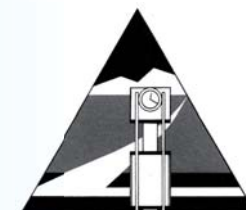


# Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan

## Final Draft Report

Prepared by Boffa Miskell Limited  
for Ashburton District Council, Town Centre Sub-committee

May 2009





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# executive summary

## Background

The Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan has been initiated as part of delivering the Ashburton Development Plan (adopted by Council in 2005). The Ashburton District Council has been assisted with developing the Concept Plan by Boffa Miskell - specialist planners, urban designers and landscape architects.

## Purpose

The Concept Plan sets a broad framework for improvement, building on the good foundations of the existing town centre. This framework will take effect over many years and will have the flexibility to accommodate a range of new initiatives (only some of which are known today).

The Concept Plan aims to co-ordinate many of the individual actions and changes that can take place within the town centre, to create a strong focus for the social, civic, business, entertainment and living activities of the District and create a safer and more pleasant place for the future.

The Concept Plan provides a basis for Council investment in public land (squares, streets, parks); clear direction for private investment in new developments and business opportunities; and interest groups and resident can have some certainty as to the future shape and quality of the town centre's features they may value.

## Concept Plan and Preliminary Design Option proposals

As Ashburton continues to grow, allowances will need to be made for expansion of the town centre. Three future growth options have been explored with the preferred option, the 'Integrated Core' that extends the town centre to the north and east, used as the basis for the Concept Plan proposals.

A number of key projects have been identified, covering much of the streetscape and public open spaces across the town centre. The Concept Plan illustrates how these separate projects can be integrated together to improve the town centre as a whole. This plan is accompanied by suggested land use changes, which inform the current District Plan Review, and a phasing plan, outlining implementation priorities. Preliminary Design Options have also been prepared to help visualise a range of possible outcomes of a few key projects around the 'heart' of the town centre. These focused on the Green Corridor ('The Green') and Baring Square.

The content and prioritisation of these design proposals have been refined following feedback provided during the community consultation.



Proposed Concept Plan

### Key Projects

- Baring Square (Civic Precinct)
- Green Corridor
- Laneways
- Cass Street
- Street Upgrades
- Triangle Shops (Cultural Precinct)
- Connecting the Domain
- 4th Avenue (Moore St)



Indicative Land Use Plan

### Land Uses

- small retail & mixed use
- cultural
- civic
- education
- open space
- medium density residential
- higher density residential
- commercial service
- large format retail
- light industrial





# executive summary

## Community Consultation

Stakeholders, such as landowners, occupiers and active interest groups, and the general public are essential parties in the process of successful implementation and have been consulted as part of the design process.

A range of local stakeholders attended the public open days with several Christchurch based stakeholders informed by way of individual presentations. All stakeholders were generally supportive of the Concept Plan proposals. Some technical issues were raised during the consultation, but these are more appropriately addressed during the implementation of the Concept Plan.

Following media releases, letter drops and two successful public open days, the project team collected useful responses to the Concept Plan proposals and a range of questions were asked through feedback forms. The main community's responses included:

- The existing issues with the town centre were considered to be the division of east and west parts of the town; the lack of car parking and traffic conflicts.
- To attract more locals and visitors to the town centre, the community identified the need for high quality spaces, good community facilities and a pedestrian friendly environment.
- Aspects they thought made Ashburton distinctive were The Domain, monuments, trees and gardens and Baring Square East (including the clock tower).
- Their priorities for investment focused on improving the civic space at Baring Square and creating a pedestrian friendly environment, such as traffic calming.
- Generally the community felt safe, although they indicated a focus should be placed on improving lighting and surveillance and upgrading laneways.

The public were asked to provide preferences for a range of concept options. The future growth option preferred by the project team 'The Integrated Core' was generally supported.

The key projects of Baring Square, the Green corridor and the laneways were seen as the top priorities when developing the town centre. There was also significant interest in connecting the town centre with the Domain.

Of those Preliminary Design Options presented, Option 3 widening the footpath on East Street, Option 3 developing Baring Square into one square, as the northern gateway to the town centre, and Option 1 providing a safe tree lined pedestrian crossing at the end of Burnett Street, were chosen as the preferred options.

## Implementation

Once an overall Concept Plan is accepted, the Council can then proceed to design specific parts of the town centre in greater detail, where more technical issues can be resolved and implemented over time through its Community Plan. Where land use changes are proposed, the District Plan review process, currently running in parallel, can give effect to these changes through new zonings and development controls.



Proposed Implementation Plan

### Key projects

1. Baring Square East
2. East Street and Town Green
3. 'Green Corridor'
4. Improve existing lanes and arcade
5. Cass Street gateways
6. Upgrade streets in core
7. Upgrade Victoria Street
8. Redevelop 'The Triangle' reserve
9. Domain entrance and connections
10. Baring Square West upgrade
11. Extend lanes network
12. Moore Street gateway
13. West Street upgrade
14. Mona Square upgrade
15. Complete Cass Street upgrade

### Early Wins

16. Green gateways at town entrances
17. 4th Avenue planting
18. East Street walkways

## Recommended Actions

Now that the Concept Plan has proceeded through community consultation and has the public's broad support for proposals to improve the town centre, we recommend the Council undertake the following actions to initiate its implementation:

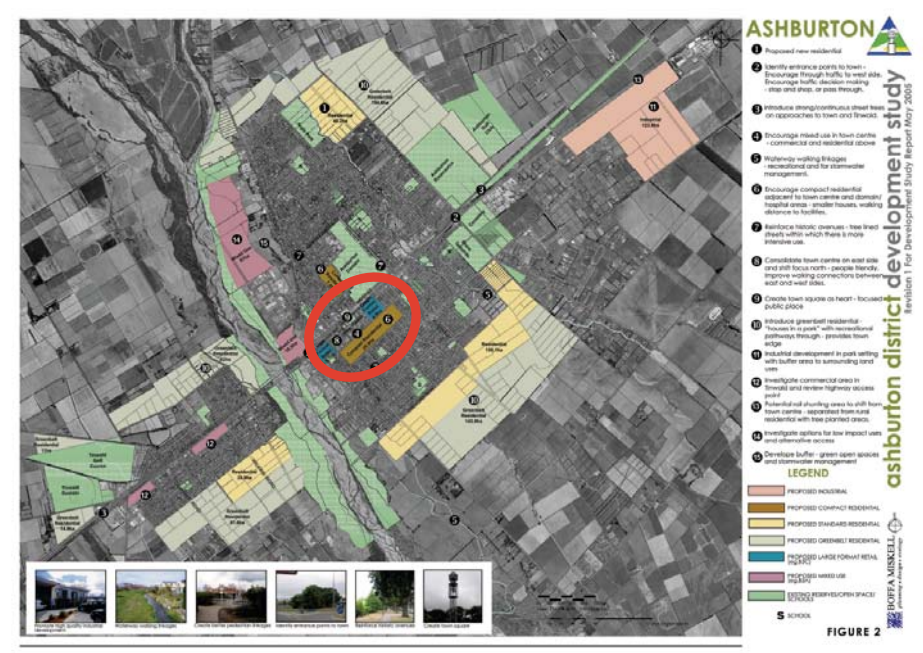
- Town Centre Sub-committee to finalise and accept in principle the Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan; subject to further detailed design, consultation and funding availability for the key projects proposed.
- Feed proposed land-use changes into the District Plan Review and consider appropriate zoning boundaries and planning controls to support the intent of the Concept Plan.
- Allow for professional fees and related implementation costs for higher priority projects during the Annual Plan and LTCCP budgeting process. This includes discussions with other Council managers on related capital works within the town centre.
- Begin planning and design work on one Key Project (e.g. Baring Square East) and appropriate 'early wins' projects (e.g. Signage), in consultation with the community.
- Carry out further work to effectively integrate or link significant community projects into the Concept Plan proposals.



# introduction

## Background

The Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan has been initiated as part of delivering the Ashburton Development Plan (adopted by Council in 2005). The Ashburton District Council has been assisted with developing the Concept Plan by Boffa Miskell - specialist planners, urban designers and landscape architects.



Ashburton District Development Study (2005)

## Purpose

The Concept Plan sets a broad framework for improvement, building on the good foundations of the existing town centre. This framework will take effect over many years and will have the flexibility to accommodate a range of new initiatives (only some of which are known today).

The Concept Plan aims to co-ordinate many of the individual actions and changes that can take place within the town centre, to create a strong focus for the social, civic, business, entertainment and living activities of the District and create a safer and more pleasant place for the future.

The Concept Plan provides a basis for Council investment in public land (squares, streets, parks); clear direction for private investment in new developments and business opportunities; and interest groups and resident can have some certainty as to the future shape and quality of the town centre's features they may value.

## Study area

The aerial photo below identifies the general area of Ashburton town considered by the project team. The existing retail core is contained within this area, but an important aim of the project was to identify what other elements could contribute to the wider appeal of the town centre and where it could expand to as community needs grow with the town.



## Structure of document

The report initially outlines the methodology, key objectives, heritage context and urban design analysis. Design proposals have then been divided into two parts;

1. **Concept Plan**- This describes the growth options considered and broad design proposals. It then indicates possible implementation phases and other projects beyond the town centre that may improve its success.
2. **Preliminary Design Options** - This develops design options for two of the key projects from the Concept Plan, the 'Green Corridor' and 'Baring Square'. They provide an indication on how other key projects could be progressed in the next stage towards implementation.

# process and implementation

## Methodology

The Concept Plan process initially developed a brief and a list of key objectives in association with the Environmental Services team within Ashburton District Council. Urban design analysis of the town centre and its immediate context was then undertaken with the aid of GIS information sources and on-site surveys.

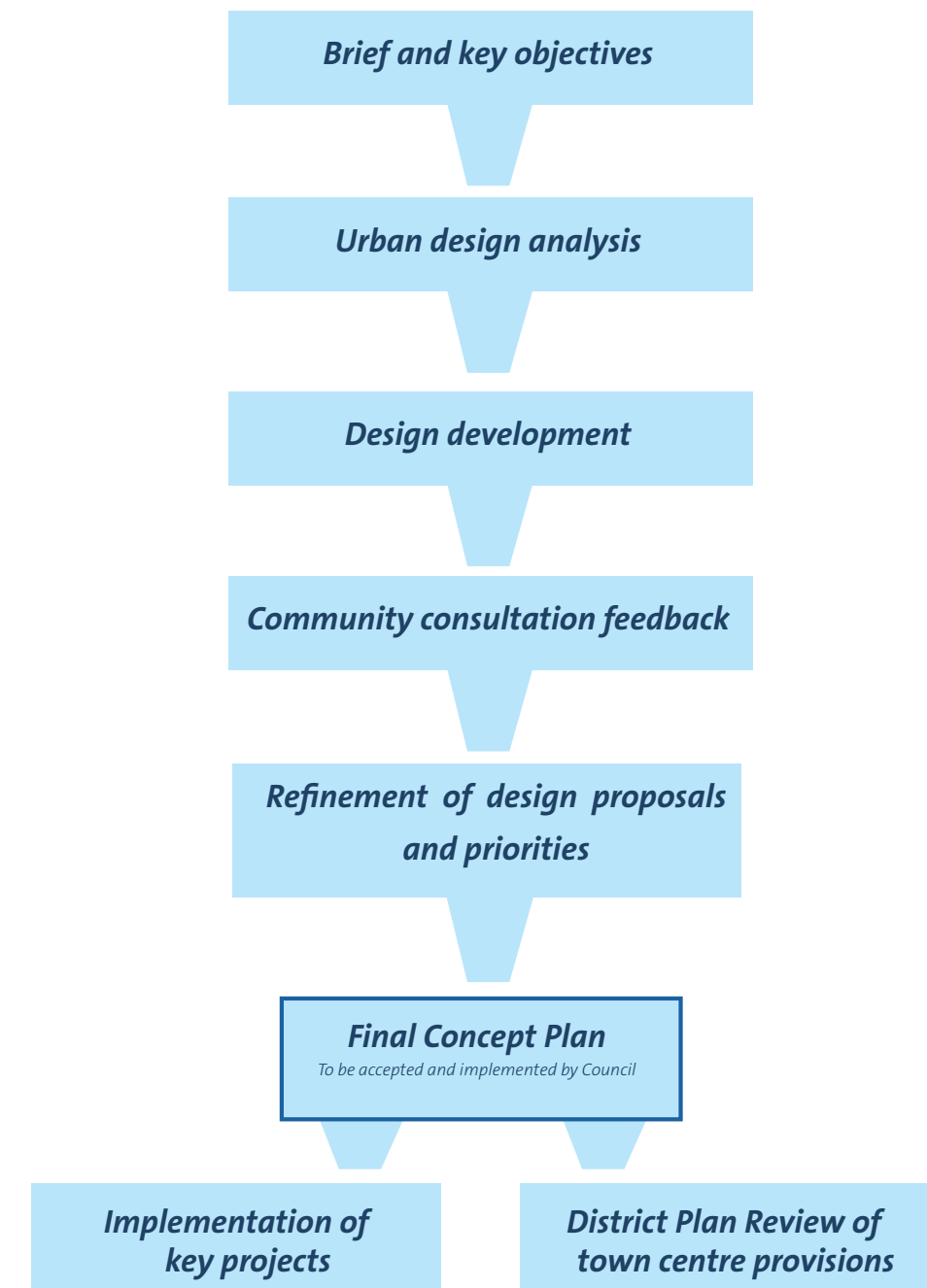
This was followed by a period of design development where a draft Concept Plan was prepared, which integrated a range of suggested land use changes with proposals for key public space projects. A series of Preliminary Design Options were also developed for some core areas of the town centre. These assisted in visualising how some of the key projects identified in the Concept Plan might look like if implemented on the ground.

Regular Town Centre Sub-committee workshops were held throughout the Concept Plan project to guide councillors through the process and agree on the consultation material. Interest groups, property owners and occupiers of the town centre were initially consulted on the Concept Plan proposals and Preliminary Design Options. This was then closely followed by wider engagement with the general public.

The consultation feedback was reviewed by the project team and the town centre proposals refined to achieve a reasonable balance between the expert advice provided and the preferences of the community. The final report has then been compiled and presented to the Sub-committee for final approval.

## Implementation

Once an overall Concept Plan is accepted, the Council can then proceed to design specific parts of the town centre in greater detail, where more technical issues can be resolved and implemented over time through its Community Plan. Where land use changes are proposed, the District Plan review process, currently running in parallel, can give effect to these changes through new zonings and development controls.

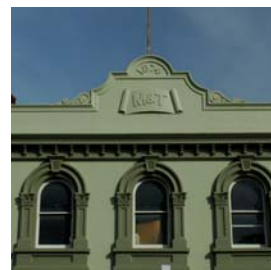




# key objectives

We have the 'chance of a lifetime to 'stitch' together a range of future town centre initiatives and make them all work together in an efficient and economically beneficial way.

In planning for the future of the Town Centre, it is important to consider both the objectives for the wider town and of the town centre itself. The key objectives of the Concept Plan are to enhance and/ or provide for:



- a. **Identity and character** – by making Ashburton town centre distinctive and reinforcing its special qualities (eg. historic buildings, green spaces and trees) and make it attractive to passers by and a source of pride for the local community.



- b. **A central public space** – a place within the town that will act as the 'heart' – where main events take place and daily life occurs. It should have a social and civic function.



- c. **Connections between places (physically and visually)** – improving walking and cycling convenience and encouraging movement between common destinations, from east to west and other parts of the town.



- d. **Activation of public space** – by encouraging new development and activities on the edges of existing squares and parks that attract people and make places safer.



- e. **Existing and emerging precincts** – consolidate successful parts of the town centre and build on areas where changes are occurring in a way that are complementary to each other.



- f. **Opportunities for higher density residential living** – by changing development controls and providing a context within which people may want to live in close proximity to the amenities provided by the town centre.



- g. **Investment** - in privately owned land that can benefit from the certainty of co-ordinated Council investment in the quality of public spaces and other infrastructure (eg. parking).



- h. **Managing traffic and parking demand** – by improving the pleasantness of busy streets and slowing traffic through the core of the town centre. Providing parking in convenient locations for visitors and commuters, while prioritising street design to encourage people to walk and cycle within the town centre.



- i. **Significant community projects (eg. Art Gallery/ Museum)** – key community landmarks can activate and generate positive change in the areas around them. The town centre should accommodate or link to these facilities for mutual benefit.





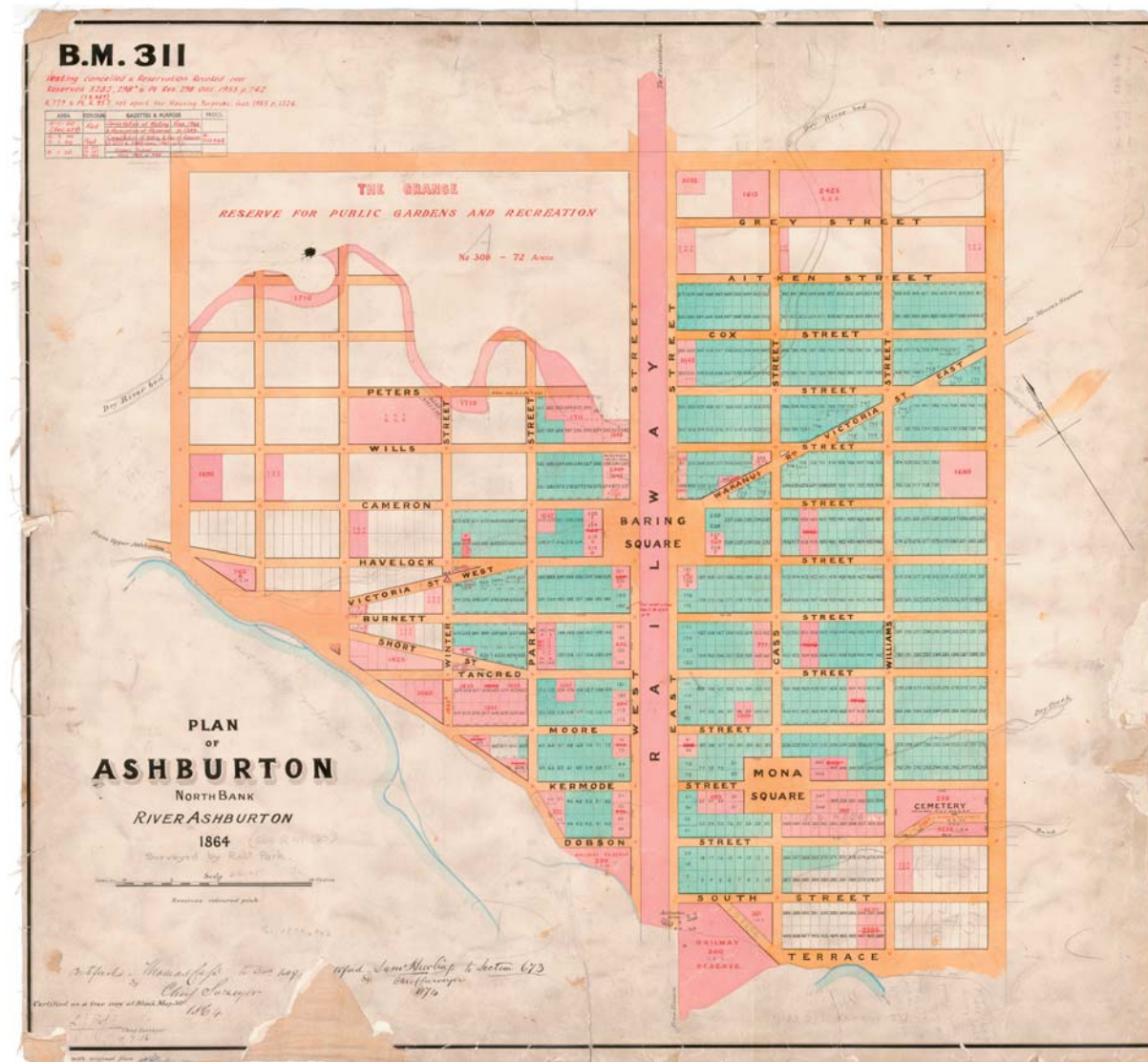
# heritage context

## Early planning

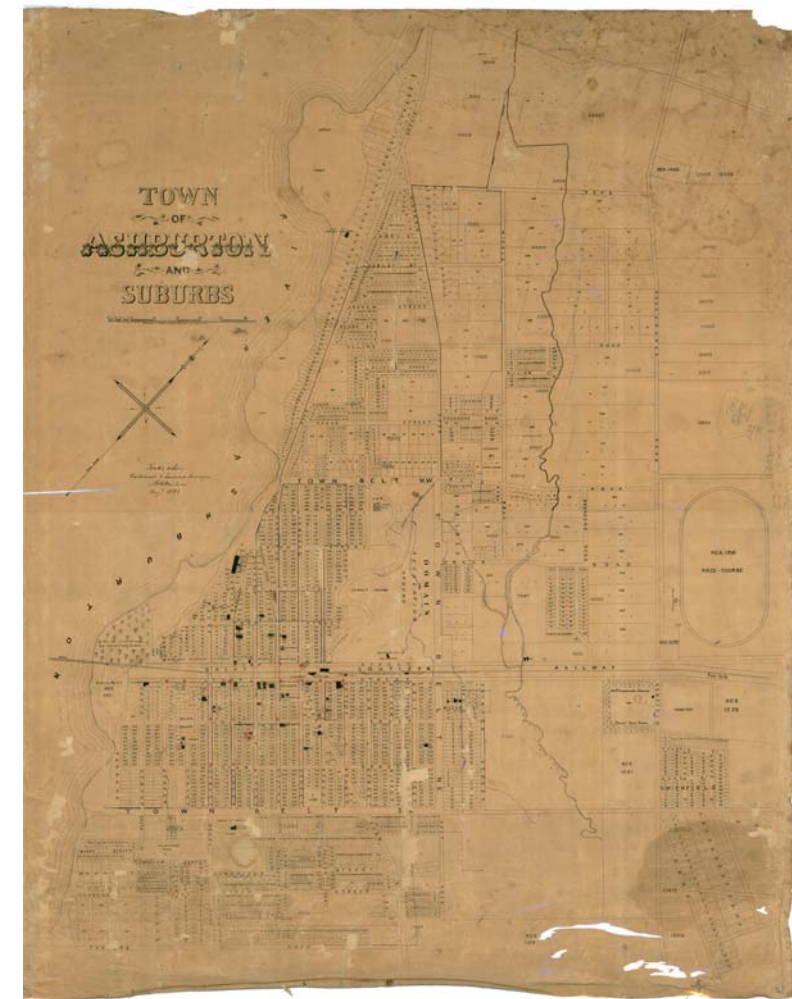
Ashburton was surveyed in 1863 by Robert Park and boundaries were laid out. A notice in the Provincial Government Gazette proclaimed Ashburton a township. The river and the town were named after the Honourable William Baring (Lord Ashburton) a prominent member of the first New Zealand Land Association founded by Wakefield in 1837.

The land on which the town of Ashburton stands was obtained from the Canterbury Association which held the land under the Wakefield Scheme. The aim of the scheme was to build a Church of England settlement like the Mother Country. (Reference: Ashburton Museum)

The street grid, provision of formal squares and the Domain remain important structuring elements of the current town centre. Maintaining and enhancing their clarity and integrity is vital to reinforce these historic links.



1864 Survey Plan (surveyed by Robert Park)



1888 Survey Plan



Ashburton Town Centre historic photo, 1903  
View of Baring Square  
(1960 Whites Pictorial Reference of New Zealand)



Ashburton Town Centre historic photo, 1960  
View North along West and East Streets  
(1960 Whites Pictorial Reference of New Zealand)



Boffa Miskell



# heritage context

## Heritage infrastructure

The subsequent development of the town, following its early planning stages, has resulted in rich layers of heritage, many of which remain important features of the town centre today. Retaining these heritage features ensures a sense of maturity is maintained and contributes to the distinctiveness and character of the town.

Heritage buildings are often located on corners or around major public open spaces where they act as important visual landmarks to orientate people around the town centre. Most noteworthy for the Concept Plan are those on the corners of Burnett and Tancred streets and around Baring Square, which provide important reference points for those travelling between eastern and western sides of the town or through the town centre itself.

The historic railway bridge 1917, located at the end of Cameron Street, provides a physical connection across the railway between these two halves. The NZ Historic Places Trust and NZTA support the 'adaptive reuse' of the bridge by extending it across West Street, along with any proposed refurbishment. Monuments and larger trees are equally important. These are frequently located within public spaces and provide valuable focal points and sense of enclosure.

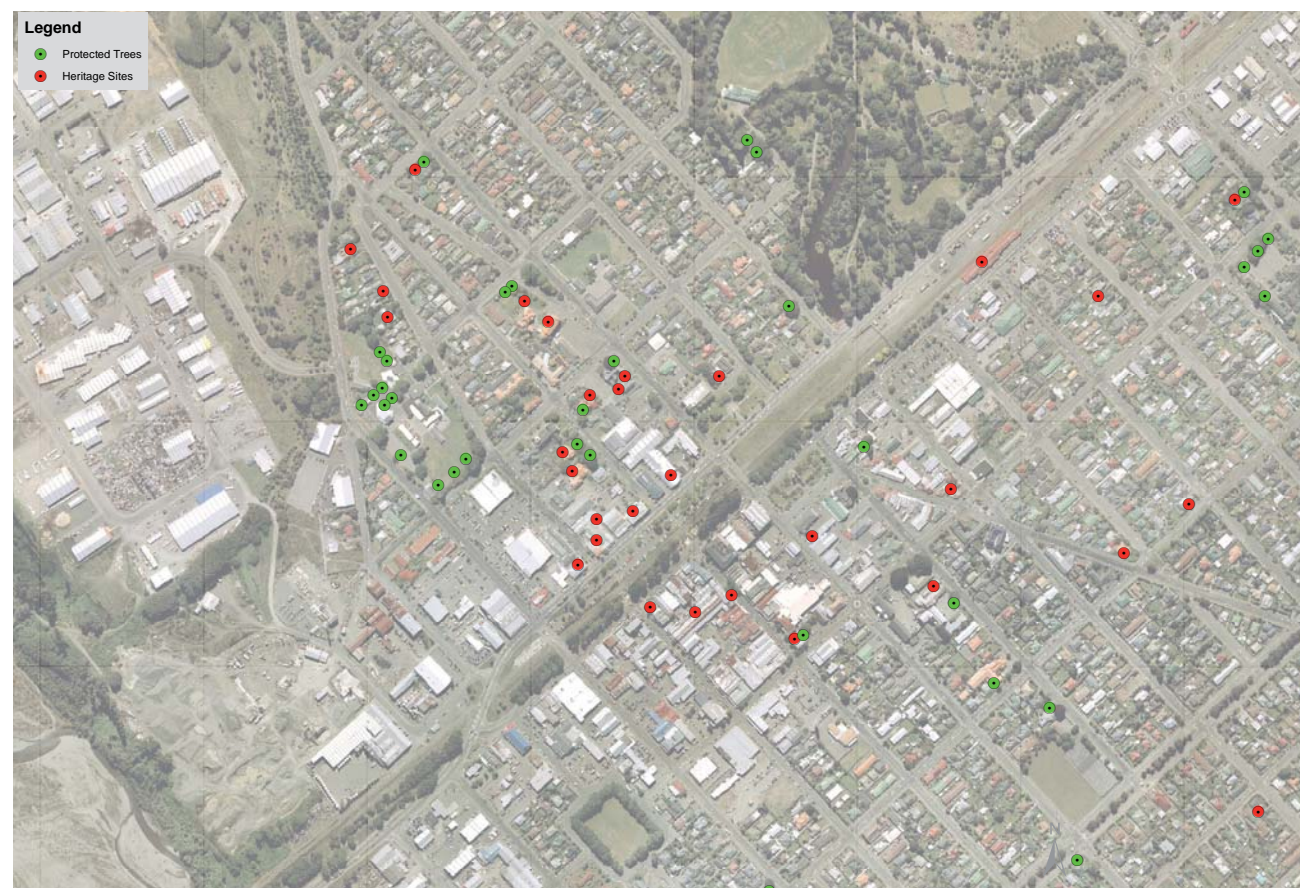
The Register of Historic Places, records the following other historical features within Ashburton Town Centre:

- A.N.Z. Bank (Bank of Australasia Former)
- Canterbury Roller Flour Mill (Mill House, original building and concrete store)
- Church of the Holy Name (Catholic)
- Federated Farmers Building
- Peter Cates Grain Store
- Presbytery
- St Andrew's Church (Former and Presbyterian)
- Tucker's Building
- W. Patching Building

Note:



At the time of issue, Environment Court proceedings relating to retention of the historic Ashburton Railway Station are ongoing. The Railway Station and its associated footbridge are both recognised for their special and outstanding historical and cultural heritage significance and value. If a decision is made to retain the building, it is recommended that an addendum to this report be prepared to ensure that it is successfully integrated into the overall Concept Plan proposals.



Map of recognised heritage sites and protected trees





# analysis ‘approaches to the town centre’

The visual approach to Ashburton and its town centre, from a visitors perspective (along the highway) and for locals (through the street grid), is important for establishing a good public image and a strong destination. Upgrading the town centre alone is not enough, the key approaches also need to be considered.

We have taken a sequence of photos along the approaches that visitors would normally take by vehicle (north and south) and locals by foot or bike (east and west). This helps indicate where improvements could be made to emphasise the arrival at the town centre, its image and visual connections between the eastern and western halves of the town.

## State Highway 1 - the visitor experience



‘welcome to Ashburton Town Centre



Wakanui Stream crossing and petrol station



Walnut Avenue and the The Domain gateway



Baring Square and the start of the town centre



Big box retail on Moore Street



View back towards town centre



The Ashburton River bridge

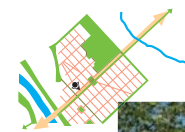
## The Grid - the local experience



Wills Street



Burnett Street



Tancred Street



Southern end of East Street



# analysis understanding the broader structure

Analysis of the existing town centre and its surroundings has been undertaken to identify its strengths and weaknesses from several different perspectives.



## Green and Blue Networks

Existing Rivers, Creeks, Parks and tree lined avenues help 'signal' the approach to the town centre and define its outer limits.



## Movement routes

State Highway 1 and the railway line are barriers to east/west movement on the local street grid, but potentially bring lots of visitors. These conflicts need to be resolved creatively.



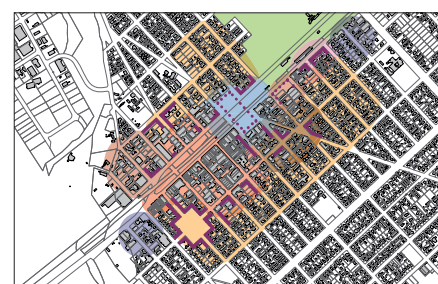
## Land uses

There are several established precincts of similar land use (e.g. retail) on either side of the highway that could work better together. Other activities are emerging around new community facilities (i.e. Performing Arts Theatre).



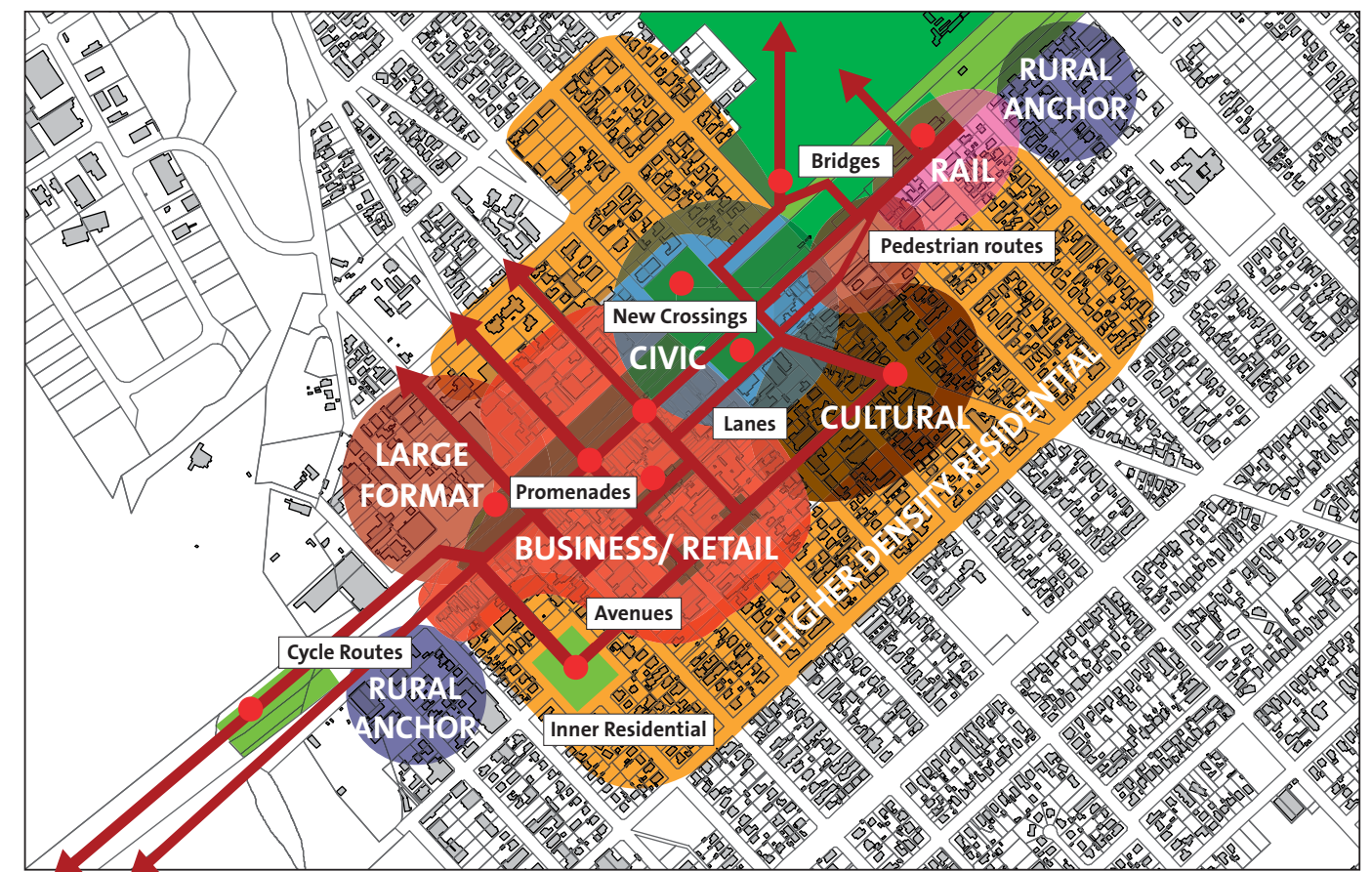
## Focal points

Existing Squares, feature buildings and other landmarks are dotted around the town centre. These, along with other historic buildings, are familiar local reference points to base improvements on or between.



## Filling in the gaps

The street grid has established a strong block structure but there are lots of gaps along their edges. Encouraging more building within the gaps consolidates the town centre activities and better defines the public streets and open spaces.



## Linking it all together

By overlaying each analysis map, we begin to see possible common land use themes and key destinations. Connections between them can be enhanced recognising focal points and 'filling' the gaps with similar activities.



# community consultation

## Process

The intention of the consultation was to gain feedback that allowed the Concept Plan to be refined and to move forward to finalisation and acceptance by Council. More detailed designs and an implementation plan can then be prepared that provides the phasing, process and responsibilities for the Concept Plan actions.

The consultation process was initiated through a full page spread in the District Diary, which explained the background to the Concept Plan and advertised two consultation open days. This coincided with a letter drop to all interest groups and owners and occupiers associated with the town centre. This invited them to the first open day and a feedback form was also enclosed. This gave them the opportunity to identify any major issues, prior to full public release.

Two days of community consultation were undertaken. These were held at the Ashburton Masonic Lodge and were estimated to be attended by well over 100 people.

The number of registered attendees at each open day are listed below:

1. Stakeholders Open Day, 13th November 2008 (68 registered attendees)
2. Public Open Day, 29th October 2008 (13 registered attendees)

Additional Meetings also provided for the New Zealand Transport Agency, NZ Historic Places Trust and Ashburton Business Association.

Key attendees throughout the community consultation included:

- NZ Historic Places Trust
- Art Gallery/ Museum
- Enterprise Ashburton
- Ashburton Business Association
- Fire Service
- Local press - Guardian and Courier
- Councillors and Council Staff



Project team explaining display boards



Summary presentations



Discussions about display board information

Two forms were provided for community to respond to the Concept Plan proposals.

The image shows two pages of a public feedback form for the Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan. Page 1 includes fields for Name, Individual/Group representation, Contact Address, Postal Address, Contact telephone number, and Email address. It also contains three numbered sections for feedback: 1. Main issues currently facing the town centre, 2. What do you think will attract more locals and visitors, and 3. Where the town centre should expand. Page 2 contains sections 4, 5, and 6, asking about distinctive features, investment within the town centre, and unsafe areas. It also includes a section for additional comments and return instructions.

Ashburton Town Centre Concept Plan (White) This form provided open ended questions designed to give the project team an appreciation of how the community felt about their town, and what was important for them moving into the future.

The image shows two pages of a public feedback form for the Concept Plan Preliminary Design Options. Page 1 includes fields for Name, Individual/Group representation, Contact Address, Postal Address, Contact telephone number, and Email address. It also contains three numbered sections for feedback: 1. Main issues currently facing the town centre, 2. What do you think will attract more locals and visitors, and 3. Where the town centre should expand. Page 2 contains sections 4, 5, and 6, asking about distinctive features, investment within the town centre, and unsafe areas. It also includes a section for additional comments and return instructions.

Concept Plan Preliminary Design Options (Green) This form related directly to options provided on the display boards. As such, the form was only available where these boards were displayed.

This form sought more quantitative results from attendees.

Consultation responses and technical opinions have formed the basis for the project team's final recommendations to Council. Responses from attendees have been collated, and are summarised on the following pages.





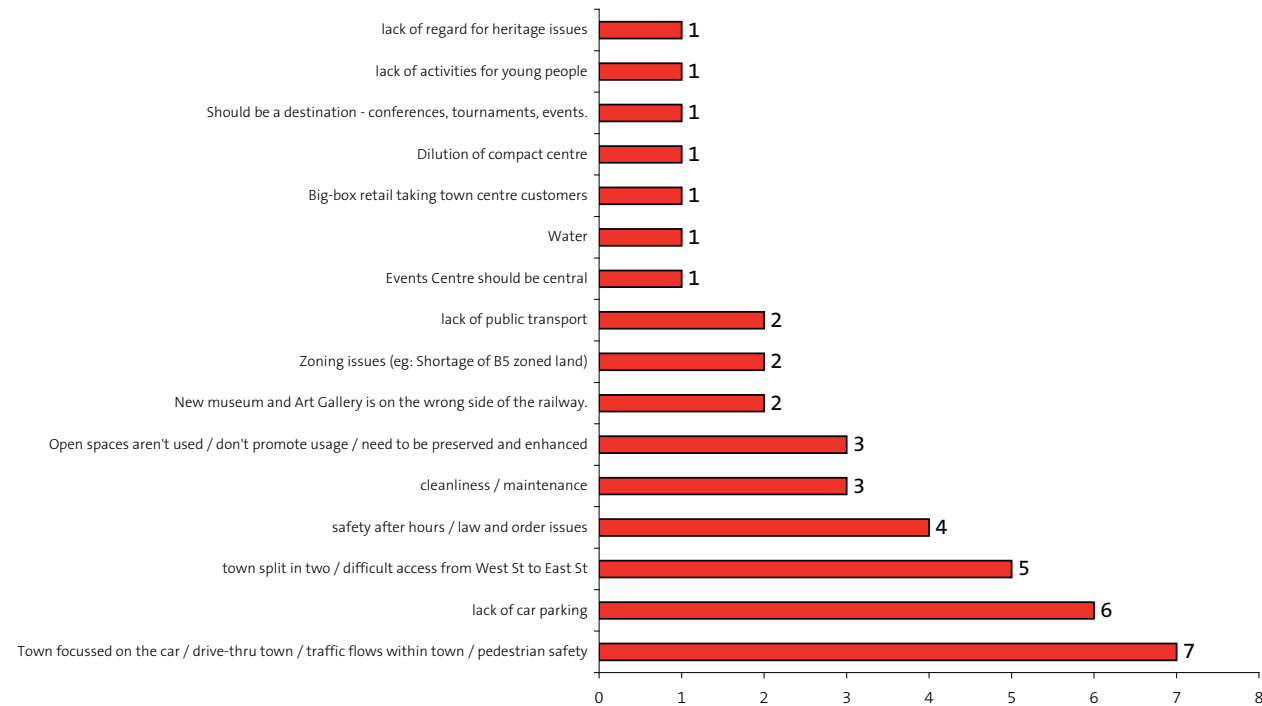
# community consultation

## Concept Plan feedback (White feedback form)

Attendees were asked for their views on a number of aspects relating to Ashburton's current condition and future prospects.

Results are illustrated in the graphs below.

Please let us know what you think are the main issues currently facing Ashburton Town Centre

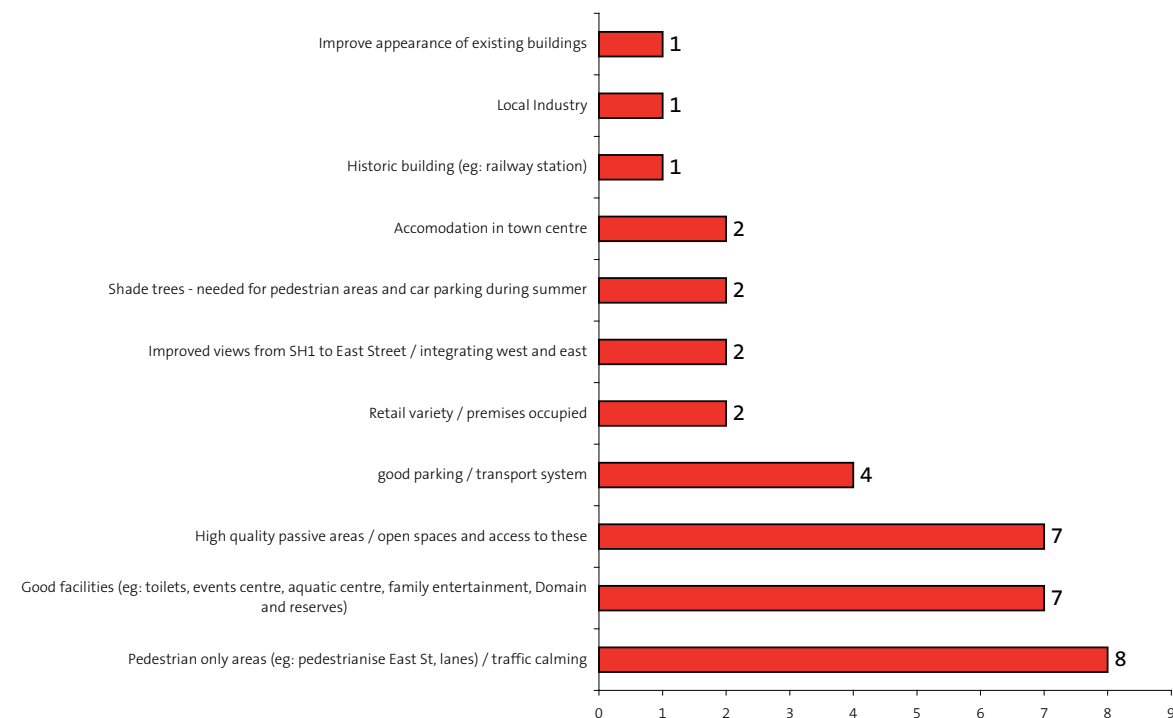


### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- Accessibility barriers such as SH1 and the railway are a genuine concern.
- Vehicle dominance within the town centre is also a genuine concern.

**Consultation feedback confirmed what has already been included with the concept plan proposals.**

What do you think will attract more locals and visitors to Ashbuton Town Centre?



### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- Good facilities, high quality public spaces and pedestrian priority areas all scored highly.

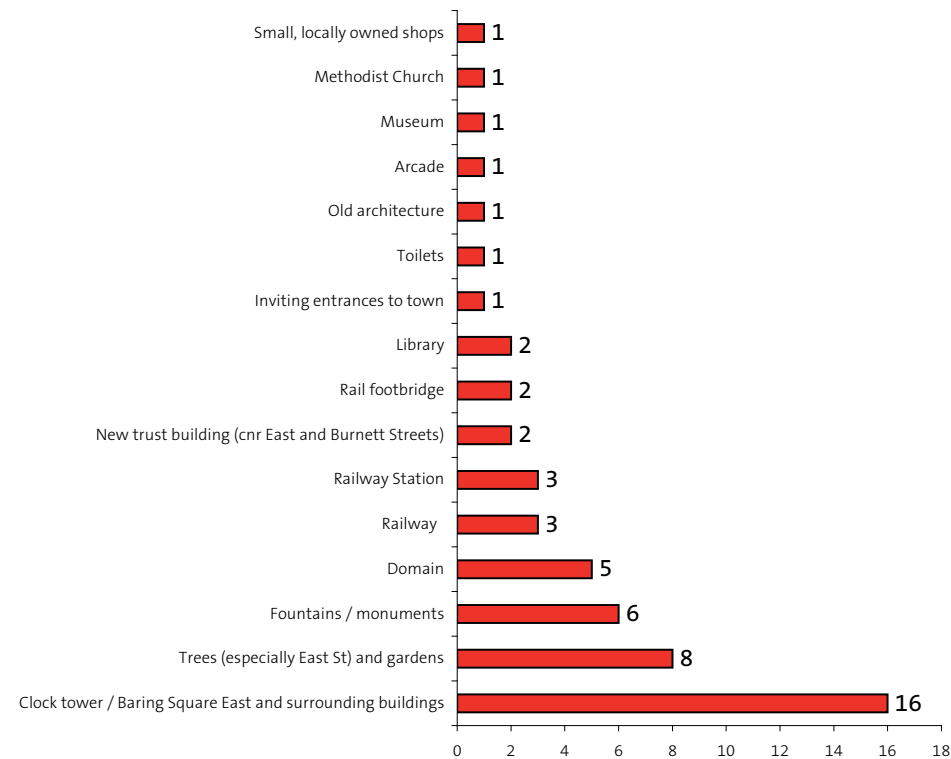
**This confirms what has already been proposed with the concept plan proposals**



# community consultation

## Concept Plan feedback (White feedback form)

What are the distinctive features of Ashburton Town Centre and why?

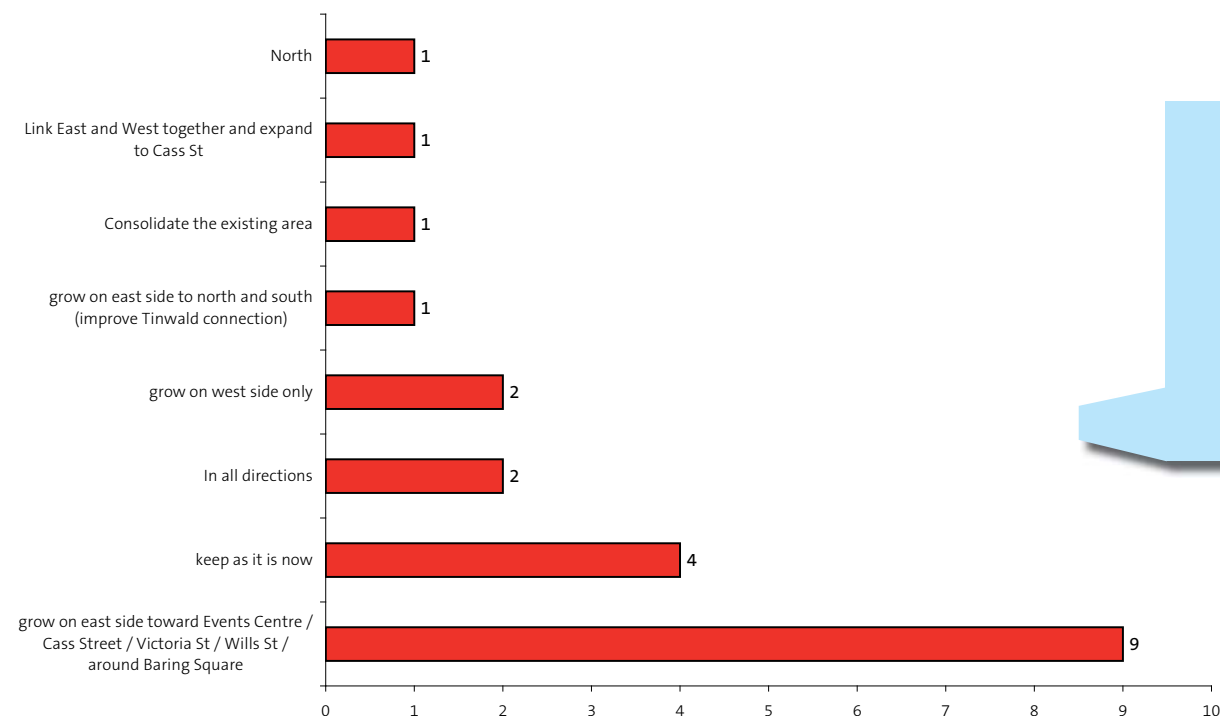


### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- The clocktower and Baring Square East were identified as being highly distinctive features of the town centre. This was followed by the town's trees and gardens, monuments and the Domain

This provides good direction on first phase projects, and reinforces the concept plan proposals to strengthen connections between the Domain and Town Centre.

As Ashburton grows where do you think the Town Centre should expand to?



### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- Strong support for growth on the East side toward Cass St/Victoria St/Wills St and around Baring Square.
- Opportunity to incorporate historical parts of the town centre, such as the triangle shops.

This growth direction reinforces the preferred approach of the project team and links in with Council's recent investment in the Performing Arts Centre.

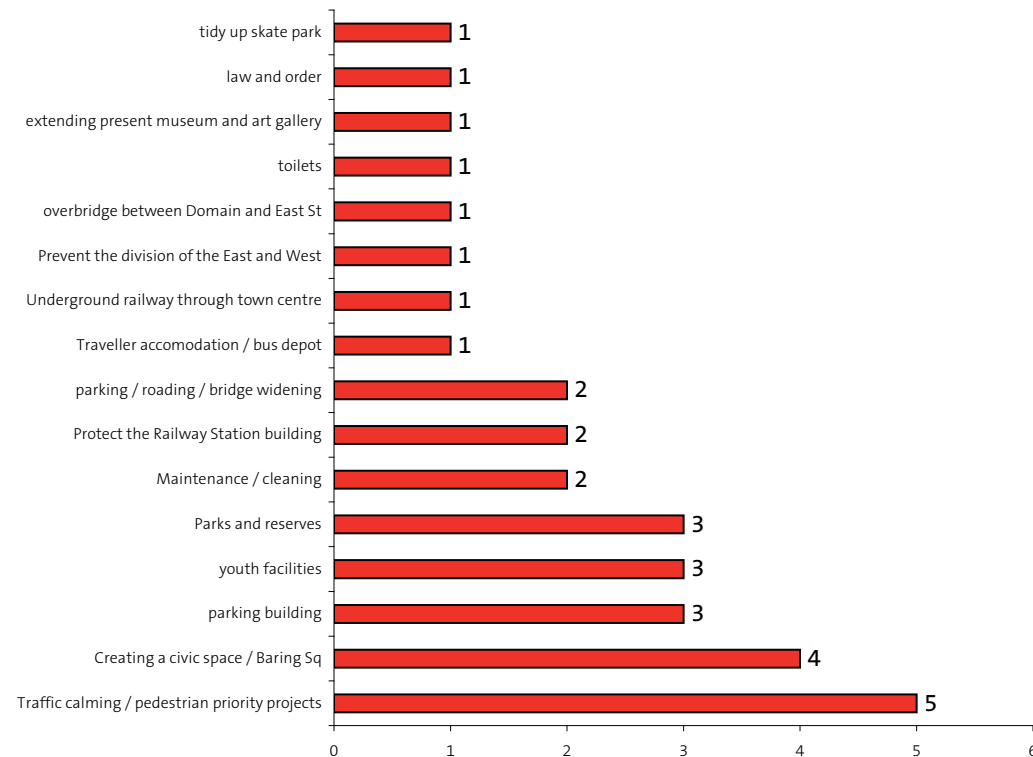




# community consultation

## Concept Plan feedback (White feedback form)

If Council was to invest within the Town Centre, what do you think it should be spent on and why?

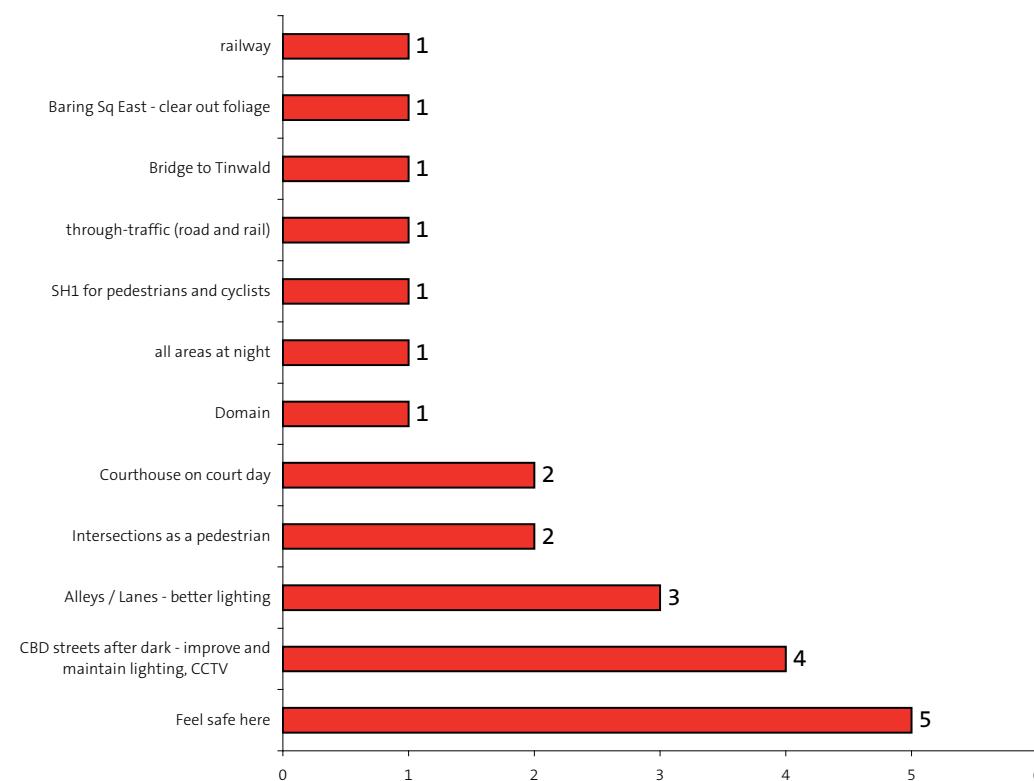


### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- Support for creation of a civic space, and pedestrian priority areas.

This provides direction on first Key Projects (eg: Baring Square East and East Street)

Are there any areas of the Town Centre that you think are unsafe and could be improved?



### FEEDBACK SUMMARY / ACTION LIST

- Encouragingly, the most votes were recorded by those who felt safe in their town centre.
- There was also an indication that public safety should be a focus for future key projects, particularly along laneways and general night lighting.

This flags up priorities for some early win and key projects (ie. CPTED study; laneway improvements).

