



'WE CAN'T EAT WHISKY'

EDINBURGH OLD TOWN'S LOCAL PLACE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2026

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This Local Place Plan has been developed by the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust (EOTDT) in collaboration with the Old Town Community Council. It is based on engagement and consultation with local people between April and July 2026. It is to be included in the City Plan 2040.

EOTDT is developing a community action plan to immediately address some of the issues affecting our community. Please email us at thecrannie@eotdt.org for further information.

Introduction

We are the Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust – a registered local charity dedicated to the Old Town in Edinburgh, Scotland. Founded in 2009, our mission is to provide safe spaces and resources through community-led initiatives that engage individuals in creating a fulfilling and thriving life. Our vision is a thriving Old Town Community where individuals have the space to foster growth and build connections.

We provide a range of year round community services to people living in the Old Town Conservation Area and the neighbourhood of Dumbiedykes, based in our community hub - The Crannie.

Our Local Place Plan has been developed in collaboration with the Old Town Community Council (OTCC). The OTCC acts as the liaison between the public and the City of Edinburgh Council for a better neighbourhood. OTCC represents the interests of residents and foster community engagement. With an aim to build a better community together, OTCC strives to foster a vibrant, engaged, and inclusive neighbourhood where every resident's voice is valued.

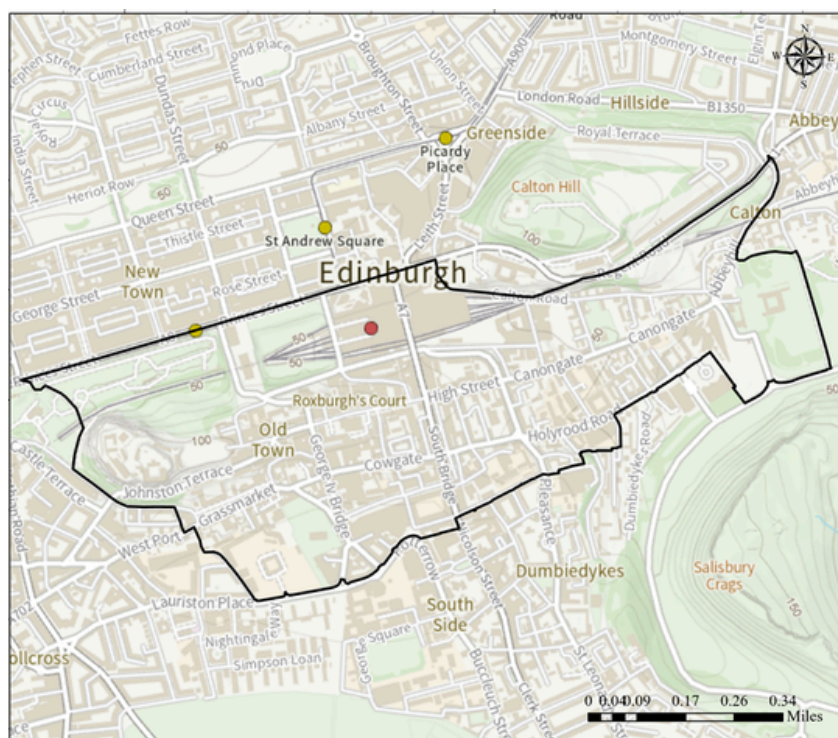
Our Local Place Plan is based on extensive community engagement carried out between April and July 2026. It included an online survey, engagement with local organisations, in-person drop-in events, as well as canvassing on the streets of the Old Town.

We hope that our Local Place Plan will help us to directly address challenges our unique neighbourhood is facing.

Edinburgh Old Town

Our area and what it's like to live here

Our Local Place Plan covers the Old Town Community Council area as outlined below.



Geographical area

For over 1,500 years the Old Town was the entirety of the City of Edinburgh. Extending the length of the Royal Mile from Edinburgh Castle to the Palace of Holyroodhouse and the Scottish Parliament, it bounds Calton Road and the railway line to the north and Lauriston Place and Drummond Street to the south. Within that area, it includes the Grassmarket and West Port on the west and Abbeyhill and Croft-an-Righ on the east.

While the borders of Edinburgh expanded from the late 18th century onwards, the Old Town has always remained the heart of the city. Across the centuries, the Old Town and its inhabitants have made a profound and lasting impact on Scottish culture and public life at the centre of the capital.

Edinburgh Old Town became a World Heritage Site in 1995. In recent times, the Old Town has become a focal point for regular tourism and the annual festivals. While we welcome our guests and appreciate the contributions that they make to our society, we want the Old Town to be much more than a thoroughfare. The Old Town is our home and we are a genuine community.



Edinburgh Old Town

Our area and what it's like to live here

Our people

The latest Scottish census suggests just under 9,000 people live in the Old Town. Parts of the Old Town are among the 20% most deprived areas in Scotland as per the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

The City of Edinburgh Council's most recent area profile includes extensive information about the area, including:

- 8465 people live in the Old Town - the population is young with 3,800 of the population being between 16 and 34 years old. Only 4.5% of the population are over 65.
- Only 125 households live with dependent children.
- 70% of the population are white with the largest ethnic minority being Chinese, Scottish/British Chinese.
- 75% of people say their main language is English.
- Over 97% of people live in flats and there is a mix of owner occupied, private rented and social rented households.
- Gas central heating is the most common heating type, however, 183 households have no central heating.
- 75% of households have no car or van.
- 67% are in the fourth quintile of income deprivation



Edinburgh Old Town

Our area and what it's like to live here

Shops, amenities and attractions

The Royal Mile Primary School is the only school in the area. It is a small (one stream) school with a catchment area including the Old Town and Dumbiedykes. GP services are not available directly in the Old Town but operate in the nearby Southside area. The Old Town encompasses many tourist attractions including Edinburgh Castle, the National Museum of Scotland, a number of smaller museums and galleries, Greyfriars Kirk and historic streets like the Royal Mile and the Grassmarket. It also includes the National and Central Lending libraries as well as the Scottish Poetry Library, the Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Scottish Parliament. Many public buses pass through the Old Town and Edinburgh's main railway station is also located here. Shops mainly cater to tourists, with the Royal Mile alone hosting 72 tourist gift shops. There are a few 'express' supermarkets that are small, visitor-focussed and more expensive than bigger shops. There are very few independent shops, cafes and restaurants, with big chains dominating the area. Alcohol is available to buy abundantly and the area includes many pubs and night clubs.

Substance misuse and homelessness

The area experiences high levels of substance misuse, including drug-related harm, and drug related deaths. In the last three years, there have been 36 drug-related deaths within a 15-minute walk of Spittal Street (where there is a harm reduction centre) and 34 in the same distance from the Cowgate. A Safer Drug Consumption Facility to provide a safe and monitored space in the Old Town is under discussion. The area also encompasses many city centre services supporting those experiencing or at risk of homelessness including Streetwork, The Access Place, and Crisis Skylight Service, as well as several temporary accommodation hostels. 56 deaths of homeless individuals were recorded in the whole of the city of Edinburgh during 2025 and of those, 37 people were living in temporary accommodation at the time of their death, while 19 had previously exited such housing. As a result of an ongoing housing crisis within Edinburgh, where the Council declared a housing emergency in 2023, there are many people sleeping rough within the Old Town, with many opting to camp outside the Council headquarters at Waverley Court which is also within the Old Town.

Edinburgh Old Town

Our area and what it's like to live here

Pressures of tourism

Tourism plays an important role in Edinburgh's economy but is putting pressure on local residents especially in the Old Town. The number of homes turned into holiday lets has risen dramatically.

The Guardian reported 29% of homes in the Old Town were short term lets versus 17% in the New Town. New laws requiring operators of short-term lets to have a licence aim to reduce this number but, as reported by BBC news, data from Inside AirBnB suggests there are still just under 6,000 listings for Edinburgh properties.



Local residents report that there are many unlicensed or unregistered short term lets. The City of Edinburgh Council's own data on short-term lets suggests only around 2,500 full houses or flats in the city are now licensed for this activity. All residents feel the direct pressure tourism can bring, such as the loss of community, long-term housing being unavailable or unaffordable, and increased noise levels. There are also wider pressures on the city, including a deepening housing and homelessness crisis.

Edinburgh Old Town

Our area and what it's like to live here

In addition, there has been a significant increase in purpose-built student accommodation being planned, approved and built in the Old Town and wider Edinburgh area over the last 15 years. The number of 16 to 34 year olds who live in the Old Town has risen since 2014, whereas population numbers in other age groups have stagnated or decreased.



The Old Town occupies just 0.3 square miles. To understand the pressures we face, tourism must be understood not just through citywide figures, but through concentration. The Old Town experiences footfall comparable to a major stadium event - every day, for up to twenty hours at a time, across much of the year. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council has a duty to keep streets clean and free of refuse. In the Old Town, that duty is discharged in conditions far beyond the norm.

Our streets carry over 110 million bus journeys a year and an unusually high visitor turnover, with average stays of just 2.3 days. This short-stay, high-impact model places constant pressure on cleansing, surfaces, and public amenities.

We recognise that the Old Town underpins a tourism economy worth £2.3 billion annually. But when demand is continuous and highly concentrated, infrastructure designed for a medieval city is placed under exceptional strain.

Edinburgh Old Town

Links to Planning

Our Local Place Plan relates to [National Planning Framework 4](#), and, in particular, supports its spatial principles including:

- Local living. We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.
- Rebalanced development. We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.

Our Local Place Plan also relates to [City Plan 2030](#), especially its aim to protect the availability of housing and protect residential amenity, and ensure any uses in residential areas are appropriate. Our Local Place Plan is in line with the City Plan 2030 Outcomes:

- A sustainable city which supports everyone's physical and mental wellbeing
- A city which everyone lives in a home they can afford
- A city where you don't need to own a car to move around
- A city where everyone shares in its economic success



Engagement

How we engaged with local people

To ensure that we received a cross-section of the population who live in the Old Town, we engaged with the community in a variety of ways.



We ran drop-in events at the Crannie, where we asked people to complete mental maps, write comments on a large map of the area, identify their top three issues to be addressed in the Old Town and to describe the Old Town in three words. We had around 50 people who attended these events.

Our online survey was live from April to July 2026 and included 25 questions on housing, moving around, streets and spaces, community facilities and amenities. We received 163 responses. We published the survey and events on social media, through distributing flyers all over the Old Town to individual households, shops, cafes and public buildings.

While flyering, we also engaged in many conversations with local people and noted down their views. We also directly contacted all local groups/institutions we are aware of including the local Primary School, residents' associations, the Old Town Association, the Grassmarket Community Project, the Cockburn Association, the Edinburgh World Heritage Trust, Canongate Youth, 6VT Youth Cafe, Streetwork, Scottish Veterans' Residences and local faith-based organisations.

As a community hub, we interact with a cross-section of society, including those with protected characteristics which are often left out of the development of plans such as these. We made sure to include these groups in our engagement and offer support in sharing these views.

Feedback

The area is going downhill rapidly

Feedback from local people paints a picture of a neighbourhood at odds with itself and in urgent need of change.



Please help.
It needs some love.

- Loss of community due to an imbalance of tourism and local community needs
- People are angry and fed up with short-term lets taking over their neighbourhood
- Lack of quality amenities for local people
- Dirty streets and buildings, covered in litter and mess
- People are embarrassed about the quality of existing shops, often described as “predatory tourist tat traps”
- Feeling unsafe due to substance misuse in the area, anti-social behaviour and homelessness
- Traffic issues, including lack of space for all the people walking; speeding cars and tour buses causing issues.
- The need for a clear vision to turn the neighbourhood around

Please also read the complete feedback in Appendix 1.

Overarching theme of the engagement responses

The Old Town community is in continuing decline. Many long-term residents have relocated to other neighbourhoods and facilities and shops are being repurposed to cater for visitors.

The existing mechanisms intended to manage the area (City Plan 2030, the City Centre Transformation Strategy, and the World Heritage Site Management Plan) are not translating into improvements that residents can feel.

More work must be done urgently to ensure the specific, multiple and ever-increasing pressures on the Old Town are considered.

Despite best intentions, the current management approach does little to nothing to improve the resident community at the heart of the Old Town.

Key Themes

We have distilled people's feedback into the following five key themes:

- Sustainable tourism and housing
- Safety
- Quality streets and amenities
- Traffic and maintenance
- Community

The next pages give an overview of issues associated with each theme, followed by solutions we are urging the Council to implement.



Key Theme: Sustainable tourism and housing

People voiced strong sentiments and frustration with housing issues. Main concerns about housing in the Old Town were the loss of community due to too many short-term lets, purpose-built student accommodation and a general focus on tourists rather than locals. People felt that tourist accommodation should be turned back into housing for long-term residents and highlighted that there are many vacant / unused spaces that should be offered to long-term residents as well. People also emphasised that housing in the area is not affordable and that the procedure to objecting to short-term lets does not allow local people to influence decisions.

All my neighbours have left and it's all short-term lets now. And when I complain to the Council, all I am being told is 'they have permission'. I have been fighting this for so long. It is dreadful.

- Local resident, 07/05/26

Unused homes. So much space across the Old Town sits empty

I have lived here for a long time. You know how many neighbours I have left? None. It's all AirBnBs. I never know who I'll run into in the stair. There used to be a lovely family upstairs with teenage boys. When there was noise, I just knocked on the door and they kept the noise down. Now I don't feel comfortable confronting strangers about noise. And now they are trying to get me out of my own house so they can let it out to tourists. I am so angry about this. I love this area, but the holiday lets destroy the Old Town.

-Local resident 07/05/26

The community has been hollowed out by holiday lets.

Key Theme: Safety

Local residents expressed how drug use and various anti-social behaviours are impacting their daily life. Seeing people injecting, smoking and dealing drugs, as well as alcohol use, public urinating and defecating and shop-lifting was mentioned by many people as a major concern. The concentration of services in the Old Town for people with complex needs was also emphasised as creating social pressures that the area is not able to cope with. People do not feel safe in the Old Town.

Broken people laying on the streets, vomiting, screaming for help. Please wake up.

There are dirty needles in the street

I'm worried about the drug users.

Feeling safe is my main concern. It doesn't currently feel safe, there are people with drug problems everywhere, needles everywhere, it's filthy, human and dog poo and pee everywhere, vomit, broken glass. People use our close as a toilet and when we confront them they shout abuse at us. It does feel threatening and aggressive.

There is human faeces in my garden

We need more lighting, street cleaning. More police presence would be nice

I have been assaulted on Royal Mile by a man under drug influence, he pushed me on the street and I fell, hitting my head; it was horrible. I don't feel safe on Royal Mile.

Key Theme: Shops and amenities

Managing tourism and the quality of shops was highlighted as a major issue for local people, with many people voicing that they feel embarrassed and angry about the quality of shops especially on the Royal Mile. People want the historic character of the neighbourhood to be preserved better, for example through regulating the design of shop fronts. The majority of people said that they need more local food and grocery shops in the Old Town. People feel that there are no longer any shops that cater for residents and that the focus on souvenir shops is too heavy. People are also in favour of more creative or arts spaces and would like to see more community gardens or allotments. Local residents want a neighbourhood that reflects and celebrates its history, provides services for those who live there, and, ultimately, is a home to be proud of.

Keep large chains out to preserve unique character. Reduce tourist tat shops for goods made abroad and sold as Scottish. Lack of authenticity is embarrassing. Other medieval towns in Europe have less cheap tat, and are easier for walking around also without the crumbling road/pavement surfaces.

The quality of the tourist shops should be regulated

The Royal Mile is a disgrace with tacky tourist shops full of Chinese-made crap.

Having a variety of shops selling quality locally made products - there's too many tartan tat shops.

Key Theme: Traffic and maintenance

The vast majority of people in the Old Town said they usually get around on foot, which highlights the importance of good infrastructure for walking. People consistently emphasised that pavements in the Old Town are too narrow and make for an unpleasant walking experience because they are dirty and full of litter. It feels dangerous as pedestrians get pushed on to roads due to lack of space, high volume of cars and tour buses and frequent speeding violations. People also said that streets and buildings are poorly maintained, which contributes to a feeling of neglect in the neighbourhood. Streets where people experience particular problems in getting around include South and North Bridge, the Cowgate, the Royal Mile and George IV Bridge.

Cowgate - pedestrianisation should be strongly considered as narrow pavements, narrow road and speeding traffic often cause accidents
South Bridge - too busy most of the time, hence dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians at bus stops

The Old Town is filthy by all standards.

People first. The old town should be a car free zone.

It's just so dirty and poorly maintained.

This is a world heritage site which is marred by litter, drug use, vandalism, speeding cars and e-bikes and appalling lack of public toilets.

Key Theme: Community

Local residents have highlighted the importance of having a resilient and thriving community, while mentioning that the Old Town community feels neglected and requires support. People said that short term lets have hollowed out the neighbourhood. Many people expressed that they feel embarrassed about what the Old Town has become, and that it feels like the area has been left behind and is now only catering to tourists and people with substance misuse problems. They feel that there is no community left for them to feel part of. Responses also highlight how a living community is dependent on the other key themes of managing tourism, safety, shops, traffic and maintenance.

“A liveable community needs local shops and services to support housing and homes. Not more tourist focused short term lets. We need community space and more public space geared towards that.

People living in the city make it a better place for everyone.

We need more community and third spaces, especially for young people.

The entire area has been given over to tourists to the detriment of the residents.

It isn't a community, it's Disnae-land

The focus should be on balancing tourism with maintaining a liveable long-term community.

Solutions

EOTDT evaluated all feedback given and crafted these into 34 solutions based on the five themes.

We are urging the City of Edinburgh Council to implement these now, and to include them in the City Plan 2040.

These solutions aim to improve the Old Town for everyone - residents, workers, and visitors.

We want an Old Town that we can be proud of.



Solutions: Sustainable tourism and housing

Expand funding and support for resident-led heritage repairs.

Increase grant funding and hands-on guidance available to residents, not only to commercial premises and the private rental sector. Residents have a strong desire to protect the area's character, but this is not matched by real, accessible support for maintaining and improving traditional building fabric.

Support energy efficiency retrofit for historic homes.

Expand access to funding and advice for energy efficiency upgrades that are compatible with listed building and conservation area constraints, helping residents to heat their homes affordably without compromising heritage fabric. Support ongoing feasibility work to extend district heat network coverage to Old Town properties, recognising the added complexity of retrofitting listed and traditionally constructed buildings.

Support independent retail providing everyday goods and local provisions.

Introduce incentives to bring more greengrocers, bakeries and other everyday retailers into the Old Town.

Solutions: Sustainable tourism and housing

Urgently reduce short-term let dominance, with published targets. Strengthen enforcement of short-term let control area rules and publish targets and progress data for converting STL stock back into private rented or owner-occupied housing that residents can live in. In addition, an Old Town wide cap should be enforced, with future capacity directed towards areas where the impact on housing and residential amenity is lower. Ensure that offices, workshops and other commercial premises are also protected from conversion to visitor accommodation or visitor-focussed attractions.

Ensure owners of short-term lets and other investment properties participate fully in owners' associations and common repairs, particularly where properties are remotely managed. This could help address longer-term maintenance pressures associated with increasingly transient ownership.

Require community benefit from retail-led development. Require major retail development or change-of-use proposals in the Old Town to demonstrate clear community benefit to residents as part of the planning assessment.

Solutions: Sustainable tourism and housing

Urgently use available powers to curb the dominance of low-value tourist retail.

Review use of Article 4 Direction and change-of-use controls to manage the concentration of low-value “tourist tat” retail and investigate alternative business rates models such as shifting liability to the operator rather than the lease-holder, as piloted on London’s Oxford Street. Reduce the number of “tourist tat” retail by 50%. As agreed in consultation with the Southside Community Council, this control should apply consistently along the whole of the Bridges corridor, including the Nicolson Street and Clerk Street frontages in the adjoining Southside Community Council area.

Support community wealth building and local business ownership.

Urgently explore mechanisms such as business rates relief to support locally owned and independent businesses (ie cafes, shops - NOT short-term lets), reducing the current dominance of chain and overseas-owned retail in the Old Town.

Solutions: Safety

Develop a dedicated Old Town night-time economy management approach. Create a night-time economy plan specific to the Old Town covering noise, antisocial behaviour and licensing density, balancing vibrancy with resident amenity.

Assess the cumulative impact of support service concentration. Commission a review of the number and geographic concentration of crisis and support services (e.g. homelessness, addiction support) in the Old Town, working with providers on fairer distribution and better-supported delivery while ensuring essential provision for vulnerable people is maintained, not removed.

Replace security bollards with integrated street greenery. Redesign existing counter-terrorism vehicle mitigation measures to incorporate planting, keeping the security function while improving the streetscape. This should follow well done examples elsewhere, such as the use of shallow-mount and surface-mounted hostile vehicle mitigation planters in London's Financial District.

Urgently reduce public drug use and improve needle-related street safety. Work with health partners to expand needle-disposal provision and strengthen street-level response to public drug use, balancing harm-reduction approaches with community safety concerns. Work with Police to address safety in and around shops, including shop-lifting.

Solutions: Quality Streets and Amenities

Urgently increase public toilet provision.

Install additional public toilets at key locations to address public urination/defecation currently affecting residential gardens and streets, and look to provide innovative night-time toilet facilities such as hydraulic UriLift units used in Amsterdam.

Increase bin collection frequency, especially in peak tourist season.

Review and increase waste collection frequency in the Old Town during the Festival and other peak periods to prevent overflow. This is a clear opportunity to leverage the Visitor Levy funds to improve resident and visitor experience.

Urgently reduce impact of noise pollution on local residents. Assess the level of noise pollution in the Old Town, including festival events, year round amplified busking, large commercial events, use of planes/helicopters for non-emergency purposes, bin lorry timings and speeding vehicles.

Urgently enhance street cleaning and rapid graffiti removal.

Increase street-cleaning frequency with a focus on closes and establish a fast-response graffiti removal service, prioritising heritage facades.

Solutions: Quality Streets and Amenities

Audit and reposition obstructive street furniture and signage.

Survey bins, signposts, A-boards and barriers that obstruct pavements and relocate or rationalise them to keep clear, continuous pedestrian routes.

Strengthen enforcement of shopfront and streetscape standards. Increase enforcement capacity for existing conservation area and listed building controls on shopfronts and signage, to prevent further erosion of historic character. Extend proactive design advice and grant support following the model used for the Milkman Shop and the existing shopfronts improvement scheme to help more traders bring shopfronts into keeping with the area's character.

Improve mobile signal and broadband coverage.

Work with network providers to address mobile signal blackspots and high-usage bottlenecks (such as during the Fringe) to ensure residents always have access to usable signal. Guarantee full-fibre coverage to properties in the Old Town.

Solutions: Traffic and Maintenance

Urgently restrict large vehicle and tour bus access on narrow medieval streets.

Introduce vehicle size and weight restrictions on named streets too narrow to safely accommodate double-decker tour buses and other large vehicles, which residents report are causing significant congestion and safety risks.

Prioritise repair of cobbles and potholes worsened by traffic.

Run a rolling maintenance programme prioritising surfaces most degraded by traffic volume, using materials and methods appropriate to conservation area/World Heritage status.

Require a genuine finish upgrade on major resurfacing works, not like-for-like reinstatement.

Where streets are resurfaced at significant cost, stipulate a distinct or upgraded surface treatment rather than a reinstatement that leaves the street looking exactly as worn as before.

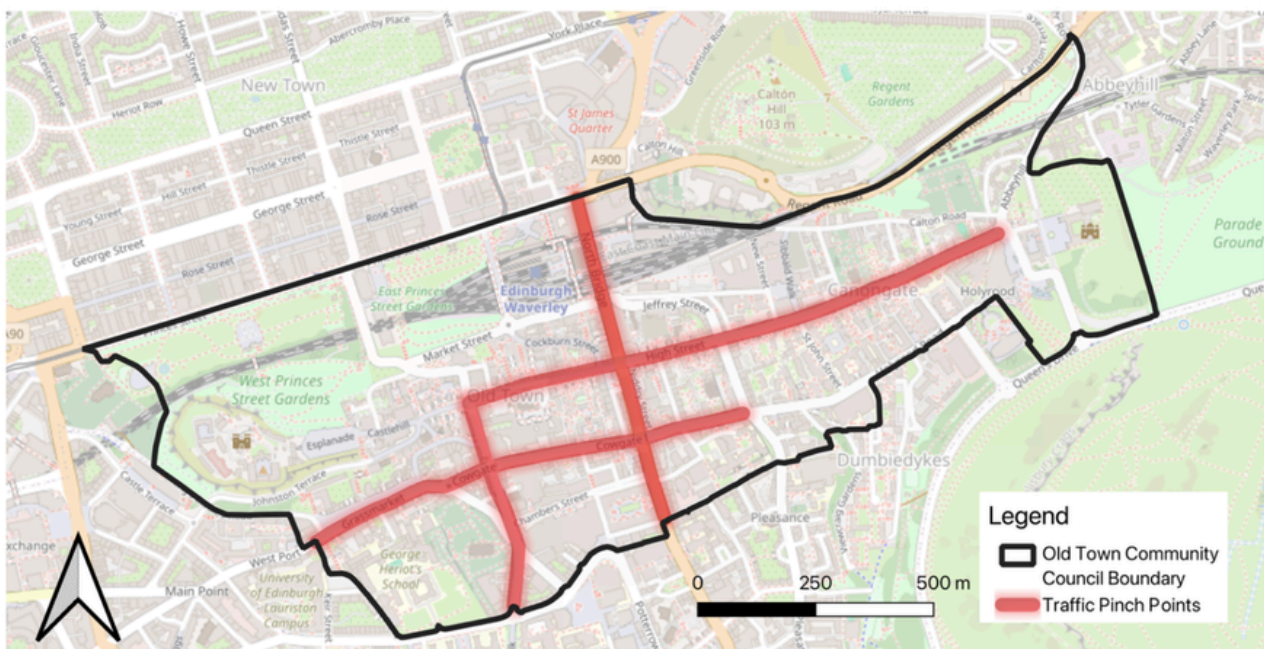
Establish a dedicated taxi rank and restrict private hire access.

Create a clearly signed, dedicated taxi rank and restrict private hire pick-up/drop-off within the Old Town core, where uncoordinated activity adds to congestion on narrow streets.

Solutions: Traffic and Maintenance

Install interim pedestrian priority measures at identified pinch points.

Use low-cost, reversible measures such as planters, parklets, seating and bollards to widen effective pedestrian space at the narrowest, most congested points as a faster interim step ahead of any full street redesign. Priority areas are marked up below. South Bridge forms part of a continuous corridor which continues south as Nicolson Street and Clerk Street in the Southside Community Council area, where the Southside Local Place Plan seeks footway widening on the same basis. Measures on this corridor should be planned across the boundary rather than to it.



Solutions: Traffic and Maintenance

Extend dropped kerb provision, prioritising Cowgate/Grassmarket.

Audit missing dropped kerbs and reinstall them, prioritising the Cowgate end of the Grassmarket, to remove real accessibility barriers for wheelchair and mobility scooter users, parents with buggies, and older residents.



Solutions: Community

Improve the pedestrian connection between Dumbiedykes and the Old Town.

Review and redesign the route(s) linking Dumbiedykes (which is covered by the Southside Community Council) to the Old Town. This should include improving crossings, lighting and wayfinding to address the isolation caused by the current road layout and topography.

Urgently embed a “resident first” principle across every management plan that covers the Old Town.

Request the Council, Historic Environment Scotland and Edinburgh World Heritage to jointly and explicitly commit to resident wellbeing and community sustainability as a primary consideration in Old Town decisions, not a secondary concern to heritage preservation or visitor experience alone. Further, we ask the Council to produce Old Town-specific supplementary guidance within City Plan 2040, using this registered Local Place Plan as its evidence base, addressing the depopulation and retail imbalance that generic city centre policy does not capture.

Establish formal resident representation in Old Town planning and heritage management.

Create a standing resident seat or advisory role on the tri-partite World Heritage Site Management group and on relevant Council committee processes for Old Town matters.

Solutions: Community

Establish a community-first presumption for vacant or underused space urgently.

Set a presumption that vacant units and underused public space in the Old Town are offered first for community use before other commercial development, mirroring the approach other Scottish Local Place Plans have used to convert vacant units into community hubs.

Give greater weight to resident objections and strengthen the presumption against inappropriate new build.

Ask that planning decisions give proportionately more weight to resident and community objections on development proposals within the Old Town conservation area/World Heritage Site, and that a firmer, more consistently applied presumption against demolition or out-of-character new build be adopted.

Protect and expand greenspace, community gardens and allotments.

Identify and secure sites for community gardens and allotments, including any vacant land identified above, and maintain and enhance existing green space.

Improve facilities and activities for children and residents.

Identify gaps in play and youth provision and support delivery of new or improved facilities.

Solutions: Community

Establish a community resource hub.

Set up a community-run resource/tool-share hub, for example cargo e-bikes and tools, ideally co-located with a community facility secured through the vacant space presumption above.

Support community events to rebuild social connection.

Provide funding and logistical support for regular community events aimed at reconnecting the dispersed Old Town resident population.

Thank You

Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust and Old Town Community Council would like to thank the staff and volunteers for all their work in compiling this document.

We would also like to thank the residents of the Old Town for their thoughts, input and for proof reading, and for their work in keeping the community alive.

We would also like to thank the i-Team for their expertise and experience in compiling this document.

Disclaimer: The use of AI did not generate any ideas, substantive content, or original language. All ideas and suggestions came from the engagement and none of the engagement responses or details of participants were passed into any AI platforms.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Complete engagement feedback

Appendix 2: How we are meeting the statutory requirements in the Local Place Plan Circular

Appendix 3: Sources

Appendix 1 - Complete engagement feedback

The following comments and information have been compiled and presented as received, with none of the content being altered.

Conversations whilst flyering:

“I have lived here for a long time. You know how many neighbours I have left? None, it's all AirBnBs. I never know who I'll run into in the stair. There used to be a lovely family upstairs with teenage boys. When there was noise I just knocked on the door and they were nice and then kept the noise down. Now I don't feel comfortable confronting random strangers about noise. And now they are trying to get me out of my own house so that they can let it out to tourists. I am so angry about this. There are so many homeless people now and people blame migrants for our problems when it is the Council that allows all this to happen. I used to go to the Old Town Community Council meetings but it was all talk and no teeth. I love this area, I love having everything on my doorstep, I am just on the way to the library actually, I love the library, but all the holiday lets are destroying the Old Town.” *7/5/26 outside City Chambers on polling day*

“I'll give you feedback alright. All my neighbours have left and it's all short term lets now. And when I complain to the Council, all I am being told is “they have permission”. I have been fighting this for so long. It is dreadful. The Council don't care. The local councillor, Finlay, he should run for First Minister, I think he actually cares. But I am furious at these people down on East Market Street who are running the show.” *7/5/26 outside City Chambers on polling day*

“We as business owners make an effort to make this a nicer street with interesting local products to sell. We feel the area is falling apart. There are so many problems here. The shop keeper at the corner got beaten up the other day. There are so many issues with anti-social behaviour, drug use, it's dirty. Something needs to happen. It is not safe.” *4/6/26 Business owner*

“This area has so many problems and it is getting worse. I’ve had my windows smashed and the police do nothing. My insurance has gone up because of anti-social behaviour so I pay because no one is looking after this area. It is really frustrating and hard to run a business here. There are so many problems because of the Salvation Army Hostel and other places and no one cares or does anything about it. It’s getting worse and worse. Everyone is moving away.” 4/6/26 *Business owner*

“It’s outrageous what is happening to this area. I just filled in the consultation about the Safer Drug Consumption Room and I’ve given them a mouthful that I am dead against it. It will make things even worse, we will get more people with drug issues, dealers, pimps, who will all be preying on vulnerable people.” 4/6/26 *Business owner*

When told the plan will be submitted to the Council: “The Council? I don’t believe the Council will do anything, they don’t care. We have so many problems here and they just don’t do anything about it.” 4/6/26 *Shop Assistant*

“You know, when I grew up, the Grassmarket and the Cowgate were areas that you would avoid. Because it was dangerous. So it’s gotten better. The Grassmarket was done up and is much nicer now. But the city doesn’t know what to do with the Cowgate. I think the priority should be to clean up the graffiti. The other thing that needs to be addressed are the short term lets. The tourists aren’t going to sweep the stair.” 5/6/26 *Local resident*

“We need a vision. The Place Plan needs to be a strong document that brings the focus back to the community. Being community minded, rather than economically minded, is something that has gotten lost - the Council has lost its focus on the community completely. Now it is all about economic development and the people are losing out. There are many things I want to mention. Walking on the Cowgate feels dangerous, the pavement is too narrow. When people pass each other you have to step on to the street. The extension of the Kickass Hostel is very upsetting. We didn’t want this to get permission at all. I was also very angry about the South Bridge Resource Centre. It was the only place for good adult education for miles and then they gave it to the Fringe. I couldn’t believe it. We need to remind the Council that building community is important. My priorities, well, I am fed up with the mess, the area needs to be cleaned up. Also, we want a balance - tourists and residents. It’s not balanced at the moment. We want a living community not something that is just for tourists. There used to be a time of year when there weren’t so many tourists. Now it’s just constant. I would say that the Old Town is actually very suitable for older people, because everything is walkable and close, you can go to the theatre and museums, it could be so much better than it is.” *Local resident, drop in event 5 June 2026*

Feedback from drop in events

Places in the Old Town I like

- The Crannie is great :-)
- The Crannie is a lifeline - keep it. Fund it!
- Lovely staff at the Crannie
- Talbot Rice Gallery
- Dunbar's Close Garden
- Centre of town, bus service is good
- The Palace Physic Garden
- Dynamic Earth, Holyrood Park
- Arthur's Seat, Craggs. I love walking about, so much heritage.
- Dunbar's Close Garden
- Dunbar's close garden
- Dunbar's Close Garden
- Princes Street Gardens
- Holyrood Gardens
- The Royal Mile, the Storytelling Centre, the closes and their history
- Wandering down closes off Royal Mile
- All the old closes, Victoria Street and Cockburn Street, Holyrood Park, Royal Mile, Grassmarket
- The Royal Mile
- Old fashioned bars, Jolly Judge, Waverley
- Nice coffee shops
- Moo Pie
- The Jazz Bar, Captain's Bar and Royal Oak
- North Bridge - can be amazing, make pavements as wide as possible

Places I don't like

- Blackfriars Street! Vacant space at the back of the mega hotel. Underused buildings
- Space behind Tweeddale court hotel car park - more greenery
- Closes - they all stink of piss, people poo there and there is litter everywhere. They need to be cleaned continuously, otherwise no one can enjoy them.
- Cobbles but so much unneeded road space and people / tourists crammed on to narrow pavements
- Roadworks need to be better quality, the new setts are already sinking and utility companies dig up the road and then patch it up badly and leave a mess
- Cowgate feels aggressive, dangerous and dirty
- Cowgate traffic is dangerous and it is like zombieland (drugs)
- High Street and Cowgate
- Walking down Cowgate is dangerous, too much traffic and narrow pavements
- George IV Bridge, Victoria Terrace, scaffolding

Places I don't like (cont.)

- High Street and Cowgate
- Hunter Square
- Hunter Square
- Hunters Square
- Yes, Hunter Square and around is disappointing.
- Jeffrey Street
- Pleasance/St Mary Street and Holyrood road Junction is horrible and dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. Real opportunity to make it better.
- The salvation army corner
- needs investment, looking run down and in need of TLC
- Can we stop people feeding the pidgeons
- Junction - Nice
- Names of areas, Dumbiedykes, Bauks View
- Using Dumbiedykes Park as a dog toilet
- Cobbles but so much unneeded road space and people / tourists crammed on to narrow pavements
- Crowded narrow pavements
- Most beautiful city in the world. But street homelessness, dirty works, ebikes, scooters, not easy walking about
- George IV Bridge, Victoria Terrace, scaffolding
- South Bridge
- South Bridge is just horrible for all but key access street to Old and Town and South side and for tourists
- South Bridge very narrow for walking and busy for cycling. Needs improvement consideration in tram proposals
- Vape Shop St Marys Street
- St Mary Street
- Vape shop in St Mary's Street
- Too many UST!
- Sugarhouse close, student accommodation
- A non planning led scheme to promote local artisan shops in old town (planning cannot control this so needs to be done in another way. think Paris. San Fransisco have done something like this.
- Tartan tat shops
- Tartan tat tourist shops
- the amount of shops that sell some tourist items
- Victoria Street is horrible!! Once the coolest shop in Edinburgh!!
- George IV Bridge, Victoria Terrace, scaffolding

The Old Town in Three Words

Addiction x 2	Students
Amazing	Tenements
An amazing place to live	Too buys/occupied
architecture	(tourism community
Beautiful x 7	cleared)
Beautiful ancient	Tourism x 2
Best city in the world!	Touristic
Busy x 5	tourists
Civic	Touristy x 2
Community	underperforming (for all)
Cosy	Unique x 2
Creative	Vibrant
Crowded	Welcoming
Deprived	World famous
Deprived pockets	Worthy
dirty	
Drunk	
Fascinating	
Friendly	
Great place to live	
Great scenery	
Historic x 8	
Historical	
history-rich	
Home (going back 5 generations to 1860)	
Lively	
Magical x 2	
mobbed	
Multicultural	
Neglected	
Overcrowded	
Overtourism	
Overtouristed	
Ruined by Council and corporate greed	
Squandered	

Your Top Three Problems

(illegible word) tourists and tour guides blocking pavements

20mph is not enforced. We need traffic calming measures

Air bnbs x 4

Anti-social behaviour x 4

as key main tourist street, lets try something strategic in terms of slowing traffic

Bad pavements

ban short term lets. They have destroyed the neighbourhood!

banning buses as far as possible

Better and more local shops

Better cleaning of closes

Bins

cars

Community is undermined by the proportion of holiday/short term lets, student accommodation

council help in local nature areas

Dangerous ebikes/motorbikes on Princes Street

Dirty needles x 2

does CEC planning have the ability to be proactive about enforcing short term lets that have been refused planning permission

Dog fouling

drug abuse x 4

Drug and alcohol abusers

Drug consumption room - we are very worried about it

Ebikes

Escooters

Failing banning traffic

Homeless people are in terrible crisis!!!!

Homeless people dont get enough support

Homelessness x 5

Hotels

I had to help someone who od'd

Incoherent traffic planning and management

knife crime

Lack of community facilities

Lack of consideration of residents during tattoo eg why not have a residents pass to get through barriers

Lack of local residents

Lack of opportunities

Lack of shops selling local goods

Your Top Three Problems (cont.)

Lack of shops that can be used by residents

Lack of social housing

lack of traffic calming measures on High Street and Cowgate and speeding private hire and other drivers

loitering

low quality shops

Manchester type free shuttle/tourist bus round Old Town, grassmarket, Princes Street. Keep it a small single decker.

More co-working/co-actions to help reduce waste and cut costs

More long term residents

No evening service and little weekend provision so no advice/info/crisis intervention at night

No housing for residents/families

Not enough bin hubs

Not enough communication between services, seems to be almost competitive or clashing dates

Not enough green spaces / outdoor places for the community

Not enough permanent local residents

Not enough public toilets (if because of injecting drug users and rough sleepers maybe drug consumption room would solve or reduce those problems)

Not enough social housing

NOt enough support for vulnerable people

Old Gray's Close

Old Town seems more for tourists than locals

Only tourist shops, nothing for local residents

Openly taking substances - openly wasted

OT can't cope with a drug consumption centre, if it needs to happen, put it in Waverley Court

Overtourism and students living in student accommodation - the students aren't the problem but the housing type, was a living community, OT residents cleared out

Pavement encroachment (shops, cafes, restaurants)

Pavement widening on South and North Bridge especially at corner at SM RM Hunter Square

Pavements blocked by scaffolding and tourist tat

People shitting in my garden

Rough sleeping

Scaffolding

short term lets

Some tourist shops

Your Top Three Problems (cont.)

strategic council - sustains - living streets led programme of traffic calming and pedestrian prioritising (illegible word) key busy old Town busy/tourist dominated streets, tourists not going anywhere so lets make it work better for ALL

Street cleaning

Street drinking

Street homelessness is a problem

Streets are a mess

Student accommodation

Tartan tat

Too much street homelessness

Too much student housing

Tourism needs better managed

Tourist tat cluttering the street

Tourists x 2

We can't eat whiskey, we need local shops

We need better street lighting especialy in the closes

We need local, independent shops

We need well managed public toilets

Where are the people that live in homes!!!

Places/issues mentioned or identified positively

The Access Place
Streetwork
The Crannie
Crisis
Stockbridge (7 Charity shops!)
Cheyne Lane Women's Aid
Leith Walk Weigh to go
Hopetoun Crescent Gardens
Piggs
Ice cream Mooooooo pie
Calzeat good tourist shop
Kilt shop
Trains (I like trains)
Braidwood (I work here)
Dumbiedykes Park (work)
Dynamic Earth, leisure activity children
more community things, allotments etc.
City Art Centre
Central Lending and National library
Fruitmarket Gallery
National Museum
Talbot Rice Gallery
Poetry Library
Waverley Station
Dunbars Close Garden
Holyrood Park and Parliament Outdoor Space
When there are no tourists
The Crannie
Greggs
The Royal Mile and my old Primary School
Lots of hearts for the old town
Southside
Crannie (workplace)
Royal Mile
Dumbiedykes, Braidwood, community
Little shady garden behind the Storytelling Centre, how can we go in?
Storytelling Centre
Royal Mile Primary School
Dunbars Close Garden
Slow Progress Coffee shop - nice
Salt Horse - Nice
Coinyie House Close

Places/issues mentioned or identified negatively

Bad Sainsburys

Bad Tesco

Too many tartan tat shops

Hunter Square unsafe, bad

Closes - the closes are dirty and dark, people hide there to inject drugs, they leave needles and blood - it's really bad, we need regular deep cleaning, better lights, walking police officers and people who can help those who struggle. Closes feel unsafe

Tents where homeless people live

Closes, we often find needles, condoms, tampons, discarded underwear in the closes, it's really bad

Royal Mile - bad tat shops

People and dogs poo and pee everywhere, yuck, we need well managed public loos

overflowing bins, lots of rats

patches of vomit everywhere

I cycle and walk but pavements are dirty, too busy and too narrow. There are too many SUVs and too many ubers. Can we ban SUVs? They make potholes worse and don't fit through our small streets.

Salvation Army Hostel, walking past here feels unsafe, intoxicated shouty people with big out of control dogs

Cowgate, holyrood road, other streets, too many cars that are too big for our streets and don't fit in a standard carparking spot.

ebikes weaving through tourists

Corner North Bridge Tron Kirk

Space by Tron Kirk, regularly abused by drug addicts and alcoholics

Cockburn Street car free? Shop owners ignore vehicle free.

The Arcade

Gates close off the arcade whenever cafe owner chooses and have walked through for 80 years!! It is filthy!

Hunter Square

South Bridge, lots of homeless people can be found here

Scientology South Bridge

South Bridge and Hunter Square, very uncomfortable to pass and lots of antisocial behaviour takes place

My house, people poo in my garden, neglected bin shed

Big junction, Salvation army, lots of drug abusers sit here and make it uncomfortable to wait at the crossing or even just walk past.

Streetwork, people sleep on the side of the road, poorly managed.

Stolen community garden

Had to leave as no family housing

Places/issues mentioned or identified negatively

Clearances

Destroyed

Too many air bnbs, we dont want them here!

Hunter Square

Royal Mile, bad boring tourist tat shops with rubbish for sale

Too many SUVs - they are dangerous and too big for our streets and parking spaces. Please can they get banned?

Lots of rubbish everywhere

Lots of dog poo

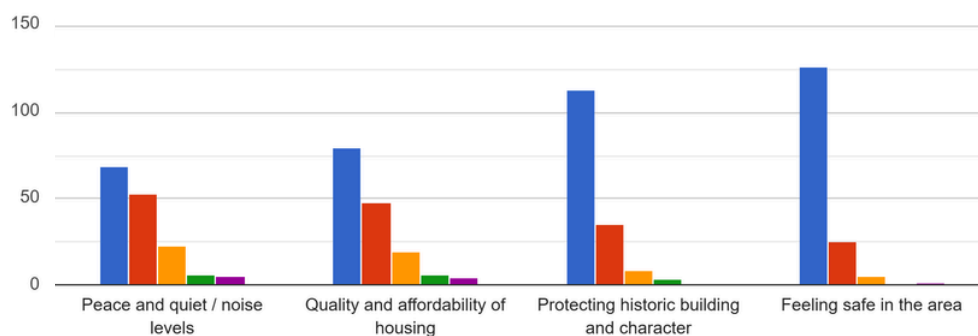
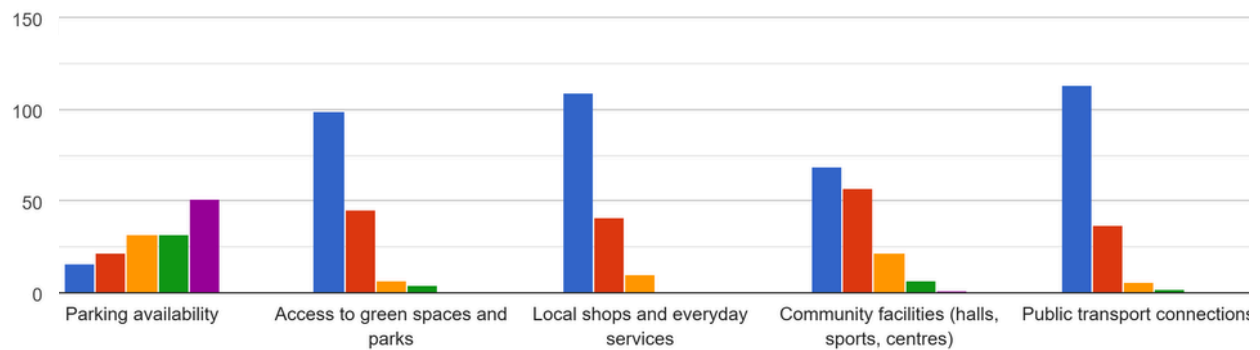
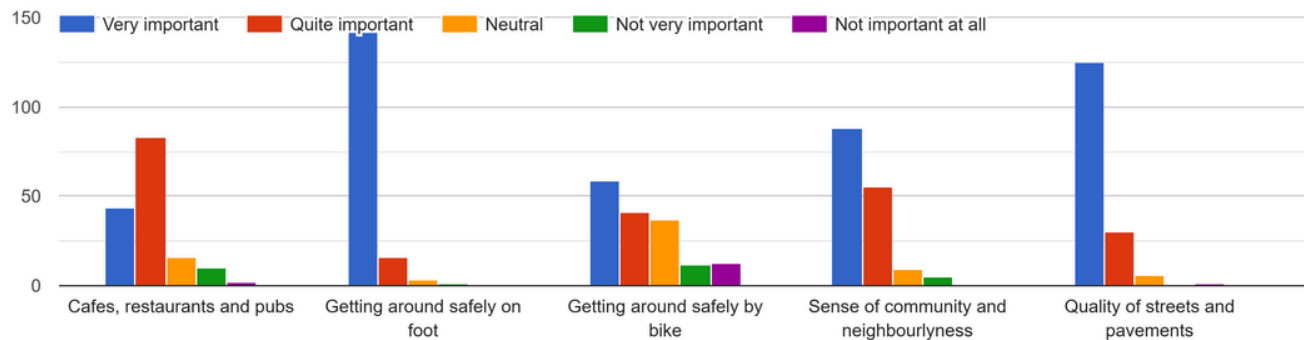
Access Place - badly managed, theres always shouting and fighting and rubbish

Steps from New Skinner's Close to Coinyie House Close, steps are always dirty, people vomit and poo there, people use drugs, there's no proper light, it feels dangerous and dodgy

Cowgate feels unsafe, lots of ASB, people die here from drug overdoses

Badly managed Salvation Army Hostel

Online survey - Thinking about the Old Town, how important are the following to you:



Online survey - Is there anything else that's important to you about the Old Town?

There needs to be more attractions for local people. The Royal Mile is a disgrace with tacky tourist shops full of Chinese-made crap. Places like "Och aye the Moo" are an eyesore in what should be a beautiful historic area.

Traffic congestion on the Royal Mile from Canongate to parliament. Pavement space is narrow in places due to goods being displayed and tables and chairs out on the pavement making the pedestrians having to use the road. This is an accident waiting to happen.

Having a variety of shops selling quality locally made products - there's too many tartan tat shops owned by people who do nothing for the area.

Local decision making on a regular basis, having priority over political bodies

Cleanliness (at the moment the Old Town is filthy by all standards)

Scaffolding and closed roads/pavements due to roadworks remain unjustifiably long

Worried about drug users

People first. The old town should be a car free zone.

Safe at night. As a woman I would never go to this aread after dark on my own.

Maybe access to taxi.

Noise pollution from helicopters

Improving accessibility for wheelchair/pram users would also be great! I work at the Tron Kirk and it's been quite eye-opening how inaccessible most of the old town is to wheelchair users :(

Bringing nature back

Too many student flats

The lack of dropped kerbs around the Grassmarket end of the Cowgate makes wheelchair/scooter access quite dangerous at points.

Preventing tourists from destroying the patination on Greyfriars Bobby

Access to the full suite of recycling facilities. Removing generic magnet and other shops from the Royal Mile owned by the Gold brothers.

Crowding and pavement size

First and foremost the entire area has been given over to tourists to the detriment of the residents

The Old Town needs clearer accountability and leadership that recognises it is not only a tourist destination but also a residential community and civic space. Tourism, hotels, and short-term lets create pressures on housing, noise, services, and daily life that should be managed more actively. Practical resident needs also matter.

Including parking access for tradespeople, deliveries, carers, and elderly neighbours, especially given the lack of affordable local shops and supermarkets.

The focus should be on balancing tourism with maintaining a liveable long-term community.

Managing overabundance of tourists

Real dangers of over-tourism

Cleanliness of the streets and buildings

Not turning the area into some sort of Disneyland.

Online survey - Is there anything else that's important to you about the Old Town?

Being able to get from A to B without being squashed by hoards of tourists. Being able to use the public library without being filmed in tourists tik tok videos.

Eliminate private car accessibility

Litter free/cleanliness

Street furniture that is useful, appropriate and unobtrusive. Far too much of it currently is ugly and set feet in from the edge of the pavement creating a blockage. Some of it is completely unnecessary. The small stone bollards on George IV are a menace and serve no useful purpose. All those huge black bins ditto, although they are at least visible above knee height. There are many other examples ... parking signs 18 inches into the pavement, bus shelters that cut the pedestrian space in half ...

As an owner of a flat in a historic building here, the economics of maintaining the flat is a heavy burden as it stands. Some help with funding to help with protection of historic building and rebate/waive from council tax would help a great deal.

More bins, more recycling bins.

Keep large chains out to preserve unique character. Reduce tourist tat shops for goods made abroad and sold as Scottish. Lack of authenticity is embarrassing.

Other medieval towns in Europe have less cheap tat, and are easier for walking around also without the crumbling road/ pavement surfaces.

Working and cycling in the old town I can hands down say that the double decker tour buses are a HUGE cause for congestion, accident. They sit for long periods on tight roads (grassmarket) causing a road block - one past at a time which causes tailbacks which congests the streets all around. They are too big! Replace them with smaller single decker city sprinter types, it would have such a positive knock on effect to all the traffic there.

I think the Old Town should feel more like a local area.

Stop building student accommodation

Old Town is extremely difficult to navigate for people with disabilities.

Better dealing with rubbish

Venues for non-classical live music

Managing the overcrowding due to high numbers of tourists
cleanliness

I do wish there wasn't so many drug mis-users in my area.

Reducing the amount of motorised traffic.

Cleanliness: no litter, overflowing bins or graffiti

good balance between resident needs and visitor industry

Cleanliness

Cleanliness. Refuse collection areas and shop owners being more responsible with their refuse. Shop owners being made responsible for the cleaning and clearing of ice and snow (when appropriate)of their front of entrance.

Online survey - Is there anything else that's important to you about the Old Town?

Public toilets

Public toilet availability. Higher calibre of shops on main street in Edinburgh

Independent shops and cafes owned by locals

This area is a hub for cultural activity and the arts and it is important to protect that too

Safety, there is a lot of people acting in an unsafe manner (probably on drugs), I have been assaulted on Royal Mile by a man under drug influence, he pushed me on the street and I fell, hitting my head; it was horrible. I don't feel safe on Royal Mile.

I think the buildings should be kept up better as some of them look very old and it is a pain in the ass to get planning consent to do anything to them

pothole-free street, recycling facilities, drinking water, free toilets

Cleanliness of air and space, which is better care of rubbish, no dog's poo and less car's exhaust fumes.

The Royal mile was supposed to be pedestrianised in 2025. This is now urgent. Get rid of parking on the Royal Mile and make it into a proper street for the thousands of pedestrians that use this fabulous street.

Regulation of short term lets. Clean up of litter. The horrible state of the cobbles.

More police on the streets

Access to closes. Wider pavements and less traffic especially south bridge all the way up South Clerk Street, George IV bridge and around Greyfriars

Reduce or eliminate access by sight-seeing buses. Restrict use of property for Air BnB.

Traffic speed. 20 miles per hour

lack of high fibre internet and/or poor mobile signal

Reducing the number of Air B&Bs and getting accommodation back for the locals

Tourists from Europe and the rest of the world come specifically to the old town and the first thing they see is heart broken people laying on the streets of Old Town, vomiting, screaming for help. The city needs an urgent cleaning. It is a constant image damaging. Please wake up.

Upkeep of the streets/cleanliness.

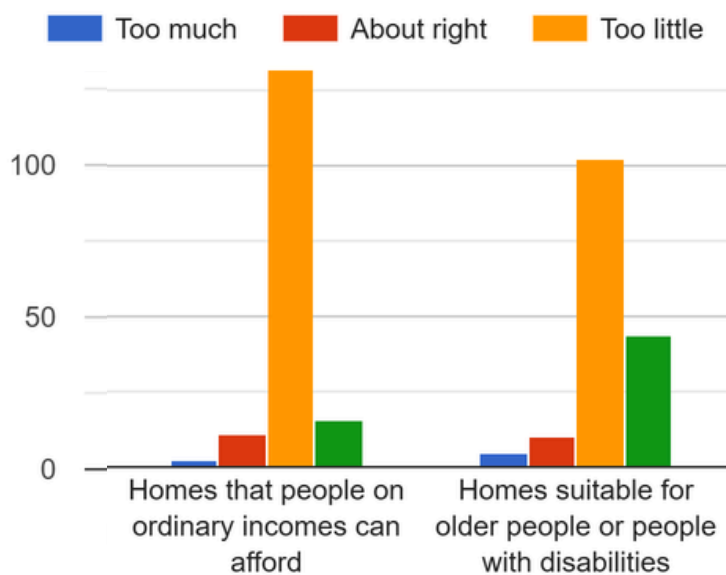
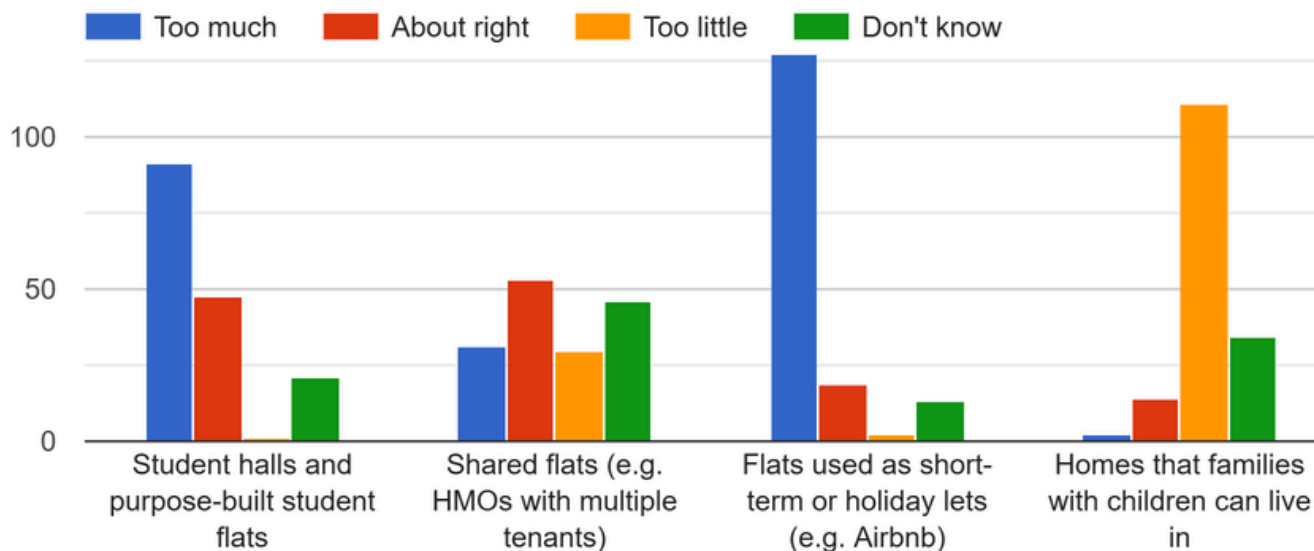
Feeling safe is my main concern. It doesn't currently feel safe, there are people with drug problems everywhere, needles everywhere, it's filthy, human and dog poo and pee everywhere, vomit, broken glass. People use our close as a toilet and we confront them they shout abuse at us. It does feel threatening and aggressive.

More policing

Good workplace in Old College

The quality of the tourist shops should be regulated

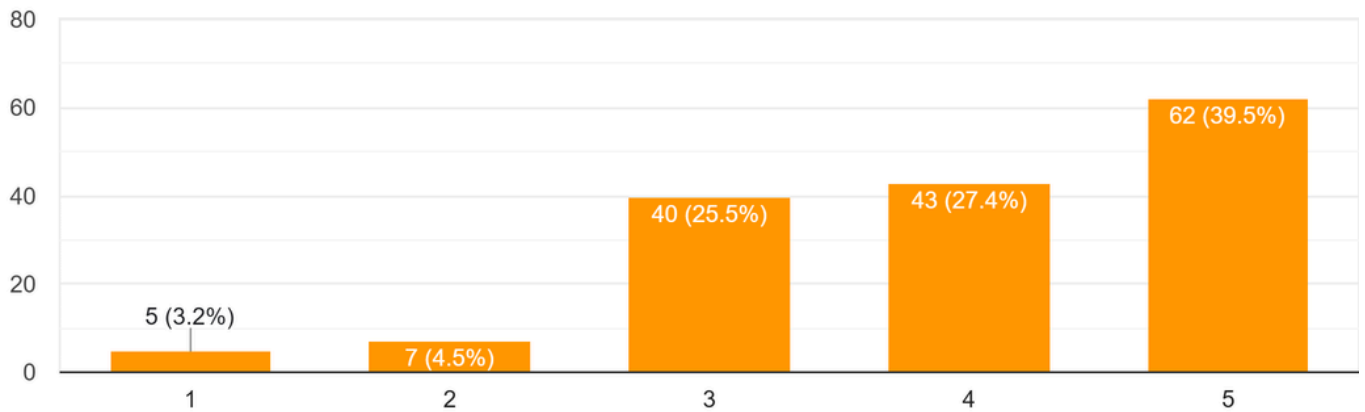
Online survey - Thinking about housing in the Old Town, do you feel there is too much, too little, or about the right amount of the following?



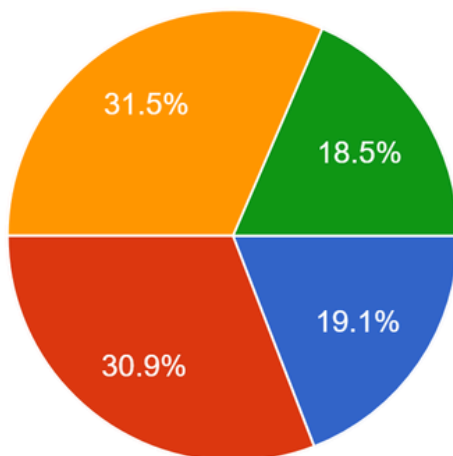
Online survey - How easy or difficult is it for someone like you to find suitable housing you can afford in the Old Town?

1 - Very Easy

10 - Very Difficult

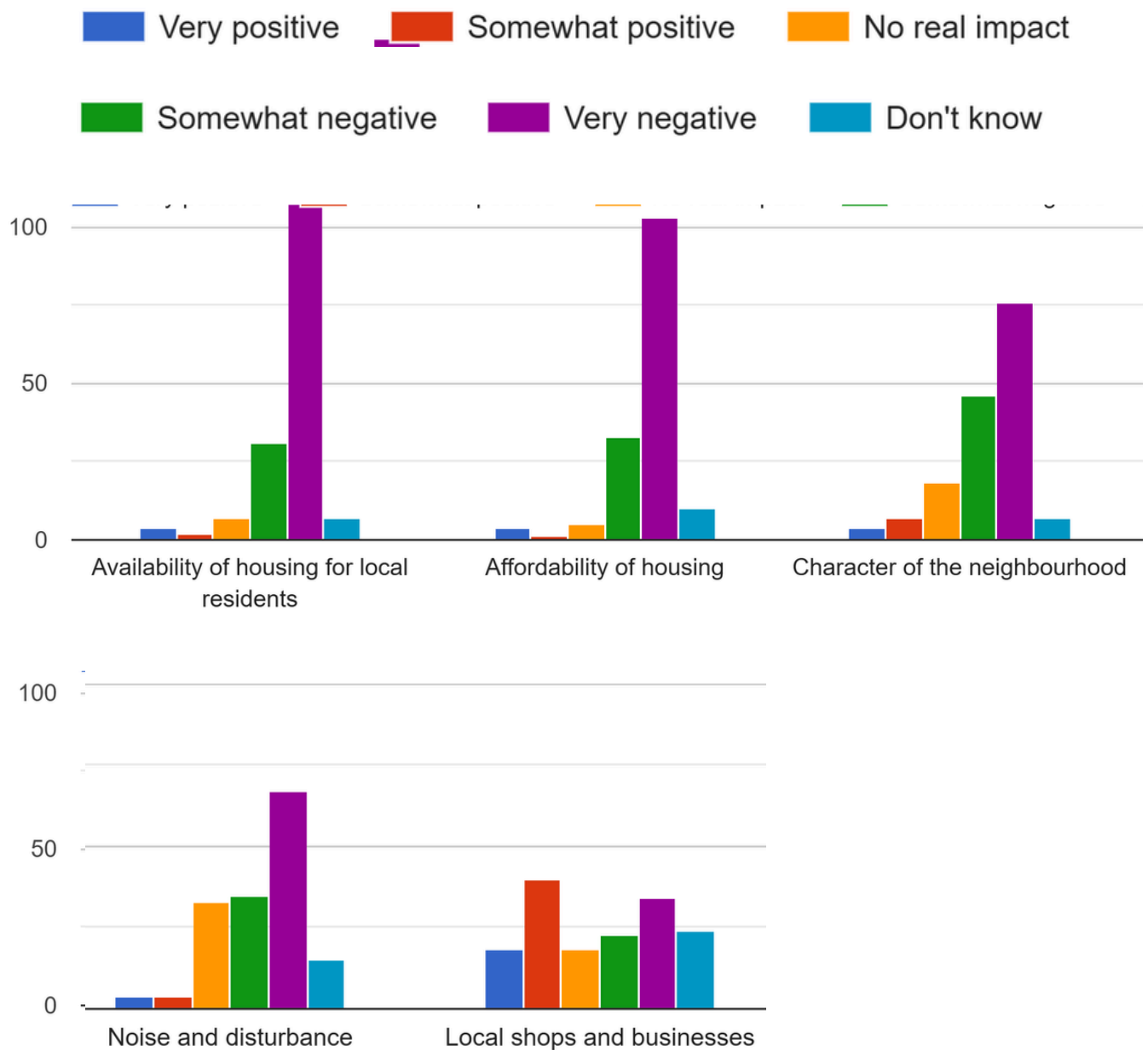


Online survey - Does the Old Town need more new housing overall?

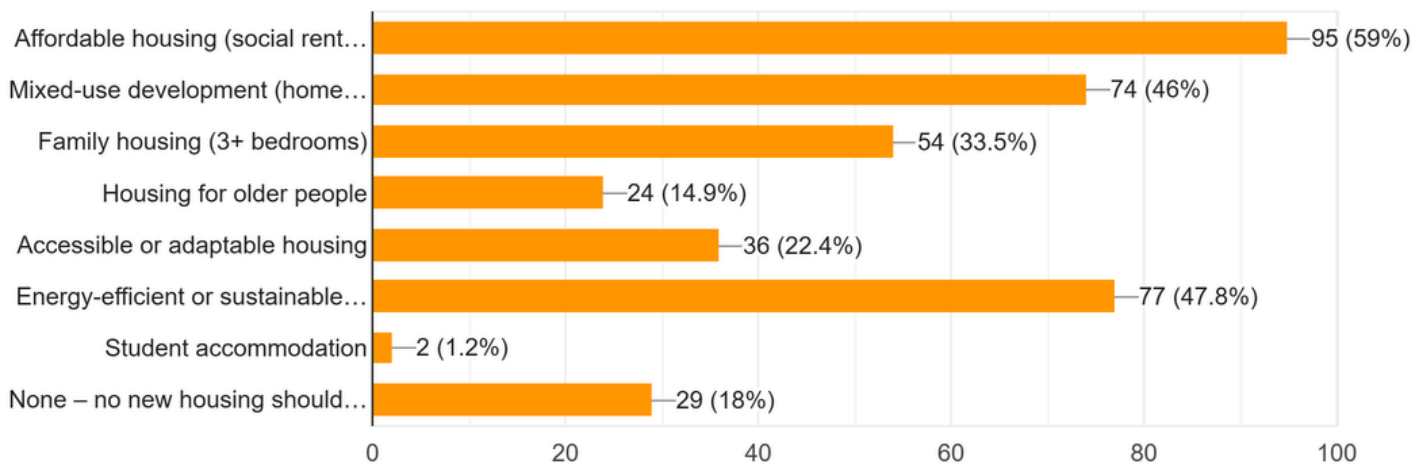


- Yes, significantly more
- Yes, a bit more
- No, we already have enough
- Don't know

Online survey - Short-term lets (e.g. Airbnb, holiday lets) operate in the Old Town. In your experience, what impact do they have on the area?



Online survey - If new housing were built in the Old Town, which types should be the highest priority?



Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

The old town occupies a very small area of the city. As a World Heritage Site it should be preserved as a historic wonder for locals and visitors to enjoy. Instead it is an ugly tourist trap with cheap goods spilling out or countless ugly shops. There is no reason for any Edinburgh resident to visit the Royal Mile.

Its disgraceful that many shops/offices are lying vacant, when these could be renovated and utilised for affordable housing

There's plenty housing, we don't need new developments until all of the airbnbs are reclaimed for housing.

The negative impacts of too many short term lets

Student accommodation is blamed when it's the type of student accommodation there is. It's all and always so expensive and poor in quality. Students need affordable discrimination free flats to rent (impossible in that area) Also as mentioned before the festival destroys any realistic availability for a long term rent. It simply doesn't exist for people. Flats that exist are a luxury only or priced out of the hilt because of location and it shows through the historic low levels of local people living in the area. It's gone from being a densely populated part of town with greengrocers and shops to being tartan made in china and flats for the wealthy. Facilities are pushed out by the GoldBrothers monopolynand council cuts and the festival haskilled any chances for anyone to afford to live all year round or rent accomodation in a city with a substantial lack of homes. It's the most expensive place to stay in Europe for a reason and I'd be absolutely mindblown if anything was to actually become affordable in the area as a place to live.

Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

The prices are extortionate, especially compared to the quality of housing. Most landlords exclude families and pets. Too many HMO properties.

A liveable community needs local shops and services to support housing and homes. Not more tourist focused short term lets. We need community space and more public space geared towards that.

Ugly/Modern frontages that spoil the character

Enough housing for locals. Far too many AirBnBs

Homes should not increase the demand for more traffic. They need the services to support local living.

People living in the city make it a better place for everyone. Housing needs to be sustainable and affordable, either to rent or buy

It's too expensive due to tourism. It's noisy and doesn't feel safe which is why I personally wouldn't live there.

Unused homes. So much space across the Old Town sits empty

Quality of newbuilds, both inside and out. Lack of care and upkeep afterwards

Affordability. Homes for low income families and service staff for the 'nighttime economy' replaced by luxury student housing and air bnbs. That sounds like a headline but people like me have watched as our friends and families move away worrying what will become of us. I was raised in southside and after decades in the old town while working nights in hospitality (service staff can't afford nightly taxis it helps to be walking distance) prices are now way out of our budget in both areas. If our landlord sold I'm not sure what we would do. In addition the high rent prices many properties are empty for all or part of the year. For example our tenement has 3 out of 8 flats and my neighbour has 2 out of 6 flats occupied all year round.

Maintaining and looking after what we currently have there

Affordability/Safety/Loss of community

No more student accommodation should be built.

It would be great to get a sense of community back.

The SNP drop their moronic vendetta against private sector landlords

The airbnb usage is out of control, the process to block applications is difficult as reporting misuse relies on ample evidence, but there are so many places to list properties for short term rental online. The biggest issue is the erosion of community to the point where there are very few owned and lived in properties in a street, so nobody is there to provide the basic evidence needed. The result of this is unchecked abuse continuing. In addition, there are lots of regulations about property maintenance, for example, in the flat I own it's in a conservation area, so I can't install anything but wooden windows. I understand this, but there is no help to maintain the historical wooden windows, I cannot afford the upgrade so my property is extremely cold in the winter. My only option is to pay the rising heating bills or be cold. I am in between a rock and a hard place.

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Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

Either provide more affordable options, or give some financial help.

There does not need to be more housing, just better use of flats already here. So many are unoccupied or used for air bnb. Also housing quality, especially energy efficiency.

There are very few homes too many of those that formerly housed families are now businesses catering for tourists with a devastating effect on the area.

all houses should have gas central heating/affordable heating

My concern is that housing discussions can become too narrowly focused on tenure or income category rather than overall quality of place. The Old Town would benefit most from well-designed, sustainable mixed communities that attract a broad range of residents and support long-term investment in the area.

Too many purpose built student accommodations that are not beneficial for students either. Too many short term lets and Airbnbs that negatively impact housing availability. My hope is to have more affordable and accessible housing with community spaces in walking distance.

Building more in an already limited space, impact on local services such as school and GP practices, parking which is equally expensive and challenging to find .

I'd like the Old Town to be a vibrant and inclusive local community with appropriate housing. Not just a tourist attraction!

That the shortage of housing improves!

Appropriate design

Quality, affordable housing for all; without destroying the character

My primary concern is that purpose-built-student-accomodation will continue to be developed even though it has been shown to have no positive outcomes for local people or students, only profits for development companies who exploit and extract from the city centre.

More affordable social housing

Happy to see new housing existing, not so keen on seeing many new buildings, especially if at the cost of existing open space. If there's opportunities for properties like Drummond House where an old school was converted into flats, then that would be ideal

Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

Minimise student housing and ban short term lets, then there would be enough housing for people who live and work here.

I'd love to see more affordable housing that older people, disabled people, and regular working families can afford and live in. The community spirit only comes back if we make room for ALL members of the community and not just the wealthy and students.

Lack of stability!! The temporary reality of Edinburgh's student and tourist short staying in the city, prevents the old town from being a suitable residential environment. That is why short term flats hire should be limited and built outside the centre with public transport access for attractions visits. this will keep the old town less polluted by traffic, rubbish (especially during festival time) and making it more pleasant for actually enjoying the space.

Managing this whilst maintaining integrity of character of the historical nature of old town. The availability of facilities for residents eg access to shops/schools etc. It's easy to blame airbnb for problems but student flats are noisier, and I'd rather have tourists as neighbours than drug dealers. Your list in Q3 doesn't include second homes and empty properties. There are two long-term empty flats in my building currently. I'd focus on filling those, even before fixing airbnb.

As an owner of a flat in a historic building here, the economics of maintaining the flat is a heavy burden as it stands. Some help with funding to help with protection of historic building and rebate/waive from council tax would help a great deal.

Where do you think it will go? Ideally it should be for locals with a ban on it being a 2nd home. 2nd homes are the new Airbnb in terms of keeping locals out.

Student accommodation is so prevalent that there is very little sense of community. Everything is transitory and that means people aren't looking after where they live. Please go and look in the bin stores on Calton Road in the student accommodation, it's terrible, there is so much waste and none of it is being disposed of correctly because there is no sense of community.

There has been simply so much extraction from the area by absent landlords who run airbnbs and now let's who do not give anything back to the community and there is no way to get them to pay for repairs.

New housing that disrupt the character of the old town. Many offices are vacant and could be used as housing.

That I will be the only local resident left in my part of the Old Town. I'd like to see more people living above shops as they do in other European cities

That again the focus is on students and tourism rather than ensuring a sustainable and thriving local community can exist (is there even one in that part of the city anymore?)

Old Town is currently a tourist zone, which is fine but should not be to the detriment of its character. Locals should feel welcome and have amenities to use, instead of trying to avoid the area altogether. It's full of tacky shops and extortionate cafes, does not show the best side of our city

Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

The original character must be protected

I don't really think new housing should be built. But I think current housing needs to be seriously renovated. I used to live on law market and my fault was disgusting.

That the buildings do not fit the character of the old town

To readjust the balance of tourists to locals to keep it a living neighbourhood

The community has been hollowed out by holiday lets.

The city doesn't have such an abundance of short term lets. As indicated in my answers to previous question there are lots of negative factors in carrying on with this.

Affordability and liability for locals

Aside short term lets another great issue is the large numbers of empty homes.

Walking down the old towns streets many flats especially in above shops and restaurants are clearly not lived in and the decay is visible. We spent 2023 to late this spring without upstairs neighbours; it's depressing to look at and cold to live beside.

That it will go back to the community - more restrictions need to be put in place against airbnb's and short-term lets. I think the Fringe does a lot of damage to any community feel that could start in the old town, because local people are second class to tourists who bring income. Less airbnbs and more housing schemes, community co-ops and encouragement of doing things locally.

Short Term Holiday lets are driving people out and the more they dominate a stairwell the more people leave creating a community desert.

Short term lets

My main concern is how hard it is to find stable, quiet, dog-friendly housing in the Old Town. I'm trying to rebuild my life, keep steady contact with my daughter, and get back into work, but the lack of suitable housing makes everything harder. I hope future homes here support people who are genuinely trying to stabilise

It brings people back to the old town

My main concern is Old Town will become one large hotel/Student accommodation/Airbnb area and lose its charm and attraction.

Housing in the Old Town for local residents is in short supply and very unaffordable. There is housing that could be suitable but it is currently being used as Short Term Lets.

There are limited resources to support more housing. Internet and phone signal are poor, limited parking and very crowded pavements.

There are too many very short term (Air B&B) properties...

That we end up completely priced out of the Old Town and no-one can consider themselves a resident of the area.

The lack of housing for homeless, people living on the streets in their own city, I hope for more housing to support everyone's needs.

Housing for people hoping to live here permanently should be built instead of student accommodation.

Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

I don't want it to turn into solely a Disneyland like part of town only for tourists. A balance of folks who live and work there and for folks to explore and visit a living part of the city is key.

That families are being driven out by the high rents.

Ensuring Old Town stays a residential area as opposed to a tourist-only attraction.

I hope it can rebuild community and keep away greedy landlords and hotel chains

Concerned that it will be too expensive

more mixed housing needed. Also constraints to be placed on short term let to do their share of the repairs in the tenement (and not block any repair/maintenance programme) as they do have different drives from residents that will ultimately negatively affect residents.

There are so many short term lets that residents have been pushed out. I work in a close where the tenement has 6 key boxes at the main door and no residents. I know of someone who lives in a similar close of 10 flats and is the only tenant. That makes the Old Town a theme park not a neighbourhood.

There's no space

Local people having availability. Older local residents who may develop disabilities being able to be rehoused in the same area according to Thier health condition and well being.

Loss of neighbours due to short term/holiday lets. Housing being used as an income generator rather than basic right/need

Any new housing in the Old Town should be for permanent, long-term residents, not students or holiday lets. The latter are destroying communities.

Retail existing housing but ensure it goes to residents and no new student housing should be built

Tourist town

Having affordable housing for people on a normal income that is available for locals to buy, not rent.

Concern is how it will visually impact the old town, which is a medieval architecture - it would be a tragedy to ruin it by some ugly new builds.

People are not able to leave there and it is a 'ghost space' without a character.

I can't really see that there is space to build. It would be great if existing property was developed as affordable/family housing rather than more density of student accommodation and hotels. Edinburgh Uni should be encouraged to release some of it's property back to the city or to develop it as social housing.

I think that people who live off the government should not be place in the city centre, this would get the druggies out of the area and makes space for families or people who produce something. If more housing will be provided, then there should a thought off more infrastructure to get the traffic handled. And more parking spaces

Online survey - What are your main concerns or hopes about housing in the Old Town?

building new houses is not just an issue of number of flats, it's also transport, parking, walking space, green space. You can't just build more without improving the associated infrastructural needs. If the Council struggles to keep our streets safe (from say people with anti-social behaviour and/or drug addicts), pothole-free etc., then wouldn't the situation be aggravated further with more people & more complexity in it?

Stay safe and with as much or more green and clean spaces

I would like to see more families move into our block

The quality and price of old town property isn't fair and the cost for tourists. The city centre isn't for locals after a decent or peaceful property. The level of housing in Edinburgh is never enough to satisfy the population when we're a small city. Higher tax on developers or top market landlords, could maybe afford trams to make the city accessible further out. The history must be retained.

That it will become unaffordable

new housing should be high level design quality. should be in a traditional style and provide viable (not affordable) outcomes.

I lived in Old Town for 9 years (before moving to Leith) and during that time, I saw a decline in amenities for locals, particularly in shops, as well as an exodus of people relocating. By the end of my tenancy in Old Town, I was the only person actually living in a 6 unit building. The rest of the flats were short-term lets. The area was not a neighbourhood, more of a hotel for tourists. Pandora's Box has already been opened, and I am not sure if things can change, but I hope that Old Town can return to being a neighbourhood where locals actually live. Where they can easily go shopping, and not be punished by higher prices at the smaller grocery stores because they live in the city centre. Where they recognise their fellow neighbours and have a sense of community.

More affordable social housing for working people. No more druggies should be housed.

Don't know

I don't think more housing needs to be built, i think the buildings already there need to be strongly regulated to limit short term lets and prioritise the majority of the housing there for long term housing for edinburgh residents.

I am unfamiliar with housing in the Old Town. I reside in a different part of Edinburgh.

No more a&b

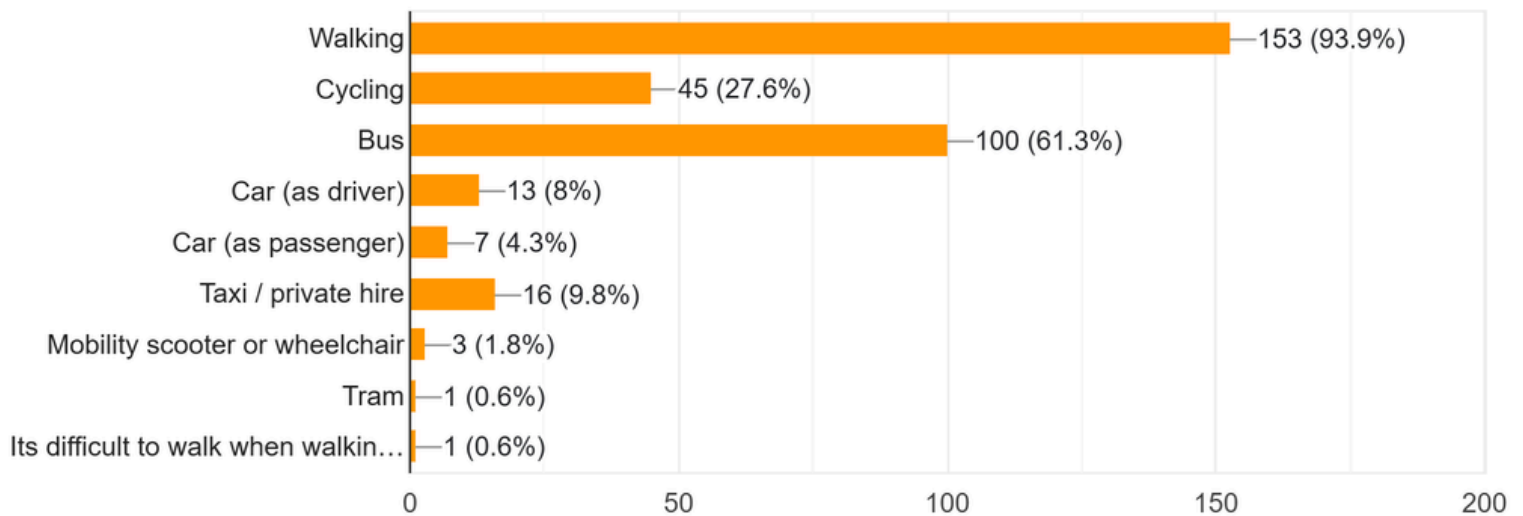
Over tourism and STL. Lack of high fibre and mobile signal

Too much of the housing space is used for temporary residents. The city is catering for tourists and students more than local residents that live here permanently. The massive amount of short term lets in particular make living in the Old Town quite unpleasant and destroys a sense of community.

Should be more people living and working there

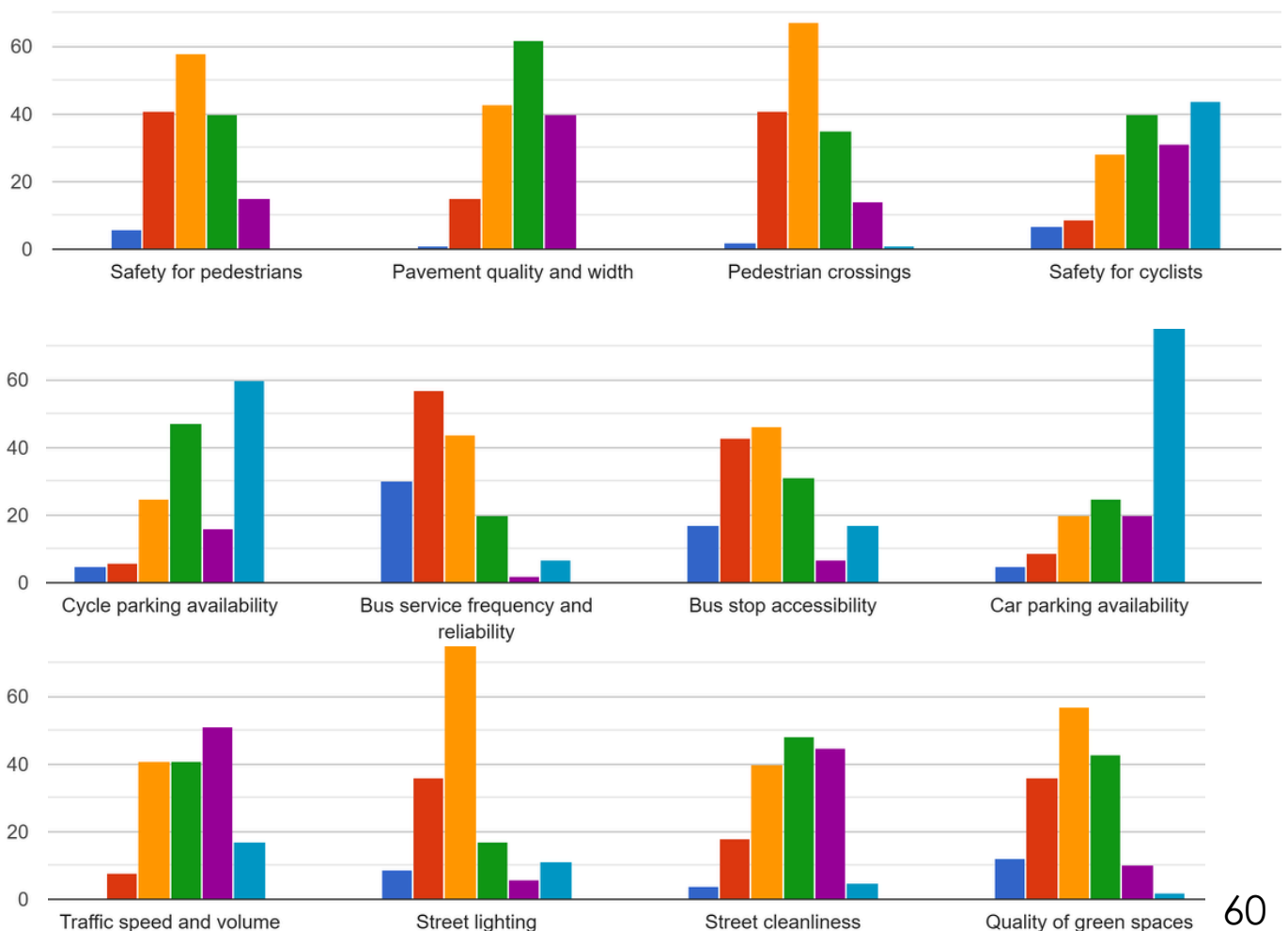
The Air B&B has taken all the available accommodation out of the Old Town. You used to know people and see locals, now it's cold and unaffordable

Online survey - How do you usually get around the Old Town?

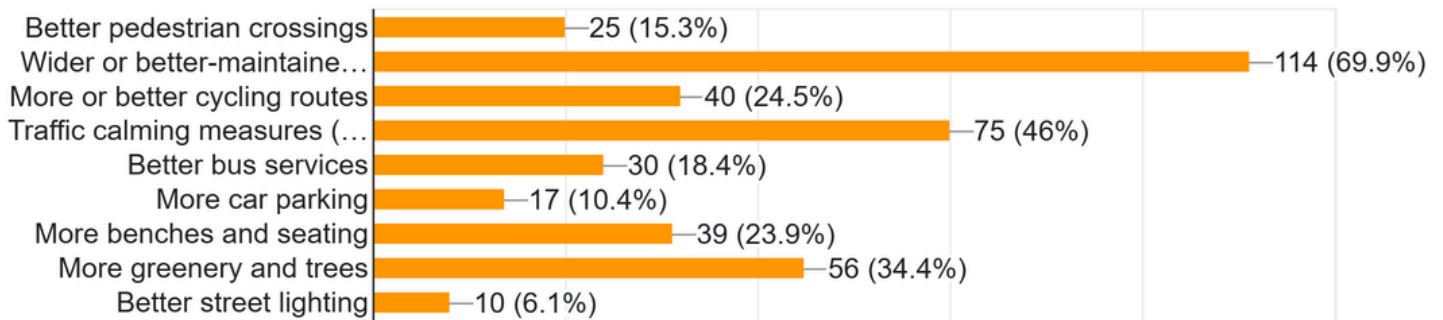


Online survey - Based on your experience living in the Old Town, how would you rate the following in the Old Town?

Very good Good Okay Poor Very poor Don't know / Don't use



Online survey - What would most improve your experience of getting around in the Old Town?



Online survey - Are there specific locations where you experience problems getting around?

The roads due to too much traffic and the pavement due to too many goods for sale

Bus service 35 is forever diverted away from royal mile and the 60 bus at Holyrood Road is so unreliable that it's fingers crossed it will actually turn up.

1. Cowgate (pedestrianisation should be strongly considered as narrow pavements, narrow road and speeding traffic often cause accidents)

2. South Bridge (too busy most of the time, hence dangerous for cyclists and pedestrians at bus stops)

Canongate and High street should be car free there is not sufficient space for them.

South Bridge needs wider pavements - users are constantly put at risk by the traffic.

King George 4th Bridge, Cowgate, West Port

Under the bridges

The junction between the Royal Mile, North Bridge and South Bridge is a total nightmare and the only time I've seen cars cut through green man pedestrian phases. We hear a lot of cars honking at pedestrians and other cars because the phases means sometimes cars get stuck in the junction and block turning vehicles. Our office is off the Royal Mile - the congestion on the Mile and North Bridge is constant

Cowgate in general but particularly the Grassmarket end

Calton road path width is ridiculously thin. I use it everyday and the cars are speeding down the cobbles and with the onslaught of tourists, often walking in the road, and pavement, there is no choice but to be with my back to oncoming traffic. I think the cobbles are great, but Calton road should probably be only for local access and otherwise pedestrianised.

Cars, especially uber drivers often drive too fast and go through red lights. The pavements are also not wide enough and often you have to step onto the road North Bridge and South Bridge

There is very little lighting around Arthur's seat/the crags

Online survey - Are there specific locations where you experience problems getting around?

The Old Town would benefit from wider and better-maintained pavements, more greenery and trees, and higher-quality public realm design that reflects the historic importance of the area. In places such as George IV Bridge and South Bridge, pavements can feel far too narrow for the volume of pedestrians, creating congestion and accessibility issues, particularly for older people or those with mobility needs. Lighting should also be used more creatively to enhance the beauty and atmosphere of the Old Town, not just for basic functionality.

Public spaces also need to be designed realistically for the pressures of a dense city-centre environment. The pedestrianisation of the Lawnmarket is positive and should remain, but spaces should be managed carefully so they continue to function primarily as attractive and accessible public thoroughfares rather than becoming overcrowded performance or gathering areas.

In places such as Hunter Square, I would favour a more active market-style use with small stalls, planting, trees, and high-quality paving rather than large seating areas. In practice, extensive fixed seating or raised planter edges can unintentionally become focal points for persistent antisocial behaviour in areas already dealing with significant social pressures. The emphasis should instead be on creating spaces that feel vibrant, attractive, safe, and well-managed for residents and visitors alike

Coaches, taxis and vans in cycle lanes. Particularly dangerous going down the Mound.

Geo IV Bridge, Grassmarket, Forrest Road

Nicholson Street where all the bus stops are with people blocking the pavement waiting for buses

Unable to access railings at Vennel due to volume of tourists leaning on them, often have to walk in the road due to narrow pavement in Candlemaker Row.

George IV Bridge

Royal Mile, bridges

South Bridge/Infirmary Street, George 1V Bridge, Cowgate/Candlemaker Row

The High Street in August.

George IV bridge

Calton Road is terrible for pedestrians, the paths are too narrow and the cars speed on the cobbles. Walking down there is deeply unpleasant and very dangerous.

Grassmarket tour bus stops block the road causing congestion tailbacks etc

George IV and South Bridges have incredibly wide roads but hardly any pavement, particularly when there are lots of visitors

George VI bridge, South Bridge, the crossing at the Mile & Bridges pavements are too small. Pavements on Cowgate are just too to use.

South Bridge, George IV Bridge, North Bridge

Online survey - Are there specific locations where you experience problems getting around?

City centre

South Bridge during August. The amount of people make it quite dangerous to walk along and not have to step onto the bus lanes.

Little to no cycling protection exists between north side (Princes Street) to the south-side (university main campus) of Old Town.

Cowgate horrible and too narrow

High Street (too many visitors) and Canongate (traffic congestion up to St Mary St + narrow pavement)

Cycling in the Cowgate and Grass Market is difficult due to too much traffic and aggressive drivers on narrow streets

South bridge and George IV bridge is very hard to walk through because it's very congested

No. There is however, far too many taxis on our roads private and non private.

Crossing at Royal Mile/North bridge very dangerous and North Bridge works terrible Royal mile/Canongate due to above

We can only drive into town due to medical conditions and parking is very expensive and free parking extremely limited and difficult to get

I don't experience problems getting around but I am able-bodied. It could be a lot more pleasant though!

I think there should be more effort in having the traffic flow better rather than less, this will unjam the area a bit and makes it faster for busses to go through.

South bridge, particularly Tron Kirk to Old College of UoE. Some people cause chaos, not respecting traffic and others, gang fights or shouts. The most unpleasant and unsafe part of Old Town.

From 242 Canongate, the bus stop (line 35, direction Leith) in front of Adagio hotel during the renovation has been removed without consultation and has never been reinstated.

The Canongate is almost impossible to walk or cycle due to allowing cars to drive freely in the road and the thousands of pedestrians have to cram on to the pavement. We regularly get forced into a very busy road because the pavements are so busy. The traffic and parking needs to be banned

Niddry Street - the pavement is incredibly narrow and there are bins blocking the pavement on one side so you have to walk on a poorly maintained street. Really, most of the side streets (in other words, not the Royal Mile) are poorly maintained. George IV Bridge and the Mound all the way up to Forrest Road, South Bridge all the way up to Clerk Street

Cowgate

Cowgate and South Bridge are absolutely horrific for pedestrians. Walking in Cowgate is downright dangerous.

South bridge

Online survey - Are there specific locations where you experience problems getting around?

COWGATE

South bridge

Bikes are dangerous most show no concern for pedestrians on pavements and the pedestrianised part of the Royal Mile.

I experience problems as soon as I open the building door and see how Edinburgh University Estate grows and grows while the city itself plummets

South Bridge bus stops

Northbridge, south bridge, cow gate - worst three

North Bridge, South Bridge, Cowgate: too many people on too narrow pavements, cars speeding. Cars are also frequently speeding on Holyrood road, very dangerous. The closes feel unsafe for walking as there are often people with drugs hiding, people using them as toilets and they are badly lit and full of litter and slimy leaves and dog pooh.

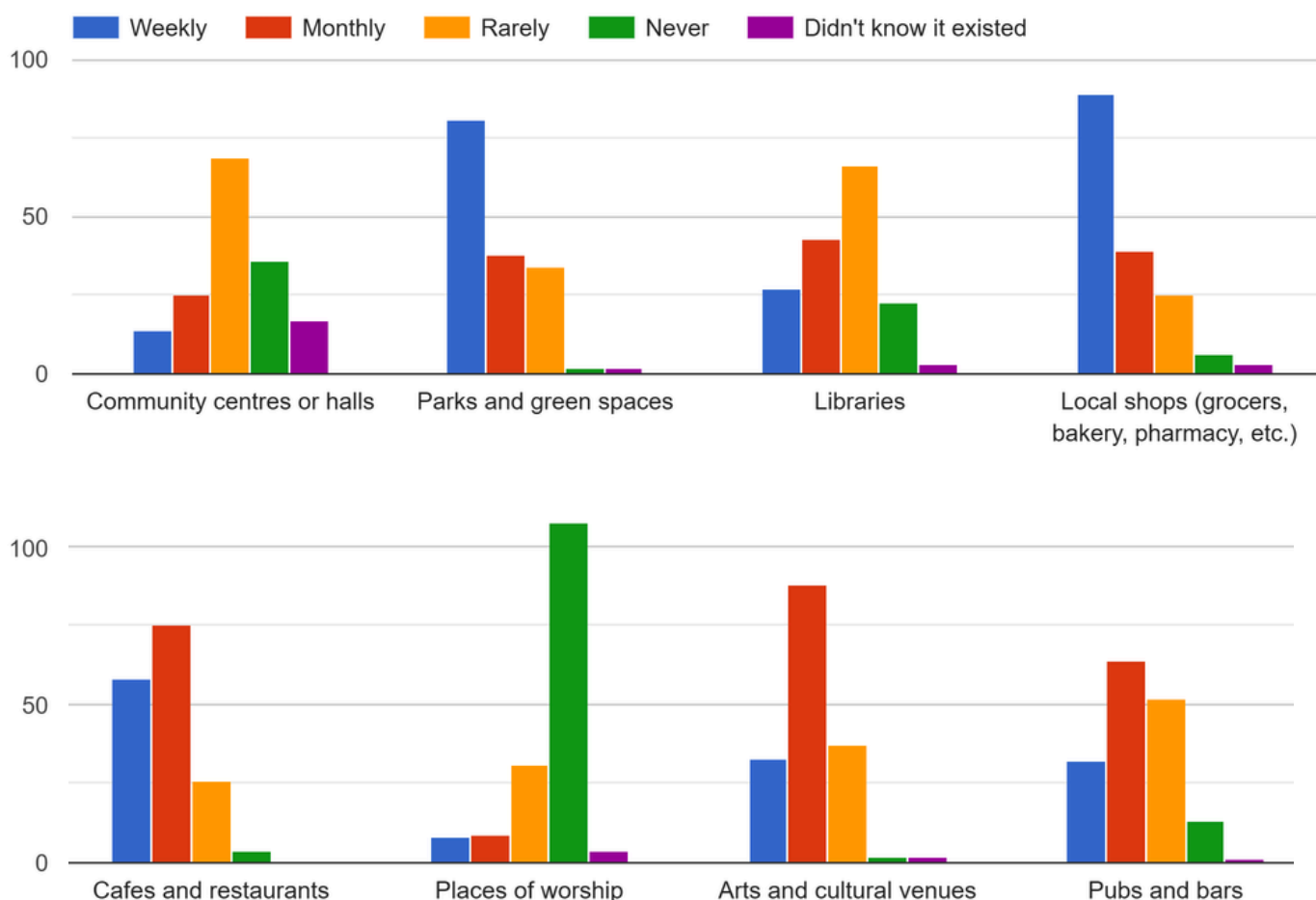
All the pavements are cluttered with stock and plastic flowers in planters

Cycling in city centre is not safe enough

Victoria street

Crossing the Royal Mile at North/South Bridge; top of Candlemaker Row

Online survey - How often do you use the following in the Old Town?



Online survey - What do you value most about the Old Town as a community, and what would you most like to see improved?

City centre

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Cowgate

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South bridge

Online survey - What do you value most about the Old Town as a community, and what would you most like to see improved?

more activities for kids - there is nothing for children at the moment and it is a shame.

What the Old Town has experienced over the last 25 years is not traditional gentrification in the way seen in places such as parts of London, where housing is upgraded, wealthier long-term residents move in, and neighbourhood retail evolves into higher-quality local amenities. Instead, the dominant change in the Old Town has been a tourism-led transformation.

Flats have increasingly shifted toward short-term accommodation, underused buildings have become hotels, and many everyday shops and services have been replaced by visitor-oriented retail and chain hospitality businesses. At the same time, there has also been a growing concentration of homelessness services, addiction support, and outreach facilities within the city centre. While these services are important and necessary, the cumulative effect of these different pressures has made parts of the Old Town feel increasingly transient, strained, and less balanced as a long-term residential community.

I would like to see a stronger focus on making the Old Town function as a high-quality mixed community again, with wider pavements, more greenery and trees, thoughtful historic lighting, support for useful local businesses, and genuinely ambitious public realm and architectural design. New buildings and spaces in the Old Town should aspire to be internationally significant examples of urban design rather than simply meeting minimum planning requirements. At the same time, public spaces need to be designed realistically for the pressures that currently exist in the city centre. Simply adding benches or small park areas without considering how spaces are actually used in practice can unintentionally create ongoing management and antisocial behaviour issues, particularly in areas already under significant social pressure.

That despite the degradations of over-tourism, community spirit remains, if precariously...

Great diversity; clamp down on quad/bikes/super old cars; clean up the streets and keep them clean

Getting to know neighbours. Don't know about improvements.

Beautiful historical building and used to have more community groups going on which was nice. Now it feels more like a stage set for tourists and the heart and soul of old town has been hollowed out. It is difficult to get about at any time of year now, used to be only in August, it is very noisy, dirty and unpleasant.

I'd like to see more diversity in the local community, more room and support for older and disabled people.

Its historical nature. Reduce overcrowding on pavements at peak visitor times and anti social behaviour.

Online survey - What do you value most about the Old Town as a community, and what would you most like to see improved?

Best: Pubs where I know I will meet people I know whenever I visit.

Worst: Alcoholics using my garden as a toilet. Yes, I am aware of the irony that both the best and worst are alcohol-related. Also bad: dog owners using my garden as a toilet. Also bad: perpetual building works, i.e. North Bridge.

I live here because I travel for work a lot and I live very close to the station. There is little to no community here, it is a tragedy. There are no local shops or shops for people who live here, the area is designed around extracting money from tourists. Putting the needs of those living here first.

While I lived in old town I never felt like part of a community. It's become so commercialised and the types of shops are really not for locals.

More evening events that are free

A community Centre like every other area, and one that doesn't get rented out to theatres for August.

As a member of the local residents' association (GRASS) I have become aware of community get togethers.

The Old Town's unique character and the commitment of its residents to maintaining a supportive community are what I value most. I would like to see greater focus on housing that enables long-term stability for local people, particularly those with support needs or pets. Ensuring that residents can remain rooted in the area would help preserve the community's continuity

The people, the people who are committed to create a safer and calmer environment for everyone. I value and appreciate the dedication they have in trying to help others around them and within the local community.

More facilities for local people, less tourist tat shops

The sense that it belongs to the common good of the people who live in it.

Making the community and its facilities more visible and easier to find.

Ferling of safety and belonging

The sense of community has been lost due to overtourism issues.

Fewer short term lets and fewer Tartan Tat shops

I don't feel there is one

It's history and family connections. It's beauty. It's people.

Access to a community garden like the one lost at Acheson House, places to gather that don't cost. It's good for the soul to connect with people living locally and adds an anchor to all the transient tourist traffic passing through

More spaces where can meet other outdoors. More outdoor activity

I value the growing pedestrianisation of spaces. I would like to see improved evening/ after work and weekend activities, with shops closing later than 6 pm.

I have concerns about the dropped curbs which adjust for the slope/hills in the pavements in various places like from the high street onto hunters square. I've seen multiple people trip and fall on them as they're very hard to see.

Online survey - What do you value most about the Old Town as a community, and what would you most like to see improved?

I live just outside old town and work in old town. I wish the royal mile, especially canongate, was more of a space for local people.

Quite a lot of opportunities but they are not well promoted

Reducing the amount of cars and increasing the comfort for being a pedestrian.

I like the variety of pubs and restaurants within walking distance

I am unsure if there really is a sense of community in Old Town.

Less needle exchanges, drop in centres for druggies, alcoholics etc. Too many here for anyone to feel safe.

Better outdoor spaces that honour pedestrians and residents moving around and pausing on foot, making them want to stay

I love walking around and exploring the Old Town. I particularly enjoy the historical ambience co-existing with the living community. I never cease to wonder at and enjoy the Old Town.

I would like to less drug addiction in Scotland/Edinburgh.

More people living here

housing availability. If people can't afford to live there, there is no community

I value the history of the Old Town, the Castle, I value how the cityscape has been built throughout the years

I like speaking in my courtyard to the two remaining long term residents, they make it feel like a home and a community. For improvement, the single thing that would help is no more drugs and drug users.

The pavements and Tron square cleared of drug users

Dense and accessible

It needs to be lived in by locals and not become even more of a Disney-land idea of Edinburgh

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

Pedestrianisation of streets, more community provisions, support for people experiencing homelessness and addiction, more investment in infrastructure. Investing in children and giving them things to do and activities in nature. Activities for older adults to build community. We need more gardens and allotments.

More local

People who care about where they live

Better tourist management

No Traffic (Cars) including Taxis.

I would personally say more housing and also more opportunities for people to participate in community spaces, to be able to be more involved and give back to the community, to be able to have the opportunity to make suggestions or discussions on the future of the community and the area. More spaces for all community members too.

Less over-tourism

Cracking down on shops that don't pay tax

Closing royal mile to cars, better pavement & cycle lanes

More public toilets, more free parking or cheaper parking, more outdoor activity or availability to meet outdoors, better regulation on shops in the old town. Would be good to see more local artisans/makers able to open shops rather than tourist and souvenir shops.

Wider footways that make people feel welcome

More local housing, fewer Short Term Lets

Less tartan shop conglomerates, more variety of local independent businesses, cleaner streets/pavements (north bridge bins always full), more pedestrianisation.

Feeling of being in Edinburgh not just a tourist spot

Greener spaces, safe to walk, mixed retail (not just restaurants/cafes and tourist shops).

Fewer private cars

More inhabited and used by locals rather than just a shallow Disney town only offering things for tourists. More workplaces, no tour buses, or at least that they are smaller and stop blocking the roads. A rule against more chains (how many black sheep coffee in Edinburgh!?) less tourist tatt shops of goods made in china - and ugly cluttered facades. Look to medieval towns such as Tallinn Estonia, authentic goods sold in shops and Stress free to walk around old town centre.

Cleaner streets, more pedestrianization and outdoor seating, more late night shopping and non alcohol related activities

A traffic ban in the entire Royal Mile and extremely tight planning control restoring the historic look of the old town

More places for art, music and regular performance. Clean streets. Less temporary accommodation for students and tourists.

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

More local owned stores, further pedestrianisation and elimination of short term lets

More friendly for locals, more safe, green and accessible

Less traffic, more small music venues, cleaner streets and less temporary accommodation

A consertive effort to support locals, rather than tourists, in order to improve the area and allow people to live in and love Old Town.

Better pedestrian access and third spaces.

Bringing back a larger more diverse resident community

If it became again a place where locals enjoyed living, working and visiting.

Less student accommodation and STLs

Car-free

Less traffic

Rent cap for businesses to allow nice establishments to operate. A limit on tourist traps. Better pavements and a feeling that it's a nice neighbourhood to spend time and live in, with good local amenities and places to meet.

Make it local and authentic not a business for the council

People prioritised over cars

A bit cleaner and safer

Removal of cars

Less vehicular traffic, better pavements and better facilities for walking, cycling and wheeling.

A focus on community inclusion and support.

Prioritising the people who live and work here over students and tourists.

Less traffic and more spaces to meet friends and community

Clean streets

Greater accessibility for locals and visitors

If the buildings could be renovated and make look good again, getting rid of the druggies and keeping the streets clean, tourism would heavily increase and the area might become as prosperous as it was 40 years ago. There is a marked decline happening due to criminality and drug usage and this needs to be tackled. Also, tourism will decline if the are becomes too unsafe for people.

Fewer Airbnb's.

Better pedestrian experience especially Cowgate and South Bridge.

More lighting and street cleaning. More police presence would be nice

Improved quali y pavements,

Pedestrianisation and a total rethink of street furniture to make is more attractive and less hazardous

Actually get rid of the Air B&Bs and help the locals move back in

Restoring the area to a safe, dignified area which reflects its history and where there are the facilities to maintain a community rather than 100% provision for tourists and the lowest possible denominator .

Preserve its historical character and severely restrict any new build.

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

Cap Airbnb/short term rentals.

Cycling-friendly, child-friendly things to do, solar power for buildings

Preservation of the buildings and the limited green spaces saved

Fewer cars

More social housing, less taxis and Cranston Street being made into a one-way street as nothing but taxis up and down blocking the road in both directions, pedestrianise the Canongate

Greenery, less traffic, return of community, less hotels and airbnb

More public facilities (toilets), financial (grants, not loans) help for owners of building to make them more sustainable

If the council sorted out the sewers /gutters through regular cleaning.

Care and maintenance

An effective “miracle” treatment for drug addiction and alcoholism.

Traffic free. Nature reintroduced to the roads. An end to hotel developments with some converted to residential housing. Return of shops to the royal mile to serve the locals. Cargo bikes made available to locals via a community resource hub. No heavy vehicles (passanger transport or other HGV). Energy generated on all roofes get rid of the traffic and parking on the royal mile

Fewer tourists and a more permanent residential population giving a (now lost) sense of community

Mixed aged, local residents living together in community.

More local shops for local residents.

Less student accommodation. Less druggies etc in centre of town.

more diverse and better shops in terms of quality (for residents - baker, pharmacy, grocery, etc - and this will indirectly benefit visitors). Stop duplication of tartan tat shops that are embarrassing in terms of what Scotland has to offer to visitors.

Promote more diversity and better quality of shop even for visitors. Council to review management of the leases of their commercial premises, create a strategy/policies to diversify shops and avoid monopolies (ie same shop owner owning all the shops in a specific areas - quotas can help manage this issue)

Maintain buildings and built environment - consistent guidelines for improving and maintaining public realm (appropriate materials and details to be used)

Implement sensitive interventions for climate change adaptation and retrofit to preserve and enhance heritage.

Look after the community. Provide funding or descope the conservation rules.

Focus on the people living here, focus on local businesses and removing the tourist shops which have a very negative impact on the area. If we improve the area for residents, we'll also improve it for tourists. Imagine if there were local businesses selling goods, coffee shops, grocery shops.

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

Wider pavements for all the slow tourists

Local people in well looked after clean safe streets would be fantastic.

An absence of useless artificial con-gestion generation schemes

More value given to views of local community who despite lots of negative issues (e.g. short term lets, loud persistent buskers etc) wish to continue living here. Over the last few years GRASS (Grassmarket Local Residents Association) has forged a good working relationship with the appointed City Centre councillors. Long may this continue.

A cared for environment with less tatty souvenir shops where people can find a public toilet

In 10 years' time, the Old Town should be internationally recognised as a model for how historic city centres can successfully balance tourism, community, beautiful urban design, and everyday liveability.

Actually make the Old Town a community again; to do this, the council need to crack down on short terms lets which threaten community cohesion and ability to live well locally.

Better, cleaner roads and pavements and affordable housing for families

Noise controls at night. Police keeping order regarding noise, and stopping cars using their horns in the middle of the night. The night time economy policy has created a nightmare for residents, the noise from businesses like Pub Crawl Companies and bus tours at night is beyond a joke. There is no peace for some residents now, trucks come around to empty bins at 11pm and others come at 5am. It never stops. There is no peace for us and its not a safe or healthy place to raise a family now. Groups of drunk men late afternoon/early evening cause chaos and noise on our street. The noise is off the scale and the Council keep licensing more premises, its insane in a residential area.

Less cars more wheeling and cycling with much of the Short Term Let homes returned to long term occupancy

For people not cars

Fewer drug users facilities , less drug users

Upper Bow Road intersection with Johnston Terrace: I'd like to see the company that repaved the street to give also a coating layer so that the street doesn't look exactly the same as it was before, otherwise what's the point of spending millions of £

More families having moved back into the area.

Reduce drug consumption and restore buildings to original state.

Get people living in buildings that were built for residents not short term lets

Support and availability of local quality arts & crafts in a slower paced, green area where people can pause, breathe and appreciate its beauty

Allow only essential (e.g., shop deliveries, taxis, disabled access, emergency vehicles, garbage collection) motorised traffic. Motorised traffic must yield to non-motorised traffic everywhere.

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

More actual shops rather than tourist tat shops selling the same thing.

Fewer Airbnbs and more families

I'd love to see unused spaces turned into things the community can actually use — places to sit, meet, or do something positive. Some parts really need wider footpaths and definitely more public toilets. I'd also like to see more things for older people, so they can keep enjoying the Old Town

Fewer short term lets, more individual shops (fewer tartan tat), fewer drug addicts, better active travel.

More inviting, outdoors and/or indoor spaces designed for the community to enjoy. Better support for residents rather than the focus always being on cramming in more visitors to the area

There are parts that need investment and tidying up. Less rubbish, less graffiti, less tart shops.

Renovate the odeon and la scala cinemas and build housing for residents.

Less overtly tourist orientated shops and cafes. Bet choice of independent shops and cafes including a decent pharmacy and bakery

A celebration of active travel and engagement with local history and architecture.

Less traffic, less 'tourist tat' shops, more benches, more public toilets

It should be a place for people to live and not Disneyland or Edinburghland

A thriving mixed community of families side-by-side with a successful tourist economy.

Massively reducing the number of private and commercial vehicles that dominate the area

Less air bandbs and cheap tat shops more locals.

More pedestrianised roads, less traffic.

Spaces that improve quality of life for local people, are free (green spaces, community spaces), and add to the local character.

More permanent residents, less focus on tourism

If it was truly a living neighbourhood with residents of all ages, and didn't turn into even more of a tartan tat theme park. Please no more Harry Potter either.

Cleaner and safer

Cleaner streets & more council control over festivals

Fewer airb&b and short term lets

Affordable housing and more third spaces!

Less cars

A place for residents, not tourists.

More housing at affordable prices.

More affordable housing, less car traffic, more local independent shops and restaurants

Having locals living there.

Proper variety of shops. // Feeling like it is for us and that we're not just an inconvenience getting in the way of tourism.

Online survey - In one sentence, what would make the Old Town an even better place in 10 years time?

More green spaces, community gardens, and green infrastructure.

Affordable housing. More music venues and affordable studio spaces for creative artists.

Adorable housing and third space access for locals

Fully pedestrianise the royal mile.

Fewer cars and better tourist management (e.g. no big tour buses and large tour groups); also turning it back into a community for residents, rather than just AirBnB chaos.

More social services, more tourist regulation and more spaces focused on local residents

Better regulation of the types and styles of shops and restaurants in the area

The old town is so much more than tartan from china. Ten years from now i hope we have created an even more special place with a thriving visible community of people living life, alongside the many visitors we love to host.

Affordable homes for local people and limits to tourist shops and short term let's and supermarket chains that already exist.

Pedestrianised Royal Mile

Social Housing

If local residents were respected and prioritised over tourists, and the Old Town was no longer treated like a Disneyland version of Scottish culture and history.

Easier to get about, fewer parked coaches on George IV Bridge

Improving buildings internal/external to match the quality of Edinburgh in the global view, it could be a lot cleaner and nicer for all, in many places

Sustainable tourism - nurturing a place to live and not just a place to visit (tourists don't want to visit a theme park)

the old town should, be better pedestrianised. feature high quality pavements and public realm. Its heritage should be managed, improved and restored in the style of patrick geddes.

Big reduction in tartan tat. Better, wider pavements. More buses, fewer cars.

Keep the number of students down and maintaining the historic character

We need cheaper beer and less tourists tat

Better roads and clean streets with cyclists and pedestrians not worrying about traffic

The streets of the Old Town need to return to being a place for residents to use, appreciate and enjoy, rather than the increasingly tacky and dispiriting theme park-cum-entertainment centre which they have regrettably become.

Independence

Online survey - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the Old Town's future?

Tourism needs to be spread out over a larger area of the city. It is too concentrated on the Royal Mile.

Old towns architecture is really historically beautiful. Keep it that way, no ugly concrete, cell block H building.

.

It's just so dirty and poorly maintained right now, it should be easy to improve it.

It needs more decisions made by more people

Perhaps local authorities enforcing stricter measures for businesses so that they don't spoil the architecture and character of the Old Town

There is too much emphasis on drug users facilities, making it unsafe for residents and visitors

Address the issue of homeless, drunk and drug addled people wandering around.

Planning changes to limit the time taken to develop or maintain sites eg North bridge and next to the central library.

No thank you

Support building owners to maintain the historic fabric for everyone's benefit

I probably won't be here.

Leave it entirely in the hands of the private sector

Please help. It needs some love. Thanks

More than anything I want to be able to be proud of the amazing historic and beautiful area surrounding my home as I was in the past rather than embarrassed and so sad about what it has become . The deterioration will continue if the problems of the High St and surrounding streets are not addressed and the proliferation of Air bnbs isn't curtailed . Tourism is economically important but without homes and facilities for local people the Old Town will continue to be simply an area controlled by a couple of businesses who make vast amounts of money from tourists and I am afraid there is little chance of there ever being a community there or even any hope for the future .

The Old Town should not continue to be treated as the historic "left behind" quarter of Edinburgh, carrying a disproportionate concentration of social pressures while surrounding districts benefit from greater investment, greenery, and residential stability. Unlike classic gentrification seen in other cities, the Old Town's transformation has largely been tourism-led, with visitor accommodation, hotels, and tourist retail increasingly replacing everyday residential and community functions. (continued on next page)

Online survey - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the Old Town's future?

The Old Town should not continue to be treated as the historic “left behind” quarter of Edinburgh, carrying a disproportionate concentration of social pressures while surrounding districts benefit from greater investment, greenery, and residential stability. Unlike classic gentrification seen in other cities, the Old Town’s transformation has largely been tourism-led, with visitor accommodation, hotels, and tourist retail increasingly replacing everyday residential and community functions.

The future of the Old Town should be based on long-term civic ambition rather than piecemeal interventions. Cities such as Barcelona and Antwerp demonstrate that historic centres can remain beautiful, liveable, mixed communities when urban design, public realm, housing, infrastructure, and local commerce are planned together with a clear vision and meaningful resident involvement. The Old Town should aspire to internationally ambitious architecture and urban design, including innovative housing models, greener streets, better lighting, wider pavements, and genuinely high-quality mixed-use development that encourages a wider diversity of people to live there long term. There also needs to be stronger stewardship and accountability for how the Old Town functions day to day. Residents often feel there is no clear overarching responsibility for managing cumulative pressures such as tourism, antisocial behaviour, public space use, temporary street works, or the gradual erosion of local amenities. With the level of footfall the Old Town already has, there is no reason why more useful and community-oriented businesses, such as bakeries, greengrocers, independent food shops, practical services, and cultural spaces, could not thrive alongside tourism. The goal should be to rebuild civic pride and make the Old Town feel like a place people actively aspire to live in again, rather than somewhere people simply pass through, exploit economically, or feel left behind within.

It’s vital to retain the authenticity and character of not just only of the buildings but the spirit .

One hope's to remain positive...

Better preservation and care for old buildings, absolutely no more new developments!

The future is people, and we need to look after each other in these increasingly difficult times.

This survey is a positive first step. Changing the current state will be hard but it has to start somewhere. The more the city focuses on adding hotels/student accommodations the farthest it will be from creating a community / pleasant tourist experience. Look at similar cities like Heidelberg Germany for an example of how it can be done.

Stop complaining, try to like it as it is.

Online survey - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the Old Town's future?

We've ruining the core Royal Mile with identikit shops and tacky displays. Some taste, variety and creativity would be good.

Stop building student accommodation

Yes cobble stones are historic, but they need to be maintained so people stop falling and hurting themselves.

More cafes open late for families and more public toilets open late.

Museums/galleries open till 7 or 8pm.

I think the council should take more of an interest about what goes on at night, when the offices close and the people come out drinking and partying. We have never seen open drug dealing in our street, its every weekend now, and the same faces. The Police cant deal with it, right on our doorstep. Its made worse by the licensing office approving more clubs and pubs. I think there should be a bigger Police presence and perhaps noise/license officers patrolling the area. We have a situation in the Cowgate where there is a bar operating with no frontage, just a shutter that rolls up. They play amplified music out into the street causing a disturbance until the early hours. The Police or council do nothing about it, in face, they grant them a late license for August. After 8pm the Old Town becomes like an open air festival for drunks and the residents suffer. They street cleaners come out at 4am and clear the broken glass and trash to make it nice and fresh for the morning tourists. the residents don't feature in the councils plans or approach, if we did perhaps we would have a community centre or local council office to pay rent, that is the main problem. Its not seen as a place where people live, that has to change.

For the City Council to consult more with the local community.

Better enforcement of people profiteering from the area to make sure they are not having a negative impact on the area

If the Old Town continues as it is it will become irrelevant to Edinburgh residents. It needs to be reclaimed before it is completely abandoned to tourists. Many locals never go there unless they have to. Thats not right. It should be for all of us.

I would like to see more police officers patrolling the area, especially in the evenings.

Tourism must be made a secondary priority to local needs

Great to consult on these matters.

For the short term let and individual shop situation to change it would be a complete reversal of the council policy as they have facilitated the Royal Mile's complete overtake of Airbnb and tartan tat shops in the last 15 years

The state of the area is going downhill rapidly with a proliferation of ugly tourist shops that don't seem to adhere to planning regulations. This is a world heritage site which is married by litter, drug use, vandalism, speeding cars and e-bikes and appealing lack of public toilets

Online survey - Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about the Old Town's future?

Need to ensure that heritage is retained and this includes recent road repairs that do not respect the original cobbles which were tarmacked over replacing interesting independent shops with more chain restaurants and 'tat' shops will only decline the Old Town's charm and international prestige. Supporting and promoting local talent, niche hobbies and unique experiences will help it feel like a real community.

More parking and faster traffic flow will make it better for sure

Collective policies to reduce energy bills in the older buildings.

I would like to live here for another 10 years, but the traffic is probably going to put me off.

It would be great if some of the side streets (such as Niddry Street or Blair Street) were turned into pedestrian zones. Taxis fly down these streets and there are very narrow pavements, which is a dangerous combination.

It has deteriorated in past 5 years. Too many beggars, tents, drug dealers here now.

No

Less/no drugs

Too many jakies around at the moment.

Stop over-amplified buskers.

Anti Terror barriers are hideous, why don't we have planters with trees as barriers?

It needs a deep cleaning

Gold Brothers need to be put in the stocks on the royal mile

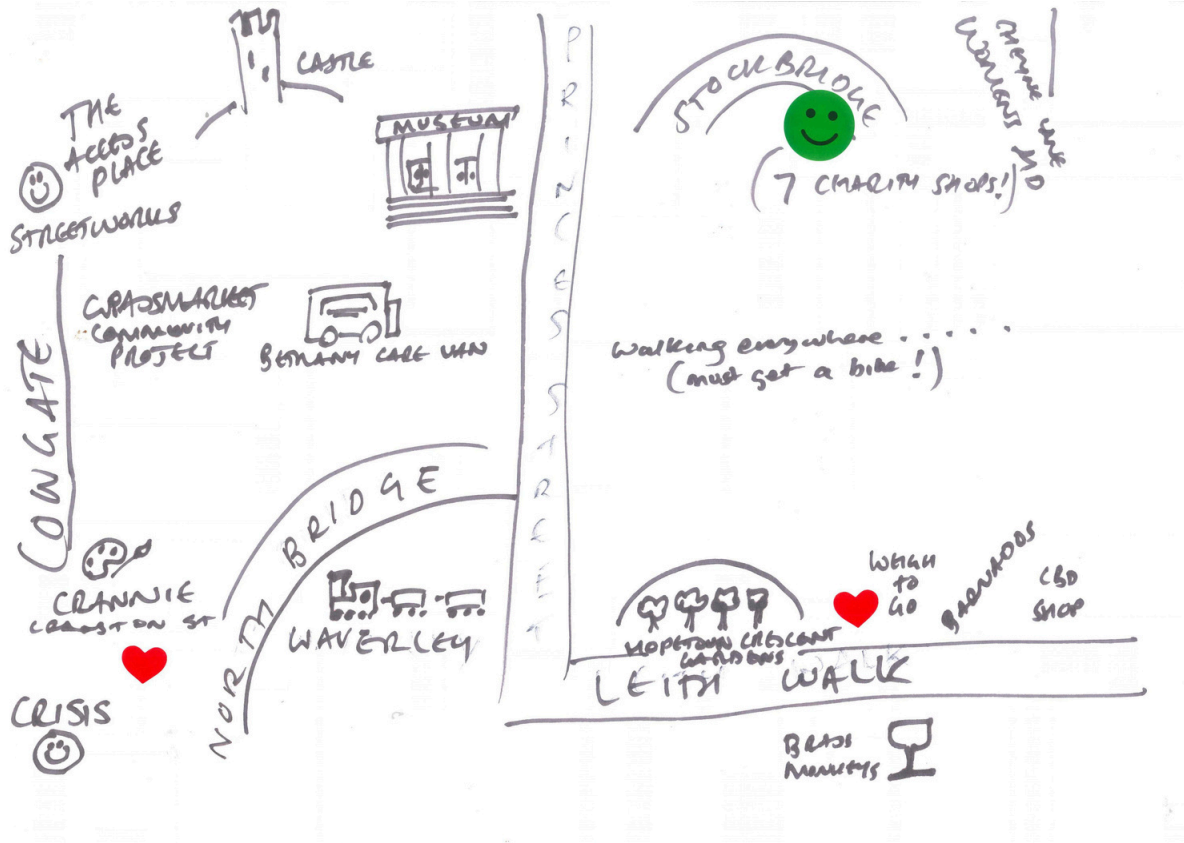
I am very worried about drug use and the drug consumption room. I feel that the Old Town shoulders all the drug problems and people have become numb to the fact that people are lying intoxicated and unconscious across pavements. We need to address this urgently. I feel this is a public health emergency.

Tackle the drug abuse and make the streets safer

Start planning NOW for heating our dense urban neighbourhood with heat networks capturing heat from elsewhere

It should be a place that locals enjoy visiting rather than avoiding because of the number of tourists.

Mental Maps



Too many Air bnb's
We don't want them
here!

We need well managed public toilets.

We need more police!

we need
more professionalised
arts!
Thinks
Schaff

little lady
go
how can go in?

Story Telling
Catherine

Too many SLRs - they
are dangerous + too big
for our streets +
parking spaces. Please
can they get banned?

We need more
nice green
spaces for
locals

bad boring tourist tat shops
with rubbish for sale

Lots of rubbish everywhere

Lots of
dog poo

shops always dirty
people vomit +
poop there
people use
drugs
there's no proper
lighting
↳ dangerous
+ dodgy

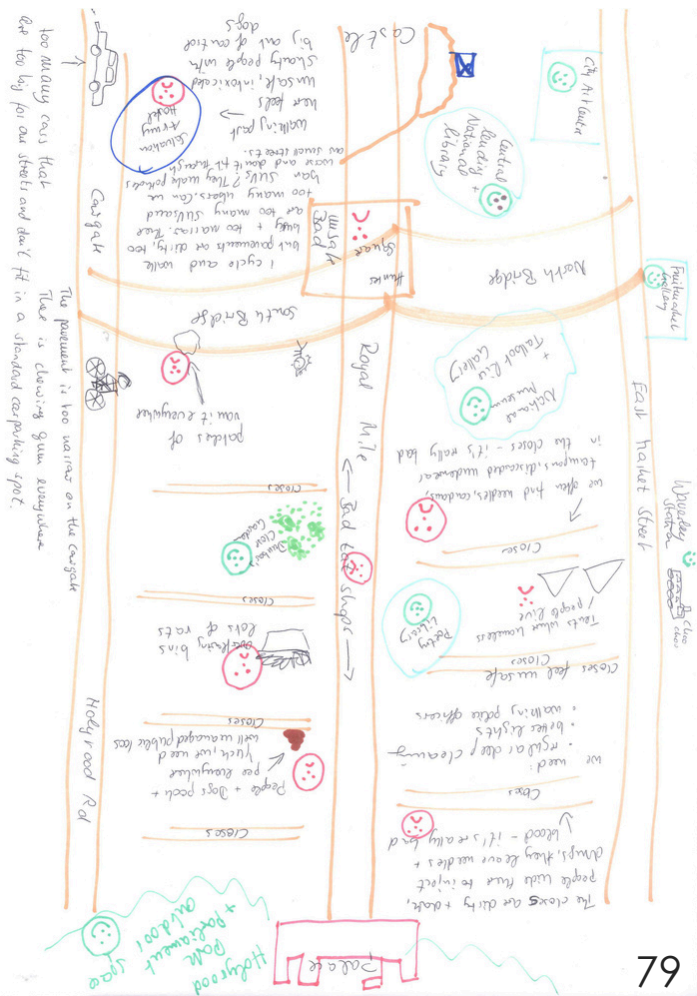
better
street
cleaning

We need
local shops
fruit, veg,
butcher,
fishmonger

We need
local shops
fruit, veg,
butcher,
fishmongers

Cowgate feels unsafe

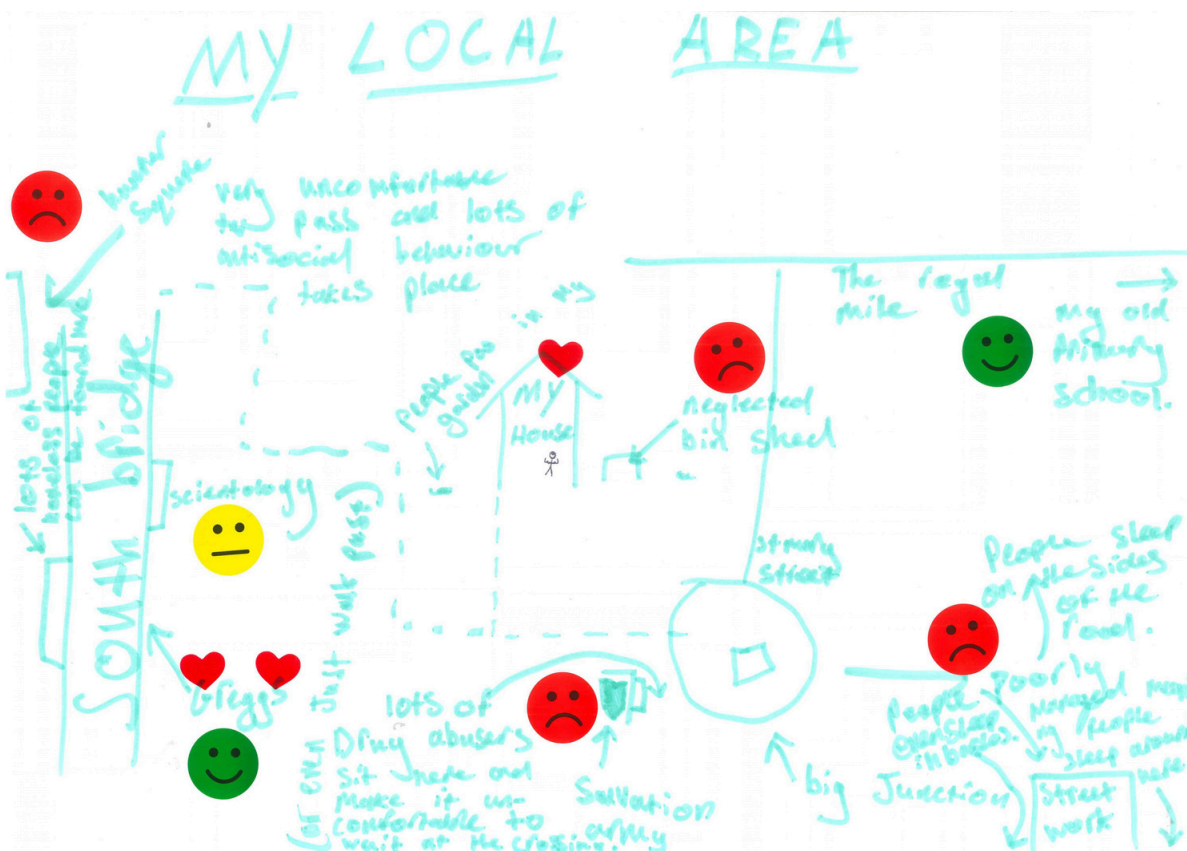
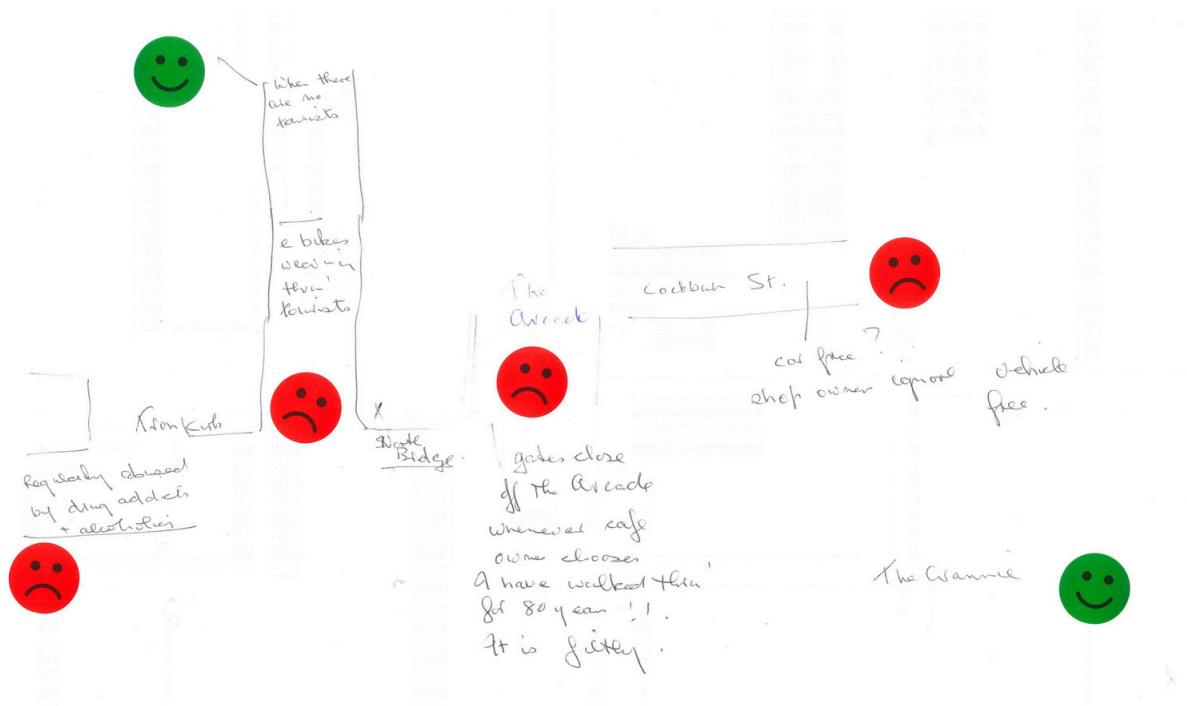

 Varun
 Army
 Hostel



Mental Maps



Mental Maps



Mental Maps



Appendix 3 - How we are meeting the statutory requirements in the Local Place Plan Circular

The following ward councillors and community councils were contacted with a draft copy of this Local Place Plan.

Councillor Margaret Graham
Councillor Finlay McFarlane
Councillor Claire Miller
Councillor Jo Mowat

New Town and Broughton Community Council
Southside Community Council
Tollcross Community Council

Information notice

Edinburgh Old Town Development Trust (EOTDT) in collaboration with the Old Town Community Council has developed the attached Local Place Plan for Edinburgh Old Town. It is based on engagement and consultation with local people between April and July 2026. It is aimed to be included in the City Plan 2040. Our Local Place Plan includes facts about our Old Town and what it is like to live here, followed by key themes identified by local people that need to be addressed urgently. The overarching theme of engagement responses is: The existing mechanisms intended to manage the area (City Plan 2030, the City Centre Transformation Strategy, and the World Heritage Site Management Plan) are not translating into improvements that residents can feel. More work must be done urgently to ensure the specific, compounding pressures of the Old Town are considered. The current management approach is not improving the resident community at the heart of the Old Town, despite best intentions. Our Local Place Plan includes 35 specific solutions for the Council to implement. Please contact us with any comments or feedback about our Local Place Plan by 24th September 2026, in order for this plan to be submitted 30th September. You can contact us by email thecrannie@eotdt.org, by phone: 0131 5572244 or by visiting the Crannie at 9 Cranston Street, EH8 8BE, during our opening times Mondays to Fridays 10am to 5pm.

Appendix 4 - Sources

BBC News article about the Royal Mile:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c4g871j04mgo>

Statistics on Airbnbs in the Old Town (Table 1), published by the Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/research-impact-short-term-lets-communities-scotland/pages/4/>

Statistics on Airbnbs in the Old Town (Table 1), published by the Scottish Government: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/research-impact-short-term-lets-communities-scotland/pages/4/> and <https://www.gov.scot/publications/research-impact-short-term-lets-communities-scotland/pages/4/>

The Guardian report on Airbnbs:

<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2020/feb/20/revealed-the-areas-in-the-uk-with-one-airbnb-for-every-four-homes>

Area profile dashboard – The City of Edinburgh Council:

<https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/strategy-performance-research/area-profile-dashboard>

BBC News on plans for drug consumption room:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/ce3549z7z7xo>

Edinburgh Old Town Community Council Deputation to the full Council meeting in February 2026: <https://www.eotcc.org.uk/impact/>

National Planning Framework 4

City Plan 2030

City Centre Transformation Strategy

World Heritage Site Management Plan