ASHINGTON TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK
REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 59% of the floorspace use in Ashington was for retail.
- Shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative - 52% did not think that Ashington offered a wide choice of shops.
- There were more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience or retail service.
- There was 7% of vacant floorspace in Ashington.
- Between 2007 and 2008, the amount of vacant floorspace had remained the same when looking at property flows.
- 74% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into the town centre by car.
- Ashington also has good bus connectivity with a wide range of destinations reached.
- 25% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into the town centre by bus.
- 21% of Ashington residents shopped in Newcastle and only 20% in Ashington.

Recommendations

- The town centre should be monitored over a number of years to track changes.
- Comparisons can also be made with towns which have similar functions.
- Use class data will take all floors (from which businesses operate) within town centre buildings into consideration, as opposed to solely the ground floor.
- Investigate the location and quantity residential properties within the town centre.
- Work in partnership with local estate agents to gain further insight on property enquiries received.
- Align footfall counts across all town centres to enable fair comparisons. Additionally, footfalls to take place on Sunday to enable a weekly footfall to be estimated.
• A map to show all bus and train routes would prove useful in the analysis process.

• Investigate impact of crime initiatives on shopper’s perception of crime and safety within the town centre.

• Investigate impact of future proposals for Ashington on shopper’s overall perception of the town centre.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Why Measure Town Centre Performance?

Through Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6), the Government sets out its key objectives for town centers. Overall, PPS6 describes the need to promote town centre vitality and viability by planning for the growth and development of existing centres; promoting and enhancing existing centres; by focusing development in such centers; and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

More generally, the UK Government is committed to:

- Enhancing consumer choice by making provision for a range of shopping, leisure and local services, which allow genuine choice to meet the needs of the entire community, and particularly socially-excluded groups.
- Supporting efficient, competitive and innovative retail, leisure, tourism and other sectors, with improving productivity.
- Improving accessibility, ensuring that existing or new development is, or will be, accessible and well-served by a choice of means of transport.

The importance of town centres and the contribution that they make to the local economy is also highlighted in the Regional Economic Strategy. According to “Leading the Way”, the draft Regional Economic Strategy (2006), thriving town centres are at the heart of our communities and it is essential that they continue to provide a good range of services such as shops, leisure, transport and other services. Town Centres provide employment in many areas and attract new businesses to sustain the local economy. Research has shown the importance of strong Town Centres as the focus for driving wider economic growth and productivity. The Regional Economic Strategy also emphasises the importance of building on the potential of all town centres so that more remote economies and communities of the settlements around them can be supported.

The importance of the role played by town centres is also highlighted in Northumberland Local Area Agreement (LAA). The LAA Economic Development and Enterprise block includes an outcome to improve the impact of public/private sector...
intervention on economic performance of Northumberland Town Centres. Whilst stretch targets leading to additional government funding are not proposed for this outcome, it is hoped that improved town centre performance can help achieve other LAA targets.

1.2 What should we measure?

Government policy contained in PPS6 recognises that:

“Comprehensive, relevant and up to date monitoring is essential to the effective planning and management of town centres. It should be used to inform the review of site allocations and town centre policies and enable early signs of change of town centres to be identified and appropriate action taken”.

In order to ensure that monitoring is effective, data collection on the quality, quantity and convenience of retailing in the area and potential capacity for growth or change of shopping centres is essential. In order to measure the vitality and viability and monitor the health of their town centres and how this is changing over time, local authorities should regularly collect information, preferably in co-operation with the private sector, on the following key indicators:

- Diversity of main town centre uses (by number, type and amount of floorspace): the amount of space in use for different functions – such as offices; shopping; leisure, cultural and entertainment activities; pubs, cafes and restaurants; and, hotels.

- The amount of retail, leisure and office floorspace in edge-of-centre and out-of-centre locations.

- The potential capacity for growth or change of centres in the network: opportunities for centres to expand or consolidate, typically measured in the amount of land available for new or more intensive forms of town centre development.

- Retailer representation and intentions to change representation: existence and changes in representation of types of retailer, including street markets, and the demand of retailers wanting to come into the centre, or to change their representation in the centre, or to reduce or close their representation.
• Shopping rents: pattern of movement in Zone A rents within primary shopping areas (i.e. the rental value for the first 6 metres depth of floorspace in retail units from the shop window).

• Proportion of vacant street level property: vacancies can arise even in the strongest town centres, and this indicator must be used with care. Vacancies in secondary frontages and changes to other uses will also be useful indicators.

• Commercial yields on non-domestic property (i.e. the capital value in relation to the expected market rental): demonstrates the confidence of investors in the long-term profitability of the centre for retail, office and other commercial developments. This indicator should be used with care.

• Pedestrian flows (footfall): a key indicator of the vitality of shopping streets, measured by the numbers and movement of people on the streets, in different parts of the center at different times of the day and evening, who are available for businesses to attract into shops, restaurants or other facilities.

• Accessibility: ease and convenience of access by a choice of means of travel, including – the quality, quantity and type of car parking; the frequency and quality of public transport services and the range of customer origins served; and, the quality of provision for pedestrians, cyclists and disabled people and the ease of access from main arrival points to the main attractions.

• Customer and residents’ views and behaviour: regular surveys will help authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvements and in setting further priorities. Interviews in the town centre and at home can be used to establish views of both users and non-users of the centre, including the views of residents living in or close to the centre. This information could also establish the degree of linked trips.

• Perception of safety and occurrence of crime: should include views and information on safety and security, and where appropriate, information for monitoring the evening and night-time economy.

• State of the town centre environmental quality: should include information on problems (such as air pollution, noise, clutter, litter and graffiti) and positive factors (such as trees, landscaping and open spaces).
In response to the monitoring requirements set out above, the InfoNet has developed the Northumberland Town Centre Performance System, which is designed to assess the vitality and viability of rural market towns and larger centres within the former coalfield areas. The system uses intelligence from the InfoNet Organisation Database; the Northumberland Property Data Service (NPDS) database; the County Public Transport Team; and from the Community Safety Analysis Function maintained for the 6 Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRP’s) in the County. This is complemented by additional primary research designed to capture footfall estimates and shopper perception of town centres. The Service is also designed to complement the Retail Distinctiveness work undertaken for One North East and the Northumberland Strategic Partnership by Millers Consulting; and the Retail Distinctiveness Toolkit that has been developed for use by Town Centre Partnerships and Managers.

The service currently covers the towns of Alnwick, Amble, Ashington, Bedlington, Belford, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth, Cramlington, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth, Newbiggin, Ponteland, Prudhoe, Rothbury, Seahouses and Wooler using town centre boundary definitions included in Local Development Frameworks. There will, however, be flexibility to include additional settlements as the system develops.
2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Ashington Town Centre Boundary

Throughout this report there are two different boundaries for Ashington Town Centre that will be used depending on the section: the town centre boundary as defined by the Wansbeck District Council Local Plan (2007) (Figure 1), and the boundary as defined by Experian (from where a lot of data within this report has come) (Figure 2).

The area of Ashington Town Centre in relation to the District Council boundary is 297434.95 m².

Figure 1: Boundary for Ashington Town Centre (District Council)

Source: Wansbeck District Council Local Plan 2007
2.2 Ashington’s Town Centre – A Definition

The RSS (Regional Spatial Strategies) definition of a town centre is that it “includes a range of different sized centres, including market and country towns, traditional suburban centres, and quite often, the principal centre(s) in a local authority’s area. Town centres contain a Primary Shopping Area, the area where retail development is generally concentrated”.

(From Wansbeck District Council): The town of Ashington is the largest settlement in Wansbeck, and is situated approximately 24 km north of Newcastle upon Tyne and 6km east of Morpeth. It expanded from being a small hamlet in the 1840s and grew to be an important centre for coal mining until the mining decline in the 1980s. Today the coal mining industry has gone but the fabric of a strong town centre surrounded by tight terraced streets remains. Key vehicular routes into the town centre are from the A197, Rotary Parkway, which runs east to west across the northern extent of the
town. The town centre of Ashington is offset to the north of the town, with the majority of the residential area located to the south. Ashington remains the principle commercial and administrative centre in the District.

The high street of Ashington is located along Station Road and is partly pedestrianised at the retail core. There are a range of shops and services including 3 supermarkets which are mainly situated in ‘edge of town’ locations.

There has been a four year rolling programme of public realm improvements in the town centre. A complementary grant scheme continues to support town centre businesses to improve shop fronts, which is gradually refreshing the image of the town. The town centre is subject to some changes relating to outstanding planning permissions and other areas identified for development. A Masterplan is currently being developed, which aims to attract quality investment and to promote the long term sustainability of the town. Ashington Football Club has been assisted to relocate from Portland Park, paving the way for new retail investment in the town centre in coming years.

2.3 History and Development of Ashington

Ashington is situated in south-east Northumberland on the north bank of the river Wansbeck.

The history of the town is dominated by the development of the coal-mining industry in the 19th and 20th centuries, when Ashington grew from a small hamlet into a successful mining town. During the peak coal mining period it was considered to be the ‘world’s largest coal-mining village’. However, the collieries closed one by one as deep pit coal mining declined during the 1980’s and 1990’s. Ashington Colliery closed in 1983, and the last remaining colliery in the area (Ellington) closed in 2005.

Today, there is some debate about whether Ashington should be described as a town or village, but with a population of around 28,000, it is larger than every other
village in England. It has numerous large employers, including Northumberland College, some of which are based in Ashington, and others which are located in the recently developed Wansbeck Business Park.

The main attraction around Ashington is the Woodhorn Colliery Museum which illustrates Ashington’s mining history. It also contains a gallery dedicated to ‘The Pitman Painters’. Other attractions include the popular Tuesday market, the Queen Elizabeth II Country Park, and the Wansbeck Riverside Country Park.
3.0 DIVERSITY OF USES

The diversity of uses within a town centre contributes to the attractiveness of the centre to the local community. In this section the use class of buildings within the town centre will be investigated in terms of the percentage of floorspace occupied within the town centre and which areas of the town centre particular uses of buildings are situated. This chapter will also look at the events that take place throughout the year in Ashington Town Centre and also the opinions of shoppers surveyed on the range of retail provision in Ashington.

The full breakdown of use class analysed in this section can be found in Appendix 1.

3.1 Diversity of Use within Town Centre

Figure 3 shows that just over half (59%) of the floorspace in Ashington Town Centre are classed as shops. Financial and professional services, businesses and general industrial each account for 7% of the floorspace in Ashington, with assembly and leisure occupying 4%.

Figure 3: Diversity of Use within Town Centre

Floorspace by Use Class - Ashington Town Centre

Source: Experian
Figure 4: Building Use Class for Ashington Town Centre

Source: Experian
The map (Figure 4) shows that the majority of shops within the town centre are clustered around the longest street, Station Road. There are also financial and professional services situated here and also on Lintonville Road which runs perpendicular to Station Road. Business properties are also distributed throughout the town centre, with premises on Woodhorn Road, Station Road and Lintonville Terrace. Assembly and Leisure properties tend to be situated on the edge of the town centre, notably on the far end of Woodhorn Road.

It must be noted that the use class information in this section is based on the ground floor of the premises from the data that was provided by Experian, and with the assumption that the majority of the commercial property in the town centre is situated on the ground floor.
3.2 Events

There are a number of events that take place throughout the year in Ashington. The weekly Market is currently based at John Street but will soon be relocating to Wansbeck Square Car Park within the next 3-6 months. The Ashington Street Fair takes place on Station Road where there is plenty of funfair rides and entertainment for the family. The Miner’s Memorial Service takes place at Holy Sepulchre Church which is a memorial service for miners. A two day Continental Market will be taking place on 31st October to the 1st of November, where there will be traders from France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Holland and Poland all selling quality products. This event takes place on Station Road.

3.3 Satisfaction with the range of provision – retail

Question 16 in the Ashington Shopper Questionnaire asked:

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement “On the whole, Ashington offers a wide choice of quality shops”? (Figure 5).

Respondents were not very positive about this statement, with 52% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. Only 21% were in agreement.
Figure 5: How would you rate “On the whole, Ashington offers a wide choice of quality shops”?

(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 290 respondents*
4.0 RETAIL TRENDS

The range and diversity of the retail offer directly influences the appeal of a town centre to visitors and shoppers. Convenience goods are consumer goods purchased on a regular basis, including food, groceries toiletries and cleaning materials. Comparison goods are durable goods such as clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods.

In this section, the category of shops will be investigated and analysed in terms of both category and whether they are part of a multiple chain or are an independent business.

Figure 6: Multiple Chain and Independent Businesses by Category – Ashington

Source: Experian
Figure 6 shows that in Ashington town centre, the majority of businesses are comparison retail (48 independent, 40 multiple chain). The category which has the 2nd highest amount of businesses is leisure services: 26 of which are independent and 10 multiple chain. There are 16 convenience retail premises and 32 retail service in total.
5.0 RETAILER DEMAND

This section aims to investigate the types of property enquiries that are being made in the town centre and whether the enquirer was of local, regional or national significance. The aim was also to investigate the new occupiers within the town centre over the past year, for which we have referred to section 7.2 (Changes in Town Centre Occupiers 2007 – 2008).

5.1 Interest in Vacant Outlets within the Town Centre 2007 - 2008

There were no enquiries for properties in Ashington Town Centre recorded on Northumberland Property Database between April 2007 and March 2008. The only enquiries recorded were for properties on Ashwood Business Park, North Seaton Industrial Estate, Wansbeck Business Park and Jubilee Industrial Estate which are all out of town industrial estates or business parks. However, it must be noted that this data is based solely on one source (Northumberland Property Database) and other sources may provide further insight. The Northumberland Property Database mainly collects information on enquiries for industrial estates and business parks i.e. industrial and office space. The Business Forum takes local enquiries about vacant retail outlets and between April 07 and March 08, 17 clients requested information about available retail premises on or near Ashington Town Centre.

5.2 A Review of New Town Centre Occupiers

6.0 RETAIL RENTS AND YIELDS

Retail rent and yield are important indicators of viability. This section will investigate the zone A rent for properties within the town centre and also the yield of Ashington Town Centre in comparison with the other town centres in Northumberland for which this information was available; the North East; and England.

6.1 Zone A Rental Information

“Zoning is a method of valuation where the highest level of value is attributable to the front part of the shop because that is the part nearest to the pavement, the frontage. It is therefore the part that all shoppers must pass to enter the shop and is also the part where the main display is generally situated in order to entice customers into the shop. The zoning theory is that the level of value within a shop decreases as the shop depth increases. The Valuation Office adopts a zoning pattern of three zones (A, B and C), each measuring 6·10 metres in depth, and then a remainder. The principle is to determine a price for zone A (the highest level of value), use half that price for zone B, half the zone B price for zone C and half the zone C price for the remainder. This is known as "halving back" though in reality the areas are adjusted in the valuation process with each area being expressed "in terms of zone A" (ITZA). The zoning process is restricted to areas of ground floor retail space. Other parts of the property will be measured to NIA and be valued in relation to a fraction of the zone A price.” (Valuation Office, October 2008)

Figure 7 shows the zone A rental information from the Valuation Office. The values relate to the 2005 Rating List, which are based on a valuation date of 1 April 2003. The properties have been banded by intervals of £100, as we cannot publish the exact figure for each building. This will also make it easier to identify trends when analysing the data on the map.

There are some properties which are shown as “unknown” on Figure 7. These premises could be retail in nature but are not valued on a zoned approach. The reason for this is that zoning is generally not used in various circumstances including:
• Larger retail properties (i.e. shops with a NIA (net internal area) greater than 1500m²).
• Where the retail areas are spread over several floors, again resulting in the Zone A being only a small fraction of the total.
• Larger shops may not have ‘traditional’ shop fronts, such that the zoning approach is not appropriate.
• The ‘market’ does not typically Zone larger shops when letting and the VOA tries to follow the market in its analysis and valuation.

**Figure 7: Valuation Office Zone A rental prices for Ashington Town Centre**

![Valuation Office Zone A rental prices for Ashington Town Centre](image)

Source: Valuation Office

Figure 7 shows that the majority of properties on one of the main streets in Ashington Town Centre, Station Road, generally have a zone A rental value of £300 - £399 per m² at the end closest to Woodhorn Road and Lintonville Road. Towards the other end of Station Road at the edge of the town centre, the zone A rental is lower at 0 – 99 per m². Woodhorn Road and Lintonville Road are also within Ashington Town Centre, however the majority of property’s zone A rental information was unknown. On North Seaton Road, the properties are £200 - £299 per m² at the end closest to
the Station Road, Woodhorn Road and Lintonville Road junction. Further away from this junction and towards the edge of the town centre, the zone A rental was lower at £100 - £199 per m².

6.2 Yield

Yield “is the ratio of rental income to capital value and is expressed in terms of the open market rent of a property as percentage of the capital value.”¹ It “provide a consistent basis for understanding how the property market assesses the comparative attractiveness of shop investments in different locations across the country… low yields indicate that a town is considered to be attractive and as a result be more likely to attract investment than a town with high yields.”²

\[
\text{Yield} = \frac{\text{Annual Rent}}{\text{Capital Value / Sale Price of the Property}}
\]

Source: Valuation Office (www.voa.gov.uk)

In Northumberland, this data is only available for 5 towns: Alnwick, Ashington, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth and Hexham.

Figure 8: Shopping Centre Yields - Ashington

![Shopping Centre Yields - Ashington](sourceimage.png)

Source: Valuation Office (www.voa.gov.uk)

¹ [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)
² [www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk)
Nb. “From Spring 2002 reporting locations with a yield of 10% or over will not be included in the time series on the assumption that such locations are not of major interest in terms of retail property investment. The locations however will still be monitored and if evidence indicates yields have fallen to less than 10% the time series will be continued.”³

### Figure 9: Shopping Centre Yields - Ashington

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shopping Centre</th>
<th>Apr-01</th>
<th>Oct-01</th>
<th>Apr-02</th>
<th>Oct-02</th>
<th>Apr-03</th>
<th>Jan-04</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average for Northumberland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average for England</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>8.08</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>7.44</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>7.31</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>6.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Valuation Office (www.voa.gov.uk)

The graph shows that for the entire 2001 – 2007 period, Ashington has had a higher average yield than Northumberland, the North East, and England. This indicates that based on yield, it has been derived that there is more of a “risk” associated with setting up business in Ashington compared to the rest of Northumberland, the North East and England. From April 2002 to April 2003, the yield appears to have dropped to 0. However, as stated above, this illustrates that the yield for Ashington at these times, was actually higher than 10, and therefore not recorded by the Valuation Office. However, in January 2004, the gap between the yield for Ashington, and the other stated “areas”, decreased as Ashington’s yield lowered to 9. The most recent results of July 2007 showed Ashington with an average yield of 8 which shows that it is now considered to be a more attractive place to set up business than in previous years.

### 6.3 Average Rental Rate

The average monthly rental rate for vacant commercial property in Ashington town centre between 1st January 2006 and 31st December 2007 was £217.04 per square metre. Figure 10 show this rate in comparison with other town centres. According to

³ www.voa.gov.uk
Figure 10, in comparison with other Northumberland town centres, Ashington has the highest average monthly rental rate in Northumberland for the 11 towns recorded here. However, it must be noted that these rental figures are based solely on properties that were vacant between 1st January 2006 and 31st December 2007 and does not take the rental prices of buildings that were occupied throughout this period into consideration.

Figure 10: A comparison on average rental prices for commercial property between Ashington and other Northumberland Towns

![Bar chart showing average rental prices for commercial property between Ashington and other Northumberland Towns.](chart.png)

Source: Northumberland Property Database
7.0 VACANCY RATES

All town centres experience a baseline level of vacancy rates and should not always be interpreted as a sign of weakness. A large number of vacant units within centres, however, may indicate decline related to poor performance of the town or that shop premises are inadequate to meet the demands of modern retailers. Furthermore, units may be located in parts of the centre unsuited to retailers' requirements. This section will investigate the vacancy rates of premises within the town centre by road and overall vacancy rates within the town. Additionally, this section will look at property flows within Ashington town centre between 2007 and 2008 in terms of both primary activity type and type of change (i.e. change in occupier, occupied to vacant, vacant to occupied).

It must be noted that the vacancy information in this section is based on the ground floor of the premises from the data that was provided by Experian, and with the assumption that the majority of the commercial property in the town centre is situated on the ground floor.

7.1 Vacancy Rates of Premises

Figure 11: Vacancy Rates of Premises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Vacant (number of buildings)</th>
<th>Vacant (floorspace sqm)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WANSBECK SQUARE</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOODHORN ROAD</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINTONVILLE TERRACE</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NORTH SEATON ROAD</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LABURNUM TERRACE</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JOHN STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KENILWORTH ROAD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LINTONVILLE PARKWAY</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAPLE STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MYRTLE STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATION ROAD</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIEWLANDS , HIRST YARD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOODHORN ROAD BACK</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian
Figure 11 shows that the street within Ashington Town Centre with the most vacant premises is Wansbeck Square with 20% of premises vacant. However, when looking at vacancy rates in terms of floorspace, Wansbeck Square was ranked 2nd with only 6% of its total floorspace vacant. The street with the most vacant floorspace in Ashington was Woodhorn Road (20%). One reason for this maybe the former Co-op building on Woodhorn Road which is like to constitute the majority of this vacant floorspace.

Figure 12 shows that in Ashington Town Centre, there were 93% of occupied premises and 7% of vacant premises overall.
### 7.2 Changes in Town Centre Occupiers 2007 – 2008 (Property Flows)

**Figure 13: Changes in Primary Activity Type 2007-2008**

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Source: Experian

Figure 13 shows changes in Town Centre Occupiers in 2007 and 2008 within Ashington Town Centre. There has been a decrease in Amusements from 4 in 2007 to 3 in 2008 as well as a decrease in the number of Cafes from 4 in 2007 to 3 in 2008. The number of Travel Agents has also decreased from 6 in 2007 to 4 in 2008. However, there has been a number of increases, the number of Hairdressing businesses has increased from 8 in 2007 to 11 in 2008, there has also been an increase in the number of Estate Agents from 6 in 2007 to 7 in 2008 as well as an increase in the number of Charity Shops from 4 in 2007 to 5 in 2008 and finally in the number of Pizza Takeaway businesses from 1 in 2007 to 3 in 2008.
Figure 14 shows the type of changes in premises in Ashington Town Centre between 2007 and 2008. Two thirds (66%) of the changes were a change in occupier. 17% of premises changed from vacant to occupied and equally 17% of premises changed from being occupied to vacant. Therefore the amount of vacancies remained the same for 2007 and 2008.
8.0 PEDESTRIAN FLOWS

Pedestrian counts are a useful measure of vitality, in relation to the number and movement of people in different parts of the town centre and at different times of the day. The counts provide a clear picture of footfall patterns across the centre and of the number of people in the town. Over time trends can be identified and the success or decline of locations monitored. This section will analyse the results of the footfall counts that took place in Ashington Town Centre in April 2008 and estimate a weekly footfall total.

8.1 Footfall methodology

Footfall counts were taken for 10 minutes of each hour between 9am and 5pm on Thursday 3rd April, Saturday 5th April and Tuesday 8th April 2008. They were carried out by interviewers at four “access points” within the town centre (see Figure 15). These counts were then used to give estimates of hourly and daily pedestrian rates.

8.2 Estimates of footfall

It is estimated that the daily footfall for a typical Tuesday (Market day) in Ashington town centre is around 24,000, although this will obviously vary depending on the time of year. The footfall count suggests that the number of pedestrians in the town is very high compared with the rest of the week. Saturday’s footfall count was more than 9,000 lower than the Market day, and Thursday’s count was 4,000 less than this.
Figure 15: Estimated daily footfall in Ashington Town Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (see Figure 2)</th>
<th>Thursday (&quot;normal&quot; day)</th>
<th>Saturday (weekend)</th>
<th>Tuesday (Market day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wansbeck Square</td>
<td>3,756</td>
<td>3,432</td>
<td>8,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilkinsons, Wansbeck Square</td>
<td>4,428</td>
<td>6,924</td>
<td>5,142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laburnum Terrace</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>3,192</td>
<td>2,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lintonville Terrace</td>
<td>1,254</td>
<td>1,284</td>
<td>7,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10,626</td>
<td>14,832</td>
<td>24,132</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Footfall Counts

* Daily footfall has been estimated by summing the footfall counts for each location, then multiplying the totals by 6 to account for the footfall count being carried out for 10 minutes in each hour.
9.0 ACCESSIBILITY

The availability of different access modes to a town centre is important if shoppers are to be attracted to a centre for frequent visits. This section will investigate various aspects of accessibility into Ashington town centre including the different methods of transport used to access the town centre by shoppers that were surveyed, their origin and their perceptions on accessibility and transport, availability of parking within the town centre and bus connectivity.

9.1 Shoppers travelling to town by car

37% of respondents travelled into Ashington by car on the day of the interview. 82% of these said that they go to Ashington at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a car for these trips) (Figure 16). This figure dropped to less than one third (31%) in the evenings.
Almost all (97%) of the respondents that travelled by car found it fairly easy or very easy to travel into Ashington town centre. No-one found it difficult (Figure 17).
Figure 17: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Ashington town centre (those respondents that travelled by car)  
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires  
*Base: 105*

Two related comments were also made when asked what the respondents would like to see improved with the shopping experience:

- “road surfaces”;
- "roads poor condition".

**9.2 Access to car parking**

The most popular places to park were the Portland Park Car Park (28%) and the Wansbeck Square Car Park (20%) (Figure 18).
Figure 18: If you travelled by car, where did you park?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>% Respondents</th>
<th>Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Portland Park</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wansbeck Square Car Park</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asda Car Park</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Back Woodhorn Road Car Park</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formalised Street Car Park</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Area</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Street Car Park</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential Area</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: 103 respondents

The “back of Wilkinsons” was also given as a response.

When asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington town centre, 15% gave an answer related to parking provision. There were also a few comments noted in response to this question:

- “more disabled parking (2 responses)";
- “better parking facilities";
- “general parking facilities";
- “bicycle parks”.

When asked how they would make the town centre better, 11% gave an answer relating to improving the parking. Two additional verbatim responses were mentioned in response to this question: “more parking” and “disabled parking".
“More parking” was also mentioned when asked for suggested improvements to the retail offer.

The safety/security of the parking facilities was rated quite highly by the respondents, with nearly two thirds (64%) giving a positive rating, and only 10% giving a negative rating (Figure 19).

The availability of parking spaces was rated slightly lower. The availability of public parking spaces received a good/very good rating by 59% of respondents, and the availability of disabled parking spaces received a good/very good rating from 56% of respondents (based on those that answered the question).

Figure 19: Percentage of respondents giving each rating for parking related attributes

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires

Base : 201 to 241 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)
9.3 Cost of parking
No information is available on the respondent’s perceptions of the cost of parking.

9.4 Ashington’s Car parks

Figures 20 and 21 show the location of car parks within and surrounding Ashington Town Centre. Any car parks listed in the table which are not shown on the map are therefore situated outside of the town centre.

Figure 20: Location of Public Car Parks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Car Park</th>
<th>Cost of Parking</th>
<th>Type of Car Park</th>
<th>Spaces</th>
<th>Long/Short Stay</th>
<th>Disabled Spaces</th>
<th>Street Parking</th>
<th>Coach Parking</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dairy House, South View</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>John Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Wansbeck Square, Station Yard</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>122</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rear Woodhorn Road</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Cricket Club, Langwell Crescent (Private Carpark)</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Portland Park West, North View</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Park Road</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Haldane Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 21: Location of Car Parks
9.5 Bus Connectivity

The direct connections linking Ashington to surrounding towns and villages are listed below.

**Figure 22: Destination and Frequency of Buses from Ashington**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Mon – Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alnwick</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amble</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnston</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Hill</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>5 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bebside</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomarsund</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambois</td>
<td>Approx 2 per 3 hours</td>
<td>Approx 2 per 3 hours</td>
<td>4 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choppington</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clifton</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cresswell</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellington</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Post</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Pit</td>
<td>3 per day</td>
<td>2 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holywell</td>
<td>3 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linton</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loansdean</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynemouth</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin by the Sea</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Seaton</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegswood</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaton Burn</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shilbottle</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverlink</td>
<td>2 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeford</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warkworth</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widdrington</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodhorn</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Travel Search [http://www.carlberry.co.uk/index.htm]; North East Travel Line [http://jplanner.travelinenortheast.info];
9.6 Shoppers travelling to town by bus

One quarter of respondents (25%) travelled into Ashington town centre by bus on the day of the interview. 89% of these said that they go to Ashington at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a bus for these trips). This figure dropped to 26% in the evenings (Figure 23).

**Figure 23: Frequency of visit to the town centre by those respondents travelling in by bus**

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

![Frequency of visit to the town centre by those respondents travelling in by bus](image)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaire

*Base: 71 for daytime; 47 for evening*

Nearly all respondents (97%) who travelled into the centre by bus found it easy or very easy. Only 3% found it fairly difficult, and none found it very difficult.
Figure 24: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Ashington town centre (those respondents that travelled by bus)

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 71 respondents

9.7 Train Connectivity
There is no train access to Ashington.

9.8 Shoppers travelling to town by train
There is no train access to Ashington.

9.9 Perception of Public Transport Services
The quality and regularity of bus services, and the destinations to and from Ashington served by public transport, were rated highly by the respondents. In each case, at least 80% of respondents gave a good or very good rating, and less than 5% a poor or very poor rating (Figure 25).
Figure 25: Percentage of respondents giving each rating for public transport related attributes

(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Very Poor</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>OK</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Very Good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The quality of bus services</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The regularity of bus services</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The destinations to and from Ashington served by public transport</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Questionnaires

Base: 215 to 220 respondents depending on attribute (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

One respondent said that there should be “buses back to Cambois more regularly”.

9.10 Perception of Accessibility

When asked how they would make the town centre better, 3% of respondents gave an answer relating to improving the accessibility. In addition, the quality of footpaths was mentioned by 5% of respondents when asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington town centre.

Respondents were also asked to rate the general quality of the footways/paving. Less than half (44%) of respondents gave it a good or very good rating, and 11% gave a poor or very poor rating.
A number of comments relating to accessibility were made in response to three different questions:

1. what would the respondent like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington town centre:
   - “more disabled parking (2 responses)”;  
   - “improved pavements for scooter and wider and better access to stores with scooter”;  
2. what improvements would the respondent like to see to the retail offer:  
   - “better access for wheelchair owners”;  
3. how would they make the town centre better:  
   - “better disabled access lowered kerbs”;  
   - “disabled parking”;  
   - “pavements slightly better for wheelchair and scooter use”;
• “easier to walk to town centre”.

9.11 Origin and method of travel of Shoppers Interviewed

Figure 27 shows that the people who were interviewed for the Ashington shopper survey came from quite a small area, mostly within and around Ashington itself. Some of these people travelled into the town using a car or bus, but most used an ‘other’ form of transport (mainly walking).

In addition to the respondents that came from Ashington itself, a few travelled in from other areas within the Wansbeck district, and from the east side of the Morpeth district. A handful of others came from the Alnwick district and from Tyne & Wear. Almost all of these travelled by bus or by car.

No respondents came from outside of the Northumberland and Tyne & Wear regions.
Figure 27: Visitors to Ashington within Northumberland and Tyne & Wear (Shopper’s Survey) - Home Towns

Visitors to Ashington within Northumberland and Tyne & Wear (Shopper's Survey)
- Home Towns

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires
10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF TOWN

This section will consider various aspects relating to the environmental quality of the town centre. This includes any improvements made within the past 12 months mainly by the District Council and Town Council (where applicable) and shopper’s perceptions of the environmental quality and appearance of the town centre as a whole.

10.1 Review of Recent Improvements

The following improvements have happened over the past 12 months in Ashington

- The Wansbeck Square car park has recently been resurfaced.

- The Wansbeck Town Centres Regeneration Project is a number of small scale town centre public realm enhancements such as new paving, street lighting, street furniture, banners and a community art project have taken place in phases on the main shopping area over the past 5/6 years, focusing on Laburnum Terrace, Lintonville Terrace, Station Road West, Station Road bridge area and Woodhorn Road. The public realm works completed in March 2008 with the final phase at Woodhorn Road.

- Included in this project has also been the Town Centre Commercial Property Improvement Grant Scheme which has also run from 2002/3 to present. The aim of the scheme is to address the poor quality of the environment which impacts on residents and surrounding trade, the poor image of the town and to provide incentives for local traders to improve their premises. Up to March 2008, 61 premises were grant aided.
10.2 Shopper perception of the town

10.2.1 Pedestrianisation
No information could be taken from the survey relating to pedestrianisation.

10.2.2 Signage, Street furniture and Open Spaces

Signage
Only 2% of respondents said that they would like to see signage and information improved in Ashington town centre.

Street furniture
Respondents were asked to rate street furniture as part of two different questions. The first question asked for a street furniture rating, and the second asked about the general state of the town centre with regards to street furniture.

64% of respondents gave a good or very good rating for ‘street furniture’, and 8% gave a poor or very poor rating. However when asked about street furniture with regards to the general state of the town centre, this rating was considerably lower. Only 50% gave a positive rating, and 10% a negative rating (Figure 28).
Figure 28 Street furniture ratings
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Street furniture</th>
<th>General state of town centre - street furniture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OK</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Poor</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 287 / 290 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

Open spaces
The parks and open spaces in Ashington were not rated very highly. Less than half (48%) of the respondents gave a positive rating. However, nearly half of respondents (46%) said that they were ‘ok’ and only 6% gave a negative rating (Figure 29).
Figure 29: Rating given for parks and open spaces
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires

Base : 212 respondents (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

10.2.3 Litter and Cleanliness
Litter and the overall level of cleanliness in Ashington town centre were not rated very highly by the respondents. Only 40% thought that the overall level of cleanliness was good or very good, and nearly one quarter (23%) gave it a poor or very poor rating. The level of litter was rated slightly higher, but still only achieved 43% of positive responses (Figure 30).
Figure 30: Ratings given for litter and overall cleanliness
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

A few comments were made by the respondents relating to litter and cleanliness:

1. what would the respondent like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington town centre:
   - “cleaner streets (3 responses)”;  
   - “cleaner pavements (dog mess)”;  
   - “town centre a bit tidier”;  
   - “streets cleaned up”;  

2. how would they make the town centre better:
   - “more public toilets & cleaner ones”;  
   - “toilets better-not very clean”;  
   - “toilets not cleaned properly…”;  
   - “tidy up, better appearance of town centre”;

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires  
Base : 290 respondents (litter); 290 responses (cleanliness); (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)
• “cleaner, less litter”;
• “improve the general town centre area - pavements, litter etc.”;
• “more litter bins…”.

10.2.4 General Appearance of the Town

Respondents were fairly negative about the general appearance of the town. The worst rating was given for the shop frontage for which only 23% gave a positive rating and 38% gave a negative rating.

Graffiti / fly posting was given a slightly better rating, with 33% of respondents saying it was good or very good, and 16% giving a poor or very poor rating (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Ratings given for the appearance of the town
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

![Figure 31: Ratings given for the appearance of the town](chart.png)

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 244 to 258 respondents; (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don't know’ response)
A number of comments relating to the appearance of the town centre were made. These are listed below:

1. what would the respondent like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington town centre:
   - “shops modernised”;
   - “update shops” (2 responses);
   - “update the shops” (2 responses);
   - “general appearance of town centre”;
   - “better atmosphere- bit dated”;
   - “update in general” (2 responses);
   - “general update”;
   - “general updating”;
   - “town centre a bit tidier-better place to shop”;
   - “covered in”;

2. what improvements would the respondent like to see to the retail offer:
   - “general updated shops”;
   - “market needs upgrading”;

3. how would they make the town centre better:
   - “tidy up, better appearance of town centre”;
   - “improve the general town centre area - pavements, litter etc.”;
   - “improve attractiveness of town centre”;
   - “modernise it a bit. Less shops the same”;
   - “update everything”;
   - “covered in shopping mall” (2 responses);
   - “cover it in”.
11.0 PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND OCCURRENCE OF CRIME

High levels of crime in a centre will impact on the way people use it and may deter traders from locating there. This section will include an analysis of reported crimes which will be supplemented with information on perception or fear of crime from the Shopper Surveys. Consideration will also be given to any initiatives designed to address town centre-related crime.

11.1 Analysis of Reported Crimes

Figure 32: Analysis of Reported Crime

Source: Northumbria Police
Figure 33: Crime and Anti Social Behaviour

Source: Northumbria Police
The map (Figure 32) shows that the majority of crimes in 2005 - 2007 occurred on Station Road, and are clustered towards the Woodhorn Road and Lintonville Road. There is a fairly even spread of all crime and “rowdy and/ or nuisance” crimes, with fewer records of “other ASB” throughout Ashington. There have been 14 incidents of “street drinking” which were recorded.

Looking at the chart (Figure 33), the types of crime have been broken down further. The most frequent type of crime occurring in Ashington Town Centre between 2005 and 2007 was rowdy and/or nuisance of which there were 728 occurrences. The 2nd most frequent type of crime was fraud and forgery of which there were 413 occurrences

11.2 Perception or Fear of Crime

2% of respondents said that they would like to see the safety and security improved with the shopping experience in Ashington. Safety and security was also mentioned by 6% of respondents when asked how they would make the town centre better. One respondent said that “the gangs in town are a problem”, and another said that “more police” were needed.

Three quarters of respondents (75%) felt that safety/security during the daytime was good or very good. This figure dropped to 43% for the night-times (Figure 34).

**Figure 34: Ratings given for safety/security**

(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)
As can be seen in section 9.2.2., 64% of respondents felt that the safety/security of the parking facilities was good/very good.

In addition, when asked for suggested improvements to the shopping experience, 6% of respondents gave a response related to illegal parking.

11.3 Initiatives to Address Town Centre-Related Crime

According to the Ashington Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CRDP) the following initiatives exist in the Wansbeck District (October 2008):

- Public awareness campaigns for bonfire night started early including school visits and advice to residents. Fixed penalty tickets will be issued to anyone who misuses fireworks, unauthorised bonfires will be removed and anyone who attempts to sell fireworks illegally will be prosecuted.
Additionally, the Arson Task Force will conduct risk assessments for any residents wishing to hold their own bonfire.

The “Street Engagement” initiative enables the Fire and Rescue Service to engage with the local community. This will include talking to mainly youths about general safety advice and their role in the community; the dangers of making hoax calls and committing arson; and offering home risk assessment and free fitting of smoke alarms.

Northumberland Arson Task Force (a joint Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service and Northumbria Police team) is working in partnership with Wansbeck Council to reduce arson and stop refuse fires in back yards or of piles of illegal fly-tipping.

12.0 CUSTOMER VIEWS
Shopper surveys will help authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvements and in setting further priorities. In this section the shoppers’ surveys carried out in Ashington Town Centre will be analysed to find out their regularity of visits, type of purchases made, opinions on and use of leisure and entertainment; and what improvements they think will improve the town centre in the future. Additionally, data purchased from Experian will enable investigation of Ashington’s catchment area; spending patterns and retaining shopper spend within the town centre.

12.1 Regularity of visits
90% of respondents go to the town centre during the daytime at least once a week, with the most common frequency of visit being twice a week (40%).
Respondents visit the centre far less often during the evenings, with 60% saying that they go there less than once a month or for a one-off visit (Figure 35).

**Figure 35: Approximately how often are you in Ashington Town Centre?**

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

![Bar chart showing frequency of visits to Ashington Town Centre](chart.png)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 287 respondents (daytime); 188 respondents (evening)*

### 12.2 Expenditure/ Type of Purchases

Figure 36 shows the proportion of respondents that shop for different items solely in Ashington town centre, and how many go further afield. Figure 37 gives more details about which shopping centres the respondents use.

As the tables show, respondents are most likely to do their food shopping and other domestic shopping in Ashington. A large proportion of respondents also tend to go to Ashington for DIY goods, and to a lesser extent, for CDs/DVDs. For other non-food items they are more likely to travel further afield, with the most popular places to shop being Newcastle and the Metro Centre.
### Figure 36: Proportion of respondents shopping in Ashington and other areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Food shopping</th>
<th>Other domestic (eg. chemist, cosmetics, etc)</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Shoes</th>
<th>Electrical goods</th>
<th>Furniture/ carpets</th>
<th>DIY goods</th>
<th>CDs/ DVDs etc.</th>
<th>Other specialist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ashington town centre</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington only</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington + local area⁵</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington + internet/non-local/ local mix</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Ashington town centre</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local area (not Ashington)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet or other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of places (not Ashington)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>279</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁵ ‘Local area’ is defined as being one of the following: Ashington, Bedington, Newbiggin, Blyth, Cramlington town centre, Cramlington Manor Walk, Newcastle, Metro Centre, Kinsgton Park, Morpeth, Silverlink.
### Figure 37: Could you indicate where you go to purchase the following items?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Other domestic (eg. chemist, cosmetics, etc)</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Shoes</th>
<th>Electrical goods</th>
<th>Furniture/ carpets</th>
<th>DIY goods</th>
<th>CDs/ DVDs etc.</th>
<th>Other specialist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td></td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Town Centre</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Manor Walk</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Park</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverlink</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nearly two thirds of respondents (66%) planned to spend less than £25 in Ashington on the day they were interviewed, with a further 24% expecting to spend between £25 and £100.

**Figure 38: How much do you plan to spend in Ashington today?**

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

1. **66%** - Less than £25
2. **24%** - £25 - £100
3. **1%** - £100 plus
4. **10%** - Don't know

*Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires*

*Base: 270 respondents*

### 12.3 The Catchment

According to the North East RSS, the region exhibits a polycentric settlement pattern based on two city-regions centered round Tyne & Wear and Tees Valley. A polycentric settlement pattern is one with many centres or nodes, albeit with different characteristics and scales, rather than one key centre dominating everywhere, where their functions are interconnected. Falling within the South East Northumberland & North Tyneside Regeneration Initiative (SENNTRI) area, Ashington is defined in the RSS as a Regeneration Town and with a population in excess of 28,000, is the main settlement and service centre within the Wansbeck district. Within Wansbeck there are four secondary centres with populations of between 6,500 and 9000 at Bedlington, Bedlington Station, Newbiggin by the Sea and Guidepost/Stakeford; each has a shopping centre and a range of other services and facilities. There are a
number of villages and smaller settlements in the District with less than 1000 residents and a very limited number of facilities.

**Figure 39: Ashington Retail Catchment**

The map above shows the catchment area for Ashington town centre, as defined by Experian. The catchment, which measures the extent of the local consumer base, is based on the Where Britain Shops survey carried out by Experian. Where Britain Shops is an ongoing survey that generates responses from around 1.6 million households per annum. The survey provides detailed knowledge of consumers
preferred shopping destinations, covering in-town and out of down locations. The retail catchment area is based on the following theory.

“Where Britain Shops utilises a gravity model called the Shopper Flow Model that calculates the probability of someone living in a specific postal sector shopping in a particular retail area. This probability is determined by the relative travel times to each centre and a retail areas relative pulling power.

The Shopper Flow Model is the key building block used to determine the shopper catchments of a retail centre and includes a measure of the quality, quantity and mix of the shops within a centre using a combination of several variables that include:

- The rank of retail centres based on shopper (weighted) population
- A rank of centres based on likely annual expenditure on comparison goods
- A retail centre's primary, secondary and tertiary catchments
- Presence of anchor, premier and key retailers plus others
- A tourism score
- Workforce importance

The Shopper Flow Model allocates demand from where people live to where they shop; describing both the comparison goods spend by each retail centre and the ranking of that shopping centre. This allows leakage statistics to be calculated and the impacts of new or re-developed shopping centres to be measured including the larger retail parks, shopping malls and out of town retail centres that are important to multiple retailers and comparison shopping in general.

The Shopper Flow Model is regulated by millions of shopper responses from Lifestyle surveys which ask people where they shop for different types of goods. The model is re-evaluated each year in the light of retail supply and demand changes and is tuned to improve and more accurately represent the picture of British shopping year on year. Use of the model over the years has identified how successfully it works.6

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6 “Goad Town Centre Shopper Report - Interpretation and Methodology 2008” Experian
12.4 Spending Patterns

In addition to the town of Ashington and the smaller adjacent settlements of Newbiggin by the Sea, Choppington, Stakeford and Guidepost, the catchment extends North to embrace the rural coalfield area (Widdrington, Amble, East Chevington and Shilbottle). Altogether, the catchment covers an area of 534.94 km² and is home to almost 65,500 people and more than 28,500 households. Together, these households and residents spend an estimated £266.7 million per annum on retail goods and services, with 36.5% of expenditure on convenience retail goods (£97.3 million) and 63.5% on comparison retail (£169.3 million). This balance is almost in line with the national (UK) average, which reports 36.6% of expenditure on convenience retail and 63.3% on comparison. The minor difference between the national and local position is illustrated through the index which relates the proportion of each spend type in the Ashington catchment to the proportion in the UK. An index of more than 100% indicates higher than average local spend and an index of less than 100 represents lower than average local spend.

![Figure 40: Ashington Catchment Summary Profile](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Ashington Catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007 Population</td>
<td>65,497.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>60,796,178.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Households</td>
<td>28,538.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,018,847.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
<td>169,328,243.00</td>
<td>63.5%</td>
<td>171,926,829,196.00</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>100.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>97,321,797.00</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>99,464,696,627.00</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>99.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail</td>
<td>266,650,040.00</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>271,391,525,823.00</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison per household</td>
<td>5,933.43</td>
<td></td>
<td>6,607.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>89.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience per household</td>
<td>3,410.25</td>
<td></td>
<td>3,822.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>89.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail per household</td>
<td>9,343.68</td>
<td></td>
<td>10,430.57</td>
<td></td>
<td>89.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

Total retail expenditure per household per annum within the catchment stands at £9344, with average comparison retail spend at £5933 per annum and convenience spend at £3,410 per annum. All of these figures are substantially below the national average, with total spend 89.6% of the UK figure.
Table 41 below provides a breakdown of Comparison retail expenditure within the Ashington catchment and in the UK. As with the UK average, the largest expenditure type within comparison retail is Clothing Material & Garments, accounting for £38.3 million or 22.6% of total Comparison Expenditure within the catchment. Clothing is followed by Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment (£21.1 million or 12.4%) and Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments (£18.5 million or 11.0%). The pattern of expenditure nationally is generally similar, but with some notable differences. Referring to the index, households in Ashington spend more on Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment, Major household appliances, Small electrical household appliances and Recording media as a proportion of total spend than the UK average. In contrast, they spend substantially less on Bicycles, Small tools and miscellaneous accessories, Major tools and equipment, Materials for maintenance and repair of the dwelling and Gardens, plants and flowers.

### Figure 41: Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington Catchment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appliances for personal care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and stationery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing materials and garments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and furnishings; carpets and other floor coverings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardens, plants and flowers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassware, tableware and household utensils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household textiles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery, clocks and watches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major household appliances (electric or not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major tools and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials for maintenance and repair of the dwelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical goods and other pharmaceutical products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other personal effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets and related products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes and other footwear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small electrical household appliances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 42: Expenditure on Comparison Retail

Expenditure on Comparison Retail: Items with an Index Less than the UK Average

Source: Experian

Figure 43: Expenditure on Comparison Retail

Expenditure on Comparison Retail: Items with an Index Greater than the UK Average

Source: Experian

Figure 44 below provides a breakdown of Convenience retail expenditure within the Ashington catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within comparison retail in Ashington is Food and non-alcoholic beverages, accounting for £67.4 million or 69.2% of total Comparison Expenditure within the area. Food and non-alcoholic beverages is followed by Alcohol (£11.5 million or 11.8%) and Tobacco (£10.7 million or 11.0%). The pattern of expenditure nationally differs slightly.
Referring to the index, households in the Ashington Catchment spend more on Newspapers and Periodicals and Tobacco as a proportion of total spend and less on Alcohol and Food.

**Figure 44: 2007 Total Expenditure Convenience Retail**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Totals</th>
<th>Ashington Catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
<td>3,023,078.00</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
<td>3,214,575,062.00</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>96.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (off-trade)</td>
<td>11,467,124.00</td>
<td>11.78%</td>
<td>12,313,767,021.00</td>
<td>12.38%</td>
<td>95.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and non-alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>67,428,745.00</td>
<td>69.28%</td>
<td>70,035,886,128.00</td>
<td>70.41%</td>
<td>98.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and periodicals</td>
<td>4,675,047.00</td>
<td>4.80%</td>
<td>4,451,576,478.00</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>107.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>10,727,803.00</td>
<td>11.02%</td>
<td>9,448,891,938.00</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>116.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>97,321,797.00</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>99,464,696,627.00</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

**12.5 Retaining Shopper Spend**

The information outlined in the previous section describes the extent and pattern of expenditure per annum of households living within the Experian-defined catchment area for Ashington. What the information does not indicate, however, is how much of the expenditure is spend purchasing goods and services in Ashington and how much leaks to neighbouring retail destinations. Based on the Where Britain Shops Survey, Experian have calculated:

- The proportion of the population within the Ashington catchment that shops in Ashington and the proportion that shop at other centres.
- The percentage of expenditure spent on goods and services in Ashington and the extent to which spending leaks to other centres.

The figures in the tables below provide a baseline assessment against which future reports will measure changes in performance. The figures do not currently provide a breakdown of leakage for comparison and convenience retail, although it is anticipated that retention will be substantially higher for the latter compared with the former.
With regards to population, Experian estimates that just over one-fifth of the resident population shop in Ashington. The main shopping destination for residents is Newcastle City Centre, which accounts for just less than one quarter of the population (13,764 or 21%). Other notable shopping destinations include the MetroCentre (10,490 or 16%), Blyth (7,426 or 11%), Cramlington (4,979 or 8%) and Morpeth (3,947 or 6%).

**Figure 45: Population Leakage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail Centre</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>21.01</td>
<td>13,764</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ashington</strong></td>
<td><strong>20.07</strong></td>
<td><strong>13,148</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.02</td>
<td>10,490</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>11.34</td>
<td>7,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>4,979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>3,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>2,639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alnwick</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>1,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1,354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>1,147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amble</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>639</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin by the Sea</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitley Bay</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

The pattern with regards to spend is relatively similar. Experian estimates that just under one-fifth of retail spend by residents and households domiciled within the Ashington catchment, representing £52.8 million per annum, is spent in the town.

Just over one-fifth of spend or £58.9 million is lost to Newcastle City Centre, with other notable leakage to the MetroCentre (£43.4 million or 16%), Blyth (£28.1 million or 11%) and Cramlington (£20.2 million or 8%). What is not clear from the figures, however, is the retail types that outlying centres are able to attract from the catchment area. This is something that InfoNet will be investigating further with Experian over the coming 12 months.
Figure 46: Spend Leakage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retail Centre</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Spend (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>21.32</td>
<td>56,852,254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>19.79</td>
<td>52,760,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.29</td>
<td>43,428,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>10.56</td>
<td>28,145,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>20,201,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>17,387,236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>10,605,009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alnwick</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>5,965,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>5,615,717</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>5,516,304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>4,615,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amble</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2,707,029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>2,570,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2,447,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2,093,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>1,873,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>1,615,106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>1,099,607</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>0.19</td>
<td>508,332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin by the Sea</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>363,832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitley Bay</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>277,441</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

The map below shows the Ashington catchment area and is colour coded to indicate the proportion of retail expenditure that is spent by the resident population in Ashington. From the map, it can be seen that households located within Ashington and parts of the Rural Coalfield spend between 30-40% of their total retail expenditure in Ashington. Propensity to shop in Ashington quickly diminishes as you travel outside of these areas, dropping to between 20-30% of total expenditure amongst households in Newbiggin by the Sea and Choppington, to between 5-10% amongst those in Bedlington, Blyth and parts of Morpeth.
Figure 47: Proportion of Retail Expenditure

Source: Experian
12.6 Opinions on and use of Leisure and Entertainment Events attended

The Tuesday Market was by far the most well attended of the events asked about in the questionnaire, with 72% of respondents stating that they have been to it. 16% of respondents said that they had not attended any of the events (Figure 48).

Figure 48: Have you ever attended any of these events?
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

![Bar chart showing event attendance]

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 277 respondents

Events respondents would like to see on a regular basis

A large proportion of respondents said that they would like to see events on a regular basis. The most popular of these were markets, with a Farmer's Market mentioned by 61% of respondents, and a Continental Style market mentioned by 37% of respondents (Figure 49).
Figure 49: What events/activities would you like to see on a regular basis? (Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 230 respondents
Eating and drinking
In terms of the places to eat and drink in Ashington, cafes, sandwich shops and takeaways were all rated quite highly, with 70%, 65% and 60% of respondents respectively giving the rating good or very good (Figure 50).

45% of respondents rated pubs and clubs as good or very good, but nearly one quarter of them (23%) gave them a poor or very poor rating.

Restaurants were not rated very highly with a higher proportion of respondents giving the rating poor or very poor than giving a good or very good rating (37% vs. 33%).

Figure 50: How would you rate the following venues for eating and drinking in Ashington?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 201 to 274 respondents, depending on venue (note: this excludes those respondent’s that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

Three respondents gave comments relating to eating and drinking:

• “a decent restaurant”;
• “decent restaurants”;
• “trendier bars & cafes”.
**Arts and leisure facilities**

Out of all of the arts and leisure facilities that respondents were asked to rate, the Woodhorn Colliery Museum was rated the highest with 81% giving a good/very good rating. None of the respondents gave a poor rating (Figure 51).

The Ashington Leisure Centre and the QE11 Country park were rated as at least good by over half of the respondents, and the Hirst Welfare Centre and 'parks and open spaces' were rating as good/very good by just less than half of respondents.

The highest level of respondents giving a poor rating was for the leisure centre (3% poor and 8% very poor).

**Figure 51: How would you rate the following arts and leisure facilities in Ashington?**

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

![Graph showing ratings of various arts and leisure facilities in Ashington.]

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 137 to 216 respondents, depending on venue (note: this excludes those respondent’s that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

A few respondents gave comments relating to arts and leisure:

- “a cinema” (3 responses);
• “more for kids on a night like cinema”;
• “more for young people (clubs)”.  

General
When asked how they would rate Ashington as a place to ‘enjoy yourself’, respondents were not very positive. Only 20% rated it as good or very good (less than 1% were very good), and 38% rated it as poor or very poor (Figure 52).

Figure 52: How do you rate Ashington as a place to enjoy yourself?
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

When asked how they would make the town centre better, 26% of respondents said that they would improve the leisure facilities. Suggestions given (in addition to the ones already mentioned in this section) were:

• “more for kids”;
• “more facilities for kids”;
• “…something for the young”;
• “more for the young”;
• “facilities for younger people”.

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires  
Base: 283
On the day of the interview, 4 respondents said that they had gone to Ashington town centre to use the leisure centre or to attend a dance class.

12.7 The Future: what will improve the town as a place to shop or visit? Respondents were generally not very positive about Ashington town centre. When asked to rate Ashington as a place to shop, visit, enjoy yourself, and live, less than 30% of respondents gave a good or very good rating in each case. The lowest rating was given when asked about Ashington as a place to visit, for which only 19% of respondents gave a positive rating, and 41% gave a negative rating (Figure 53).

Figure 53: How do you rate Ashington as a place to shop, visit, enjoy yourself and live? (Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland InfoNet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 275 to 288 respondents, depending on question (note: this excludes those respondent’s that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)
From the analysis of the Ashington shopper survey, it appears that in order to improve the town as a place to shop or visit, the main issue that needs to be addressed is the retail offer. This subject area is looked at in more detail below. However, it is recommended that four other issues are also taken into consideration:

- leisure facilities (26% said that the leisure facilities needed to be improved to make the town centre better);
- general appearance and cleanliness of the town centre (see section 10.2c and 10.2d);
- parking provision (see section 9.2.2);
- toilet facilities (29 of respondents mentioned this).

**Retail offer**

Out of the 159 respondents that gave an answer to the question about what they would like to see improved with the retail experience in Ashington town centre, 47% gave an answer related to the retail offer. Over half of these mentioned ‘better’ shops (Figure 54).

Respondents were also asked how much they agreed with the statement ‘on the whole, Ashington offers a wide choice of quality shops’. Only 21% of respondents agreed with the statement, and 52% disagreed.

In order to make the town centre better, 69% thought that a better retail offer was needed. A further 7% gave a ‘shop’ related response.

When asked what improvements they would like to see to the retail offer in Ashington, the most common responses were: more chain stores (48%), fewer charity shops (43%) and an increased variety of shops (38%).
Figure 54: What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Ashington?

(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Of the 70 examples of types of shops respondents would like to see (or other noted improvements), nearly two thirds mention clothes shops. This ties in with the findings from section 12.2 in which it was shown that respondents are much more likely to shop for clothes in locations other than Ashington.

A Farmer’s market and continental style markets were also mentioned by a reasonable proportion of respondents (61% and 37% respectively) when asked about events they would like to see on a regular basis.
13.0 INVESTMENT

13.1 Redevelopment

The following developments are proposed for Ashington Town Centre;

- ONE, Wansbeck District Council and SENNTRi has jointly commissioned the preparation of a town centre ‘Regeneration Framework’ to establish key uses and priority objectives.

- There are current plans to develop Portland Park, re-develop the North East Quadrant, relocate Northumberland College, and brownfield opportunity sites have been identified.

This is uncertain at this time therefore best to leave out.
14.0 CONCLUSION

Ashington is currently undergoing a programme of redevelopment (the ‘Ashington Town Centre Regeneration Framework’) which must be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions about the health of the Town Centre.

In the Town Centre, 59% of the floorspace use was for retail (Figure 3). However, despite this high percentage of the amount of retail floorspace, shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative with 52% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to the statement “Ashington offers a wide choice of quality shops” (Figure 5). Appendix 2 showing the verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the shopping experience shows that they feel more choice, fewer charity shops, more clothing shops and an update of the existing shops are all needed. Additionally, figure 6 highlighted that there were more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience or retail service. This may indicate that shoppers would like to see less comparison retail than convenience or service, or they would like more variation within that particular category.

The yield for Ashington was shown to be higher than the average for Northumberland, North East and England (Figure 8). However, a positive aspect was that this had been decreasing over the years and the latest figure (taken at July 2007) of 8 was at its lowest, since April 2001 when the data originated. This could be one of the impacts of the various regeneration projects that have happened over recent years such as the Town Centre Commercial Property Improvement Grant Scheme which addresses the poor image of the town and provided incentives for local traders to improve their premises. Also, the Wansbeck Town Centres Regeneration Project which enhances various public realm aspects such as new paving, street lighting and street furniture, would most certainly contribute to Ashington being a more attractive place to set up a business, therefore reducing the yield. These schemes would also hopefully reduce the amount of negative responses given by shoppers about the general appearance of the town.
There was 7% of vacant floorspace in Ashington (see Figure 12). Figure 13 also shows that between 2007 and 2008, the amount of vacant floorspace had remained the same when looking at property flows. However, this does not mean that it was the same floorspace that was vacant both years.

Accessibility into the town was not a problem for the shoppers interviewed with 74% (of those travelling by car) finding it very easy (Figure 17). Ashington also had good bus connectivity, which is shown in Figure 22 by the frequency and number of destinations reached from Ashington. This is important as 25% of shoppers on the days of the shopper's survey had travelled by bus and there is no train access to Ashington.

When looking at retaining shopper spend, 21% of Ashington residents shopped in Newcastle and only 20% in Ashington (Figure 45). However, the current regeneration programmes may show that this percentage will increase in the next few years.

The responses from shoppers coupled with the various aspects that make up a town centre, suggest that although there has been some negative responses from the shoppers' surveys towards Ashington Town Centre in general, things are improving and the implementation of the various regeneration projects in the town centre should show hopefully show some improvements in forthcoming years.
15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The town centre health checks are scheduled to be carried out biennially and there are various recommendations that would ensure that the next report improves and builds upon this initial “baseline” report.

After this first “batch” of reports has been completed, in subsequent years comparisons will be able to be made within the same town over a period of time, and also between towns which have the similar roles or functions, (e.g. market towns).

Section 3, Diversity of Uses, focused on the different uses of commercial properties. Using the data from Experian, an analysis of property use class was carried out, however this data was only based on the ground floor of the properties and did not take into consideration any businesses that were situated on the upper floors. In order to give a more accurate picture of the use class of the town centre, these other floors would have to be considered. Another area to look at next time would be the identifying the location and quantity of residential properties in the town.

Section 5, Retailer Demand, summarised the interest of vacant outlets in the town centre. In this report, the source of this data was Northumberland Property Search. This cannot be taken as an exhaustive source of this information, and it would be beneficial to work in partnership with the various estate agents within the County to gain a more reliable and accurate insight. Additionally, a substantial amount of enquirers from the Northumberland Property Search referred to out of town properties such as those situated on business parks or industrial estates and therefore were excluded for the purpose of this report.

Section 8, Pedestrian Flows, analysed the footfall counts that had taken place within the town centres alongside the shopper’s surveys. As they had taken place on a “normal” weekday, a market day (where applicable) and a Saturday, it was not possible to estimate a weekly footfall count without including a footfall on a Sunday. This is something that would have to be considered next time. Additionally, to enable comparison across all of the towns in Northumberland, the footfall counts would all have to be carried out within the same week for accuracy. Due to various
circumstances this did not happen in this instance and they would have to be coincided next time.

Section 9, Accessibility, gathered all of the destinations reached from Ashington by bus. This information was drawn up into a table, however a map showing all of these routes would have been even more useful and easier to present in the report, but unfortunately this was not available at the time of publishing.

Section 11, Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime, analysed the number of crimes that had taken place within the town centre between 2005 and 2007, and also the initiatives designed to address town centre-related crime. It will be interesting in the next report to investigate what impact these initiatives have had on the number of crimes reported in the town centre.

Section 13, Investment, looked at future proposals for the town centre. The perception of town centre shoppers should be reviewed when the report is next updated, in order to see if their opinions have been considered within future proposals for the area.
APPENDIX 1

Use Class Order
(www.planningportal.gov.uk)

The following classes of use for England are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments.

- **A1 Shops** - Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices, pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners and funeral directors.
- **A2 Financial and professional services** - Banks, building societies, estate and employment agencies, professional and financial services and betting offices.
- **A3 Restaurants and cafés** - For the sale of food and drink for consumption on the premises - restaurants, snack bars and cafes.
- **A4 Drinking establishments** - Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not a night clubs).
- **A5 Hot food takeaways** - For the sale of hot food for consumption off the premises.

- **B1 Business** - Offices, research and development, light industry appropriate in a residential area.
- **B2 General industrial**
- **B3-B7 Special Industrial Groups** - See 'Use Classes Schedule'.
- **B8 Storage or distribution** - This class includes open air storage.

- **C1 Hotels** - Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided.
- **C2 Residential institutions** - Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
• **C2A Secure Residential Institution** - Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.

• **C3 Dwellinghouses** - Family houses, or houses occupied by up to six residents living together as a single household, including a household where care is provided for residents.

• **D1 Non-residential institutions** - Clinics, health centres, crèches, day nurseries, day centres, schools, art galleries, museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non residential education and training centres.

• **D2 Assembly and leisure** - Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not night clubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiuims or sports arenas (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).

• **Sui Generis** - Theatres, houses in multiple paying occupation, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, launderettes, taxi businesses, amusement centres. Casinos.
APPENDIX 2

VERBATIM RESPONSES FOR SHOPPER’S SURVEY

Verbatim responses to ‘Q14 Can you tell me what you would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Ashington Town Centre?

Shops

- Better shops (24 responses)
- Better shop
- Better shops in general
- Better shops and less charity shops
- Better shops. Less charity shops
- git rid of charity shops
- Less charity shops
- To many charity shops, nothing for day to day
- More shops (6 responses)
- More and better shops
- Much better shops
- More choice of shops
- more choice of shops, food and non-food
- More variety of shops
- Quality of shops (2 responses)
- Shops (2 responses)
- More retail shops
- Better shops and a post office near to where I live
- Indoor shops maybe
- Shopping centre like Eldon square
- Shops modernised
- Update shops (2 responses)
- Update the shops (2 responses)
- More clothes shop’s
- Better clothes shop’s
- More clothes stores
- More formal clothes
- Better mens clothing shops
- More children clothes shops
- More clothes shops for youngster’s
- Better kids shop
- More shops for young people
- More shops for younger people
- Shops for boys
- Primark shop
- More food shops
Toilets
- Public toilets (6 responses)
- Better toilet facilities
- Better toilets
- Toilet facilities
- New toilets
- No toilets of any good

Cleanliness & appearance
- Cleaner streets (3 responses)
- Cleaner pavements (dog mess)
- General appearance of town centre
- Better atmosphere- bit dated
- update in general (2 responses)
- General update
- General updating

Mixture of things
- Better shops & better toilet facilities
- Better toilets & shops
- Toilets & better shops
- Toilets & shops better quality
- Town centre a bit tidier- better place to shop
- Streets cleaned up, more variety shop

Parking & accessibility
- More disabled parking (2 responses)
- Better parking facilities
- bicycle parks
- general parking facilities
- Improved pavements for scooter and wider and better access to stores with scooter

Other
- Gangs in town are a problem
- More police about
- More for kids
- pod restricted, something for the young
• covered in
• Northern Rock B/S please
• Train station opened
• Buses back to cambois more regularly

Don't know / nothing
• Don't know (9 responses)
• Don't know/thing
• DK
• nothing (17 responses)
• Nothing, ok as it is

• Road surfaces
• Roads poor condition

• OK
• OK no bother
• It's fine
• not sure
Verbatim responses to ‘Q19 What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Ashington?’

**Examples of shops**

**Clothes & shoe shops**
- clothes mainly
- Improved clothes shops
- more clothes shops
- more good clothes shops
- more variety of clothes shops
- Clothes, shoes
- Men's clothes shops
- Clothes store, children's and Primark
- Evans
- H&M, Next, Specialist
- Primark (3 responses)
- primark, Debenhams
- Primark, shops for younger ones
- Topshop, primark
- Tucci, USC

**Examples of other shops**
- more kids shops, teenager shops, all quite old fashioned
- Children's shops
- Main shops like BHS
- A good department store
- Less card shops
- not all charity shops as it is

**General shops**
- more shops like those in metro centre
- different shops all seem same kind of shop
- General updated shops
- more choice of shops food and non-food

**Mixture of shops mentioned**
- Kids clothes, men clothes, women clothes, food store
- homeware and clothes
• More quality shops in general, electrical

Other comments
• Better access for wheelchair owners
• more parking

Anything / don't know
• Any really
• Anything really (2 responses)
• Don't Know

Other suggested improvements

Clothes & shoe shops
• Better clothes & shoe shops
• Classier type dress shops
• Clothes & shoe shops
• clothes for short people, shoes
• Clothes shops (2 responses)
• Ladies fashion
• Better quality shops, clothes
• Mens clothing shops
• More clothes shops (2 responses)

• More clothing shops -
  Debenhams, Next, M&S.
  Bigger and better quality.
• More clothing shops
• More shops selling clothes
  so you don’t have to go into
  Newcastle
• Plus size clothes shop
• Primark and better shops
• Younger clothes shops

Examples of other shops
• Kids store
• Large stores like M&S
• M&S, BHS, Next, Primark
• less card shops
• Less card shops + banks
• Less shoe shops

• Specialist shops
• Department stores like M&S.
  Better quality shops. Good restaurants
• The Co-op back
• Don't know why the co-op closed
• Better mix of everything.
   Large department store.
• Market needs upgrading

Mixture of clothes & other shops
• Shoes, clothes, furniture
• Clothes shops. Homeware
• Clothes. Furniture
• Better variety altogether. DIY, Homeware, clothes
• Shops like BHS, M&S food, Clothes
• More clothes, shoes & furniture stores
• More food shops, clothing stores, shoe shops. Deli

General shops
• Better quality/more upmarket shops
• Classier shops, more upmarket
• More modern shops
• More modern shops like there are in Newcastle/Metro Centre
• All shops are the same here
• Anything really, just better shops
Verbatim responses to ‘Q27 How would you make this town centre better?’

Leisure

• Cinema (2 responses)
• A cinema
• A decent restaurant
• Decent restaurants
• Trendier bars & cafes
• Facilities for younger people
• more for the young
• More for young people
• More facilities for kids
• More for kids on a night like cinema

Toilets

• Better public toilets (3 responses)
• Better toilets
• Better toilets in the town centre
• Improve public toilets
• Improved toilet
• Improved toilets
• More public toilets & cleaner ones
• Public toilets
• Toilets better-not very clean
• Toilets need improving
• Toilets not cleaned properly, worst toilets

Retail

• Better shops (3 responses)
• Better choice of shops - Clothes, furniture
• better clothes shops have to go to Newcastle
• Better clothing. Department stores. Deli & food stores.
• Better shopping - clothes
• Better shops - M&S food, clothes
• better shops, more variety
• better shops, primark for kids
• Better/more food shops
• More shoe shops, clothes shops & DIY shops
• More homeware and clothes shops
• too many charity shops
• Get rid of charity shops
Accessibility
- Better disabled access
  - lower kerbs
- Disabled parking
- pavements slightly better for wheelchair and scooter use.
- Easier to walk to town centre

Appearance of town centre
- Tidy up, better appearance of town centre
- Cleaner, less litter
- Improve the general town centre area - pavements, litter etc.
- Improve attractiveness of town centre
- Modernise it a bit. Less shops the same
- Update everything

More than one area mentioned
- More litter bins & toilets
- More toilets & shops
- Open train station B.H.S M & S Older classic stores

Other
- Covered in shopping mall (2 responses)
  - More parking
- cover it in
  - park doug up again
- no Quar(?)

Anything / don't know
- Anything to improve
- Don't know (2 responses)
- Don't know- ok as it is
- Not sure
- None (3 responses)
- Nothing
- ok (2 responses)
- OK as it is
The Northumberland Information Network

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