

Council

Meeting of 16 September 2026

Business Unit: Community

Date Created: 06 August 2026

Town Centre Refresh Engagement Outcomes

Purpose Te Aronga o te Pūrongo

The purpose of this report is to present the outcomes of community and stakeholder engagement on two proposed Feilding Town Centre Refresh projects and seek direction on the next steps for each proposal.

The engagement tested a proposed permanent all-weather cover over the Brick Quadrant in the Square; and proposed one-way traffic and placemaking changes to sections of Fergusson and Goodbehere Streets.

Recommendations Ngā Tūtohunga

That the Council:

1. Receives the Feilding Town Centre Refresh engagement outcomes set out in this report.
2. In relation to the proposed cover over the Brick Quadrant in the Square:
 - a. Notes that 77.3% of the 753 formal submitters who answered the relevant question did not support the proposed cover, and that the independently collected short-form feedback also showed strong opposition.
 - b. Note that a change in design is unlikely to address many of the matters raised, that these matters would need to be resolved to achieve a successful outcome through a publicly notified resource consenting process, and that there is a risk of appeal through the Environment Court.
 - c. Agrees that Council does not progress with the proposed cover over the Brick Quadrant in the Square, and that officers provide a report on alternative Town Centre Refresh work programme projects to the District Development Committee.
3. In relation to the proposed one-way traffic and placemaking changes:
 - a. Notes that 61.5% (437) of the 710 formal submitters who answered the relevant question supported the proposed Fergusson and Goodbehere Street traffic improvement and placemaking improvements.
 - b. Agrees that Council progresses a 12-month Fergusson and Goodbehere Street traffic improvement trial that considers speed, safety, parking dimensions, reversing visibility, and business servicing.

- c. Agrees that Council implements the Fergusson and Goodbehere Street streetscape placemaking improvements.

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1. Background Ngā Kōrero o Muri

- 1.1 Council approved \$5 million of capital funding through the 2024-34 Long-Term Plan for the Feilding Town Centre Refresh. The funding is phased at \$500,000 a year over 10 years, with unspent capital able to accumulate to support larger projects.
- 1.2 The Town Centre Refresh is intended to strengthen the town centre as a community and economic asset for the district. The wider programme includes improvements to public spaces, direction signage to key public amenities, lighting to improve visibility and safety, refreshed planting, refreshed town entrance signage, public art and heritage storytelling, and other activities that activate the town centre.
- 1.3 A Town Centre Refresh Focus Group was established to prepare an overall strategy and develop the initial programme. An urban designer reviewed earlier reports, community engagement feedback and the Refresh Strategy and worked with the Focus Group to prepare concept designs that provide a consistent design theme and that “brings to life”, through imagery, some of the proposed work programme.
- 1.4 On 18 September 2025, Council supported in principle the overall design themes and instructed officers to continue progressing a covered structure over the Brick Quadrant. On 15 April 2026, Council approved targeted stakeholder and wider community engagement before further design work or a resource consent application could be considered.
- 1.5 The two proposals presented through the 2026 engagement were:
- A covered, weather-protected community and event space over the Brick Quadrant in the Square; and
 - One-way traffic and placemaking changes to sections of Fergusson and Goodbehere Streets, including additional parking and refreshed gardens, seating and streetscape elements.

2. Strategic Fit Te Tautika ki te Rautaki

- 2.1 The programme goal is "a connected, vibrant and enjoyable central place to live, work, do business, play and grow". The programme supports Council's community outcomes by seeking to create a place where people belong and spend time, infrastructure that is fit for the future, and a prosperous and resilient local economy.
- 2.2 Responding transparently to the engagement outcomes also supports sound decision-making. The results provide a clear basis for Council to distinguish between elements that have community support and those that require reconsideration.

3. Discussion and Options Considered Ngā Matapakinga me ngā Kōwhiringa i Wānangahia

Engagement Approach and Participation

- 3.1 Engagement was undertaken in two stages. Direct meetings with affected and interested groups began on 19 June 2026. Wider public engagement ran from 15 July to 14 August 2026 using the Council website, social media, newspaper advertising, CBD signage and a pop-up at the Feilding Farmers' Market.
- 3.2 Council received 766 formal submissions during the public engagement period. Not every submitter answered every question, so the results below use the number of responses to each question as the denominator. Theme counts are non-exclusive because one written comment may have been coded to more than one theme.
- 3.3 A further 22 responses were provided through an independently developed short form. As that form used different questions and response options, those results have been analysed separately and have not been combined with Council's formal submission results.
- 3.4 Demographic information was optional. Among the 757 submitters who provided their age, 595 were aged 40 or over and 41 were aged under 30.
- 3.5 Because younger people were under-represented in the formal submissions, officers also met with approximately 30-40 Year 12 and 13 students of the Feilding High School Council on 21 August 2026. Their feedback is reported separately as targeted youth input.

Formal Public Submission Results

- 3.6 The formal results show a clear difference between the two proposals. There was substantial opposition to the proposed cover over the Brick Quadrant, while the one-way trial and increased parking questions received majority support.
- 3.7 The percentages in this report are calculated using the number of respondents who answered each question. This is why the one-way traffic and additional parking percentages differ from the whole-record headline percentages in the public feedback presentation, which include records without an answer. The single respondent who selected both one-way options is shown separately below.

Question	Result among those who answered	Main messages
Cover over the Brick Quadrant	171 support (22.7%) 582 do not support (77.3%) 753 responses	Opposition centred on cost, retaining the Square's openness and character, the visual fit and scale of the design, perceived security, maintenance, functionality issues, and effects on nearby businesses. Support focused on reliable shelter, vitality in the town centre, and opportunities for events and increasing year-round activity.
Planting option in Square	125 Option 1 (35.6%) 224 Option 2 (64.1%) 349 responses	Option 2, with more planting, was preferred. Respondents also asked that the planting avoid unnecessary maintenance.
One-way traffic changes	437 support (61.5%) 273 do not support (38.4%) 710 responses	A majority supported the change. Concerns focused on the one-way traffic direction, and resulting speed, safety, parking dimensions, reversing visibility, and business servicing.
Additional parking	470 yes (67.5%) 226 no (32.5%) 696 responses	A majority considered that additional parking would improve access. Feedback sought safe and usable bay dimensions, mobility parking, suitable loading areas, parking enforcement and careful treatment of pedestrian space.

- 3.8 The independently collected short-form feedback reinforced the opposition to the covered-space proposal. Of 22 responses, none supported the proposed design, 20 opposed it and two did not answer. Three expressed qualified support for the overall concept, 18 opposed it and one did not answer. The strongest themes were retaining the Square's openness and character, the appearance of the design, cost and value for money, and whether sufficient need or use had been demonstrated.

Cover over the Brick Quadrant - Detailed Feedback

- 3.9 The strongest formal submission themes were opposition to proceeding or retaining the Square as it is (370 comments), cost and competing priorities (317), and the openness, character, heritage and visual fit of the structure (377). As the themes overlap, these counts should not be added together or read as separate groups of submitters.
- 3.10 Other recurring concerns included safety, security and antisocial behaviour (135), design alternatives or other locations (119), weather protection and event use (113), roof engineering and whole-of-life maintenance (104), effects on nearby businesses and town-centre activity (98), planting and green-space preferences (97), and accessibility and event logistics (91).
- 3.11 Submitters who supported aspects of the design most often identified weather protection and all-weather use (84), support for markets and town-centre activity (62), the overall appearance or character (44), a flexible multipurpose event space (31), and planting or stormwater treatment (23).
- 3.12 The feedback raises several matters that would need to be resolved before a permanent cover could be justified or considered for a resource consent. The key matters include:
- A preference that the site be left clear of any permanent structure, retaining the open nature of the Square;

- The suggestion that the proposed cost of the permanent cover could be better attributed to other infrastructure or asset development;
- The opinion that the design may not appropriately reflect the local identity and heritage character of Feilding - recognising that, like art, building design is subjective;
- Clarity on how effects on adjoining businesses would be mitigated versus the wider economic benefits that may be gained by a more defined, weather protecting space;
- Concerns about the potential for night-time security issues that could arise as a result of a covered space.

3.13 Given the overwhelming feedback was for the cover not to proceed, a change in design is unlikely to address the other matters raised by these submitters. If Council chooses to proceed with a resource consent, it will be subject to a publicly notified process, with a high likelihood that similar submissions will be made in opposition. As a result, there is a risk that the matter could be escalated to the Environment Court for a decision.

Traffic and Placemaking Improvements - Detailed Feedback

3.14 The road proposal received majority support, but the written comments show that support is conditional on the practical design working well. The themes most frequently identified as advantages were improved traffic flow (45), additional or more usable parking (35), and better pedestrian access and public space (33).

3.14 The most frequently identified disadvantages were cost and affordability (119), that the current arrangement is adequate (65), and concerns about angle parking, reversing and large-vehicle safety (52). As the themes are non-exclusive, some respondents supported the proposed changes overall while also identifying potential disadvantages or matters requiring further consideration.

3.15 A 12-month trial should test the impact of one-way travel, effects on nearby streets and intersections, vehicle speeds, parking and loading dimensions, reversing visibility, crossings, and mobility access. Construction should be staged to lessen impacts on businesses.

Targeted and Face-to-Face Feedback

3.16 The facilitated sessions allowed participants to ask questions and consider the proposals in more detail. These sessions were generally more positive than the open public submissions, although views differed between groups.

Group and timing	Key feedback
Businesses adjoining the Market Quadrant 19 June	Four of the five directly impacted businesses were strongly opposed to the cover, with one being in support of the cover. Their concerns were the effect of additional event-related road closures on trade, customer access and movement, and reduced business visibility.
Farmers' Market stallholders 19 June - 10 stallholder groups	Strong support for the proposed changes and a clear desire for the project to progress.

Group and timing	Key feedback
Fergusson and Goodbehere Street businesses and property owners 23 June - 10 attendees	General support for the one-way layout, additional parking and refreshed garden areas. Feedback on the cover was also generally positive, suggesting that additional events can have positive business impacts. Questions about management of the covered area and cost-effective maintenance.
Feilding Business Initiative 6 July - 21 members	Overall positive sentiment toward both proposals. Discussion on the cover focused on design, use, security and cost.
FDP Biz@5 15 July - 30 attendees	Initial concerns about procurement, use of non-local designers, security and whether events benefit businesses. The discussion became more positive about the cover's potential to attract people. The street changes were generally well received.
Manawatū District Residents and Ratepayers 22 July - 8 attendees	Generally positive sentiment after discussion of funding, security, use and activation.
Feilding High School Council 21 August - approximately 30-40 students	Strong support for both proposals. Students wanted the cover to modernise and increase the usefulness of the town centre while remaining sympathetic to Feilding's heritage and rural character. They also sought more places to socialise, entertainment, and food and retail variety.

- 3.17 The difference between the facilitated feedback and the open submissions should not be treated as a contradiction to be averaged away. The sessions provide useful qualitative insight from particular user and stakeholder groups; the formal submissions provide a clear signal from a much larger self-selected group. Both point to opinion on the covered structure design that could be considered, solutions needed for adjoining businesses, cost, possible security concerns and clarity on the operating model.

Options Considered and Recommended Direction

- 3.18 **Cover over the Brick Quadrant - Option 1:** do not proceed with this project at this time and focus on the wider Town Centre Refresh work programme (recommended).

This option responds directly to the 77.3% of submissions opposed to the current proposal, particularly those who were concerned about cost and the impact on the open nature of the Square. This would remove the objective of improved shelter and activation, which received support from market stallholders, youth and several business groups.

Alternative projects for the Town Centre Refresh work programme should be presented to Council's District Development Committee, that has oversight delegated authority for the Town Centre Refresh work programme.

- 3.19 **Cover over the Brick Quadrant - Option 2:** progress the current concept with design changes.

This would retain project momentum but would expose Council to reputational and significant consenting risk and additional cost if progressed in the current economic climate. The scale of opposition is directed not only at individual design features but also at cost, location, and a perceived lack of demonstrated need. Note the proposed design concept is a self-supporting roof design reported to require less structural support and less construction cost than many other roof options. Any further design work will likely attract additional design cost and the potential for higher construction costs.

- 3.20 **Street improvements - Option 1:** progress to a 12-month trial and implement the streetscape improvements (recommended)

This reflects majority support while recognising that the one-way street traffic change may have parking, safety, accessibility and business-servicing issues that need to be considered overtime before becoming permanent.

- 3.21 **Street improvements - Option 2:** do not progress the changes.

This would avoid disruption and project cost but would not reflect the majority support for one-way changes and additional parking or address the identified streetscape and accessibility opportunities.

4. Risk Assessment Te Arotake Tūraru

Reputational and decision-making risk:

- 4.1 Progressing the current cover concept despite the scale of opposition could undermine confidence in the engagement process. The proposed control is to stop the current concept, explain Council's response publicly and use the feedback to shape any future options.
- 4.2 Progressing any version of a cover over the Square to resource consenting stage is likely to attract significant opposition that may result in the matter being escalation to the Environment Court, which is time-consuming and costly.

Transport, accessibility and service-delivery risk:

- 4.3 Permanent street changes could create unintended effects on nearby streets, safety, mobility access or business activity. The controls include a 12-month trial to monitor potential effects before becoming a permanent change.

5. Engagement Te Whakapānga

Significance of decision:

- 5.1 Receiving the engagement outcomes does not in itself trigger the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy. The recommended direction remains within the approved Town Centre Refresh programme as approved in the 2024-2034 Long-term Plan.

Māori and cultural engagement:

- 5.2 The source material does not record a separate Māori-specific engagement session as part of this phase. Earlier programme engagement identified interest from Ngāti Kauwhata in historical storytelling and cultural design elements but to date this engagement has not been realised and should continue to be an aspiration throughout the wider Town Centre Refresh work programme.

Community engagement:

- 5.3 The engagement combined direct stakeholder meetings, a four-week public submission process, a market pop-up and targeted youth engagement. The detailed group feedback, public theming summary and public feedback presentation are attached.

6. Operational Implications Ngā Pānga Whakahaere

- 6.1 The recommended direction will require officers to update the Town Centre Refresh work programme, communicate Council's decision, and undertake a 12-month trial for the street proposal. This work can be prioritised within the existing programme.

7. Financial Implications Ngā Pānga Ahumoni

- 7.1 The Town Centre Refresh has an approved capital budget of \$5 million over 10 years that is accounted for in the current Long-term Plan. By not progressing the cover over the Square, the costs associated with determining a detailed design and by making a resource consent application, are mitigated. Any reallocation of the Town Centre Refresh work programme will be brought back to the District Development Committee for consideration.

8. Statutory Requirements Ngā Here ā-Ture

- 8.1 There are no statutory requirements arising from receipt of the engagement outcomes. If a permanent covered structure was progressed, all required planning and building approvals would need to be obtained.

9. Next Steps Te Kokenga

- 9.1 Subject to Council adopting the recommendations, officers will:
- Publish a summary of the engagement outcomes and Council's response;
 - Stop work on progressing the cover over the Brick Quadrant;
 - Prepare for a 12-month trial of the one-way street proposal and engage with affected-businesses on the construction timeframe; and
 - Report back to the District Development Committee with relevant information on the Town Centre Refresh work programme.

10. Attachments Ngā Āpitihanga

- Town Centre Refresh Engagement Group Feedback
- Town Centre Refresh Theming Summary
- Public Feedback on Town Centre Refresh Presentation