BEDLINGTON TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT

Prepared by: Lauren Widdrington & Alyson Forster
Tel: 01670 534757, 01670 534755
E-mail: alyson.forster@northumberland.gov.uk / lauren.widdrington@northumberland.gov.uk
Working Paper Number: 93
Date: May 2009

Contacts
Philip Hanmer – Research Manager
Tel: (01670) 533919
Laurie Turnbull – Research Assistant
Tel: (01670) 533038
Fax: (01670) 533967
E-mail: InfoNet@northumberland.gov.uk
Website: www.northumberlandinfonet.org.uk

The Corporate Research Unit (InfoNet) is part of the Policy & Partnerships Service of Northumberland County Council (in the Performance Directorate); it supports the Corporate Policy Team, other sections of the council and the NSP.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 37% of the floorspace in Bedlington was for retail.

- Shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative – 48% did not think Bedlington 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 10% of vacant floorspace in Bedlington.

- 94% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into town centre by car.

- Almost half (49%) of respondents said that the availability of parking spaces was good or very good in Bedlington town centre, whereas almost one third (31%) gave a poor or very poor rating.

- 92% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into town centre by bus.

- Public transport in Bedlington was rated quite well. Approximately two thirds of respondents gave a good/very good rating for the quality, the regularity and the destinations served by public transport. However, 18% gave a poor/very poor response from the destinations to and from Bedlington served by public transport.

- 1% of Bedlington residents shopped in Bedlington. 22% of expenditure was lost to Newcastle and a further 17% to the Metro Centre.

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 Bedlington 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. “Looking After Our Town Centres” which was published April 2009 by Communities and Local Government also mentions the importance of town centres.

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 Bedlington’s Town Centre Boundary

Throughout this report there are two different boundaries for Bedlington Town Centre that will be used depending on the section: the town centre boundary as defined by the former Wansbeck District Council (Figure 1), and the boundary as defined by Experian (a source of data used in this report) (Figure 2).

The area of Bedlington Town Centre in relation to the District Council boundary is 119,793.68 m². The area in relation to the Experian boundary is 55,259.52 m².

Figure 1: Boundary for Bedlington Town Centre (District Council)
Figure 2: Boundary for Bedlington Town Centre (Experian)

Source: Experian
2.2 Bedlington’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 the former Wansbeck District Council): Bedlington is in Wansbeck District and is 5 km south of Ashington, 7km east of Morpeth and 17km north east of Newcastle upon Tyne. With its 18th and 19th century terraces on Front Street, central Market Place and green spaces, Bedlington is one of the most attractive Northumberland market towns.

Bedlington is surrounded by rural areas to the north, south and west, whilst the east boundary is formed by the river Blyth and its valley. The town centre is linear and extends only on the frontage of Front Street and a small part of Glebe Road to the North. To the south of Front Street lie more recent housing developments. Bedlington is one of four secondary retail and service centres in Wansbeck, with Ashington being the principle centre of the District. It has a range of shops, mostly small independent traders with some larger local and regional outlets and two supermarkets. The Bedlington Townscape Heritage Initiative with funding of almost £2million will help conserve and enhance the historic environment of the conservation area, helping to improve the town as a place to run a business and the quality of life for the people who live and work there.

2.3 History and Development of Bedlington

Bedlington lies on the river Blyth, around 10 miles north of Newcastle and 4½ miles north-east of Morpeth. The name ‘Bedlington’ is believed to have come from Saxon times, meaning ‘the settlement of Bedla’s (or Betla’s) people’.

Evidence of people in the area dates back to the Bronze age, with burial cists discovered at Mill Hill. There has also been a discovery of a flint, possibly dating back to the Neolithic period.
The Church of St Cuthbert is the only medieval building standing in the town. The original church on the site is thought to date back prior to 900AD, and it is believed that it’s name was a result of St Cuthbert’s remains being rested there in December 1069.

The major industry during the 18th and 19th centuries was the production of iron. Bedlington Iron and Engine Works was founded in 1736, initially manufacturing nails, then later, malleable iron rails and engines for locomotives. The ironworks was closed in 1867 due to competition.

The coal industry also played a major part in the development of the town. Bedlington coal company was set-up in 1838, and by 1909, there were ten collieries producing coal in the area. The last one closed in 1974.

These days, Bedlington is an attractive market town, with a weekly market held on a Thursday. It has a population of around 15,400 (2001 census), many of which use the town as a base from which to commute to south Northumberland and Tyneside. The major employer in the area is Welwyn Components. Many people know the town as being the place where the famous Bedlington terrier was originally bred.

A major attraction in the area is Bedlington Country Park, a nature reserve with over 5 miles of paths and nature trails along the banks of the river Blyth.
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 Bedlington Town Centre and also the opinions of shoppers surveyed on the range of retail provision in Bedlington.

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 one third (37%) of the floorspace in Bedlington Town Centre are classed as shops. Businesses account for a significant proportion of the floorspace in Bedlington with 33%, whilst drinking establishments and financial and professional services each occupy 8% of floorspace. Non-residential institutions took 10% of Bedlington’s floorspace.

Figure 3: Floorspace by Use Class

Source: Experian
Figure 4: Building Use class for Bedlington Town Centre

Building Use Class for Bedlington Town Centre

Source: Experian
The map (Figure 4) shows that the majority of shops within the town centre are quite evenly distributed the three main streets: Choppington Road, Front Street West and Market Place. The main clusters of businesses (accounts for one third of floorspace) are situated at the top of the town centre and on Choppington Road, however, as can be seen on the map, the floorspace consists of a few large premises as opposed to lots of smaller premises.

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 in Bedlington, Friends of Gallagher Park which is an outside community event is held at Bedlington Market Place and Milne Car Park. A commemorative service for Remembrance Sunday takes place at Bedlington Front Street. A Mythical Winter World event is held at Doctor Pit Park Pavillion, this is a music and storytelling family event. A weekly market takes place in the car park behind Tesco’s.

3.3 Satisfaction with the range of provision – retail

Question 14 in the Bedlington Shopper Questionnaire asked:

To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement “On the whole, Bedlington offers a wide choice of quality shops”?

The level of disagreement with this statement was considerably higher than the level of agreement (48% vs. 32% of respondents) (Figure 5).
Figure 5: How would you rate “On the whole, Bedlington offers a wide choice of quality shops”? 
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Shopper Surveys

Base: 149 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 - Bedlington

Figure 6 shows that in Bedlington town centre, the majority of businesses are leisure services (13 independent, 2 multiple chain). The category which has the 2$^{nd}$ highest
amount of businesses is comparison retail: 9 of which are independent and 3 multiple chain. There are 6 convenience retail premises and 11 retail service in total.
5.0 RETAILER DEMAND

5.1 Interest in Vacant Outlets within the Town Centre 2007 - 2008
There were no enquiries for properties in Bedlington Town Centre recorded on Northumberland Property Database between April 2007 and March 2008. However, it must be noted that this data is based solely on one source (Northumberland Property Database) and other sources may provide further insight.
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 Northumberland in comparison with the North East and England, as this data does not exist for Bedlington Town Centre. It has been assumed that the reason for this is, “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.”¹

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 8 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.

¹ www.voa.gov.uk
There are some properties which are shown as “unknown” on Figure 8. 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 8: Valuation Office Zone A rental prices for Bedlington Town Centre**

Figure 8 shows that the properties for which Valuation Zone A data is available, are situated on Front Street West where the prices are a mixture of £100 - £199 m² and
£200 - £299 m². The varying prices are quite evenly distributed along Front Street West with no apparent trend.

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.” ² 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.”³

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

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.

There is therefore no available data for Bedlington, however Figure 9 shows the average yield for Northumberland, the North East of England, and England.

² www.voa.gov.uk
³ www.voa.gov.uk
Figure 9: Shopping Centre Yields – Northumberland

The graph shows that since April 2001, the average yield for Northumberland has generally been higher than the average for the North East of England and England. The biggest difference in yield between Northumberland and the rest of the North East was by 0.86 in January 2005. Similarly for Northumberland and the rest of England in January 2005 it was 1.20. This indicates that based on yield, it has been derived that there is more of a “risk” associated with setting up business in Northumberland compared to the rest of the North East and England. The latest result, however, in July 2007, showed that this gap had decreased. The average yield for Northumberland was 7.05; the average yield for the North East was 7.02; and the average yield for England was 6.70.

6.3 Average Rental Rate

The average monthly rental rate for vacant commercial property in Bedlington town centre between 1st January 2006 and 31st December 2007 was £123.65 per square metre. Figure 10 show this rate in comparison with other town centres. According to Figure 10, in comparison with other Northumberland town centres, Bedlington has the 6th highest average monthly rental rate in Northumberland for the 11 towns recorded here with only Alnwick, Haltwhistle, Newbiggin, Rothbury and Amble with lower average rental rates. However, it must be noted that these rental figures are
based solely on properties that were vacant between 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2006 and 31\textsuperscript{st} 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 Bedlington and other Northumberland Towns**

![A comparison on average rental prices for commercial property between Bedlington and other Northumberland Towns](image)

Source: Northumberland Property Database
7.0 VACANCY RATES

All town centres experience a baseline level of vacancy rates and this should not always be interpreted as a sign of weakness. A large number of vacant units within centres 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 Bedlington 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 the majority of the commercial property in the town centre is situated on the ground floor.

7.1 Vacancy Rates of Premises

Figure 11 shows that the street within Bedlington Town Centre with the most vacant premises is Market Place with 29% of premises vacant. However, when looking at vacancy rates in terms of floorspace, whilst Market Place was still ranked 1st, 31% of its total floorspace was vacant. Front Street West was the only other street in Bedlington that had vacant premises and floorspace (5 % vacant and 3% vacant respectively).

Figure 12 shows that in Bedlington Town Centre, there were 90% of occupied premises and 10% of vacant premises overall.
Figure 11: Vacancy Rates of Premises

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Road</th>
<th>Vacant (number of buildings)?</th>
<th>Rank - vacancy</th>
<th>Vacant (floorspace sqm)?</th>
<th>Rank - vacancy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MARKET PLACE</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRONT STREET WEST</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHOPPINGTON ROAD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRONT STREET EAST</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLEBE ROAD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLD POLICE STATION</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCHALKSMUHLE ROAD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VULCAN PLACE</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

Figure 12: Is a Property Vacant

Is Property Vacant? (Bedlington Town Centre)

- 10% yes
- 90% no

Source: Experian
7.2 Changes in Town Centre Occupiers 2007 – 2008 (Property Flows)

Information about changes in town centre occupiers between 2007 – 2008 is not currently available for Bedlington town centre, as the GOAD plan from which the data is taken, was only created by Experian in 2008 when the work was commissioned by Northumberland Information Network.
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 Bedlington 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, Friday 4th April and Saturday 5th April 2008. They were carried out by interviewers at two “access points” within the town centre (see Figure 13). These counts were used to give estimates of hourly and daily pedestrian rates.

8.2 Estimates of footfall

It is estimated that the footfall for a typical Saturday in Bedlington town centre is around 2,190, although this will obviously vary depending on the time of year. The data suggests that, on a market day, more people visit the town centre than on a Saturday with a daily figure of 3,066. On the “normal” weekday, which was a Friday in this instance, the highest footfall was taken with a daily figure of 4,962.
Figure 13: Estimated daily footfall in Bedlington Town Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (see Figure 2)</th>
<th>Thursday (Market Day)</th>
<th>Friday (&quot;normal&quot; day)</th>
<th>Saturday (Weekend)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lloyds TSB, Front Street West</td>
<td>2,118</td>
<td>2,466</td>
<td>1,380</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tesco’s, Market Place</td>
<td>948</td>
<td>2,496</td>
<td>810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,066</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,962</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,190</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Footfall Counts

On this occasion, footfalls were calculated for the individual days that they were carried out to give an indication of daily footfall totals on particular “types” of day of the week. In the future, it is the intention to calculate average weekly footfalls for each town.

---

4 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 Bedlington 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

31% of respondents travelled into Bedlington by car on the day of the interview. Almost one half of these (47%) (Figure 14) said that they go into Bedlington everyday during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a car for these trips). This figure dropped to just 5% in the evenings.

Figure 14: Frequency of visit to the town centre by those respondents travelling in by car

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 47 for daytime; 19 for evening
Over half (54%) of the respondents that travelled by car found it very easy to travel into Bedlington town centre (Figure 15). A further 40% found it fairly easy. 6% found it fairly or very difficult.

**Figure 15: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Bedlington town centre (those respondents that travelled by car)**

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

![Pie chart showing ease of travel by car](source)

*Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
*Base: 47*

### 9.2 Access to car parking

Almost half (49%) of respondents said that the availability of parking spaces was good or very good in Bedlington town centre, whereas almost one third (31%) gave a poor or very poor rating (Figure 16).

The availability of disabled parking spaces was perceived to be a little worse, with only 31% giving a positive rating and 31% giving a negative rating.

The safety/security of the parking facilities also received a good/very good rating by 41% of the respondents.
Figure 16: Percentage of respondents giving each rating for parking related attributes

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 74 to 124 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

When respondents were asked how they would make the town centre better, the third most common answer was to improve the parking (27% of respondents mentioned this).

9.3 Cost of parking

No information is available on the respondent’s perceptions of the cost of parking. However, there is no charge for parking in Bedlington.

9.4 Bedlington’s Car parks

Figures 17 and 18 show the location of car parks within and surrounding Bedlington Town Centre.
### Figure 17: Location of 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/Sh Short Stay</th>
<th>Disabled Spaces</th>
<th>Coach Parking</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>293</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>88</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Error! Hyperlink reference not valid.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Former Wansbeck District Council, Transport Direct
Figure 18: Location of Car Parks

Bedlington Town Centre - Car parks

Source: Former Wansbeck District Council, Transport Direct
9.5 Bus Connectivity

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

**Figure 19: Destination and Frequency of Buses from Bedlington**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Mon – Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Over 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barnston</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beacon Hill</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 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>Blyth</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burradon</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambois</td>
<td>Approx 2 per 3 hours</td>
<td>Approx 2 per 3 hours</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choppington</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>6 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cresswell</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Hartford</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>4 per day</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>Hartford</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>4 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Pit</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>4 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holywell</td>
<td>2 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killingworth</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkhill</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitty Brewster</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lynemouth</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>4 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nedderton</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>6 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin by the Sea</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 6 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 1 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>Seaton Burn</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadfen</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeford</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 6 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stobhill</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitley Bay</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodhorn</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>4 per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sources: Travel Search [http://www.carlberry.co.uk/index.htm](http://www.carlberry.co.uk/index.htm) and North East Travel Line [http://planner.travelinenortheast.info](http://planner.travelinenortheast.info)*
9.6 Shoppers travelling to town by bus

16% of respondents travelled into Bedlington by bus on the day of the interview. Just over one third of these (38%) said that they go into Bedlington everyday during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a bus for these trips). This figure dropped to 33% in the evenings.

Figure 20: Frequency of visit to the town centre by those respondents travelling in by bus

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

Over half (54%) of the respondents that travelled by bus found it very easy to travel into Bedlington town centre. A further 38% found it fairly easy. No-one found it fairly or very difficult.
Figure 21: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Bedlington town centre (those respondents that travelled by bus)

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 24 respondents

9.7 Train Connectivity
There is no train access to Bedlington.

9.8 Shoppers travelling to town by train
There is no train access to Bedlington and therefore no shopper’s questionnaire respondents said that they travelled to Bedlington town centre by train.

9.9 Perception of Public Transport Services
Public transport in Bedlington was rated quite well. Approximately two thirds of respondents gave a good/very good rating for the quality, the regularity and the destinations served by public transport. However, 18% gave a poor/very poor response from the destinations to and from Bedlington served by public transport.
Figure 22: 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>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The regularity of bus services</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The destinations to and from Bedlington served by public transport</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 114 to 119 respondents depending on attribute (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)*

A few comments were made regarding public transport. These related to the main problems with the town centre:

- More buses
- more regular bus service
- Should have left buses as they were

### 9.10 Perception of Accessibility

When asked how they would make the town centre better, 8 respondents (5% of respondents) said that improved accessibility was needed. Also one comment made when asked about ways to make the town centre better was:

- More disabled acc, more ramps
9.11 Origin and method of travel of Shoppers Interviewed

As Figure 23 shows, most of the respondents from the Bedlington Shopper Survey live in the Wansbeck District, with a large proportion living in or around Bedlington itself. In addition, some respondents came from the district of Blyth Valley, and most of the others came from elsewhere in Northumberland or Tyne & Wear.

The respondents that live in or around Bedlington travelled in by car, bus and other. The majority of respondents that lived further away from Bedlington travelled into the town centre by car.

No respondents came from outside of the Northumberland and Tyne & Wear regions.
Figure 23: Visitors to Bedlington within Northumberland
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

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

Visitors to Bedlington - Method of Transport
- car
- bus
- walk
- others

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 Bedlington

- The £1 million revamp of the Market Place commenced in March 2009 and is due to be completed in September 2009.

10.2 Shopper perception of the town

10.2.1 Pedestrianisation

None of the respondents made any comments about pedestrianisation.

10.2.2 Signage, Street furniture and Open Spaces

Signage

None of the respondents made any comments about signage.

Street Furniture

Respondents were asked to rate street furniture as part of two different questions (Figure 24). 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.

The responses to the two questions were similar. Over half of respondents gave a good or very good rating, and less than 13% gave a poor or very poor rating.
Figure 24: Street furniture ratings
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

![Street furniture rating chart]

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 146 to 148 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don't know’ response)*

Open Spaces

43% of the respondents gave a positive rating for the parks and open spaces in Bedlington (Figure 25). 28% gave a negative rating.
Figure 25: Ratings given for parks and open spaces
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

![Pie chart showing ratings for parks and open spaces]

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 101 respondents (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

Two suggestions for making the town centre better was to have “more things for younger people” and “something for the kids”. This could be interpreted as parks or open spaces for children to play in but it is not certain.

10.2.3 Litter and Cleanliness

The overall level of cleanliness in Bedlington town centre was perceived to be ok, with 35% of respondents giving a good or very good rating, and 30% giving a poor or very poor rating (Figure 26). Litter within the town centre received a more negative response with 31% of respondents giving a good or very good rating, and 38% giving a poor or very poor rating.
When asked what the respondents would like to see improved with the shopping experience in the town centre, responses relating to litter and cleanliness were:

- clean it all up and open new businesses
- litter
- litter clearance
- the cleanliness improved
- The general place cleaned up

When asked how the respondents would make the town centre better responses relating to litter and cleanliness were:

- A clean up
- general cleanliness
10.2.4 General Appearance of the Town
Respondents were slightly more positive than they were negative about the general appearance of the town. Graffiti received the highest rating (38% good or very good). The general state of the buildings and shop frontage were rated marginally lower (37% and 36% positive ratings respectively) (Figure 27).

Figure 27: Ratings given for the appearance of the town
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

A number of suggestions of ways to make the town centre better were made. Comments relating to the appearance of the town are given below:

- Buildings put back into use, redesigned
- Improve the look of the town
- Improve the market
- the area new things in new business
- the whole of the front street improved
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 28: Analysis of Reported Crimes

Source: Northumbria Police
Figure 29: Crime and Anti Social Behaviour

Looking at Figures 28 and 29, it is clear to see that the majority of crime in Bedlington in 2005 – 2007 occurred on Front Street West, and the main type of crime here was “rowdy and/ or nuisance”. There were 8 cases of “street drinking” recorded on Front Street West during this time, but crimes of this type have been found to be rare. Occurrences of all types of crime are more sparsely distributed, but with the majority on Front Street West.

Looking at the chart (Figure 29), the types of crime and anti social behaviour have been broken down further. The most frequent type occurring in Bedlington Town
Centre between 2005 and 2007 was Rowdy and/or Nuisance behaviour of which there were 297 occurrences. The most frequent type of crime was Violence/offences against the person of which there were 60 occurrences.

11.2 Perception or Fear of Crime

3% of respondents thought that improving safety/security would improve the shopping experience in the town centre, although another respondent did mention that, “more police” would improve the town centre.

Further, when asked how they would make the town centre better, 12% of people gave an answer related to safety or security.

Respondents were also asked to rate safety/security during the daytime and the night-time. Approximately two thirds of respondents (63%) gave a good or very good rating for the daytime, and 10% a poor or very poor rating. For the night-time, the ratings were considerably worse, with only one third (33%) giving a positive rating and 37% a negative rating.

As can be seen in Figure 16, less than half of respondents felt that the safety/security of the parking facilities was good/very good.
Figure 30: Ratings given for safety/security
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 132 respondents (nighttime); 107 respondents (daytime); (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

11.3 Initiatives to Address Town Centre-Related Crime
According to the Wansbeck 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 Bedlington 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 Bedlington catchment area; spending patterns and retaining shopper spend within the town centre.

12.1 Regularity of visits

The highest number of respondents (48%) go to the town centre during the daytime every day, and 32% of respondents visit the town centre twice a week during the day.

Respondents visit the centre far less often during the evenings, with 37% only visiting twice each week, 17% visiting less than once a month, and 15% visiting once a week (Figure 31).

Figure 31: Approximately how often are you in Bedlington Town Centre?

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 151 respondents (daytime); 89 respondents (evening)
12.2 Expenditure/ Type of Purchases

Figure 32 shows the proportion of respondents that shop for different items solely in Bedlington town centre, and how many go further afield. Figure 33 gives more details about which shopping centres the respondents use.

As can be seen from the tables, the respondents use Bedlington primarily for food and other domestic shopping, although, for food shopping, Blyth is also used by a reasonable proportion of respondents.

For all other items, respondents are much more likely to travel to other shopping centres, the most popular of which is Newcastle.
### Figure 32: Proportion of respondents shopping in Bedlington 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>Bedlington</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington only</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington + local area(^5)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington + 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>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Bedlington</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 Bedlington)</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet or other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of places (not Bedlington)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base</strong></td>
<td>145</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

\(^5\) ‘Local area’ is defined as being one of the following: Ashington, Newbiggin, Blyth, Cramlington, Newcastle, Metro Centre, Kingston Park, Morpeth, Silverlink.
## Figure 33: Shopping centres used by respondents to purchase different items

<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>Ashington</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Town Centre</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Manor Walk</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Park</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverlink</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base</strong></td>
<td><strong>145</strong></td>
<td><strong>146</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>150</strong></td>
<td><strong>144</strong></td>
<td><strong>141</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
<td><strong>143</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Over two thirds of respondents (69%) planned to spend less than £25 in Bedlington on the day they were interviewed, with a further 19% expecting to spend between £25 and £100. 12% did not know how much they were going to spend (Figure 38).
Figure 34: How much do you plan to spend in Bedlington today?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 149 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. Within Wansbeck, Bedlington is one of four secondary centres (the others being Newbiggin by the Sea, Bedlington Station and Guidepost/Stakeford). It 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 35: Bedlington Retail Catchment

The map (Figure 35) shows the catchment area for Bedlington town centre, as defined by Experian. The catchment, which measures the extent of the local consumer base, was determined by calculating the centre’s population and the number of retailers present and assigning a radius of 1 mile.
12.4 Spending Patterns

In addition to the town of Bedlington, the catchment also takes in the smaller adjacent settlements of Bedlington Station, Nedderton and Choppington. Altogether, the catchment covers an area of 140.42 km², is home to more than 13,300 people and almost 5,900 households. Together, these households and residents spend an estimated £56.3 million per annum on retail goods and services, with 36.2% of expenditure on convenience retail goods (£20.4 million) and 63.8% on comparison retail (£35.9 million). This balance is almost in line with the national (UK) average, which reports 36.6% of expenditure on convenience retail and 63.4% 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 Bedlington 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 36: Bedlington Catchment Summary Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bedlington Catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Population</td>
<td>13,334.00</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>60,796,178.00</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>100.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Households</td>
<td>5,851.00</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>26,018,847.00</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>98.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
<td>35,893,647.00</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
<td>171,926,829,196.00</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>20,395,661.00</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>99,464,696,627.00</td>
<td>36.6%</td>
<td>98.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail</td>
<td>56,289,308.00</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>271,391,525,823.00</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

Total retail expenditure per household per annum within the catchment stands at £9620, with average comparison retail spend at £6135 per annum and convenience spend at £3,486 per annum. All of these figures are substantially below the national average, with total spend per household 92.23% of the UK figure.

Figure 37 below provides a breakdown of Comparison retail expenditure within the Bedlington catchment and in the UK. As with the UK average, the largest expenditure type within comparison retail is Clothing Material & Garments, accounting for £8.1 million or 22.6% of total Comparison Expenditure within the catchment. Clothing is followed by Audio-visual, photographic and information
processing equipment (£4.5 million or 12.6%) and Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments (£4.1 million or 11.4%). The pattern of expenditure nationally is generally similar, but with some notable differences. Referring to the index, households in Bedlington spend substantially 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 37: 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>Bedlington 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>Item</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small electrical household appliances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small tools and miscellaneous accessories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic appliances and equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

**Figure 38: Expenditure on Comparison Retail**

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

Source: Experian
Figure 39: Expenditure on Comparison Retail

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

- Major household appliances (electric or not)
- Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment
- Small electrical household appliances
- Recording media
- Clothing materials and garments
- Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments

Index (UK=100)

Source: Experian

Figure 40 below provides a breakdown of Convenience retail expenditure within the Bedlington catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within comparison retail in Bedlington is Food and non-alcoholic beverages, accounting for £14.1 million or 69.2% of total Comparison Expenditure within the area. Food and non-alcoholic beverages is followed by Alcohol (£2.4 million or 11.9%) and Tobacco (£2.2 million or 11.0%). The pattern of expenditure nationally differs slightly. Referring to the index, households in the Bedlington Catchment spend more on Newspapers and Periodicals and Tobacco as a proportion of total spend and less on Alcohol and Food.

Figure 40: 2007 Total Expenditure Convenience Retail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Convenience Retail</th>
<th>Bedlington Catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>634,360.00</td>
<td>3.11%</td>
<td>3,214,575,062.00</td>
<td>3.23%</td>
<td>96.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
<td>2,418,956.00</td>
<td>11.86%</td>
<td>12,313,767,021.00</td>
<td>12.38%</td>
<td>95.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (off-trade)</td>
<td>14,121,309.00</td>
<td>69.24%</td>
<td>70,035,886,128.00</td>
<td>70.41%</td>
<td>98.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and non-alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>971,703.00</td>
<td>4.76%</td>
<td>4,451,576,478.00</td>
<td>4.48%</td>
<td>106.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and periodicals</td>
<td>2,249,334.00</td>
<td>11.03%</td>
<td>9,448,891,938.00</td>
<td>9.50%</td>
<td>116.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>20,395,661.00</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 Bedlington. What the information does not indicate, however, is how much of the expenditure is spend purchasing goods and services in Bedlington 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 Bedlington catchment that shops in Bedlington and the proportion that shop at other centres.
- The percentage of expenditure spent on goods and services in Bedlington 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 1% (138) of the resident population shop in Bedlington. The main shopping destination for residents is Newcastle City Centre, which accounts for just over one fifth of the catchment population (2,851 or 21%). Other notable shopping destinations include Ashington (2,611 or 20%), the MetroCentre (2,208 or 17%), Blyth (1,660 or 12%) and Cramlington (1,201 or 9%).

**Figure 41: Population Leakage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Population (no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>21.38</td>
<td>2,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>19.59</td>
<td>2,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>2,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>12.45</td>
<td>1,660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pattern with regards to spend is relatively similar. Experian estimates that just over 1% of retail spend by residents and households domiciled within the Bedlington catchment, representing £0.6 million per annum, is spent in the town.

Just over one-fifth of spend or £12.2 million is lost to Newcastle City Centre, with other notable leakage to Ashington (£10.8 million or 19%), the MetroCentre (£9.5 million or 17%), Blyth (£6.6 million or 12%) and Cramlington (£5.2 million or 9%).

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 42: Spend Leakage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Spend (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>21.71</td>
<td>12,222,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>19.15</td>
<td>10,779,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.87</td>
<td>9,493,655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>11.71</td>
<td>6,592,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>9.15</td>
<td>5,153,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>2,614,171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>2,588,873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>1,316,911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1,245,520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1,098,960</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 43 shows the Bedlington catchment area and is colour coded to indicate the proportion of retail expenditure that is spent by the resident population in Bedlington. Clearly, from the map it can be seen that spend is consistently less than 5% across the whole catchment area.

Figure 43: Proportion of Retail Expenditure
12.6 Opinions on and use of Leisure and Entertainment

Events attended
Out of respondents, the Thursday Market had the largest attendance (56%). Live music performances closely followed with 28% of respondents attending. However, 39% of respondents had not attended any of these events.

Figure 44: Have you ever attended any of these events?
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday Market</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Music Performances</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Markets</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised Walks/ exercise/ sports activities</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Theatre Productions (Masquerade)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not attended any</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 151 respondents

Eating and drinking
The highest rated eating/ drinking venues by respondents were pub and clubs with 65% rating them either good or very good. Only 28% of respondents rated the restaurants in Bedlington as good or very good. Further, 41% of respondents rated the restaurants as poor or very poor (Figure 45).
Figure 45: How would you rate the following venues for eating and drinking in Bedlington?

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 116 to 126 respondents depending on type of venue (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

Arts and leisure facilities
The highest rated arts and leisure facilities by respondents was Bedlington Country Park with 55% rating them either good or very good. Only 10% of respondents rated Cleasewell Hill Healthy Living Centre as good or very good. Further, 55% of respondents rated Cleasewell Hill Healthy Living as poor or very poor (Figure 46).
Figure 46: How would you rate the following arts and leisure facilities in Bedlington?

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

How would you rate the following? (excludes don’t knows)

Source: Northumberland InforNet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 150 to 151 depending on facility (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

When asked how they would rate Bedlington as a place to enjoy yourself, just 14% of respondents gave a good or very good response and over half (57%) gave a poor or very poor response (Figure 47).
Figure 47: How do you rate Bedlington as a place to enjoy yourself?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

![Pie chart showing ratings: 26% Very Poor, 31% Poor, 29% OK, 14% Good, 0% Very Good.]

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

**Base: 143 (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)**

**General**

When respondents were asked how they would make the town centre better, 47% gave an answer relating to improving the leisure facilities. A few comments were also made on this subject:

- cinema
- leisure centre
- Leisure facilities
- Leisure facilities and clothes shops
- Leisure Facilities improved - more shops
- Sports
- sports centre
- better facilities for kids
- More for young people.
- something for kids
• Swimming baths

12.7 The Future: what will improve the town as a place to shop or visit?

From the analysis of the Bedlington shopper survey, it appears that in order to improve the town as a place to shop or visit, three issues need to be addressed - the retail offer, parking, and the leisure facilities. The latter two have already been covered in sections 9.2 and 12.6. The retail offer is examined in more detail in this section.

Figure 48: How would you make this town centre better?
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How would you make this town centre better?</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Better Retail offer</td>
<td>79%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved Leisure Facilities</td>
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<td>Improved Parking</td>
<td>27%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety and security</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improved Accessibility</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>14%</td>
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Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 146 respondents

Retail

Throughout the survey, respondents have been fairly negative about the retail offer in Bedlington as can be seen in the following figures:

• Comments given as part of the main improvements with shopping experience question include: “A better shop selection”, “more choice in shops”, “more
shopping facilities, more for young”, “Clothes and toy shops”, “better class of shops” and “Shopping, social facilities”.

- Only 32% of respondents agreed that Bedlington offers a wide choice of quality shops; 48% disagreed with the statement.
- As can be seen in sections 12.2 and 12.3, Bedlington is mainly used for food shopping and shopping for other domestic items. For all other items, respondents are much more likely to go to alternative shopping centres, particularly Newcastle.
- Only 15% of respondents gave a good/very good rating when asked to rate Bedlington as a place to shop; 62% gave a poor/very poor rating.

When asked what improvements respondents would like to see to the retail offer in Bedlington, the most common suggestion was to have an increased variety of shops (81% of respondents mentioned this). More chain stores and more shops offering local produce were also popular answers (Figure 49).

Figure 49: What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Bedlington?

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

**Base: 149 respondents**
Respondents were also asked to give examples of suggested improvements to the retail offer in Bedlington. A list of these responses is given in Appendix 2 (Q19).
13.0 INVESTMENT

Redevelopment
The following developments are proposed for Bedlington Town Centre;

- The Bedlingtonshire Townscape Heritage (THI) with funding of almost £2 million will help conserve and enhance the historic environment of the conservation area, helping the town as a place to run a business.

- Improvements will be made to commercial historic buildings and public realm works at the Market Place.

- The Council are also progressing plans for consultation this autumn on a new development scheme for the Market Place ‘gap site’ to attract new business to the town.
14.0 CONCLUSION

Bedlington is currently undergoing various developments in the Town Centre. Whilst the majority of the regeneration will improve the aesthetic aspects of the town centre, they will hopefully contribute to improving the town centre as a whole and should therefore be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions about the health of the Town Centre.

In the Town Centre, 37% of the floorspace use was for retail (Figure 3). However, despite this relatively high percentage of retail floorspace, shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative with 48% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to the statement “Bedlington offers a wide choice of quality shops”, compared to 32% agreeing or strongly agreeing (Figure 5).

When asked what shoppers would like to see improved with the shopping experience (Appendix 2) the responses included that more shops were needed and that the variety of shops needed to be improved. The verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the retail offer (Appendix 2) highlighted that more shops and more choice of shops were high on their priorities. 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.

There was 10% of vacant floorspace in Bedlington (see Figure 12). There were no enquiries for properties in Bedlington Town Centre recorded on Northumberland Property Database between April 2007 and March 2008. The only enquiries recorded were for properties on Welwyn Electronics Park and Barrington Industrial Estate which are both of town employment sites. However, it must be noted that this data is based solely on one source (Northumberland Property Database) and other sources may provide further insight.

Accessibility into the town was not a problem for the shoppers interviewed with 94% (of those travelling by car) finding it very (54%) or fairly (40%) easy (Figure 15).
However, 31% of these shoppers felt that the parking in the town centre was either poor or very poor. Bedlington also has good bus connectivity, which is shown in Figure 19 by the frequency and number of destinations reached from Bedlington. 92% of shoppers travelling into the town centre by bus also found it very or fairly easy to travel there (Figure 24) and the remaining 8% found it neither easy nor difficult. Further, Figure 25 shows that when looking at overall perception of the shoppers interviewed, around two thirds of respondents rated the quality, regularity and destinations served by public transport positively.

When looking at retaining shopper spend, just 1% of Bedlington residents shopped in Bedlington. 21% of expenditure was lost to Newcastle and a further 20% to Ashington (Figure 41). There were actually 11 centres which had a higher percentage of Bedlington’s population spend than Bedlington itself. However, the current regeneration programmes may show that the percentage for Bedlington will increase in the next few years and there will be a reduction in leakage to surrounding centres.

The responses from shoppers coupled with the various aspects that make up a town centre, suggest that generally Bedlington was in reasonable health. Although there has been some negative responses from the shoppers’ surveys with regards to the retail offer in general, the implementation of the various regeneration projects and aesthetic improvement to the town centre should show hopefully show some improvements in forthcoming years.
15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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

Section 9, Accessibility, gathered all of the destinations reached from Bedlington 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, gymnasiuums 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 Bedlington Town Centre?

Shops

- A better shop selection
- A variety of shops
- better class of shops
- better shops
- Better shops
- Bigger Tesco's. More Businesses.
- Clothes and toy shops
- Lack of decent shops
- more choice in shops
- More choice of shops
- more cloth shops
- More Shopping
- more shops
- More shops
- More Shops
- MORE SHOPS
- more shops for games
- more shopping facilities, more for young
- more underwear shops
- more variety in shops
- more variety of shops
- need better shops
- Shop- new life!
- Shop provision
- Shopping, social facilities
• Shops
• shops
• Shops from outfitter
• shops occupied is what people want
• shops, m+s
• Supermarkets. Clothes

Leisure

• cinema
• leisure centre
• Leisure facilities
• Leisure facilities and clothes shops
• Leisure Facilities improved - more shops
• Sports
• sports centre
• better facilities for kids
• More for young people.
• something for kids
• Swimming baths

Cleaner

• clean it all up and open new businesses
• litter
• litter clearance
• the cleanliness improved
• The general place cleaned up

Access/parking

• More buses
• more regular bus service
• Should have left buses as they were

General update
• Buildings put back into use, redesigned
• Improve the look of the town
• Improve the market
• the area new things in new business
• the whole of the front street improved

Roads
• Church lane

Other
• More police
• Stop kids hanging around
• zebra crossing by chemist needs improving

Nothing
• fine
• Its alright, nothing
• Its ok
• nothing
• Nothing

Don't know

D/K
Verbatim responses to ‘Q19 What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Bedlington?’

Examples given for response ‘Increased variety of shops’

- A coop
- A DEPARTMENT STORE
- baby clothes, new look, select, Primark
- Bakers. Snack Shops.
- Chemists, furniture
- children clothing shops, fashions
- clothe shops
- clothe shops, household items, electricals
- clothes
- Clothes
- Clothes / Food
- Clothes / Furniture
- Clothes all ages
- clothes and shoes, accessories
- Clothes shops and shoe shops
- Clothes shops
- Clothes shops, a shopping centre
- Clothes shops, electricals
- CLOTHES STORES, SUPERMARKET, D.I.Y
- Clothes, d.i.y
- Clothes, electrical
- Clothes, electrical goods
- Clothes, electricals
- CLOTHES, ELECTRICALS
- Clothes, food & butcher
- clothes, leisure facilities, youth
- Clothes, music, Sports facilities
- Clothes,
- clothes, shoes
- Clothes, shoes
- Clothes, shoes, DVDs
• clothes, shoes, electric goods
• Clothes. Fashion all ages.
• Clothes. Shoes
• Clothes. Shoes. Electrical.
• Clothes. Shoes. Music.
• Clothes. Shoes. Supermarkets.
• clothing
• Clothing
• Clothing for men, Lauderette,
• clothing shops
• Clothing shops
• clothing shops, shoe shops
• clothing shops, Wilkinson’s, M&S,
• Clothing, a shopping centre
• Clothing, food shops, baby shops
• Clothing, electrical goods
• clothing, fashion stores
• department store, clothe stores, s
• dept stores
• don’t know
• fashion and shoe shops, baby fashion
• fashion shops like new look or Dorothy Perkins
• Food / Clothes
• Food. Clothes.
• Food. Supermarkets.
• Furniture / Clothes
• Furniture
• General electricals, clothes, Tesco
• groceries
• grocers, bakers, local produce,
• HMV, computer game shops,
• ladies shops clothes
• Large chemist, better florist
• Larger supermarket, electrical,
• LEISURE FACILITIES
• Like Cramlington, a shopping centre
• M+S
• Men’s Clothes
• More baby and clothes shops
• more grocery shops
• more individual clothes and shoe shops
• none
• Nothing
• Produce/ fresh produce
• Quality clothes shops
• shoe shops, nice quality fashion f
• Shoes / Clothes
• shoes and clothes
• shoes shops clothing store DVD shops
• SHOES, CLOTHES, MUSIC
• shops selling playstation games
• sport shops
• Supermarket
• Supermarket / Clothes / Shoes
• Supermarket, Clothes
• Supermarket. Cafes. Booze.
• Supermarket. Clothes. Shoes.
• Supermarkets
• Supermarkets.
• Supermarkets. Clothes all ages.
• TESCO - NON-FOOD SECTION
• Underwear. Shoes. Clothes
• USE DISUSED STORES, CAR PARKING
• Wilkinson’s, cloth shops
• women’s clothes and shoe shops
Verbatim responses to ‘Q27 How would you make this town centre better?’

- A clean up
- All types of shops,
- Clothes
- Clothes and baby shops
- Clothes. Shops.
- D/K
- don’t know
- Food stores.
- Food/Clothes
- Furniture
- general cleanliness
- IMPROVED EMPTY PROPERTY AND VARIETY OF SHOPS
- More Chain Stores
- More different shops
- More disabled acc, more ramps
- MORE FLOWERS TO BRIGHTEN UP
- MORE SHOPS
- More Shops in all areas
- more shops opened
- More things for younger people
- None
- Toilets and baby changing
- SOMETHING FOR THE KIDS
- STOP ILLEGAL PARKING
The Northumberland Information Network

Contacts

Philip Hanmer – Information Network Manager
Tel: (01670) 533919

Laurie Turnbull – Research Assistant
Tel: (01670) 533038
Fax: (01670) 533967

E-mail: InfoNet@northumberland.gov.uk

Website: www.northumberlandinfonet.org.uk

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