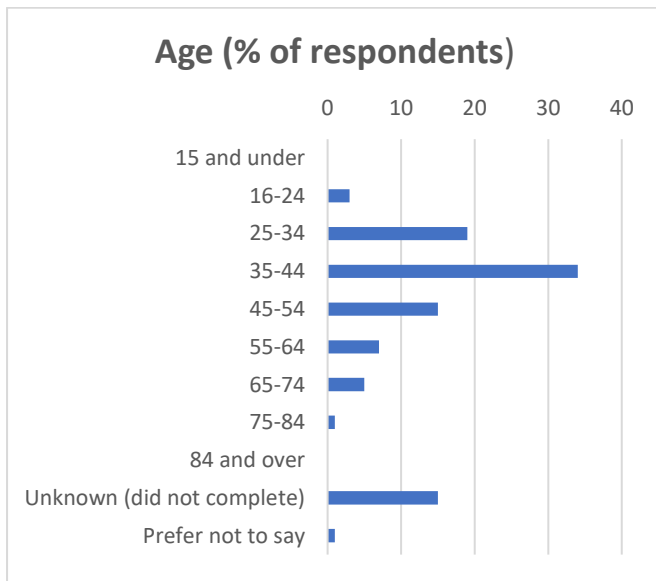
Between 27<sup>th</sup> September and 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 there were **1,224 visitors** to the Morley Commonplace resulting in **280 individual respondents** (people that completed all or part of the survey information on the site).

The graphs and charts below provide a demographic overview of the individuals who participated in the engagement exercise via the Morley Commonplace platform. The “unknown” category is when this section was not completed. For graphs where totals are more than 100%, respondents could select multiple responses.

The maps below identify where the individuals lived, based on their postcode, and illustrate that a proportion of those responding were not based within the Morley area. The colour scheme of the house icons on the map indicates their overall sentiment (green indicating positive sentiment and red indicating negative sentiment). Roughly 95% of those who responded reside within Morley.



The graphs below provide a demographic overview of those who responded:



# Commonplace – General findings

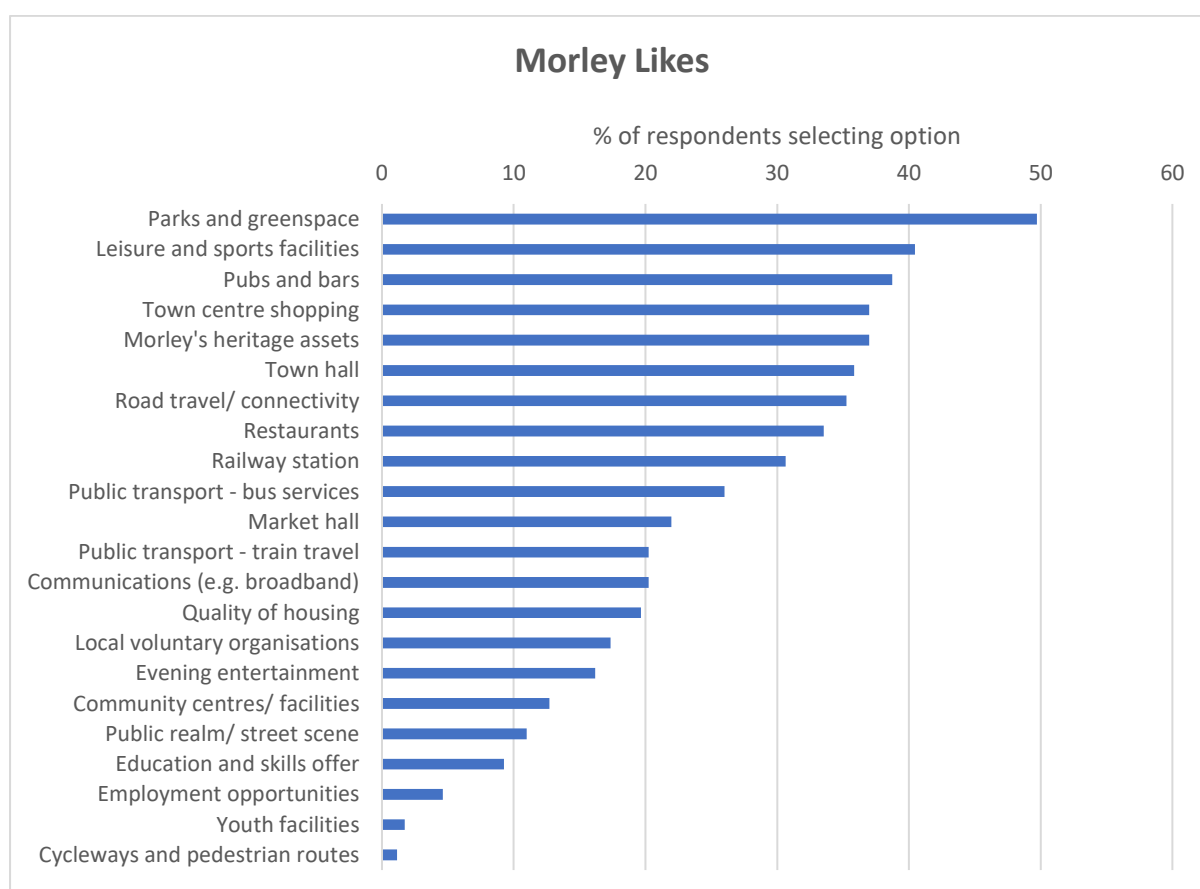
Accompanying the heatmap element of Commonplace were three multiple choice questions for those responding to complete:

- What do you like about Morley?
- What do you dislike about Morley?
- We are applying for funding from central government to improve Morley. How should this money be best spent?

Those responding were able to choose multiple options from those provided

## Likes

The following graph summarises the results of the question: “What do you like about Morley?”



This indicates that Morley’s parks and greenspaces are highly-valued by the local community. This corresponds with those responding on the heatmap, which included

multiple pins placed in greenspaces, alongside generally positive comments about those areas, particularly Scatcherd Park.

Leisure and sports facilities were also particularly valued, which is likely to be influenced by the modern and well-regarded Morley Leisure Centre.

Pubs and bars were also identified as being a significant asset to Morley - a finding also reflected in the interview results. Despite the competition with Leeds Centre Morley performs well in this area in comparison to areas of a similar size.

Morley's "heritage assets" were also well regarded by those responding and this corresponds with the high proportion of Grade 2 listed buildings in the area. This includes the Town Hall that was the sixth highest.

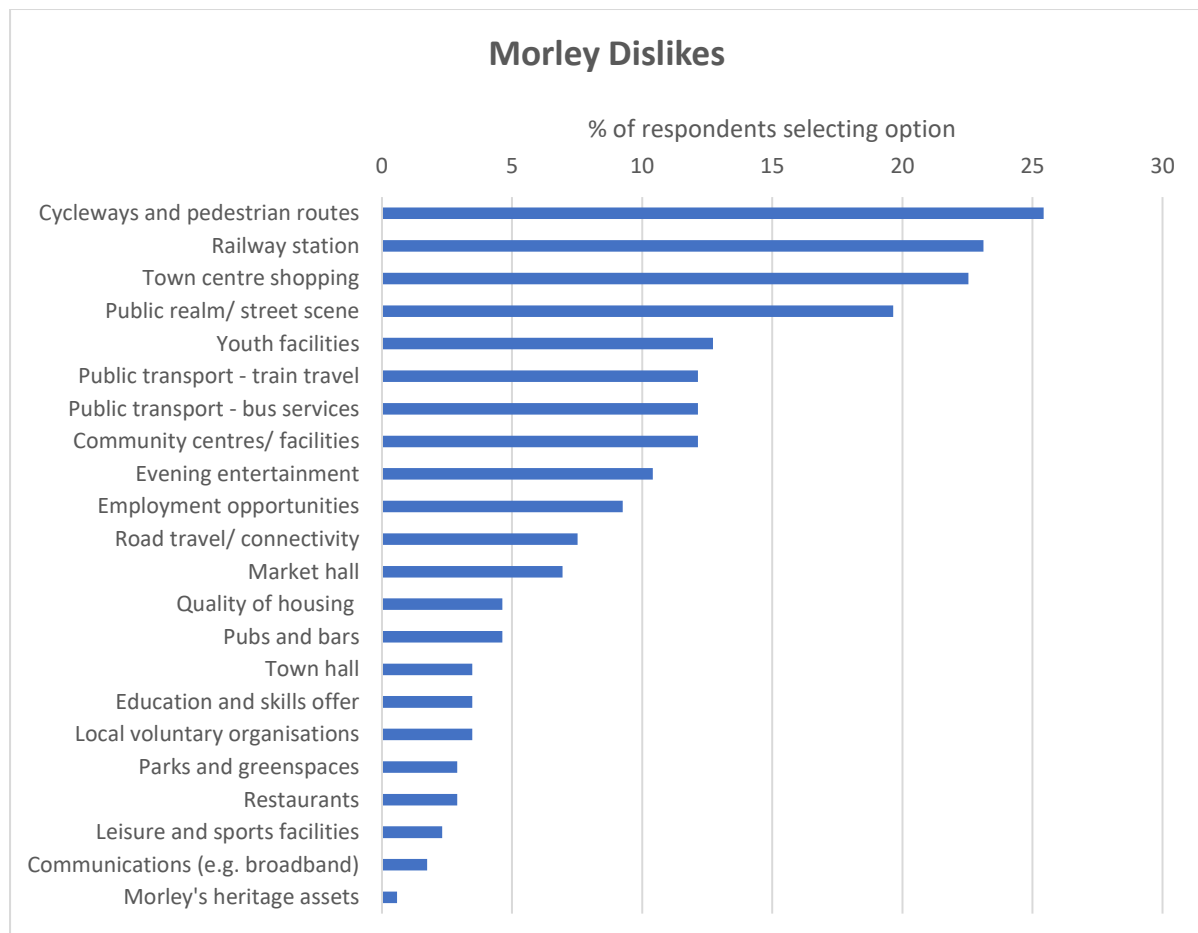
Town Centre Shopping was the fifth highest, providing a strong indication of the value placed upon it by local people, despite it also scoring very high as a dislike (see below).

Those responding were also given an "other" option where they could respond using an alternative word or phrase. Each of the following were identified once each:

- House value
- Library
- Community spirit

## Dislikes

The following graph summarises the results of the question: “What do you dislike about Morley?”



The graph particularly indicates dissatisfaction with Morley’s cycleways and pedestrian routes. This corresponds with comments made on the heatmap (including the Connecting Leeds site) and the results of interviews which indicated aspirations for the further pedestrianisation of town centre locations and improved cycleways (e.g. from train station to town centre, from Morley into Leeds).

Despite it featuring fifth as a “like” town centre shopping was identified as an area in need of improvement. Multiple comments related to the numbers of charity shops, aspirations for more quality independents and the need to improve shop frontages.

Both issues identified above are likely connected to the fourth most identified dislike, which was public realm/ street scene. Comments received from interviews and the



heat map indicate an aspiration to refresh and improve the look of the town centre and to incorporate new planting and green areas.

Morley Train Station was third, and comments related to its condition, accessibility, and facilities, as well as the transport and pedestrian/cycle routes between the station and Morley Town Centre. A related dislike was Train Travel which was fifth, and likely relates to comments made about the infrequency of trains, quality of the passenger experience, and the limited number of carriages.

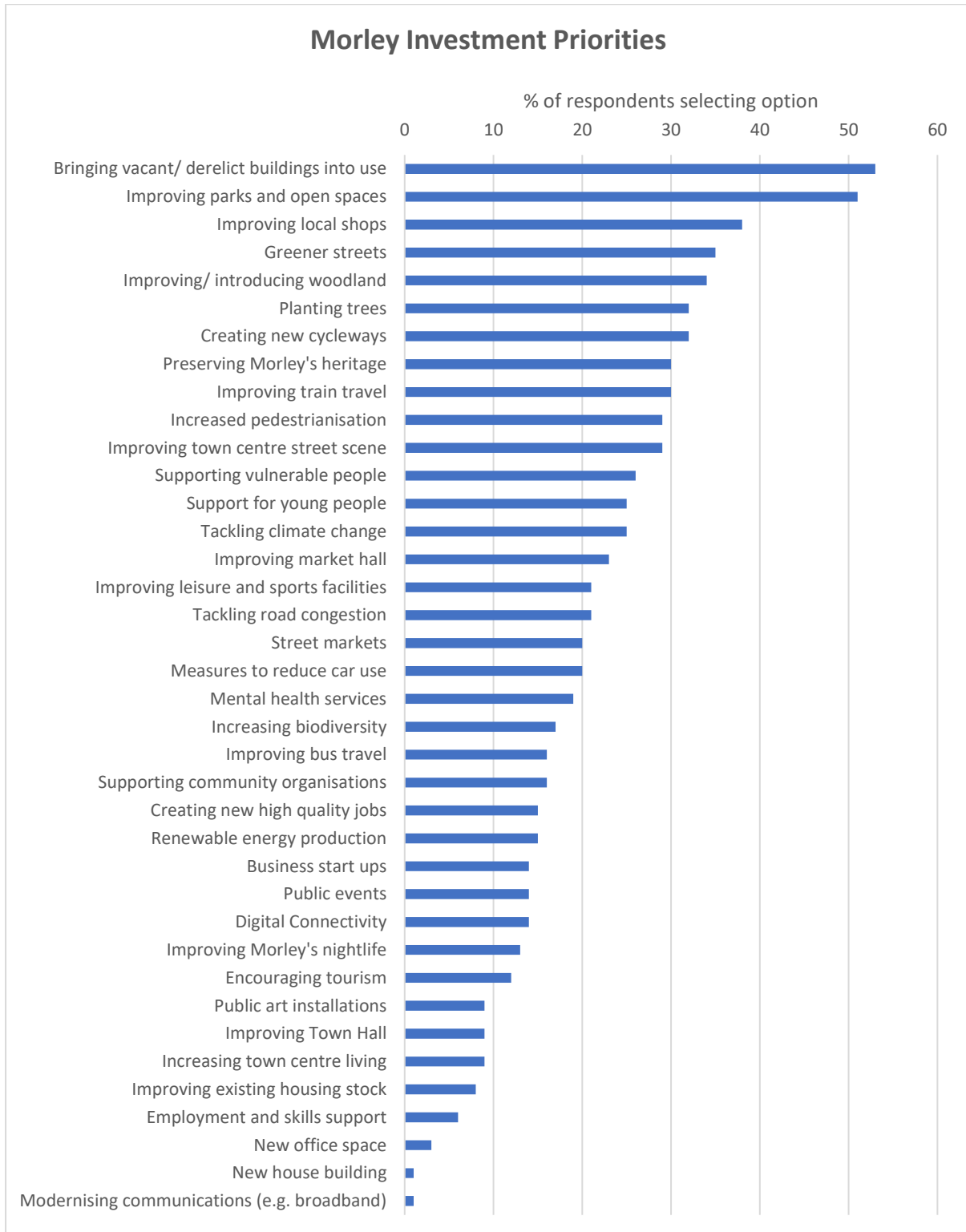
Sixth was youth services, which is likely linked to the perception of a lack of dedicated facilities for young people and a growing concern for the wellbeing of young people because of COVID-19.

Those responding were also given an “other” option where they could respond using an alternative word or phrase. Responses left under this category included:

- Very few if any vegetarian/ vegan options for food and drink
- Hembrigg Park
- Scruffy appearance of the shops opposite Prospect Bar in Morley Bottoms
- Too many charity shops and betting shops
- Overdevelopment - all the green fields that surrounded Morley have gone to housing causing congestion of traffic, doctors, dentists, noise
- Litter

# Investment Priorities

The following graph summarises the results of the question: “We are applying for funding from central government to improve Morley. How should this money be best spent?”



In relation to the priority areas most identified by those responding, two distinct areas have emerged:

1. Priorities generally focussed upon the town centre, particularly an ambition to bring unoccupied retail units and other derelict buildings (e.g. The Pavilion) back into use, and initiatives to improve local shops
2. Priorities that have an environmental or green element - including improving parks and open spaces, creating greener streets, introducing woodland and tree planting, and in relation to green transport - creating new cycleways

Preserving Morley's heritage also featured highly and aligns with the value that local people place upon heritage assets (as indicated by the high proportion of people who selected this under the "likes" question).

Further transport-related priorities also feature highly with improving train travel and increased pedestrianisation featuring ninth and tenth, respectively.

Those responding were also given an "other" option where they could respond using an alternative word or phrase. Responses left under this category included:

- Provide much-needed bus depot and stop buses using the main Queen Street - so many near misses
- Free parking, removal of parking restrictions!
- Bus station. Pavilion, town hall. Morley could be so much more than it is
- Education - more schools and a state grammar school
- Reduce planning applications for greenbelt land, such as on Laneside Farm unless road and public infrastructure is improved
- Add a pedestrian crossing at Morley Bottoms to get to train station

# Commonplace – Pin clusters

The following section focuses upon geographical areas of Morley, which have been identified by those leaving comments on the Morley Commonplace Heatmap. The Heatmap works by those responding placing pins on the heatmap, which then opens a window enabling those responding to:

- Name or describe the area
- Choose from a selection of words which describe what type of place it is (e.g. street, hotel etc)
- Choose from a selection of descriptive words to indicate how they feel about the area (e.g. overcrowded, family friendly etc)
- Indicate whether they feel it should be a priority for Town's Fund Investment (Yes or No)
- Provide a comment (e.g. what they like, dislike, how it could be improved etc)

As the number of pins grow, clusters of pins begin to emerge. This has enabled us to identify the areas of Morley which are of most concern to the community. The following section provides an overview of the clusters which are beginning to emerge. We have used illustrative quotations which are relatively typical of the comments relating to the pins within that cluster.

## Cluster 1 – Morley Train Station



*The train station is vital for those living and working in Morley. It is quite remote from the town centre and can feel isolated at night. It would benefit from better lighting and perhaps a small cafe or something. It isn't very accessible to all so perhaps this could be improved.*

Comments about Morley Train Station included:

- Inaccessible for pushchairs and wheelchair users including steps, and condition and steepness of pathways (explore potential for lift access)
- Toilet facilities
- Cafe/ shop
- Improved lighting (linked to feelings of safety)
- Extremely important in relation to connectivity of the town (e.g. to Manchester and Leeds)
- Longer platforms to allow for longer trains with more carriages
- Better signage and pedestrianisation between station and town centre
- Improved shelters for poor weather
- Increase car parking provision on brownfield site in proximity
- Bus connectivity and frequency (to town centre, to White Rose, including integrated smart travel)



## Cluster 2 – Morley Bottoms



*Whilst a number of empty buildings have been adapted as commercial ventures several remain vacant and in poor condition. Revitalisation of this area as a bar or eating district would be welcome.*

*This four-road junction has no pedestrian crossing. There is no gap in the lights to allow pedestrians to cross.*

Comments about Morley Bottoms included:

- Improve pedestrianisation (including pavement widening)
- Improve quality of public realm
- Reconfigure to allow for outdoor seating area
- Improved layout of junction for cyclists
- Provision of bars, cafes, and restaurants (improved evening economy)
- Improved shop frontages
- Renovation and restoration of heritage buildings



## Cluster 3 – Queen Street



*People used to travel some distance to come to Morley to visit the shops and particularly the market however it has become so run down and sadly representative of many small towns it no longer holds an appeal. A little bit of investment in the facades of the buildings and the use of the shops would start to attract people again.*

*Desperately need a bus depot. Buses constantly blocking lower Queen Street stopping traffic nearly every morning, roads just not wide enough.*

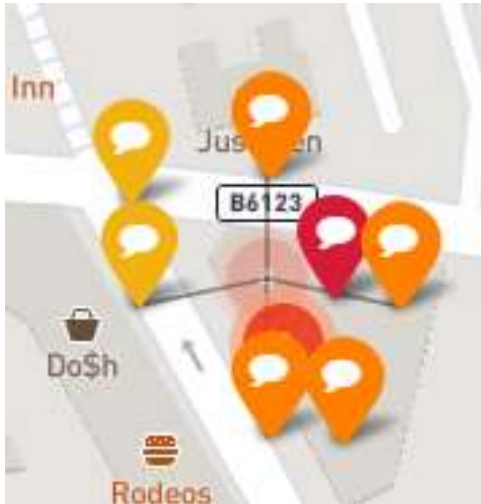
*The upgrade to the bus facilities is great, but there is a complete lack of facilities for cyclists wanting to come into Morley on their bike*

Comments about Queen Street included:

- Improving look of shop frontages
- Investing in Morley Market
- Improved public realm including planting and greenspace
- Increasing number of independent shops (e.g. delicatessen, organic food etc)
- Pollution reduction
- Bus depot
- Utilising heritage buildings to enhance appearance



## Cluster 4 – New Pavilion



*Architecturally this is a lovely building and part of Morley's heritage. It is currently derelict which is an absolute shame and it would be lovely to see it converted for public use*

*It's currently a really run-down eye-sore but has the potential to be an amazing music venue/ bar or it could house independent shops or street food vendors. Would love to see it used for entertainment purposes.*

Comments about the New Pavilion included:

- Potential for independent shops
- Potential for bar/ music venue
- Architectural value
- Arts/ heritage centre
- Fitness, sports, indoor climbing centre
- Community space/ hub
- Concern about dereliction
- Need for enforcement action to safeguard the building





## Cluster 5 – Scatcherd Park



*The skate park is a really valuable facility and is very popular with young people. I think additional facilities like this should be considered in other spaces in Morley, although I know that litter is a major problem here*

*I would like to see some lighting in the middle of the park. As a safety feature it would benefit anyone walking through the park*

Not a cluster as such, but Scatcherd Park did attract pins in multiple locations across the park.

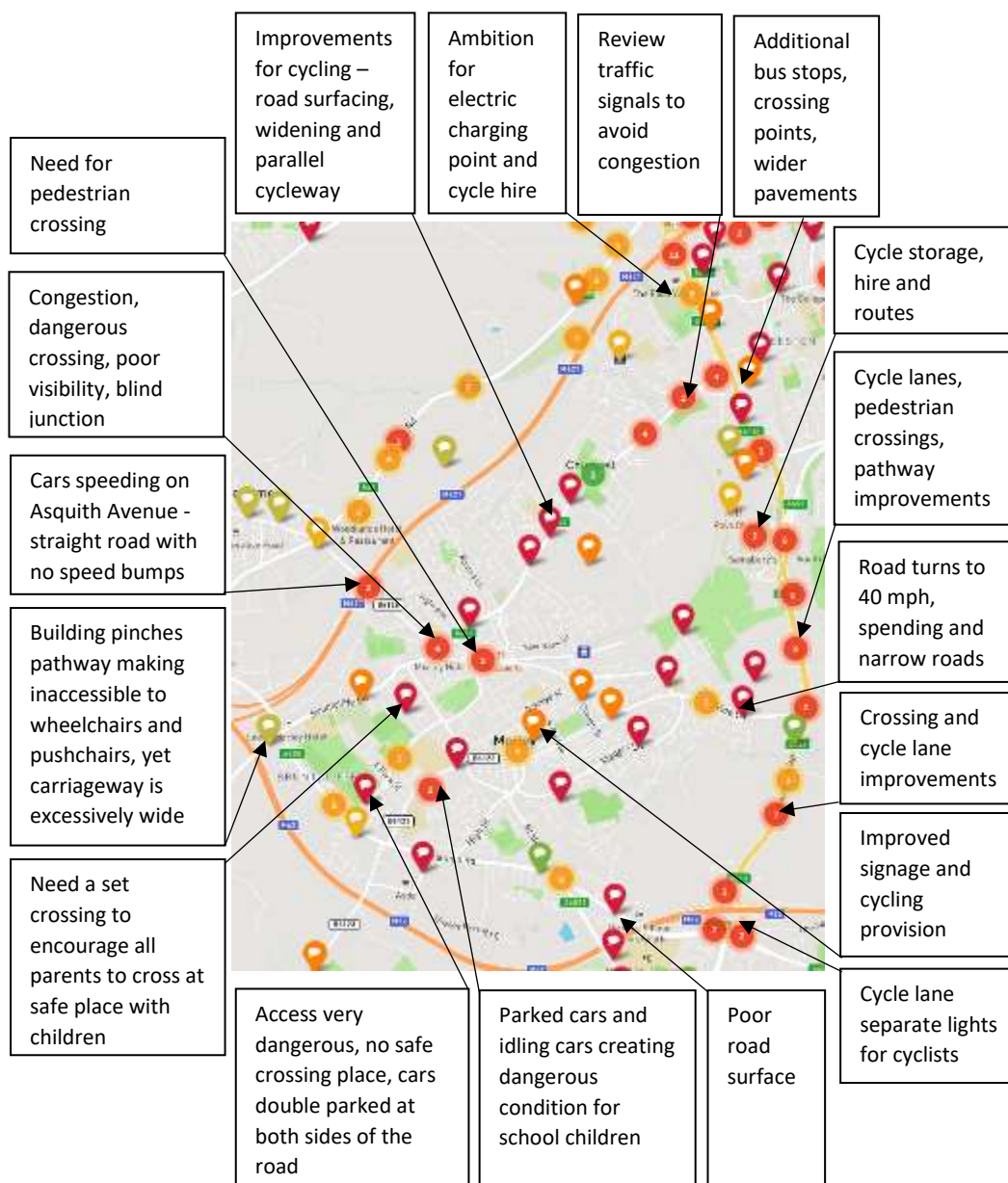
Comments about Scatcherd Park included:

- Valued by local people
- Concern about litter
- Suggestion for a programme of events and outside activities
- Visitor attraction in the park (large wooden playground)
- Youth facilities/ hub
- Improve lighting



# Connecting Leeds

Morley Commonplace is not the first Commonplace site for Leeds. [Connecting Leeds COVID-19 Transport Response](#) is part of the council's response to Covid-19 - emergency action to help the public safely make essential walking or cycling trips. We have provided highlights of comments made below within the Morley boundary, but a key finding was the number of times that cycling routes and facilities were identified as a need.



# Stakeholder interviews

Fourteen stakeholder interviews have been undertaken to date. The responses are summarised below with a selection of illustrative quotations:

## Strengths

### ***People and Sense of Community:***

There is a strong sense of place and independence within the town. It has civic pride, civic identity, and community spirit. It is a definable town that has not blended into Leeds

*Feels more like a village than a town. People are very protective of Morley*

*Fiercely independent on lots of different levels – politics, community spirit*

*Close knit - it's a place where generations stay*

### ***Location and Connectivity:***

Interviewees identified the strength of Morley's location and its connectivity, including rail links to Manchester and Leeds, with the station being an anchor point for the town. It also has proximity to the motorway network making the town an attractive place for commuters.

*A small-town feel but only ten minutes from Leeds, fifty minutes from Manchester, and easy to get to London*

*Almost feels like the centre of the universe. You can be in lots of places pretty quickly*

### ***Economic Assets:***

White Rose and Capital Park each represent economic assets for the town despite not being based within the centre. White Rose also feels connected to the town, being a supporter of events such as the arts festival.

Views were expressed that the Morley economy was relatively diverse and was therefore not reliant upon one industry or a single large employer

The town centre was also identified as a strength in terms of the footfall it attracts and the combination of independent and family businesses alongside chains (although attracting more brand retail names was an aspiration of some). The market was also considered as an asset and it was felt that this represented an opportunity for growth.

*We are a convenience town. You don't need to leave Morley for anything other than an airport*

### ***Heritage Assets***

Morley was considered to have a wealth of heritage assets – manifesting through the history of the area (particularly its industrial past) as well as the architectural merit of its built environment. The Town Hall particularly was identified by a very high proportion of those interviewed as representing a “symbol of civic pride and identity”, although comments were also made about whether its heritage value was matched by the value created by its use

### ***Education***

Morley's schools were identified as “outstanding”, including the secondary school offer with Grove Academy particularly being singled out as a school that performs well despite taking a higher proportion of disadvantaged students than others

### ***Housing***

The residential housing market was identified as being healthy with lots of choice, whilst remaining affordable for the majority

### ***Health & Wellbeing***

The Leisure Centre was identified as representing outstanding provision and potentially the best in Leeds.

The number of parks serving Morley was also identified as a positive particularly for a place so close to Leeds Centre

*Morley's like a Mars Bar – you can work, rest and play*

# Weaknesses

## ***Demographics***

Morley was perceived to be a place where young people do not stay (but also a place that they come back to in later life, once they have explored educational and employment opportunities elsewhere). Young people leaving the area to pursue post 16 and 18 educational opportunities because of lack of Morley-based opportunities was identified as a weakness for the town

This view was reinforced by a belief that Morley's population skews older, and this is reflected in the use of the town centre

## ***Attitudes & Perceptions***

Some interviewees identified a tendency for Morley to be "inward looking" with people sometimes being overcritical of new ideas and initiatives. And that Morley's identity is defined by its history and is rooted in the past, limiting an exploration of Morley's future ambitions and its purpose going forward

*Still some old-fashioned attitudes. Some people haven't moved with the times*

*"We've always lived in Morley; We've always done things this way" Is anyone looking outside the town to see how things are done in other places? Does this insular mentality stop people coming into the town?*

## ***Transport Connectivity***

Despite the Train Station and Morley's overall connectivity being considered as an asset, comments were also made about how far the station is from the town centre and the lack of a clear pedestrian corridor between the town centre and the station. Multiple issues were identified with the station – parking, accessibility, facilities, condition, and its visual amenity.

*Parking at the station is appalling. Need to address that to get people out of their cars*

*Bit of a third world station*

The lack of suitability for cyclists was also identified as an issue to be addressed – the lack of facilities for cyclists for storage and the lack of cycling lanes (with environmental implications on as well as transport connectivity). This was reinforced by the multiple responses on the Leeds Connect Commonplace site.

### ***Town Centre***

Despite the Town Centre and the retail offer being viewed as a strength of Morley, aspects of the town centre were also identified as a weakness. A challenge is created by its length (Queen Street), and whether this undermines the ability to present a compelling and cohesive retail offer. The gaps (unlet units) can create a run-down feel and several interviewees commented upon the proportion of charity shops and bookies, which were viewed as undesirable.

Other weaknesses associated with the town centre included the lack of a strong “night-time” economy, although there were differing opinions on whether the bar and restaurant scene had been improving and some had not fared as well as others during COVID-19.

The indoor market offer was also identified as needing investment and some optimism in this area was evident, linked to the recent change in ownership of this building.

The look of the town was also identified as a weakness, with Morley Bottoms being identified as an area that is particularly run-down, an issue compounded by its status as a gateway into the town. The dereliction of the New Pavilion was also identified as an example of where Morley’s heritage could be under threat, a site which creates a poor impression of the town and a potential target for Town’s Fund investment. The need to “refresh” aspects of the town centre was also identified:

*It was built in the 1970s and looks like it*

*The town centre is unattractive with no glue or focal point to hold it together*

*It looks like it could do with a good wash!*

*Seems to be an invisible wall halfway down the street. People walk down, look around and walk back*

### **Skills and Education**

A key gap in skills and education provision identified was post-16/18 provision - particularly the development of vocational skills. This was also identified as a contributory factor to young people leaving the area to access opportunities elsewhere

## **Investment Priorities**

### **Leverage**

Stakeholders identified the need to use the Towns Fund £25m to lever further investment, and that this should be an overarching priority and a principle for the board to adopt in relation to all its investment decisions - the need to use this money as a trigger or catalyst for project activity which transcends the spending of the £25m:

*Make the £25m into £50m. There needs to be a strategic plan - not just for other public funding but private sector investment too*

*The board need to be clear about top level priorities that will make a difference and we know we can deliver*

### **Town Centre**

Several suggestions were made to reconfigure the town centre, particularly concentrating Queen Street's retail offer in the middle, with the potential for an evening economy offer at either end of its length.

Increasing the proportion of town centre residential property was also suggested, including replacing retail and exploring residential above retail - increasing the town centre residential population and contributing to town centre footfall for daytime and evening use.

Investing in Morley Bottoms was suggested, particularly pedestrianisation and public realm improvements. A proposal was to use improvements in public realm to

increase the connectivity of this area to the rest of the town centre.

Other town centre investment suggestions included:

- Town hall, and the area surrounding, particularly with a focus on arts and enhancing the public realm
- New Pavilion – Training/ learning Centre as well as an evening entertainment venue
- Using Towns Fund money to lever private sector investment from property owners to upgrade buildings they own or bring them into use

Supporting the development of Morley's night-time economy was identified as a potential priority area – and dovetailing this with public realm improvements to encourage a café culture (particularly the provision of outdoor seating areas on newly pedestrianised areas).

Investing in projects to improve feelings of safety within the town was also identified, including CCTV and locations for the Police to have a presence.

### ***Skills and Training***

An investment in post 16/18 education and training – particularly vocational training opportunities linked to local employment opportunities and active industries.

The aim would be to encourage young people to stay in the town providing an opportunity to ensure a transition from secondary to further education to employment can take place locally. An ancillary benefit would be to encourage the proportion of young people using the town centre.

### ***Transport***

As previously identified, investment in Morley Train Station was viewed as a priority with improving accessibility (for wheelchairs and pushchairs), facilities (shelters, shops, café and parking), signage, and improving pedestrian and cycling routes to the town centre.

*Shuttle link from station to town centre – cable car, monorail, something different! Must be accessible for wheelchair users, pushchairs etc*



### ***Parks***

Investing in parks to encourage their greater use (relaying pathways, outdoor gyms, skate parks etc) – recognising their contribution to health and wellbeing, and exploring their use as events spaces.

### ***Arts & Culture***

Recognising the potential to increase the profile of Morley through arts and culture (exhibition and events, including building on the Arts Festival), to improve footfall to the town centre from local people, as well as strengthening the visitor economy, and the potential to use public arts to enhance the town centre environment. This could include exploring the potential to use the town centre, and the space in front of it, as a hub for arts activities and installations (alongside permanent improvements to the public realm). Encouraging artists and crafters to display and sell their creations with the potential for street markets or to enhance the offer within the permanent market hall is another possibility. This could be a potential USP for Morley.

## **Investment priorities under six themes**

The following themes were used as prompts - to support interviewees thinking about Morley in terms of considering issues from a variety of perspectives and to encourage thinking beyond the activities which relate to physical assets. These themes are not proposed themes to be adopted by the Town Deal Board, nor are they themes provided by Government under the programme.

The themes, in full, were:

- **Housing and the Environment** - Morley as a place to live, including improving housing quality and green spaces
- **Economy and Enterprise** - Morley as a place to work, and for businesses to become established and grow
- **Skills and Education** - Morley as a place to develop the skills, experiences, and qualifications for a successful career

- **Communities and Health** - Morley's health and leisure services, its community assets (including youth and community centres) and the organisations that help us to remain happy and healthy
- **Transport and Communications Infrastructure** - Morley as a well-connected place in terms of road and pedestrian access, cycleways, and public transport; alongside its digital connectivity
- **Town Centre, Visitor Economy & Arts and Culture** - Morley's town centre with its mix of uses and high-quality public realm, alongside Morley's arts, culture and entertainment offer

The information summarised in the table below represents the information captured under these themes:

Housing and the Environment	Economy and Enterprise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The spaces in between the houses - landscaping of public areas</li> <li>• Not just green spaces for the sake of them – how are they used?</li> <li>• More greenspace in the town centre</li> <li>• Higgidy piggidy place. Historically high-quality buildings but also low quality. It doesn't quite blend</li> <li>• Developing Morley as part of a bigger plan, rather than developers coming in and building suburban properties with no real regard to the town</li> <li>• Crying out for sheltered housing and places for this have been identified</li> <li>• Getting to the top of the housing list is a task</li> <li>• Nice mix of housing that suits most demographics – residential developments for families, converted mills for young professionals</li> <li>• More affordable homes. Some buildings in the town centre have potential to be affordable homes (e.g. housing association)</li> <li>• Shortage of affordable homes, but opposition to building on greenbelt land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do people really see it as a place to work? Would struggle to name any current big employers. Historically there was Kodak</li> <li>• Disparate offer – retail, offices, some tech</li> <li>• This theme has to be thought about in the context of Covid. Potential for agile working spaces (e.g. couple of days per week)</li> <li>• Eclectic mix of businesses who have chosen to be in Morley because of its location – proximity to motorways</li> <li>• White Rose could be a place to attract new businesses building the social and economic links between WR and town</li> <li>• Looked at establishing Business Improvement District a few years ago but Morrisons (largest town centre business) was not supportive</li> <li>• No business support offer or networking. Support for SMEs and local business directory</li> <li>• Industrial estate could become more tech focussed (White Rose or Capital Park)</li> </ul>

## Skills and Education

- Linking to John Townsley (Academy Trusts) and local business owners to explore how connection between skills and industry could be improved
- FE centralised in Leeds about ten years ago for good reasons (austerity). Reinventing FE offer for Morley feels exciting. Not a little college - a strong quality offer of key skills and basic skills
- Employer led offer, (apprenticeships, vocational)
- Is a college in Morley the right thing for young people? Is it better for them to get out of the town raising aspirations and exploring the wider world?
- Arts Awards incorporated into Arts Festival
- Could skills offer attract business
- Gaps in post-16 and post-18 offer

## Communities and Health

- Perception of aging population with poor health.
- Fantastic Leisure Centre offer, well used
- Less provision of a private fitness offer
- Need for more sports pitches
- Strengthen community infrastructure for wellbeing. Council owned community space run by community groups
- Youth Services work well but target most vulnerable/ ASB rather than broader offer
- Elderly Action during Covid - food banks, keeping in touch with vulnerable
- Awareness and support for men's mental health.
- Dementia Friendly Morley, in response to ageing population. Involve local businesses

## Transport and Communications Infrastructure

- Gateways into the town centre need to be improved to create a better first impression
- Digital connectivity also needs to include how the town is represented online
- Free parking in the town centre is an asset and needs to be preserved
- Station – out of the town centre. The walk from the station to the centre is not signed and can be dark. How do we connect station to the town centre?
- Accessibility issues at the station especially on platform 2
- This is a commuter station and there is not enough car parking, people park on the roads surrounding the station. Discussions ongoing with Network Rail
- Bus station –something that could be a focal point in the town centre, but also a view that it's not needed and there is no space for it in the town
- Layout of the roads is awkward for buses – not a simple clear bus route through town
- No sense of a cohesive cycle network
- Town centre to White Rose would be a priority for cycle routes
- Issues around speeding, would like to see some better traffic calming measures, camera network etc to encourage people to drive responsibly

## Town Centre, Visitor Economy & Arts and Culture

- Heritage – raise awareness for visitors & residents
- Town centre is not going to be a visitor attraction and Morley visitor economy is limited
- Need to create attractive offer for residents with money – market, café culture, quality shops
- Needs a more varied retail offer. Too many hairdressers, charity shops, bookies etc
- Not a place you would go for a night out. Town shuts at 4-5pm. Need a vibrant night-time economy
- Different bar and restaurant offer at either end of the high street; “glitzy” offer at one end of the town/ indy, craft brewery feel at Morley Bottoms
- Need to be improvements – reduction in ASB, better lighting, CCTV etc
- How do you re-engineer the mix of the town centre so that works in reduced retail environment. What is going to drive footfall?
- Morley as a destination - arts festival at town hall
- Town Hall is a key building but how can it best be used? What is its purpose?
- Residential offer in the town centre – flats over shops to bring young professionals into town
- Layout of the town centre is problematic - no central anchor point. Offer is disjointed at two ends of the high street
- Pavilion could be the anchor building at the other end of the street.

- Highlight the town centre as an alternative shopping venue – as opposed to White Rose or Leeds city centre
- Needs something to create an impression, whether that's green spaces, street furniture, installations.
- Younger families who live in the town as a commuter base or because of good education do not necessarily use the town centre
- Free parking needs to be kept - to encourage footfall to town centre businesses



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