



WEYMOUTH TOWN CENTRE MASTER PLAN

REPORT FROM THE
PUBLIC CONSULTATION EVENTS
JANUARY 2015

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A CONVERSATION ABOUT PLACE-MAKING



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Feria Urbanism is a planning + design studio that specialises in urban design, urban planning, urban strategies, public participation and community engagement. Established in 2007, we have been involved in a diverse range of projects across the UK and have developed key skills in organising community engagement events that inform urban and rural strategies.

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**ESTABLISHING A
COMMUNITY-LED
VISION FOR
WEYMOUTH
TOWN CENTRE**



PLACE-MAKING TO IMPROVE + ENHANCE THE TOWN CENTRE

THIS REPORT IS A SUMMARY OF THE MAIN OUTCOMES FROM TWO PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS HELD IN WEYMOUTH ON 6th OCTOBER AND 21st NOVEMBER 2014.

The purpose of the workshops was to ascertain public opinions on a range of planning and design issues affecting Weymouth town centre. The workshops were designed to reveal participant's views on issues, including land use, public realm, the quality of streets and spaces, access and movement (including traffic, parking, walking and cycling) and how community organisations could get further involved in shaping the future of Weymouth town centre.

This report will be used to inform the drafting of the Weymouth Town Centre Master Plan, being prepared by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council. The master plan which, when complete, will become a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

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The participants at both workshops were drawn from an established list of community groups and organisations held by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council. The invitations included schools, colleges, voluntary groups, civic organisations and other stakeholder groups with an interest in the future of the town centre. Over 90 participants took part in each of the events; a full list of attendees can be found in the appendix of this report.

Please note that all drawings and layouts shown in this report are indicative only and will be subject to further revisions. Sketch schemes shown are preliminary design studies only and are subject to information available at the time. They are not subject to measured survey, legal, structural, soil investigation, utilities survey, daylight or sunlight, topographical, mechanical and electrical, highways and access rights surveys or planning permissions.



SECOND STAGE CONSULTATION

The dual workshop approach was designed to ensure that participants had the opportunity to voice their opinions on the town centre as it is now, and on future scenarios for change. The first workshop comprised a series of tasks that looked at land use, urban quarters, streets and spaces, access and movement, the waterfront and demographics. Each task was completed by the twelve groups that took part in the event.

The Feria Urbanism facilitation team reviewed the outcomes and produced a series of "hypothesis plans" based on the first workshop results. These plans set out possible future scenarios for connections, public realm, walking circuits and character areas. These possible scenarios were tested at the second workshop, together with ideas for how different community groups could get further involved in the delivery of change in the town centre.



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Images from the workshops The photos above demonstrate the interactive nature of both workshop events, with a variety of techniques being employed to allow participants to express their views. These included coloured overlays to represent different land uses (03), bespoke stickers to identify problems and opportunities (04) and postcard images of other places (05). There was intensive debate during the group sessions (01, 07, 08 and 10) and each group gave feedback to the wider group (11). At both events, younger people were represented (03 and 09).

SUMMARY OF FIRST STAGE CONSULTATION

Between 14th August and 2nd September 2014, officers from Weymouth and Portland Borough Council undertook a series of eight public consultation exercises in the town centre. The purpose of this first stage consultation work was to review the priorities previously identified by the public, to check if they were all still relevant, whether there were additional themes that needed to be added or if any were no longer relevant and should be deleted.

At each of the eight first stage events, participants were invited to indicate their three priorities for Weymouth town centre. The results provided a platform for the design of the second stage consultation workshops.

Top Five Outcomes

- Provide opportunities for higher paid, less seasonal jobs with better career prospects for young people.
- Maintain a good range of shops and services in the town centre.
- Take pride in the built heritage of the town. Maintain, improve and show off the historic streets and buildings.
- Keep the streets clean, tidy and free of clutter.
- Diversify the town centre economy so it is less dependant on summer tourism.

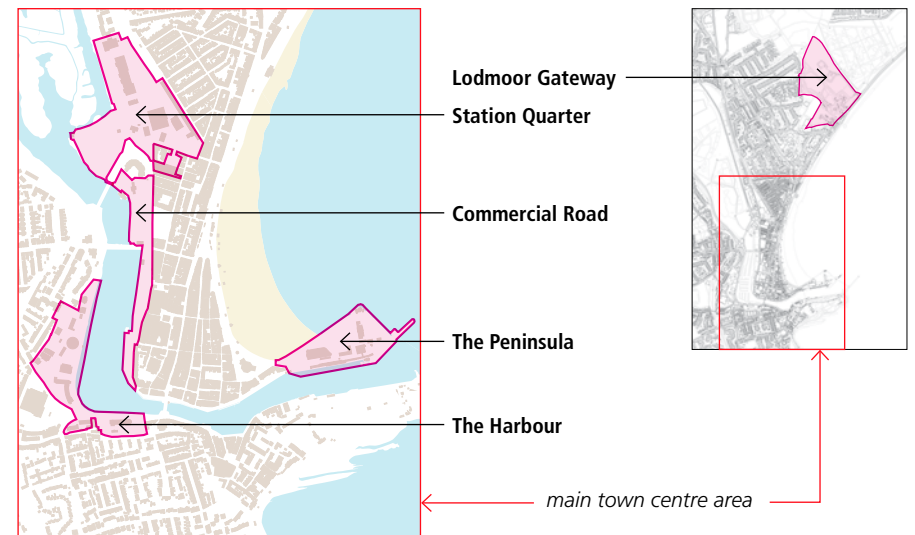


Areas of Change

The two public workshops held in October and November 2014 introduced five key areas of change. These had been identified by Weymouth and Portland Borough Council as having a likely significant contribution to make towards the regeneration of the town centre and the wider area.

The Lodmoor Gateway comprises green open space and is located approximately 2kms north of the town centre. The town centre sites (i.e. Station Quarter, Commercial Road, the Peninsula and the Harbour) all broadly contain a mix of vacant and/or under-utilised land that could be put to more effective use in creating a more beautiful and more prosperous town centre.

These four sites occupy prime locations in the town, close to transport hubs and the waterside, both assets that will strongly influence to the ongoing regeneration of the town centre. To not maximise the potential of these sites would be to miss an important opportunity in the fortunes of Weymouth town centre. Many of the tasks at both workshops were therefore designed with these key sites in mind. The outcomes of the public workshops will help inform the design, planning, layout and land use mix across all five sites.



Areas of Change The five specific areas of change that were under consideration in the workshops.

FIRST WORKSHOP

Overview of results from the public workshop 06.10.14

Task 01

This task allowed groups to create their own “vision” of how different areas of activity could develop across the town centre. Using a series of coloured overlays, groups created a montage of activity patterns.

The results gave a general consensus on the need to maintain a vibrant shopping district in the heart of the town centre, supported by better management and greater investment in the retail core. It was also identified that the shop units could be more intensively used, with opportunities for living on the upper floors not fully exploited. Maintenance of the existing building stock was identified as a concern.

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Task 01 Workshop participants were encouraged to “plan the town centre” using different coloured overlays to indicate different areas of activity.

Other common themes included the following issues:

- The marina could be an area for “boutique” and/or “independent” retail to compliment the more “mainstream” retail core. This too could work well with residential units on the upper floors in this part of the town centre.
- The Station, Harbour and Marina could all host better public realm and/or civic spaces. The station could become a much a better entrance to Weymouth and should incorporate mixed-uses e.g. cafés to encourage a greater level activity across the day/night cycle and create a safer environment.
- The Harbour and the Peninsula were identified as areas where there could be a greater level of walking and cycling. The concept of locating community facilities or a hotel on the Peninsula that would draw people in and that could be architecturally striking appears to be supported. The place was seen as a destination.
- Evening and night time activities should be distributed rather than concentrated within specific areas of Weymouth. The waterfront was a space that the community felt should retain its current fun and pleasure-themed activities and host events that exploit the waterfront setting.
- Employment should be actively encouraged and (as with evening and night-time uses) be distributed throughout Weymouth, rather than concentrated. Creating conditions that can support the fishing and maritime uses was supported.

Conclusions

This was an engaging task at the first workshop and was seen as a valuable opportunity to express a preferred mix of activities by many who took part. There was a wide variety of ideas within each of the resultant plans that provided a useful input to the scenario plans prepared for the second workshop.

Task 02

The task allowed participants to describe the different areas of change within the town centre and how they would like to see them develop in the future.

The Peninsula

Participants felt that this could become a hub for entertainment that includes leisure activities, events, family-orientated activities and attractions yet be unique, distinctive and inspiring. The word “destination” was commonly used; given the site is a cul-de-sac this is considered appropriate.

The Harbour

This area could be a location for enterprise, community and be “refreshing” with a modern and vibrant atmosphere.



Task 02 Workshop participants were encouraged to describe the qualities that different districts or quarters in the town centre should exhibit in the future.

Lodmoor Gateway

This area should become a safe tourist focal point. It should be imaginative and fun, respectful to the environment and clean. It may become something that can be used all year round or have mixed use. If the space is used in the right way, it could be the start of a good connection south to the town centre. The word “green” was used frequently. This could include an area of natural beauty, a park or garden or a community green space.

Station Quarter

This area needs to provide a better connection with the town. Participants felt that they come out of the train station and do not know where to go or how to get to their final destination. It is not intuitive. It could have something fun and attractive that directs people to the beach or the town centre, maybe something green or landscape-led.

The area could become more pleasant for residents and more inviting to tourists. Participants also felt that there was a lot of spare land that could be redeveloped into a transport interchange. Any interchange building should be both informative and functional as well as welcoming.

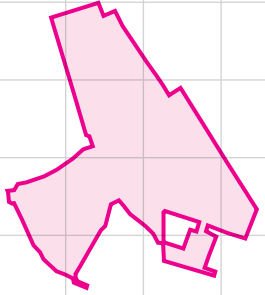
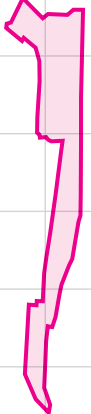
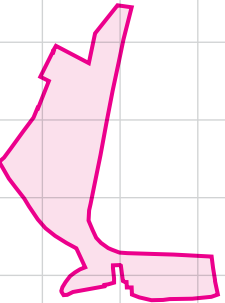
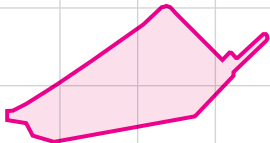
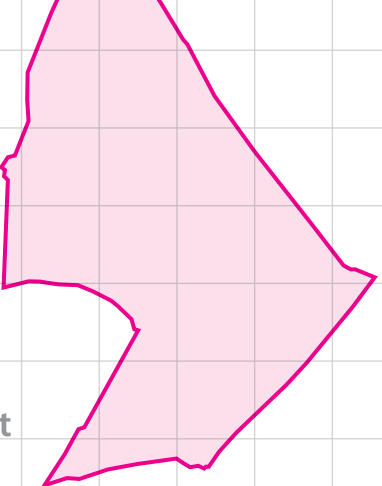
Commercial Road

This area could become a particular focus for the public whereby it is attractive, fun and lively. It may be an imaginative, serene and friendly area with activities throughout the day, evening and all year round. It could be the key to adding an identity to the heart of Weymouth.

Conclusions

Overall, the results showed a distinct contrast between all the areas under examination while Commercial Road has the flexibility to be many things to many different user groups.

Task 02 Summary of Key Words + Qualities

				
<p>Station Quarter</p>	<p>Commercial Road</p>	<p>The Harbour</p>	<p>The Peninsula</p>	<p>Lodmoor Gateway</p>
<p>Provide a better connection with the town centre</p>	<p>A particular focus for the public</p>	<p>Enterprising</p>	<p>Hub for entertainment</p>	<p>Leisure activities, events, family-orientated activities and attractions</p>
<p>Fun and attractive</p>	<p>Attractive, fun and lively</p>	<p>Community</p>	<p>Unique, distinctive and inspiring destination</p>	<p>Tourist focal point</p>
<p>Help give a sense of direction</p>	<p>Imaginative, serene and friendly</p>	<p>Refreshing</p>	<p>Imaginative and fun, respectful to the environment</p>	<p>A good connection south to the town centre</p>
<p>A green or landscaped feel</p>	<p>Activities throughout the day, evening and all year round</p>	<p>A modern and vibrant atmosphere</p>	<p>Area of natural beauty, a park or garden</p>	
<p>Informative and functional</p>	<p>Key to adding an identity to the heart of Weymouth</p>			

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Task 03

This task focused on the detail of the town centre streets and spaces. Participants used small bespoke stick-on icons to identify areas of current concern and also suggest ideas for improvement.

The Harbour

There was a general consensus that any redevelopment of this area should involve significant landscape works, particularly around the gas depot area. Any redevelopment should also be better connected for walking with a high quality public realm space to make the area more vibrant and feel safer. Mixed-use and affordable housing development should be encouraged as part of this redevelopment.

The area round Westway House was highlighted as being confusing particularly for drivers; with traffic noise and congestion being problem issues affecting this space.

Commercial Road

Accessibility for wheelchair users, pedestrians and cyclists was highlighted as problem issues. Footways are considered uneven and too narrow. Several sections of the road could be significantly enhanced through footway widening and the “greening” of the area through landscape works to make it more attractive as place to visit and spend time in.

Station Quarter

Traffic congestion was a recurrent issue, with many groups adding the red icons to identify problem issues. Difficult access for wheelchair users was also a recurrent theme. The place was seen as being cluttered, detracting from its use as a genuine public space. As a key entrance to Weymouth, it needs more “greening” and more day/night time activities. It was also suggested that business units with residential units above could be located in immediate vicinity of the station. A mixed-use live/work station hub concept?

The station space must also provide much clearer and more direct pedestrian access to the beach. At present, the area lacks an intuitive legibility; it should not have to rely on signposts.

Lodmoor Gateway

There was a general consensus that this is area should be maintained and enhanced as a green, open space with water features. It should have a focus on outdoor activities, including areas for picnics, camping and cycling. The task results highlighted a general perception that the area is currently a fairly cluttered area which could be quickly enhanced through relatively minor works, such as more litter bins and/or more frequent litter collections, investment in public facilities and encouraging more “pop-up” events and activities to take place.



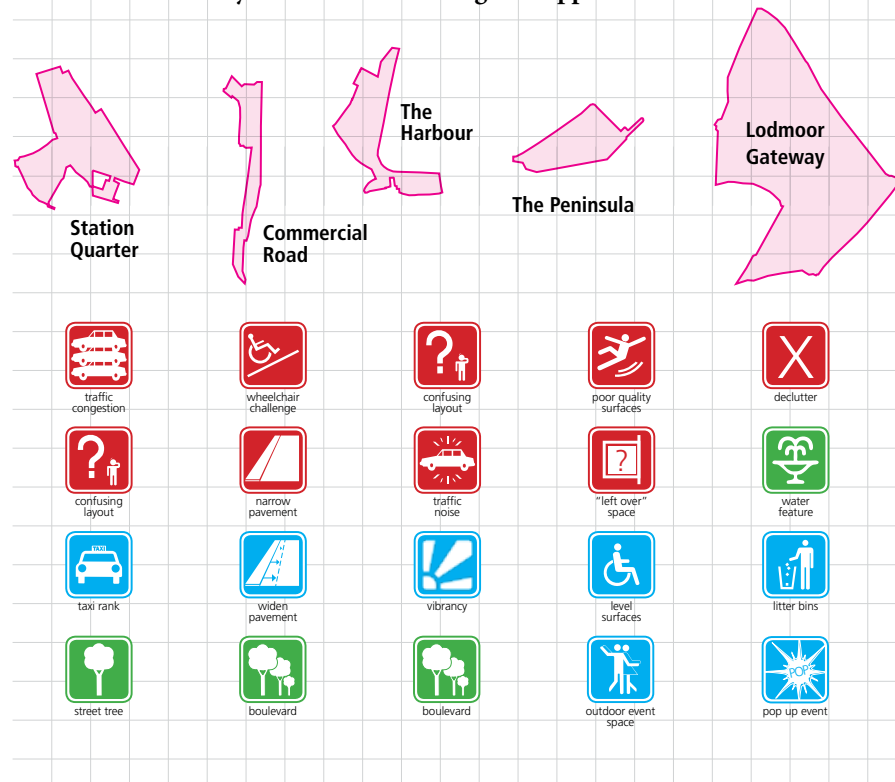
Task 03 Workshop participants used a series of icons to identify the challenges and opportunities associated with the streets and spaces in the town centre.

The Peninsula

There was a clear focus on creating a better public realm with a better pedestrian experience and greater/safer access for cyclists. The area is dominated by expanses of surface car parking. Adding high quality street furniture will help break this visual dominance up and help make better use of the existing space and to create a more vibrant environment that positively exploits aspects of the sites the heritage and location (i.e. out at sea with panoramic views).

Some groups considered a mixed-use approach to redevelopment to be appropriate response to this site, including community and leisure facilities in the mix.

Task 03 Summary of the Main Challenges + Opportunities



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Task 04

This task focused on how people move around Weymouth town centre; which circuits/routes people tend to use and which routes could be used more frequently.

Many comments suggest that participants would rather not walk along Commercial Road but use it “because they have to”. This is a route that could be changed to make it more attractive for non-car modes of travel. Some groups indicated locations around the town centre which could become hubs for hiring bicycles and mobility scooters.

The areas that participants would like to change are the station areas and the poor connections between the Esplanade and the Peninsula.

Strategic transport links could also be strengthened, such as the park and ride extending its operations beyond 6pm and the bus route from there penetrating the town centre further.



Task 04 Workshop participants examined the connections between different places and the time it takes to move between them.

The overall result of this task did reveal Weymouth as having a compact town centre, in which it should be easy and convenient to get from one place to another by foot or by bicycle. It also highlighted specific issues that can deter non-car modes of travel.

There were many opinions about Commercial Road, the Harbour and how vehicles could be restricted in these areas in future. However, such restrictions may place greater strain on other parts of the network. The street needs to successfully balance a variety of uses and modes of travel, combining safe pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movements.

Participants identified Weymouth's key destinations and landmarks as the Marina, the Peninsula, the lifting bridge, the beach, the Nothe gardens and the “working” harbour — a place that contrasts with the marina.

During this task, participants identified places to park cars, including: north of the Marina, near the station (with several multi-storey car parks in this area), the Peninsula, on the eastern edge of the Marina and at Nothe gardens. There was a general feeling that there were perhaps too many car parks, leading to a need for rationalisation. Many participants stated they use King Street, Commercial Road, Westwey Road and also park on town centre streets.

Conclusions

There is clearly a desire for change with the current system of movement within the town centre. While there is caution about the role of the car in supporting the economy of the town centre and the potential disruption that could be brought about to the current network through interventions, there was nevertheless a general acceptance that too many areas of the town centre are too car-dominated at present.

Given the compact nature of the town centre, much more could be done to encourage cycling and walking and this may be achieved in tandem with a reduction in the amount of space given over to both the parking and movement of cars.

Task 05

This task explored the future of the waterfront and what could happen on the water's edge in the future.

The three main waterside spaces that were highlighted through this task included the Peninsula, Commercial Road and the Esplanade. Many groups spent time discussing the Peninsula with general comments about how it could become a centre of leisure activities.

Some of the comments suggest that activity on the Peninsula tends to “die off” in the evenings and it should therefore include activities that will change the atmosphere both during the day and into the evenings. A majority participants appear to be in favour of redevelopment of the Peninsula but expressed that there needs to be suitable access for all.

Many participants stated that many people arrive in Weymouth by boat and berth at the working harbour — i.e. west of the lifting bridge. This area should therefore become a “cultural hub” of different enterprises, including food and entertainment.

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Commercial Road has an extensive waterfront and presents many good opportunity for urban interventions. It is west-facing and therefore catches the setting sun. The street could include small interventions and spaces for “pop-up culture” — such as exhibitions, sport competitions, one-day art galleries, temporary cafés and bars. The road could become a street, perhaps an urban boulevard that accommodates a broader range of movement options. It should be a lovely place to walk or cycle along but it is a currently a fairly hostile traffic route with a limited number of activities to attract residents and tourists attentions.

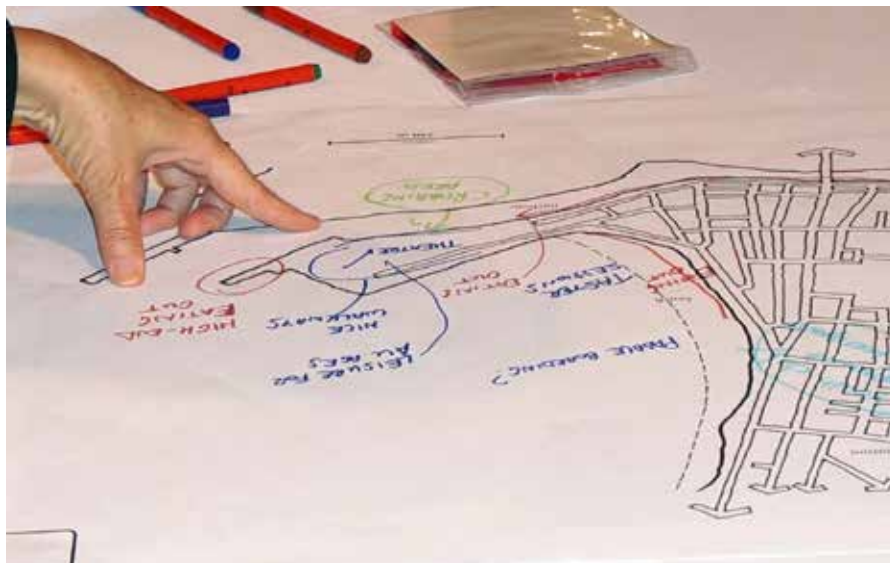
Other comments included ideas for a “legible city” type information, such as colour-coding different themes — e.g. family fun, free attractions, the beach, places of food and arts and so on — through new signs and information boards.

Further comments mentioned various events that could happen one day of each week such as cycle racing nights, fireworks, outdoor projections and beach sports including volleyball and motor-cross.

The task also showed a willingness to explore how “culture” and “entertainment” does not have to be fixed in one area but can shift around the Harbour and Marina and the wider town centre. One comment suggested a floating barge with on-board entertainment e.g. cinema.

Conclusions

Participants were keen to see a range of different activities along the waterfront, including culture, leisure activities and dining. The range of activities must be targeted at all markets and age groups. Participants made a link between this animation of the waterfront and a way in which these areas can be transformed, in turn helping transform the streets that connect the town centre with the water.



Task 05 Workshop participants explored the range of activities that could be encouraged along the waterside. There was encouragement from the facilitation team to think more widely than the traditional seaside activities.

Task 06

This task explored the opportunities and challenges faced by different demographic groups.

A significant challenge identified through this task was the lack of activities that appeal to the younger end of the demographic groups. Ideas to rebalance this include shops aimed at a younger market, a youth café/centre with a greater focus on creative arts and a live music venue. A swimming pool was also mentioned.

Another significant challenge was weak employment opportunities and associated difficulties for businesses finding employees with the right skills. It was also felt that there is a lack of space for small businesses in the town centre, discouraging new businesses and industries to grow.

Reliance on summer trade, which transforms the town into a lively area during these months, was also identified through these tasks. Participants want to see more use of the town centre and additional points of focal activities that can counter the seasonal emphasis on the beach. For example, holding a variety of different events and interventions in the less frequented parts of the town.

New all-year-round activities could help address a series of related challenges: 1) Small focal points of non-seasonal events or interventions can attract residents and tourists into the town centre. 2) Such focal points may involve leisure uses, such as sports or skate parks in temporary locations, off-pitch from the usual locations. 3) These activities may, in turn, attract other investments into these areas, such as cafés and small-scale retail, increasing dwell time in these parts of the town centre. 4) This new investment may start to generate greater job opportunities and opportunities to learn a range of new skills or volunteering opportunities.

Another challenge that was identified was difficulty moving around town, especially for tourists. Many felt this was because there is no clear “sense of direction” in the way the town can be read.

Task 06 Summary of Key Results

teenagers	businesses + employers	pensioners + empty-nesters	young adults without children	families with young children	visitors + tourists	students
need for later buses to get home at the end of an evening	limited range of skilled workforce	need to feel safe in the town centre after dark	vibrant night time economy of pubs and clubs	need to have higher activity levels between 6pm and 11pm	lack of a central information hub	often a lack of opportunities make them feel they need to move away
limited disposable income	high speed broadband is critical	free bus passes has encouraged more town centre trips	a lack of variety outside the pub and club scene	walking and getting around safely with children can be difficult due to cluttered streets	much better public transport interchange needed to give a more positive welcome	a reason to stay and commit their energy and ideas to local initiatives
free town centre WiFi system	better choice of employment premises	lack of street furniture to make the town more hospitable	need for a good evening and night time cafe culture		better signposting to spectator locations	free town centre WiFi system



Task 06 Workshop participants were asked to list the challenges and opportunities faced by different demographic groups.

SUMMARY OF FIRST WORKSHOP

The first workshop tested ideas around land use and areas of activity (task 01), identified the desired future qualities for different urban quarters (task 02), examined the quality of the streets and spaces around the town centre (task 03), assessed different access and movement options (task 04), looked at the range of activities that could take place by the water (task 05) and identified the challenges and opportunities faced by different demographic groups that use the town centre (task 06).

The relative lack of intensity on the waterside along Commercial Road, Westwey Road and the Harbour is in contrast to the much more intensive nature of the Esplanade, beach and quaysides to the east of the lifting bridge. The need to “grow” this intensity of active uses into the less developed areas was seen a significant ambition for the master plan.

There was a consensus around the need for a much better welcome at the railway station, currently having a particularly poor quality public realm and associated problems with pedestrian access and safety in the wider area.

Commercial Road was seen as having real potential for change. It was viewed as being a space that could host a wide variety of activities, by the water, all supported by a new and exciting public realm. This should be a modern and vibrant waterfront that complements, not competes with, the beach and Esplanade to the east.

In terms of demographics, one of the more striking outcomes was the challenges faced by younger people in the town, who often feel they have to “leave to achieve” rather than stay in Weymouth for the longer term. There was also a desire to see a more sporty town, with ideas of walking, cycling and fitness recurrent themes.

The Feria Urbanism team used these key outcomes to inform the preparation of a series of hypothesis plans for use at the second workshop.