BLYTH TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT

Prepared by: Lauren Widdrington (Research Officer) and Alyson Forster (Research Officer)
Tel: 01670 534757/ 01670 534755
E-mail: lwiddrington@northumberland.gov.uk / alforster@northumberland.gov.uk
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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

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 63% of the floorspace in Blyth was for retail.
- Shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative – 28% did not think Blyth offered a wide choice of shops.
- Shoppers would like to see improvements with more choice and variety was needed.
- There was more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience retail.
- There was 9% vacant floorspace in Blyth.
- 44% of premises went from vacant to occupied, 26% went from occupied to vacant and 30% had a change in occupier.
- 85% of shoppers interviewed found it very easy or fairly easy to travel into Blyth town centre by car.
- 52% gave a good or very good rating for the availability of car parking spaces in Blyth.
- Blyth also has good bus connectivity by the frequency and number of destinations reached from Blyth.
- 76% of those travelling by bus found it easy or fairly easy, no-one found it difficult.
- Just less than two thirds of respondents gave a positive rating for the quality and the regularity of bus services and the destinations served by public transport.
- 10% of Blyth residents shopped in Blyth. 27% of expenditure was lost to Newcastle, 17% to the Metro Centre and 11% to 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 Blyth 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 Blyth’s Town Centre Boundary

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

The area of Blyth Town Centre in relation to the District Council boundary is 65,146.23m².

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

Source: Experian, June 2009
2.2 Blyth’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 Northumberland County Council): Blyth is the largest retailing and commercial centre in the South East Northumberland with an estimated population of 35,818. The town and port grew with the development of coal mining, however, the town has suffered high levels of unemployment as coal mining contracted, culminating in the closure of Bates Colliery in 1986. The decline in heavy industry has been coupled with an increase in the service sector, retailing, education and government services.

The Port of Blyth is a major business and landowner in the town. Industrial premises are located to the south of the estuary at the Blyth Riverside Park. The town has grown substantially over the last few decades through urban extensions at South Beach to the south of the town and Chase Farm to the west of the town, adjacent to the A189 Northumberland Spine Road.

Due to its coastal location and proximity to Tyneside, the town does not have much of a hinterland and its service role is in the main, limited to its own population. Retail activity is focused around Market Square and the relatively modern Keel Row Shopping Centre.

2.3 History and Development of Blyth

Blyth is a large town (population around 36,000\(^1\)), located in south-east Northumberland, approximately 13 miles north-east of Newcastle.

\(^1\) 2001 census
There is evidence to suggest that there were people in the area as far back as the late-Neolithic or early Bronze Age eras, and cropmarks have been discovered possibly dating back to the Iron Age.

The port of Blyth dates from the 12th century. However, the modern town of Blyth didn’t develop until the 18th century. A number of industries shaped the town, the two most important being coal mining and shipbuilding.

The first report of shipbuilding in Blyth was in 1748, though it wasn't until the early 20th century that the industry boomed. The Blyth Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company was one of the largest shipbuilding yards on the north east coast. During the two world wars, they built numerous ships for the Admiralty, including the Royal Navy’s first aircraft carrier. The shipyard finally closed down in 1967.

In the 18th century, a new quay was built for shipping coal. Then in 1858, a new Act allowed dredging of the harbour, allowing bigger ships to enter the port, and a massive increase in the amount of coal exported.

Other important industries in the area related to fishing, salt and the railway. In the 18th century, there were 14 salt pans producing more than 1,000 tons of salt each year. The last of these were destroyed in 1876 and this industry ceased. In 1847, a railway line was constructed, connecting Blyth to the collieries at Seghill, and combining with an existing line to link Blyth with North Tyneside. The line closed during the 1960’s. Blyth was also used as a submarine base during the two World Wars.

Blyth has been seriously rundown by the decline of the shipbuilding and coalmining industries. However, the port is still very important, with shipments of paper and pulp from Scandinavia flowing through the port supplying newspaper industries in England and Scotland. Blyth Lifeboat Station (built in 1808) is also still in use today,

Considerable regeneration of Blyth Links has been carried out over the past few years, including a new amphitheatre, play area, modernisation of the promenade, and redevelopment of the market square. Further investment is planned for the next
few years. Renewable energy in the area has also been invested in, with the construction of Blyth Harbour Wind Farm in 1992 (9 wind turbines) and Blyth Offshore Wind Farm in 2000 (2 wind turbines erected 1km off-shore).

As well as the Northumberland Coast, Blyth has a number of attractions and events. These include annual summer and Christmas Fairs, the Spirit of the Staithes sculpture, a thrice weekly market, a large sports centre, a golf club, and the Phoenix Theatre. Several country parks can also be found nearby. Another attraction is the 'High light' lighthouse, standing nearly 19m tall. It was built in three stages (1788, 1888 and 1900) and was deactivated in 1985.
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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 Blyth Town Centre and also the opinions of shoppers surveyed on the range of retail provision in Blyth.

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 almost two thirds (63%) of the floorspace in Blyth Town Centre are classed as shops. Assembly and leisure accounts for 10% of the floorspace in Blyth, and financial and professional services occupies 9% of floorspace.

Figure 3: Floorspace by Use Class

![Floorspace by Use Class - Blyth Town Centre](image)

Source: Experian, June 2009
Figure 4: Building Use class for Blyth Town Centre

Source: Experian, June 2009
The map (Figure 4) shows that throughout the town the properties are dominated by the retail sector. The majority of financial and professional services are situated just off the east of Bridge Street. The largest floorspace area for assembly and leisure is found on either end of Union Street.

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 happen throughout the year. A number of summer plays take place, the first one being the Aldi summer play in August, from 11-2pm in the Aldi car park. Heritage Open Days at Blyth bandstand take place in September, as well as ‘Smooth Sundays’ where live music is played. The Beach Play party is held in August from 11-3pm on Blyth beach, activities such as summer day hunts, football, dance performances and face painting. An annual summer and Christmas Fairs, the Spirit of the Staithes sculpture, a thrice weekly market, a large sports centre, a golf club, and the Phoenix Theatre, where there is an ongoing exhibition in the foyer gallery.

3.3 Satisfaction with the range of provision – retail

Question 16 in the Blyth Shopper Questionnaire asked:

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

The level of disagreement with this statement was considerably higher than the level of agreement (28% vs. 20% of respondents) (Figure 5).
Figure 5: How would you rate “On the whole, Blyth offers a wide choice of quality shops”?  
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Shopper Surveys, April 2009

Base: 285 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 - Blyth

Source: Experian, June 2009
Figure 6 shows that in Blyth centre, the majority of businesses are comparison retail (43 independent, 34 multiple chain). The category which has the 2nd highest amount of businesses is leisure services: 33 of which are independent and 9 multiple chain. There are 23 convenience retail premises and 44 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 Blyth Town Centre recorded on Northumberland Property Database between April 2007 and March 2008. The only enquiries recorded were for properties on Cowpen Industrial Estate, Blyth Valley Retail Park and Blyth Riverside Business Park which are out 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.
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 Blyth 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 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.

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 Blyth Town Centre**

Figure 8 shows that the properties on Bridge Street in the Keel Row Shopping Centre generally have the highest zone A rent, with the majority being £400 - £499 per m² and a couple falling in the £500 - £599 per m² category. The prices decrease towards the edge of the town centre and onto Regent Street and Waterloo Road where the majority of properties are £100 - £199 per m² or £200 - £299 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.” 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.”

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

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.

Figure 9: Shopping Centre Yields - Blyth

Source: Valuation Office (www.voa.gov.uk), July 2007

2 www.voa.gov.uk
3 www.voa.gov.uk
Figure 9 shows that whilst the yield for Blyth was slightly lower that the average for Northumberland between April 2002 and January 2005, it was still higher than the average for the North East and England. However, in July 2005 whilst the yield for Blyth stayed at 8.5 as it had been in January 2005, the yield for the average of Northumberland dropped from 8.6 (January 2005) to 7.9 (July 2005). Between July 2005 and January 2007, the yield for Blyth (ranging between 7.5 and 8.5) was higher than the averages for 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 Blyth during this time. However, it is evident that the situation in Blyth has been improving and decreasing in recent years and in July 2007 which was the last value recorded, the yield for Blyth had dropped below the Northumberland and North East averages.

6.3 Average Rental Rate

The average monthly rental rate for vacant commercial property in Blyth town centre between 1st January 2006 and 31st December 2007 was £174.66 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, Blyth has the 3rd highest average monthly rental rate in Northumberland for the 11 towns recorded here with only Morpeth and Ashington with higher average rental rates. 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 Blyth and other Northumberland Towns

A comparison on average rental prices for commercial property between Blyth and other Northumberland Towns

Source: Northumberland Property Database, December 2007
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. Vacancies concentrated in an area may also reflect an ongoing land assembly in advance of a wider regeneration of part of a town. 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 Blyth 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 Blyth Town Centre with the most vacant premises is Delaval Terrace with 33% of premises vacant. When looking at vacancy rates in terms of floorspace, Delaval Terrace still had the highest proportion of vacant space, with 83% of floorspace vacant. This is due to one of the vacant premises having a floorspace of 1910 m² which is considerably larger than the other premises in the town centre. On Seaforth Street, almost half of the premises’ floorspace (47%) were vacant.

Figure 12 shows that in Blyth Town Centre, there were 91% of occupied premises and 9% of vacant premises overall.
### 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>BEACONSFIELD STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BONDICAR TERRACE</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOWES STREET</td>
<td>8% 9</td>
<td>6% 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGE STREET</td>
<td>16% 6</td>
<td>25% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH STREET</td>
<td>10% 8</td>
<td>4% 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COOMASSIE ROAD</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CROFT ROAD</td>
<td>17% 5</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DELAVAL TERRACE</td>
<td>33% 1</td>
<td>83% 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAVELock STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KEEL ROW SHOPPING CENTRE, KEEL ROW</td>
<td>5% 10</td>
<td>1% 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KING STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARKET STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARSONS STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PERCY STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REGENT STREET</td>
<td>11% 7</td>
<td>3% 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAFORTH STREET</td>
<td>33% 1</td>
<td>47% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMPSON STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STANLEY STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNION STREET</td>
<td>33% 1</td>
<td>28% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WANLEY STREET</td>
<td>33% 1</td>
<td>30% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WATERLOO ROAD</td>
<td>3% 11</td>
<td>1% 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WRIGHT STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, June 2009
Figure 12: Is a Property Vacant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property Vacant? (Blyth Town Centre)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>no</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>yes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, June 2009

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

Figure 13 shows changes in Town Centre Occupiers in 2007 and 2008 within Blyth Town Centre. The graph shows the number of offices have decreased in 2007 from 6 to 4 in 2008. There has also been a decrease in premises by 1 for certain primary activity types including computer equipment, greengrocer, sandwich bar and supermarket. However, there has been a number of increases. The number of cafes increased from 6 in 2007 to 10 in 2008, hairdressers increased from 13 in 2007 to 15 in 2008; and the number of haberdasheries increased from 2 in 2007 to 4 in 2008.
Figure 13: Changes in Primary Activity Type 2007-2008

Source: Experian, August 2008

Figure 14 shows the type of changes in premises in Blyth Town Centre between 2007 and 2008. Just under one third (30%) of the changes were a change in occupier. Almost a half (44%) of these changes were premises that were vacant in 2007 but were occupied in 2008. Only 26% of premises were occupied in 2007 but vacant in 2008, therefore a reduction of vacant premises is evident (also see Figure 13).
Figure 14: Type of Changes in Premises 2007-2008

Type of Changes in Premises 2007 - 2008
(Blyth Town Centre)

Source: Experian, August 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 Blyth Town Centre in April 2009 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 Saturday 4th April, Monday 6th April and Friday 10th April 2009. They were carried out by interviewers at four “access points” within the town centre (see Figure 15). These counts were used to give estimates of hourly and daily pedestrian rates.

8.2 Estimates of footfall

The data suggests that Saturday tends to be the busiest day of the week in Blyth, with around 12,000 people visiting the town centre on the day of the footfall counts. Fridays (one of the Market Days) appear to have fewer people visiting the centre (around 1900 lower in this case), and on a ‘normal weekday’, the figure drops further.
Figure 15: Estimated daily footfall in Blyth Town Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Saturday (Weekend + Market Day)</th>
<th>Monday (“Normal” Day)</th>
<th>Friday (Market Day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Junction of Waterloo St and Wanley St</td>
<td>2,478</td>
<td>2,526</td>
<td>2,550</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regent Street (close to Keel Row entrance, Market Place)</td>
<td>2,952</td>
<td>2,814</td>
<td>3,108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridge St and Stanley St Junction</td>
<td>3,228</td>
<td>1,476</td>
<td>2,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regent St north, outside Morrisons</td>
<td>3,360</td>
<td>2,082</td>
<td>2,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12,018</td>
<td>8,898</td>
<td>10,122</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Footfall Counts, April 2009

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 Blyth 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

81 respondents (28%) travelled into Blyth by car on the day of the interview. Three quarters of these (Figure 16) said that they go into Blyth at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a car for these trips). This figure dropped to 40% in the evenings.

Figure 16: 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, April 2009

Base: 81 for daytime; 52 for evening
85% of the respondents that travelled by car found it very easy or fairly easy to travel into Blyth town centre (Figure 17). Only 1 person found it fairly difficult and no-one found it very difficult.

When asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Blyth, 20% of respondents mentioned the traffic.

**Figure 17: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Blyth town centre (those respondents that travelled by car)**

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

```
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly easy</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither easy nor difficult</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly difficult</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

*Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009*

*Base: 81*

**9.2 Access to car parking**

Respondents that travelled into Blyth by car on the day of the interview were asked where they had parked. The most common response (46%) was the Morrisons Car Park, followed by the Keel Row Shopping Centre (23%) (Figure 18).
Just over half of respondents (52%) gave a good or very good rating for the availability of public parking spaces in Blyth (Figure 19). The figure was slightly less (42%) for the availability of disabled parking spaces.

Only two fifths of respondents (40%) felt that the safety/security of the parking facilities was good or very good. 18% gave this a negative rating.
When asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Blyth, 2% mentioned the parking provision, and 5% the illegal parking. In addition, 6% said that in order to make the town centre better, the parking needed to be improved. One respondent said that he would like the town centre made better “for parked cars”.

9.3 Cost of parking

The cost of parking in Blyth was not specifically asked about in the survey, and no comments were made on the subject.

9.4 Blyth’s Car parks

Figures 20 and 21 show the location of car parks within and surrounding Blyth Town Centre.
## Figure 20: 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/Short Stay</th>
<th>Disabled Spaces</th>
<th>Coach Parking</th>
<th>Additional Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Blyth, Union Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Blyth, Essoldo</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Blyth, Keel Row</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>337</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Blyth, Freehold Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>128</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Blyth, King Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>49</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Blyth, High Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Blyth, Station Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>57</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Blyth, Bowes Street/Arthur Street</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Blyth, Plessey Road (Adj. Joiners Arms)</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Blyth, Renwick Road</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Blyth, Blyth Sports Centre</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Blyth, Fulmar Drive/Curlew Way/South Beach</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Blyth, Mermaid</td>
<td>Free</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Blyth Valley District Council, Transport Direct, August 2009
Figure 21: Location of Car Parks

Source: Blyth Valley District Council, Transport Direct, August 2009
### 9.5 Bus Connectivity

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Monday to Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
<th>Sunday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle Haymarket</td>
<td>Approx 26 per day</td>
<td>Approx 26 per day</td>
<td>Approx 18 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regent Centre</td>
<td>Approx 29 per day</td>
<td>Approx 29 per day</td>
<td>Approx 26 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley</td>
<td>Approx 30 per day</td>
<td>Approx 30 per day</td>
<td>Approx 27 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington, Northumbrian Rd</td>
<td>Approx 19 per day</td>
<td>Approx 19 per day</td>
<td>Approx 15 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Shops</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 8 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>Approx 23 per day</td>
<td>Approx 23 per day</td>
<td>Approx 13 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>Approx 37 per day</td>
<td>Approx 37 per day</td>
<td>Approx 20 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>Approx 40 per day</td>
<td>Approx 40 per day</td>
<td>Approx 15 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bebside</td>
<td>Approx 42 per day</td>
<td>Approx 42 per day</td>
<td>Approx 25 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeford</td>
<td>Approx 43 per day</td>
<td>Approx 43 per day</td>
<td>Approx 26 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington Station</td>
<td>Approx 51 per day</td>
<td>Approx 51 per day</td>
<td>Approx 26 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaton Delaval</td>
<td>Approx 25 per day</td>
<td>Approx 50 per day</td>
<td>Approx 33 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benridge Park</td>
<td>Approx 19 per day</td>
<td>Approx 19 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington High Pit</td>
<td>Approx 23 per day</td>
<td>Approx 23 per day</td>
<td>Approx 21 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 15 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaton Burn</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazelrigg</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinnington</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wideopen</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Park</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 17 per day</td>
<td>Approx 14 per day</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.6 Shoppers travelling to town by bus

85 respondents (29%) travelled into Blyth by bus on the day of the interview. 88% of these said that they go into Blyth at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a car for these trips). This figure dropped to 29% 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)

Just over three quarters (76%) of the respondents that travelled by bus found it very easy or fairly easy to travel into Blyth town centre. No-one found it difficult (Figure 24).
Figure 24: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Blyth town centre (those respondents that travelled by bus)
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, June 2008
Base: 85 respondents

9.7 Train Connectivity
There is no train access to Blyth.

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

9.9 Perception of Public Transport Services
Just less than two thirds of respondents gave a positive rating for the quality and the regularity of bus services and the destinations served by public transport. 5% gave a negative rating in each case.
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>Service</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/rail services</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The regularity of bus/rail services</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The destinations served by public transport</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 238 to 240 respondents depending on attribute (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

9.10 Perception of Accessibility

When asked how they would make the town centre better, 8% of respondents said they would improve the accessibility. In addition, 23% of respondents would like to see the quality of the footpaths improved, and 22% would like to see road safety improved.

One respondent said that it needed to be “more wheelchair friendly”.

9.11 Origin and method of travel of Shoppers Interviewed

As Figure 26 shows, a large proportion from the Blyth Shopper Survey live in or around Blyth itself. In addition, some respondents came from the villages and towns surrounding Blyth, and most of the others came from elsewhere in Northumberland or Tyne & Wear.
Most of the respondents travelled in by car, although a number of the respondents travelled by bus. A large proportion of the respondents that live in, or close to, Blyth said that they walked.

The remaining few respondents were from either Scotland or just outside of the Northumberland and Tyne and Wear region. Most of these travelled into Blyth by car.
Figure 26: Visitors to Blyth within Northumberland
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

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

Source: Northumberland Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Figure 27: Visitors to Blyth outside Northumberland
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Visitors to Blyth outside of Northumberland and Tyne & Wear
(Shopper's Survey)
- Home Towns

Visitors to Blyth - Method of Transport
- Bus
- Car

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
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 Blyth

- The Shop Fronts Scheme was launched at the end of October and the circulation of the Application Pack to owners/tenants has generated considerable interest. To date the architect is dealing with 6-7 potential applications and it is hoped to have the first approvals through on the first meeting of the Approvals Panel on 9th December.

- All seating in Ridley Park was replaced with new hardwood benches.

- All seating in New Delaval Welfare was replaced with new hardwood benches.

- Plastic lamp posts bins have been replaced throughout Blyth (ongoing) with metal bins.

- Two worn out shrub beds in Ridley Park had new shrubs planted.
10.2 Shopper perception of the town

10.2.1 Pedestrianisation
Views on pedestrianisation were not specifically asked about in the survey, and no comments were made on the subject.

10.2.2 Signage, Street furniture and Open Spaces

Signage
5% of respondents said that they would like to see signage & information improved in Blyth town centre.

Street Furniture
Respondents were asked to rate street furniture as part of two different questions (Figure 28). 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 both of the questions were similar, with less than half of the respondents in each case giving a positive rating.
Figure 28: Street furniture ratings
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 282 to 287 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

One respondent said that they would like to see “better seating”.

Open Spaces
The promenade and beach, and Ridley Park, both received a high proportion of positive ratings from the respondents (86% gave a good or very good rating, and only 1% a poor or very poor rating) (Figure 29).
Figure 29: Ratings given for parks and open spaces
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

10.2.3 Litter and Cleanliness
The litter and the overall cleanliness in Blyth were not rated very highly. Litter received a positive rating from just over one quarter (26%) of respondents, and a negative rating from 17%. The overall level of cleanliness fared slightly better, with 28% of positive ratings and 13% of negative ratings (Figure 30).
Figure 30: Ratings given for litter and overall cleanliness
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Base: 280 respondents (litter); 282 responses (cleanliness); (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

10.2.4 General Appearance of the Town
The general appearance of the town was not thought highly of. Less than 20% of respondents gave a good or very good rating for the graffiti/fly posting, the general state of the buildings and the shop frontage. Nearly one quarter gave a negative rating in each case (Figure 31).
Figure 31: Ratings given for the appearance of the town
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Base: 260 to 282 respondents; (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

A few respondents made comments or suggestions of improvements relating to the appearance of the town:

- “Shops fronts cleaned up and brighter”.
- “General updating”.
- “If the shop front matched up with the street market place”.
- “Keep the rest up to date like market square”.
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 Crimes

Source: Northumbria Police, December 2007
Looking at Figure 32, all types of crime were spread fairly evenly through the town centre, with “other ASB” and “rowdy and/or nuisance behaviour” also distributed throughout the town centre. Street drinking was far less common as can be seen by the few occurrences showing on the map.

Looking at the chart (Figure 33), the types of crime have been broken down further. The most frequent type of crime occurring in Blyth Town Centre between 2005 and 2007 was “fraud and forgery”, of which there were 270 occurrences. The 2nd most
frequent type of crime was “violence/ offences against the person” of which there were 106 occurrences.

11.2 Perception or Fear of Crime

The safety and security in Blyth was obviously seen as an issue, particularly with respect to drugs. 27% of respondents said that they would like to see the safety/security improved, and 49% said they would improve safety/security to make the town centre better. Numerous comments were also made on the subject:

- “Get rid of the druggies” (3 responses).
- “Security less druggies”.
- “Get druggies off street”.
- “Remove all the druggies and crime”.
- “Safety get rid of all drugs & alcohol”.
- “Clean up the drugs”.
- “Get young drugs off street”.
- “Get scum off the streets”.
- “More for kids keep them off the street”.
- “More police for youths…”.
- “Better security”.
- “More security”.
- “Less crime”.

Respondents were also asked to rate the safety/security in Blyth during the daytime and the night-time. For the daytime, 37% of respondents gave a good or very good rating, and 23% gave a poor or very poor rating. For the night-time, the positive ratings dropped to 19% and the negative ratings increased to 47% (Figure 34).
Figure 34: Ratings given for safety/security
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Base: 278 respondents (daytime); 238 respondents (nighttime); (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

As can be seen in section 9.2, 40% of respondents felt that the safety/security of the parking facilities was good or very good.

11.3 Initiatives to Address Town Centre-Related Crime
According to the former Blyth Valley Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CRDP) the following initiatives exist in the former Blyth Valley District (August 2009):

- Acquisitive crime road shows in Cramlington and Blyth being held in August. The aim is to:
  - provide crime prevention advice relating to general security including home and vehicle security, personal safety and offering bike marking.
  - form part of Northumbria Police’s "Let's draw a line under crime" campaign to crackdown on acquisitive crime and as part of this officers at the venues will also be going around the car parks and writing to vehicle owners who have left valuables on display.
• There is also a Partnership week of action coming up in Seaton Delaval at the end of September.
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 Blyth 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 Blyth catchment area; spending patterns and retaining shopper spend within the town centre.

12.1 Regularity of visits

89% of respondents go to Blyth town centre during the daytime at least once a week, with nearly half (47%) going into town every day. Respondents visit the town centre less often during the evenings, with 50% visiting at least once a week (Figure 35).

![Figure 35: Approximately how often are you in Blyth Town Centre?](image)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 290 respondents (daytime); 235 respondents (evening)

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

As can be seen from the tables, respondents are most likely to shop in Blyth for food and other domestic items. For all other items asked about in the survey, although a reasonable proportion of respondents stay in Blyth to shop, many others go to other shopping centres, the Metro Centre and Newcastle in particular.
**Figure 36: Proportion of respondents shopping in Blyth 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>Blyth</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth only</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth + local area(^5)</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth + 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-Blyth</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 Blyth)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet or other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of places (not Blyth)</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Base</strong></td>
<td>289</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>278</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

\(^5\) ‘Local area’ is defined as being one of the following: Ashington, Bedlington, Newbiggin, Cramlington, Newcastle, Metro Centre, Kingston Park, Morpeth, Silverlink
Figure 37: Shopping centres used by respondents to purchase different items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Centre</th>
<th>Food Shopping</th>
<th>Other (e.g. 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>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</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>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>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Town Centre</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington Manor Walk</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Park</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverlink</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

36% of respondents planned to spend less than £25 in Blyth on the day they were interviewed, with a further 22% expecting to spend between £25 and £100, and 2% over £100. 39% did not know how much they would spend (Figure 38).
Figure 38: How much do you plan to spend in Blyth today?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 269 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.

Blyth is defined in the RSS as a Regeneration Town, lying within the Tyne & Wear City-Region, which is an area that looks primarily to the Tyne & Wear conurbation for access to jobs and services. Blyth is one of the two principal towns within the former Blyth Valley district, with other settlements within the district including Cramlington, Seaton Delaval and Seaton Sluice.
The map (Figure 39) above shows the catchment area for the town of Blyth, as defined by Experian. The catchment, which measures the extent of the local consumer base, is generated using a gravity model which calculates the probability that someone living in a specific postal sector shops in a particular retail centre. This probability is based on a retail centre’s pulling power and the relative drive times to...
the location. The model is calibrated using Experian’s ‘Where Britain Shops’ survey, which 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 town 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.\(^6\)

### 12.4 Spending Patterns

In addition to the town of Blyth itself, the catchment embraces a number of other settlements in the North East. These include Alnwick and Morpeth to the north-west, Ashington to the north, Cramlington to the west, and Whitley Bay to the south.

Altogether, the catchment covers an area of 1,942 sq km, is home to almost 488,000\(^7\) people and 217,000 households. Collectively, these households and residents spend an estimated £2,076 million per annum on retail goods and services, with 38.1% of expenditure on convenience retail goods (£791 million) and 61.9% on comparison retail (£1,286 million). This balance differs slightly from the national (UK) average, which reports 36.8% of expenditure on convenience retail and 63.2% on comparison. The difference between the national and local position is illustrated through the index which relates the proportion of each spend type in the Blyth 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.

\(^6\) “Goad Town Centre Shopper Report - Interpretation and Methodology 2008” Experian

\(^7\) 2007 figures
Figure 40: Blyth Catchment Summary Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Blyth Catchment</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007 Population</td>
<td>487,673</td>
<td>60,796,178</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Households</td>
<td>216,894</td>
<td>26,018,847</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
<td>1,285,694,828</td>
<td>179,754,231,987</td>
<td>98.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>790,615,686</td>
<td>104,652,220,255</td>
<td>103.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail</td>
<td>2,076,310,514</td>
<td>284,406,452,242</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison per household</td>
<td>5,928</td>
<td>6,909</td>
<td>85.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience per household</td>
<td>3,645</td>
<td>4,022</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total retail per household</td>
<td>9,573</td>
<td>10,931</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008

Total retail expenditure per household per annum within the catchment stands at £9,573, with average comparison retail spend at £5,928 per annum and convenience spend at £3,645 per annum (Figure 40). Total comparison spend per household and total convenience spend per household in the catchment are well below the UK average, with indices of 85.8 and 90.6, respectively.

Figure 41 below provides a breakdown of comparison retail expenditure within the Blyth catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within comparison retail is ‘Clothing Material & Garments’, accounting for £304.8 million or 23.7% of total comparison expenditure within the catchment. ‘Clothing’ is followed by ‘Furniture and furnishings; carpets and other floor coverings’ (£167.7 million or 13.0%), and ‘Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments’ (£133.2 million or 10.4%).

The pattern of expenditure nationally is similar, but with some notable differences. Referring to the index, households in Blyth spend substantially more on ‘Bicycles’,

8 Calculated using the expenditure divided by the number of households.
‘Household Textiles’, and ‘Furniture and furnishings; carpets and other floor coverings’ as a proportion of total spend than the UK average. In contrast, they spend substantially less on ‘Major Household Appliances’, and ‘Small Electrical Household Appliances’.

Figure 41: Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of expenditure</th>
<th>Blyth catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
<td>2,819,514</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>354,204,309</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>111.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appliances for personal care</td>
<td>118,039,917</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
<td>16,761,583,265</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment</td>
<td>92,081,137</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>15,452,757,227</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicycles</td>
<td>13,623,914</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
<td>1,389,089,399</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>137.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and stationery</td>
<td>47,238,487</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>7,158,777,623</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing materials and garments</td>
<td>304,838,344</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>38,625,941,717</td>
<td>21.5%</td>
<td>110.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture and furnishings; carpets and other floor coverings</td>
<td>167,727,286</td>
<td>13.0%</td>
<td>18,880,841,989</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>124.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments</td>
<td>133,201,043</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>19,806,134,279</td>
<td>11.0%</td>
<td>94.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Value 1</td>
<td>Value 2</td>
<td>Value 3</td>
<td>Value 4</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardens, plants and flowers</td>
<td>21,853,742</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>3,903,000,117</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>78.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassware, tableware and household utensils</td>
<td>32,225,176</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>4,974,640,272</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household textiles</td>
<td>52,614,278</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>5,681,876,198</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>129.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewellery, clocks and watches</td>
<td>35,007,778</td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>4,498,494,173</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>108.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major household appliances (electric or not)</td>
<td>18,570,332</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>4,992,966,397</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major tools and equipment</td>
<td>3,389,547</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>432,470,167</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>109.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials for maintenance and repair of the dwelling</td>
<td>43,808,886</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>7,295,875,756</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>84.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical goods and other pharmaceutical products</td>
<td>27,941,420</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>3,842,494,306</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
<td>101.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other personal effects</td>
<td>18,175,503</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>2,358,213,242</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>107.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets and related products</td>
<td>16,440,618</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2,727,000,343</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>84.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording media</td>
<td>45,821,418</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
<td>7,708,848,306</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>83.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoes and other footwear</td>
<td>41,424,153</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5,582,133,042</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>103.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small electrical</td>
<td>2,012,299</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>518,135,243</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>54.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Figure 42: Expenditure on Comparison Retail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>UK 2008</th>
<th>US 2008</th>
<th>Index (UK=100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major household appliances (electric or not)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small electrical household appliances</td>
<td>27,156,954</td>
<td>3,465,755,265</td>
<td>1.9% 109.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardens, plants and flowers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therapeutic appliances and equipment</td>
<td>19,683,080</td>
<td>3,342,999,352</td>
<td>1.9% 82.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording media</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials for maintenance and repair of the dwelling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets and related products</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassware, tableware and household utensils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books and stationery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appliances for personal care</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
<td>1,285,694,828</td>
<td>179,754,231,987</td>
<td>100.0% 100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008
Figure 43: Expenditure on Comparison Retail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Expenditure</th>
<th>Blyth Catchment</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Base</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
<td>25,375,003</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>3,187,732,158</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>105.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (off-trade)</td>
<td>110,194,632</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>13,040,208,014</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>111.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and non-alcoholic beverages</td>
<td>544,662,604</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
<td>74,284,581,106</td>
<td>71.0%</td>
<td>97.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and periodicals</td>
<td>38,209,259</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>4,388,696,381</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>115.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008

Figure 44 below provides a breakdown of convenience retail expenditure within the Blyth catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within convenience retail in Blyth is ‘Food and non-alcoholic beverages’, accounting for £544.7 million or 68.9% of total convenience expenditure within the area. ‘Food and non-alcoholic beverages’ is followed by ‘Alcohol’ (£110.2 million or 13.9%) and ‘Tobacco’ (£72.2 million or 9.1%). The pattern of expenditure nationally differs a little. Referring to the index, households in Blyth spend proportionately more on ‘Newspapers and Periodicals’, ‘Alcohol’ and ‘Non-durable household goods’, and less on ‘Food and non-alcoholic beverages’ and ‘Tobacco’.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>72,174,188</th>
<th>9.1%</th>
<th>9,751,002,596</th>
<th>9.3%</th>
<th>98.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>790,615,686</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>104,652,220,255</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008

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 Blyth. What the information does not indicate, however, is how much of the expenditure is spent purchasing goods and services in Blyth 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 Blyth catchment that shops in Blyth and the proportion that shop at other centres.
- The percentage of expenditure spent on goods and services in Blyth and the extent to which spending leaks to other centres.

The figures in Figures 45 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 10% of the resident population shop in Blyth (50,024 or 10.3%). Newcastle-upon-Tyne – central is the most commonly used shopping destination for those people living in the catchment (133,948 or 27.5%), with other popular centres including the Metro Centre (82,212 or 16.9%) and Ashington (55,947 or 11.5%).
## Figure 45: Population Leakage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>133,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>82,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>55,947</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blyth</strong></td>
<td><strong>10.3</strong></td>
<td><strong>50,024</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>37,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>30,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>18,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>18,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>10,539</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>10,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alnwick</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5,327</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>5,141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4,944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitley Bay</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4,463</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tynemouth</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester-le-Street</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>710</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008

The pattern with regards to spend is relatively similar. Experian estimates that just less than 10% of retail spend by residents and households domiciled within the Blyth catchment, representing nearly £206 million per annum, is spent in the town. More than £577.2 million of expenditure is lost to Newcastle-upon-Tyne (27.8%), with other notable leakage to the Metro Centre (£350.3 million or 16.9%) and Ashington (£228.4 million or 11.0%).

What is not clear from the figures, however, is the type of retail units within the outlying centres which attract people living in the catchment area. This is something that will be investigated further in the future.
### Figure 46: 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>27.8</td>
<td>577,238,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>350,288,479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>228,445,035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Blyth</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.9</strong></td>
<td><strong>205,985,049</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>160,867,600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>130,279,620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>82,227,230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>80,567,101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>45,570,784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>43,214,958</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>28,237,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>22,834,208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alnwick</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>22,404,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>22,301,094</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>21,375,308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whitley Bay</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>20,308,657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>19,150,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>8,278,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tynemouth</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3,504,371</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chester-le-Street</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3,232,422</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian, August 2008

The map below (Figure 47) shows the Blyth catchment area and is colour coded to indicate the proportion of retail expenditure that is spent by the resident population in Blyth. From the map, it can be seen that in the area immediately adjacent to Blyth and in the Cambois area, the households are likely to spend around 30-40% of their total expenditure in Blyth. In the area slightly further from Blyth, including Seaton Sluice to the south and Newbiggin-by-the-sea to the north, this figure decreases to between 10% and 30%. For the rest of the catchment, the figure is less than 10%.
12.6 Opinions on and use of Leisure and Entertainment

Events attended

Only 39% of respondents had attended at least one of the events mentioned in the survey. The Lifeboat Day was attended by the largest proportion of respondents (18%), closely followed by Blyth in a New Light (15%) and the Continental Markets (14%) (Figure 48).
Figure 48: Have you ever attended any of these events?  
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifeboat Day</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth in a New Light</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continental Markets</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Theatre Productions (Phoenix)</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Music Performances</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised Walks/ exercise/ sports activities</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not attended any</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Base: 291 respondents

Respondents were also asked what events they would like to see on a regular basis. The most popular responses were a Farmer’s Market, mentioned by nearly half of respondents, and a continental style market (36% of respondents) (Figure 49).
Figure 49: What events would you like to see on a regular basis?

![Bar chart showing event preferences]

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 291 respondents

Other events that the respondents would like to see are given in Appendix 2. Many of these relate to activities/events for children.

**Eating and drinking**

The ratings given for the eating and drinking places in Blyth varied considerably by venue type, though none were rated particularly highly. Cafes and sandwich shops were rated the highest with 42%/43% of respondents respectively giving a good or very good rating. Restaurants received the lowest ratings (22% positive and 22% negative) (Figure 50).
Figure 50: How would you rate the following venues for eating and drinking in Blyth?

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Base: 213 to 273 respondents depending on type of venue (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a 'don't know' response)

Arts and leisure facilities
The arts and leisure facilities in Blyth were all rated quite highly. Ridley Park and the Promenade and Beach received the highest ratings (86% positive ratings), and Phoenix Theatre received the lowest rating (71% positive ratings) (Figure 51).

Figure 51: How would you rate the following arts and leisure facilities in Blyth?
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)
When asked how they would rate Blyth as a place to enjoy yourself, only 28% of respondents gave a good or very good response. 21% gave a poor or very poor response (Figure 52).

Figure 52: How do you rate Blyth as a place to enjoy yourself?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)
General
When respondents were asked how they would make the town centre better, 26% gave an answer relating to improving the leisure facilities. A few comments were also made throughout the questionnaire relating to leisure, mainly asking for more activities for the children/youths:

- “… more activities for kids”.
- “… better activities for kids”.
- “More for youngsters” (2 responses).
- “Activities for teenagers”.
- “More for kids keep them off the street”.
- “More leisure facilities”.
- “Cinema”.

5% of respondents said that they were in Blyth town centre to use the leisure centre on the day of the interview.
12.7 The Future: what will improve the town as a place to shop or visit?

From the analysis of the Blyth shopper survey, it appears that in order to improve the town as a place to shop or visit, two key issues need to be addressed. One relates to the retail offer, and the other relates to safety and security in the town centre. The latter issue has already been covered in section 11.2. The retail offer is examined in more detail later in this section.

In addition to these issues, it should be noted that there are a number of areas that either: (1) a reasonable proportion of respondents highlighted as areas that they would like to see improved, or (2) that received low poor ratings from the respondents. These are listed below:

- Quality of footpaths (see Figure 53).
- Traffic/road safety (see Figure 53).
- Improved leisure facilities (see Figure 53).
- Litter/cleanliness/appearance of town (see 10.2).
- Eating and drinking venues (see section 12.6).

Figure 53: What would you like to see improved with the shopping experience in Blyth town centre?

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009

Base: 239 respondents
Figure 54: How would you make this town centre better?
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009
Base: 285 respondents

Retail

As can be seen from the points below, respondents were not particularly positive about the retail offer in Blyth:

- When asked how they would make the town centre better, 55% of respondents said there should be a better retail offer.
- 11% of respondents mentioned the retail offer when asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience.
- Only 28% of respondents rated Blyth as a good or very good place to shop. 17% said that it was poor or very poor.
- 28% of respondents disagreed with the statement ‘on the whole, Blyth offers a wide choice of quality shops’. Only 20% agreed.
- As can be seen in section 12.2, Blyth shopping centre is mainly used for food shopping and shopping for other domestic items. For all other shopping, although Blyth shopping centre is used by many respondents, a large
When asked what improvements respondents would like to see to the retail offer in Blyth, the most common suggestion was to have more chain stores (57% of respondents mentioned this) (Figure 55).

**Figure 55: What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Blyth?**

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

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who would like to see improvements in different aspects of the retail offer in Blyth. The most common suggestion is for more chain stores (57%), followed by increased variety of shops (18%), more shops offering local produce (10%), longer opening hours (6%), and don't know other (32%).]

*Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires, April 2009*

*Base: 287 respondents*

Respondents were also asked to give examples of suggested improvements to the retail offer in Blyth. A list of these responses is given in Appendix 2 (Q17).
DRAFT
13.0 INVESTMENT

Redevelopment
The following developments are proposed for Blyth Town Centre;

- Morrison’s Supermarket - One NorthEast are continuing discussions with Morrison’s to finalise a Development Agreement that would include a financial contribution towards site assembly for the redevelopment of the existing supermarket site. It is hoped that this Agreement will be concluded soon so that a planning application can be submitted. This will mean the development of a new high quality designed 12,000m² superstore with 385 car parking spaces.

- A draft layout scheme for a new bus station and depot has been developed by the County Council. Progress to deliver is dependent upon the relocation of the Arriva garage/depot to an alternative site in Blyth. Discussions are on-going with Arriva to identify a suitable alternative location within Blyth for the depot/garage. The relocation of the depot/garage will, with the assistance of One NorthEast, create a significant development opportunity site adjacent to the town centre and linking the centre with the quayside.
14.0 CONCLUSION

Blyth is currently undergoing various developments in the Town Centre including expansion of the existing Morrison’s Supermarket which will be a high quality design. A draft layout scheme for a new bus station and depot has also been developed by the County Council and progress to deliver is dependent upon the relocation of the Arriva garage/depot to an alternative site in Blyth. These proposals should therefore be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions about the health of the Town Centre.

In the Town Centre, 63% of the floorspace 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 33% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing to the statement “Blyth offers a wide choice of quality shops”, compared to 28% agreeing or strongly agreeing (Figure 5).

There were many verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the shopping experience (Appendix 2) the majority of responses were mainly around a better retail offer and the safety and security of the town. Some of the responses included, better shops, better quality and variety of shops. The verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the retail offer (Appendix 2) highlighted that more choice and variety was needed. Additionally, Figure 6 highlighted that there was more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience retail. 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. Further, within the comparison category, the majority of the businesses were independent as opposed to multiple chain such as high street shops which were also suggested when asking shoppers what would improve the retail offer (Appendix 2).

Although the yield for Blyth had been higher than the average yields for Northumberland, North East and England since July 2005, by July 2007 (when the last values were recorded), the yield for Blyth had dropped to below the yields for
Northumberland and the North East (Figure 9). This means that at this time, Blyth was seen to be a more attractive place to set up business which could have been the result of various regeneration projects that have taken place in the town centre.

There was 9% vacant floorspace in Blyth (Figure 12). Figure 14 also shows that between 2007 and 2008, the amount of vacant floorspace had reduced when looking at property flows. This was a result of more buildings changing from being vacant to occupied from 2007 to 2008, than occupied to vacant. There had been no interest for vacant properties in the Town Centre as recorded by Northumberland Property Search. However, this is not an exhaustive view of all enquiries made on properties within the town centre, just a snapshot.

The yield for Blyth was slightly lower that the average for Northumberland between April 2002 and January 2005, it was still higher than the average for the North East and England. However, in July 2005 whilst the yield for Blyth stayed at 8.5 as it had been in January 2005, the yield for the average of Northumberland dropped from 8.6 (January 2005) to 7.9 (July 2005). Between July 2005 and January 2007, the yield for Blyth (ranging between 7.5 and 8.5) was higher than the averages for 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 Blyth during this time. However, it is evident that the situation in Blyth has been improving and decreasing in recent years and in July 2007 which was the last value recorded, the yield for Blyth had dropped below the Northumberland and North East averages. Recent improvements such as the Shop Front Scheme led by the council will contribute to keeping yield at a low value and make Blyth a more attractive place to set up a business.

Accessibility into the town was not a problem for the shopper’s interviewed with 85% of the respondents that travelled by car found it very easy or fairly easy to travel into Blyth town centre (Figure 17) and only 1% finding it difficult. However, just over half of respondents (52%) gave a good or very good rating for the availability of public parking spaces in Blyth (Figure 19). The figure was slightly less (42%) for the availability of disabled parking spaces. Blyth also has good bus connectivity which is shown in Figure 22. 29% travelled into Blyth by bus on the day of the interview and
76% of these respondents found it easy or fairly easy to travel into the centre (Figure 24). Further, just less than two thirds of respondents gave a positive rating for the quality and the regularity of bus services and the destinations served by public transport and only 5% gave a negative rating in each case.

Estimates show that 10% of the resident population shop in Blyth. Newcastle-upon-Tyne city centre is the most commonly used shopping destination for those people living in the catchment (27.5%), with other popular centres including the Metro Centre (16.9%) and Ashington (11.5%). However, with new regeneration projects in the pipeline (especially the expansion of the new Morrison’s Supermarket) may show that the percentage for Blyth will increase in the next few years and there will be a reduction in leakage to surrounding centres.

The responses from the shoppers coupled with the various aspects that make up a town centre, suggest that generally Blyth is in reasonable health. Although there have been some negative responses from the shopper’s surveys with regards to the retail offer and safety and security in general, the implementation of new regeneration in the Town Centre should hopefully show some improvements.
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 Alnwick 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, gymnasiums 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, if anything, you would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Blyth Town Centre?*

**Retail offer**
- Better shops (12 responses)
- Better shop (2 responses)
- Better shops more variety
- Better quality of shops
- More shops (9 responses)
- More shops better quality so attract people
- More shops bigger market
- Shops (2 responses)
- Shops open
- More variety
- More quality shops
- More shops less empty or charity ones
- Less empty shops
- Better market (2 responses)
- New shops
- Nicer shop
- More kids shops
- More children's shops

**Safety & security**
- Security less druggies
- Better security
- Clean up the drugs
- Get scum off the streets
• Get young drugs off street
• Less crime

Appearance of town
• Shops fronts cleaned up and brighter
• General updating

Mixture of things
• Shops new clothes stores more activities for kids
• More police for youths better activities for kids
• Fill shops market small improve market plan

Other
• More for younsters
• Less charity shops and banks etc
• Activities for teenagers
• Better seating
• Everything

Nothing / Don't know
• Not sure
• Nothing - ok (3 responses)
• Nothing (6 responses)
• Ok nothing
• D/k - ok
• D/k (3 responses)
Verbatim responses to ‘Q19 What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Blyth?’

**Examples of shops**

**Shops**
- Primark (4 responses)
- Clothes shops Primark
- Clothes stores
- G Star Raw
- Marks & Spencer of BHS
- Marks and Spencer
- More food malls
- More quality shops
- More teenage male shops
- More variety
- More variety in general
- Not good for mens shoes
- Less charity shops
- Less empty shops
- More of everything
- More for older people
- More for youngsters 18-25
- Bigger centre
- More like Cramlington

**Other**
- I only work here
- Only come for the leisure centre

**Anything**
- Anything
- Anything better than whats here
• Anything really

Other responses

Retail
• Childrens clothes store
• Less charity
• Less charity shops
• More closer together
• More for men

Other
• More leisure facilities
• More security
• More wheelchair friendly

Anything/not sure
• Anything
• Anything really
• Not sure
• Not that bothered I dont tend to shop here
• Ok as it is
Verbatim responses to ‘Q21 What events/activities would you like to see on a regular basis?’

Specified outdoor sessions…
- Activities for children 8 yr and up
- Childrens events
- Better markets
- Bigger market
- At coast maybe because it is a nice coast line
- I don't come here that often
- I only come to Blythe to work
- Not in Blyth enough to care
- D/k (2 responses)

‘Other’ specified responses…
- Leisure activities for kids
- More children
- More for kids
- Things for kids
- More walks
- Not interested
- D/k (2 responses)
- D/k not from here
Verbatim responses to ‘Q27 How would you make this town centre better?’

Shops
- Fill empty shops
- More shops less charity shops fill empty shops
- No empty shops
- Same shops

Safety & Security
- Get druggies off street
- Get rid of the druggies (2 responses)
- Remove all the druggies and crime
- Safety get rid of all drugs & alcohol

Mixture of things
- Knock it all down & get rid of the druggies
- More for kids keep them off the street
- Better advertising and make it more attractive retail offers

Other
- The way it was
- More for youngsters
- Better reputation
- Cinema
- For parked cars
- If the shop front matched up with the street market place
- Keep the rest up to date like market square

Nothing
- Nothing
- Nothing its ok
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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