NEWBIGGIN TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT

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

- 46% (3,150m²) of the floorspace in Newbiggin was for retail.

- Shopper's perceptions of the range of retail provision was somewhat negative - 61% did not think Newbiggin offered a wide choice of shops.

- Additionally, figure 6 highlighted that there were more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience or retail service.

- There was 13% of vacant floorspace in Newbiggin.

- 75% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into the town centre by car.

- 30% of these shoppers felt that the parking in the town centre was either poor or very poor.

- The quality of bus services in Newbiggin was given a very good rating by over half (52%) of respondents, with a further 11% giving a good rating.

- The regularity of bus services and the destinations to and from Newbiggin served by public transport were rated slightly lower (51% and 50% positive ratings respectively).

- 1% of Newbiggin residents shopped in Newbiggin. 34% of Newbiggin residents shop in Ashington, 18% of expenditure was lost to Newcastle and a further 13% to the Metro Centre.

Recommendations

- The town centre should be monitored over a number of years to track changes.

- Comparisons can also be made with towns which have similar functions.
• Use class data should 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 of 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 Newbiggin 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 Corporate Research Unit 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 CRU’s 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.
2.0 DESCRIPTION OF THE TOWN CENTRE

2.1 Newbiggin’s Town Centre Boundary

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

The area of Newbiggin Town Centre in relation to the District Council boundary is 26660.98 m². The area in relation to the Experian boundary is 20399.51 m².

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

![Figure 1: Boundary for Newbiggin Town Centre (District Council)](image)

Source: Former Wansbeck District Council
Figure 2: Boundary for Newbiggin Town Centre (Experian)
2.2 Newbiggin’s Town Centre – A Definition

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

(From the former Wansbeck District Council): Newbiggin by the Sea is an attractive seaside village located approximately 5km to the east of Ashington. It lies on the east coast and its beach and other leisure facilities also make it a tourist destination. Over the centuries the village has made good use of its links with the sea, and at one time the town was only third in importance to London and Hull for the shipping of corn, and still maintains a small fleet of cobles.

The town centre dates from mainly around the second part of the 19th century and the town centre has a very strong character demonstrated through variety in building eras. It is one of four secondary retail and service centres in Wansbeck with Ashington being the principle centre of the District. One of the main roads in the village is Front Street. There are a range of shops, mainly small independent retailers, with the largest store in the retail core being the Co-operative foodstore.

In 2007/08 Newbiggin by the Sea was the focus of some high profile regeneration activity with £10million investment from DEFRA and £1million of other funds toward the breakwater, beach replenishment, and installation of the ‘Couple’ offshore sculpture. The ‘Go Build on your Heritage’ initiative, supported by Go-Wansbeck and the former Wansbeck District Council will see over £500,000 invested in conservation-led restoration of local historic business premises in the heart of the village. The aim is to help bring the historic and architectural character of some of the villages most beautiful buildings back to life.
2.3 History and Development of Newbiggin

Newbiggin-by-the-sea lies on the North Sea coast in south-east Northumberland, 4 miles north of Blyth and 7 miles east of Morpeth. Originally, the town was called South Wallerick. However, after the Danish invasion in 875, it was renamed as 'Neubegang' or 'Newbegining'. Several different spellings were used until 'Newbiggin' was finally settled upon.

Evidence of people in the area dates back to the Mesolithic period, from which large number of flints have been found. Three Bronze Age spearheads and a burial cist have also been found nearby, suggesting possible settlement at that time.

Three industries have played a major part in the development of Newbiggin: fishing/shipping, tourism and coal mining. A special type of boat (a coble), was developed specifically for fishing off the coast of north-east England. In 1626, 4 cobles were being used. This rose to over 140 in 1869. A few of these boats are still in use today. Newbiggin’s port was also used for shipping grain, and was at one time considered to be the third most important port after London and Hull.

By the late 1800’s, Newbiggin had also become a popular seaside resort with hundreds of visitors each day. This was particularly helped with the expansion of the railway to Newbiggin in the 19th century.

Coal mining also played a key part in Newbiggin’s development. Newbiggin Colliery opened in 1908, and at its peak in 1940, employed 1,400 men & boys. The colliery closed down in 1967.

In the early 1970’s, the town began to decline due to the reduction of the coal and fishing industries, together with serious erosion of Newbiggin Bay. Despite this decline, Newbiggin still has a population of around 7,100 and has numerous attractions to offer. The town boasts the oldest working Lifeboat Station in the country (1851) as well as the medieval church of St Bartholomew. Every August, the ‘Medieval Fayre of St Bartholomew’ is held.

1 www.newbigginbythesea.co.uk
Newbiggin also has two caravan parks, a golf course, and a sailing club as well as several country parks nearby. The bay has recently undergone a £10 million renovation to stop the erosion and to make it more attractive to residents and visitors.
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 Newbiggin Town Centre and also the opinions of shoppers surveyed on the range of retail provision in Newbiggin.

The full breakdown of use class analysed in this section can be found in Appendix 1.
3.1 Diversity of Use within Town Centre

Figure 3 shows that just under half (46%) of the floorspace in Newbiggin Town Centre are classed as shops. One fifth of the floorspace was occupied by drinking establishments and 8% was occupied by restaurants and cafes which shows that Newbiggin is quite heavily dominated by the food and drink sector in comparison with other sectors. 14% of floorspace was taken by non-residential institutions.

Figure 3: Floorspace by Use Class

![Floorspace by Use Class - Newbiggin Town Centre](chart)

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

Building Use Class for Newbiggin by the Sea Town Centre

Source: Experian
The map (Figure 4) shows that the majority of shops within the town centre are clustered around the centre of Front Street and at the far west end of Front Street. The remaining buildings on the far west end of Front Street are occupied by drinking establishments.

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

The main summer attractions are the 'Newbiggin by the Sea Summer Fair' taking place during the month of July and later in August in the town centre. ‘The Medieval Fayre of St Bartholomew’ takes place.

Hopefully the following acts will be playing music at St Bartholomew, The Grainger Singers, Mid Northumberland Chorus, Julie Pargeter’s Recorder Quartet and The Denlyn Quartet with Helen Pearson on the harp. Every Saturday there is ballroom/sequence dancing from 7.45pm till 9.45pm at Newbiggin Sports and Community Centre. Live Music Night at The Coble Inn - Tuesdays from 8.00pm, where you can bring your own instruments and sing.

3.3 Satisfaction with the range of provision – retail

Question 14 in the Newbiggin Shopper Questionnaire asked:

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

The level of agreement with this statement was considerably higher than the level of disagreement (61% vs. 9% of respondents) (Figure 5).
Figure 5: How would you rate “On the whole, Newbiggin offers a wide choice of quality shops”?  
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Shopper Surveys  
Base: 67 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 - Newbiggin

![Bar chart showing multiple chain and independent businesses by category in Newbiggin town centre.]

Source: Experian

Figure 6 shows that in Newbiggin town centre, the majority of businesses are leisure services (14 independent, 1 multiple chain). The category which has the 2nd highest amount of businesses is comparison retail: 10 of which are independent and 1 multiple chain. There are 8 convenience retail premises and 4 retail service in total.
5.0 RETAILER DEMAND

5.1 Interest in Vacant Outlets within the Town Centre 2007 - 2008
There were no enquiries for properties in Newbiggin Town Centre recorded on Northumberland Property Database between April 2007 and March 2008. However, it must be noted that this data is based solely on one source (Northumberland Property Database) and other sources may provide further insight.
5.2 A Review of New Town Centre Occupiers

6.0 RETAIL RENTS AND YIELDS

Retail rent and yield are important indicators of viability. This section will investigate the zone A rent for properties within the town centre and also the yield of Northumberland in comparison with the North East and England, as this data does not exist for Newbiggin Town Centre. It has been assumed that the reason for this is, “from Spring 2002 reporting locations with a yield of 10% or over will not be included in the time series on the assumption that such locations are not of major interest in terms of retail property investment. The locations however will still be monitored and if evidence indicates yields have fallen to less than 10% the time series will be continued.”

6.1 Zone A Rental Information

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

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

2 www.voa.gov.uk
There are some properties which are shown as “unknown” on Figure 8. These premises could be retail in nature but are not valued on a zoned approach. The reason for this is that zoning is generally not used in various circumstances including:

- Larger retail properties (i.e. shops with a NIA (net internal area) greater than 1500m²).
- Where the retail areas are spread over several floors, again resulting in the Zone A being only a small fraction of the total.
- Larger shops may not have ‘traditional’ shop fronts, such that the zoning approach is not appropriate.
- The ‘market’ does not typically zone larger shops when letting and the VOA tries to follow the market in its analysis and valuation.

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

![Valuation Office Zone A rental prices for Newbiggin by the Sea](image)

Source: Valuation Office

Figure 7 shows that there was no zone A data for a lot of the properties in Newbiggin therefore it is not possible to identify any trends. However, it can be seen that the
properties on Front Street for which the data is available fell into £0-£99 per m² bracket.

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.” ³ 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.”⁴

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

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

In Northumberland, this data is only available for 5 towns: Alnwick, Ashington, Berwick upon Tweed, Blyth and Hexham.
There is therefore no available data for Newbiggin, however Figure 9 shows the average yield for Northumberland, the North East of England, and England.

³ www.voa.gov.uk
⁴ www.voa.gov.uk
The graph shows that since April 2001, the average yield for Northumberland has generally been higher than the average for the North East of England and England. The biggest difference in yield between Northumberland and the rest of the North East was by 0.86 in January 2005. Similarly for Northumberland and the rest of England in January 2005 it was 1.20. This indicates that based on yield, it has been derived that there is more of a “risk” associated with setting up business in Northumberland compared to the rest of the North East and England. The latest result, however, in July 2007, showed that this gap had decreased. The average yield for Northumberland was 7.05; the average yield for the North East was 7.02; and the average yield for England was 6.70.

6.3 Average Rental Rate
The average monthly rental rate for vacant commercial property in Newbiggin town centre between 1st January 2006 and 31st December 2007 was £56.70 per square metre. Figure 9 show this rate in comparison with other town centres. According to Figure 9, in comparison with other Northumberland town centres, Newbiggin has the 10th highest average monthly rental rate in Northumberland for the 11 towns recorded here with only Haltwhistle with lower 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 9: A comparison on average rental prices for commercial property between Newbiggin and other Northumberland Towns**

![Graph showing average rental prices between Newbiggin and other Northumberland Towns](source: Northumberland Property Database)
7.0 VACANCY RATES

All town centres experience a baseline level of vacancy rates and this should not always be interpreted as a sign of weakness. A large number of vacant units within centres may indicate decline related to poor performance of the town or that shop premises are inadequate to meet the demands of modern retailers. Furthermore, units may be located in parts of the centre unsuited to retailers' requirements. This section will investigate the vacancy rates of premises within the town centre by road and overall vacancy rates within the town. Additionally, this section will look at property flows within Newbiggin 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 10 shows that the street within Newbiggin Town Centre with the most vacant premises is High Street with 100% of premises vacant. However, it must be noted that this refers to just one retail building on High Street which is a vacant public house. The only other street within the town centre boundary with vacant premises and floorspace was Front Street with 12% of premises and 8% of floorspace vacant.

Figure 11 shows that in Newbiggin Town Centre, there were 87% of occupied premises and 13% of vacant premises overall.

**Figure 10: 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></td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>Rank - vacancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIGH STREET</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRONT STREET</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIDGE STREET</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WOODHORN LANE</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Information about changes in town centre occupiers between 2007 – 2008 is not currently available for Newbiggin town centre, as the GOAD plan from which the data is taken, was only created by Experian in 2008 when the work was commissioned by Northumberland Information Network.
8.0 PEDESTRIAN FLOWS

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

8.1 Footfall methodology

Footfall counts were taken for 10 minutes of each hour between 9am and 5pm on Friday 4th April, Saturday 5th April and Monday 7th April 2008. They were carried out by interviewers at two “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

It is estimated that the footfall for a typical Saturday in Newbiggin town centre is around 486, although this will obviously vary depending on the time of year. The data suggests that on the Friday (a “normal” day), the footfall was higher with 510. However, on the other “normal” day (Monday) the footfall was lower than the weekend day with 312 which could be due to a variety of factors.

Figure 12: Estimated daily footfall in Wick Town Centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location (see Figure 2)</th>
<th>Estimated daily footfall*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monday (“normal” day)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-op, Front Street</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post Office/ Chip Shop, Gibson Street</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Footfall Counts

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

29% of respondents travelled into Newbiggin by car on the day of the interview (Figure 13). One quarter of these said that they go into Newbiggin at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a car for these trips). In terms of evening visits, all 9 that responded said that they go once a month or less.

**Figure 13: Frequency of visit to the town centre by those respondents travelling in by car**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Daytime</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Day</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Week</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a Week</td>
<td></td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Month</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>month</td>
<td></td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One-off visit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 20 for daytime; 9 for evening
Nearly two thirds (65%) of the respondents that travelled by car found it very easy to travel into Newbiggin town centre (Figure 14). A further 10% found it fairly easy. No-one found it difficult.

**Figure 14: How easy/difficult do you feel it is to travel into Newbiggin town centre (those respondents that travelled by car)**

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 20*

### 9.2 Access to car parking

Parking in Newbiggin town centre was not rated particularly highly, with less than half of respondents (48%) saying that the availability of parking spaces was good or very good, and 30% giving a poor or very poor rating (Figure 15).

A slightly lower proportion of respondents (46%) gave a positive rating for the availability of disabled parking spaces, and slightly more (35%) gave a negative rating.

The safety/security of the parking facilities was not rated particularly high either, with 45% giving a good or very good rating, and 31% giving a poor or very poor rating.
Figure 15: Percentage of respondents giving each rating for parking related attributes

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base : 46 to 67 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

14% of respondents said that they would like to see parking provision in Newbiggin improved, and 24% said that they would improve the parking in order to make the town centre better.

Two comments were also made relating to parking:
1. what respondents would like to see improved:
   • “new car parks, dangerous as you need to back out onto roads”.
2. suggested improvements to retail offer:
   • “better parking / don’t let them back out”.

Respondents that travelled into the town centre by car were also asked where they parked. The most popular parking place was the Church Point car park (12 respondents), but the formalised on-street parking on the High Street was also used by 7 respondents. One person said they had parked at work.
9.3 Cost of parking
No information is available on the respondent’s perceptions of the cost of parking. However, parking in Newbiggin is free.

9.4 Newbiggin’s Car parks
Figures 16 and 17 show the location of car parks within and surrounding Newbiggin Town Centre.
### Figure 16: 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>Wilkie Terrace</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>New Queen Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>New King Street</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Melrose Terrace</td>
<td></td>
<td>Surface Car Park</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Former Wansbeck District Council, Transport Direct
Figure 17: Location of Car Parks

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

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

**Figure 18: Destination and Frequency of Buses from Newbiggin**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Mon – Fri</th>
<th>Sat</th>
<th>Sun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annitsford</td>
<td>Approx 1 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 2 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 5 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guide Post</td>
<td>Approx 1 per day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killingworth</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Seaton</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 4 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pegswood</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeford</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wansbeck</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 3 per hour</td>
<td>Approx 1 per hour</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Travel Search [http://www.carlberry.co.uk/index.htm]; North East Travel Line [http://jplanner.travelinenortheast.info]

9.6 Shoppers travelling to town by bus

6 respondents (9%) travelled into Newbiggin by bus on the day of the interview. Half of these said that they go into Newbiggin at least once a week during the daytime (although it cannot be deduced how often they use a bus for these trips). Of the two people that said they go into the town during the evenings, one said they go twice a week, and the other said they go less than once a month.

5 of the 6 respondents that travelled by bus found it easy or very easy to travel into Newbiggin town centre. No-one found it difficult.
9.7 Train Connectivity
There is no train access to Newbiggin.

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

9.9 Perception of Public Transport Services
The quality of bus services in Newbiggin was given a very good rating by over half (52%) of respondents, with a further 11% giving a good rating. The regularity of bus services and the destinations to and from Newbiggin served by public transport were rated slightly lower (51% and 50% positive ratings respectively).

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

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base : 52 to 54 respondents depending on attribute (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

When asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Newbiggin, one respondent said, “mini buses going around estates”.
9.10 Perception of Accessibility
Only 3% of respondents said that in order to make the town centre better, the accessibility should be improved.

When asked how they would like to see the shopping experience improved, 6% of respondents mentioned quality of footpaths.

9.11 Origin and method of travel of Shoppers Interviewed
As Figure 20 shows, most of the respondents from the Newbiggin Shopper Survey live in the Wansbeck District, with a large proportion living in or around Newbiggin itself. Most of the others came from elsewhere in Northumberland or Tyne & Wear, namely Blyth Valley.

Most of the respondents travelled in by car, although a number of the respondents that live in, or close to, Newbiggin said that they walked.

The remaining few respondents were spread across the rest of the UK. Most of these travelled into Newbiggin by car.

**Figure 20: Visitors to Newbiggin within Northumberland and Tyne and Wear**
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)
Visitors to Newbiggin by the Sea within Northumberland and Tyne & Wear (Shopper's Survey) - Home Towns

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Figure 21: Visitors to Newbiggin outside Northumberland and Tyne and Wear
(Excludes 'don't know' responses unless otherwise specified)

Visitors to Newbiggin by the Sea outside of Northumberland and Tyne & Wear
(Shopper’s Survey) - Home Towns

Visitors to Newbiggin - Method of Transport
- Bus
- Car
- Walk

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
10.0 ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY OF TOWN

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

10.1 Review of Recent Improvements

The following improvements have happened over the past 12 months in Newbiggin:

- A town centre improvement plan that will look at the condition of public realm and recommendations for improvements that will be partly implemented this autumn/winter.

- A number of improvements to businesses in Newbiggin have been grant supported led improvements to their business premises. This scheme involves repair or reinstatement of timber shopfronts, sash windows, stone repairs, signage and security measures where needed. Some of the businesses that have took part are: Star Video, Ladhar Fish bar and The Fruit Shop. (Figure 22 and 23)
Figure 22: Before and After: Star Video

Source: Wansbeck D.C

Figure 23: Before and After: Ladhar Fish Bar

Source: Wansbeck D.C
10.2 Shopper perception of the town

10.2.1 Pedestrianisation
Views on pedestrianisation were not specifically asked about in the survey. However, two people made comments on the subject:

- “pedestrianise the town centre”.
- “pedestrianising the main street would be a benefit”.

10.2.2 Signage, Street furniture and Open Spaces

Signage
One person said that they would like to see the signage and information improved in Newbiggin town centre.

Street Furniture
Respondents were asked to rate street furniture as part of two different questions (Figure 24). The first question asked for a street furniture rating, and the second asked about the general state of the town centre with regards to street furniture.

Nearly two thirds of respondents (65%) gave a positive rating for street furniture in the town. When asked about street furniture as part of the general state of the town centre, the ratings were slightly lower (61% positive ratings).
Figure 24: Street furniture ratings
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 65 to 66 respondents depending on question (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

Open Spaces
No information is available on the respondent’s perceptions of open spaces.

10.2.3 Litter and Cleanliness
Nearly two thirds of respondents (65%) gave a positive rating for litter in Newbiggin town centre, and 12% gave a negative rating. The overall level of cleanliness was rated a bit lower with just over half (51%) giving a good or very good rating, and 30% giving a poor or very poor rating (Figure 25).
A few comments were also made relating to litter and cleanliness:

- “bins for dogs, dog litter”.
- “clean up dog mess on pavements everywhere”.
- “…litter bins” (2 responses).

**10.2.4 General Appearance of the Town**

Just over half of respondents (52%) gave a good or very good rating for the graffiti/fly posting in Newbiggin. Nearly one third (31%) gave a poor or very poor rating.

The general state of the buildings and the shop frontage were rated quite poorly, with considerably more respondents giving a negative rating than a positive rating. For the general state of the buildings, 30% gave a positive rating and 45% gave a negative rating, and for the shop frontage, only 21% gave a positive rating and 56% gave a negative rating (Figure 26).
Figure 26: Ratings given for the appearance of the town
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 62 to 69 respondents; (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don't know’ response)

Various comments were made about the appearance of the town:

- “needs a good tidy up (2 responses)”.
- “tidy it all up”.
- “revamp town centre”.
- “shop fronts need revamping”.
- “shop fronts need updating”.
- “…renovation of shop fronts”.
- “give shops a facelift”.
- “keep it all old world”.
- “make it look nice”.
- “don't leave shops & pubs boarded up, it doesn't look nice”.
- “get rid of empty shops, looks bad”.
- “reopen shops up…”.
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 27: Analysis of Reported Crimes

Source: Northumbria Police
Looking at Figures 27 and 28, it is clear to see that the majority of crime in Newbiggin in 2005 – 2007 occurred on Front Street, and the main type of crime here was “rowdy and/ or nuisance”. There were also a significant number of cases of “rowdy and/ or nuisance” crimes recorded throughout the town centre on some of the smaller streets within the town centre boundary. Occurrences of all types of crime are more sparsely distributed.

Looking at the chart (Figure 28), the types of crime have been broken down further. The most frequent type of crime occurring in Newbiggin Town Centre between 2005
and 2007 was fraud and forgery of which there were 56 occurrences. The 2nd most frequent type of crime was “other offences” of which there were 24 occurrences.

11.2 Perception or Fear of Crime

Two respondents (3%) mentioned safety/security when asked how they would make the town centre better. Another respondent made the comment, “kids driving around in cars at night put people off walking down the street”.

Respondents were also asked to rate safety/security during the daytime and the night-time. For the daytime, this was perceived to be quite good, with over three quarters (76%) of respondents giving a favourable rating, and only 8% a poor or very poor rating. For the night-time, the rating was much lower with 36% giving a positive rating and 32% giving a negative rating (Figure 29).

As can be seen in Figure 15, less than half (45%) of respondents felt that the safety/security of the parking facilities was good or very good.

Figure 29: Ratings given for safety/security
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 63 respondents (daytime); 44 respondents (nighttime); (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)

11.3 Initiatives to Address Town Centre-Related Crime

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

- Public awareness campaigns for bonfire night started early including school visits and advice to residents. Fixed penalty tickets will be issued to anyone who misuses fireworks, unauthorised bonfires will be removed and anyone who attempts to sell fireworks illegally will be prosecuted.

- Additionally, the Arson Task Force will conduct risk assessments for any residents wishing to hold their own bonfire.

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

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

Shopper surveys will help authorities in monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of town centre improvements and in setting further priorities. In this section the shoppers’ surveys carried out in Newbiggin 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 Alnwick catchment area; spending patterns and retaining shopper spend within the town centre.

12.1 Regularity of visits

Over two thirds (69%) of respondents said that they go to Newbiggin town centre at least once a week during the daytime, with the most common frequency of visit being every day (34%).

Respondents visit the centre far less often during the evenings, with only 23% visiting at least once a week. 57% said that they visit less than once a month (Figure 30).

**Figure 30: Approximately how often are you in Newbiggin Town Centre?**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Day time</th>
<th>Evening</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Every Day</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Week</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twice a Week</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once a Month</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than once a month</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 71 respondents (daytime); 47 respondents (evening)
12.2 Expenditure/ Type of Purchases

Figure 31 shows the proportion of respondents that shop for different items solely in Newbiggin town centre, and how many go further afield. Figure 32 gives more details about which shopping centres the respondents use.

As can be seen from the tables, Newbiggin is not used much by the respondents for shopping. The most common items bought in Newbiggin are food and other domestic items (one quarter of respondents said they buy these items there).

Ashington is the most popular place for the respondents to shop for all items except ‘other specialist’ items. Newcastle is also quite popular.

This ties in with the responses to other questions which show that the respondents have a low opinion of the retail offer in Newbiggin, and would like to see it improved. A full list of these suggested improvements can be found in Appendix 1.
Figure 31: Proportion of respondents shopping in Newbiggin and other areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Food shopping</th>
<th>Other domestic</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Shoes</th>
<th>Electrical goods</th>
<th>Furniture/ carpets</th>
<th>DIY goods</th>
<th>CDs/D VDs etc</th>
<th>Other specialist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin only</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin + local area⁶</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin + 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>Non-Newbiggin</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 Newbiggin)</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet or other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of places (not Newbiggin)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

⁶ ‘Local area’ is defined as being one of the following: Ashington, Bedlington, Blyth, Cramlington, Newcastle, Metro Centre, Kingston Park, Morpeth, Silverlink.
### Figure 32: Shopping centres used by respondents to purchase different items

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Food</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Clothes</th>
<th>Shoes</th>
<th>Electrical goods</th>
<th>Furniture/carpets</th>
<th>DIY goods</th>
<th>CDs/DVDs</th>
<th>Other specialist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td></td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></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>26%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Centre</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manor Walk</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td></td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kingston Park</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silverlink</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Base</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
88% of respondents planned to spend less than £25 in Newbiggin on the day they were interviewed. 9% didn’t expect to spend anything (Figure 33).
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. Newbiggin is one of four secondary centres within the Wansbeck district and has a shopping centre and offers a range of other services and facilities serving a local market. There are a number of villages and smaller settlements in the District with less than 1000 residents and a very limited number of facilities.
Figure 34: Newbiggin Retail Catchment

The map (Figure 34) shows the catchment area for Newbiggin town centre, as defined by Experian. The catchment, which measures the extent of the local consumer base, was determined by calculating the centre’s population and the number of retailers present and assigning a radius of 1 mile.
12.4 Spending Patterns

The catchment area of Newbiggin is limited, capturing the town itself and extending west to the former mining village of Woodhorn. The catchment also takes in the Sandy Bay Holiday Park and Newbiggin Golf Club. Altogether, the catchment covers an area of 17.22 sq km, is home to 6,100 people and almost 2,800 households. Together, these households and residents spend an estimated £23.8 million per annum on retail goods and services, with 38.7% of expenditure on convenience retail goods (£9.2 million) and 61.3% on comparison retail (£14.6 million). This balance differs slightly from the national (UK) average, which reports 36.7% of expenditure on convenience retail and 63.3% on comparison. The difference between the national and local position is clearly illustrated through the index which relates the proportion of each spend type in the Newbiggin catchment to the proportion in the UK. An index of more than 100% indicates higher than average local spend and an index of less than 100 represents lower than average local spend.

Figure 35: Newbiggin Catchment Summary Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Newbiggin by the Sea Catchment Summary Profile</th>
<th>Newbiggin</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>UK</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Index</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Population</td>
<td>6,118.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>60,796,178.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007 Households</td>
<td>2,797.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>26,018,847.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison</td>
<td>14,613,237.00</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>171,926,829,196.00</td>
<td>63.40%</td>
<td>96.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
<td>9,230,212.00</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>99,464,696,627.00</td>
<td>36.60%</td>
<td>105.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail</td>
<td>23,843,450.00</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>271,391,525,823.00</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Comparison per household</td>
<td>5,224.61</td>
<td></td>
<td>£6,807.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>79.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience per household</td>
<td>3,300.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>£3,822.79</td>
<td></td>
<td>86.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Retail per household</td>
<td>8,524.65</td>
<td></td>
<td>£10,430.57</td>
<td></td>
<td>81.73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

Total retail expenditure per household per annum within the catchment stands at £8525, with average comparison retail spend at £5225 per annum and convenience spend at £3,300 per annum (Figure 35). All of these figures are substantially below the national average, with total spend 81.73% of the UK figure.
Figure 36 provides a breakdown of Comparison retail expenditure within the Newbiggin catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within comparison retail is Clothing Material & Garments, accounting for £3.3 million or 22.7% of total Comparison Expenditure within the catchment. Clothing is followed by Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment (£1.9 million or 12.7%) and Games, toys and hobbies; sport and camping; musical instruments (£1.6 million or 10.7%). The pattern of expenditure nationally is similar, but with some notable differences. Referring to the index, households in Newbiggin spend more on Small electrical household appliances, Major Household Appliances and Audio-visual, photographic and information processing equipment as a proportion of total spend than the UK average. In contrast, they spend substantially less on Bicycles, Small tools and miscellaneous accessories and Major Tools and Equipment.

Figure 36: Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Comparison

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

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

Source: Experian
Figure 39 provides a breakdown of Convenience retail expenditure within the Newbiggin catchment and in the UK. Clearly the largest expenditure type within comparison retail in Newbiggin is Food and non-alcoholic beverages, accounting for £6.3 million or 68.5% of total Comparison Expenditure within the area. Food and non-alcoholic beverages is followed by Tobacco (£1.2 million or 12.9%) and Alcohol (£1.0 million or 10.7%). The pattern of expenditure nationally differs a little. Referring to the index, households in the Newbiggin catchment spend more on Tobacco and Newspapers and Periodicals as a proportion of total spend and less on Alcohol, non durable household goods and food and beverages.

Figure 39: 2007 Total Expenditure Convenience Retail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2007 Total Expenditure (in 2006 prices) Convenience Retail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% of Non-Durable household goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol (off-trade)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food and non-alcoholic beverages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers and periodicals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Convenience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

12.5 Retaining Shopper Spend

The information outlined in the previous section describes the extent and pattern of expenditure per annum of households living within the Experian-defined catchment area for Newbiggin town. What the information does not indicate is how much of the expenditure is spend purchasing goods and services in Alnwick 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 Alnwick catchment that shops in Alnwick and the proportion that shop at other centres.
- The percentage of expenditure spent on goods and services in Alnwick and the extent to which spending leaks to other centres.
The figures in Figure 40 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 less than one percent of the resident population shop in Newbiggin by the Sea. The main shopping destinations are Ashington (2,054 or 34%), Newcastle Central (1,100 or 18%), Metro Centre (811 or 13%) and Blyth (585 or 10%).

![Figure 40: Population Leakage](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>33.58</td>
<td>2054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>17.99</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>13.26</td>
<td>811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>9.57</td>
<td>585</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.67</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newbiggin by the Sea</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Experian

The pattern with regards to spend is relatively similar. Experian estimates that less than one percent of retail spend by residents and households domiciled within the Newbiggin catchment, representing almost £0.2 million per annum, is spent in the town.

Just over £8 million of expenditure is lost to Ashington (£8.02 million or 34%), with other notable leakage to Newcastle Central (£4.3 million or 18%), the MetroCentre (£3.2 million or 13%) and Blyth (£2.3 million or 10%). What is not clear from the figures, however, is the retail types that outlying centres are able to attract from the
catchment area. This is something that InfoNet will be investigating further with Experian over the coming 12 months.

**Figure 41: Spend Leakage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan Name</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
<th>Spend (£)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashington</td>
<td>33.62</td>
<td>8,016,949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Central</td>
<td>17.98</td>
<td>4,286,256</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro Centre</td>
<td>13.25</td>
<td>3,158,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blyth</td>
<td>9.56</td>
<td>2,279,414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cramlington</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>1,826,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields - Silverlink Retail Park</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td>1,034,776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morpeth</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>603,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Shields</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>542,353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallsend</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>450,735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Kingston Park Centre</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>391,595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunderland</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>251,726</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedlington</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>239,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Newbiggin by the Sea</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.81</strong></td>
<td><strong>192,656</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gateshead - Team Valley Retail World</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>180,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Shields</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>176,531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne - Byker Shields</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>170,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gateshead</strong></td>
<td><strong>0.18</strong></td>
<td><strong>42,294</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Experian*

Figure 42 shows the Newbiggin catchment area and is colour coded to indicate the proportion of retail expenditure that is spent by the resident population in Newbiggin. Clearly, from the map it can be seen that spend is consistently less than 5% across the whole catchment area.
12.6 Opinions on and use of Leisure and Entertainment

Events attended
83% of respondents had attended at least one of the events asked about in the survey. The Lifeboat Day had the largest number of respondents (54%) attending, closely followed by St Bartholomew's Fayre (47%) (Figure 42).
Figure 43: Have you ever attended any of these events?
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lifeboat Day</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Bartholomew’s Fayre</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live Music Performances</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organised Walks/ exercise/ sports activities</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Theatre Productions (Masquerade)</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have not attended any</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

Base: 70 respondents

One person said that they had attended the “boxing day (run into the sea)”.  

Events that respondents would like to see
The events that respondents would most like to see are a Farmer’s Market (64% of respondents mentioned this) and a Continental Style Market (57%) (Figure 44).
Figure 44: What events/ activities would you like to see on a regular basis?  
(Excludes ‘don’t know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

Base: 72 respondents

The following is a list of ‘other’ events/activities that the respondents would like to see on a regular basis:

- “market near beach during summer months”.
- “market near sea front, more toilets”.
- “proper market”.
- “market on sea front on a Sunday”.
- “outdoor theatre productions and plays and puppet shows”.
- “plays & open air concerts”.
- “kids shows”.
- “car boot sale on promenade near beach”.
- “car boot sale on the beach on Saturday”.
- “facilities for tourists”.
- “anything would be nice attract visitors”.

Eating and drinking
The eating and drinking venues in Newbiggin were generally rated quite well, with takeaways and cafes receiving the best ratings (74% and 76% positive ratings respectively).
However, respondents were not impressed with the restaurants in Newbiggin. These received a positive rating from only 31% of respondents, and a negative rating from 62% (Figure 45).

**Figure 45: How would you rate the following venues for eating and drinking in Newbiggin?**

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

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 55 to 68 respondents depending on type of venue (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)*

The following related things were mentioned when respondents were asked what they would like to see improved with Newbiggin town centre:

- “sea front food”.
- “needs people to open shops and pubs again”.
- “… proper restaurants…”.
- “more proper restaurants...”.

...
**Arts and leisure facilities**

The arts and leisure facilities in Newbiggin were rated quite highly. Nearly all respondents (97%) gave a positive rating for the promenade and beach. 87% rated it as very good.

The lowest rated facility was Woodhorn Church, with nearly two thirds (64%) giving a good or very good rating, and one third (33%) giving a poor or very poor rating (Figure 46).

**Figure 46: How would you rate the following arts and leisure facilities in Newbiggin?**

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

![Bar Chart](chart.png)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

**Base: 30 for the sports and community centre, 59 to 67 for the other facilities (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don’t know’ response)**

Five respondents suggested that the leisure facilities need to be improved in Newbiggin. These included comments such as:

- “more leisure”.
- “more leisure eg bowling, Frankie and Bennys, McDonalds”.
• “more fayres, car boot sales and markets”.
• “cinema and bowling alley, pizza hut”.

When asked how they would rate Newbiggin as a place to ‘enjoy yourself’, 58% of respondents gave a good or very good response (Figure 47).

**Figure 47: How do you rate Newbiggin as a place to enjoy yourself?**
(Excludes ‘don't know’ responses unless otherwise specified)

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses]

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires
Base: 59 (note: this excludes those respondents that gave a ‘don't know’ response)

**General**

When respondents were asked how they would make the town centre better, 11% gave an answer relating to improving the leisure facilities. A few comments were also made asking for “more attractions” and “more for tourists”.

When asked the reason that they were in Newbiggin on the day of the interview, 1 person said they were going to the leisure centre, 1 said they were eating out, and 17 (24%) said ‘social reasons’.
12.7 The Future: what will improve the town as a place to shop or visit?

From the analysis of the Newbiggin shopper survey, it appears that in order to improve the town as a place to shop or visit, the key issue that needs to be addressed is the retail offer. This is dealt with in more detail below. In addition, there are a number of other issues which respondents have said need improving, or have felt negatively about:

**Figure 48: How would you make this town centre better?**

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

![Figure 48: How would you make this town centre better?](image)

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

**Base: 72 respondents**

Retail

Throughout the survey, respondents have been fairly negative about the retail offer in Newbiggin as can be seen in the points below:

- When asked how they would make the town centre better, 63% of respondents said there should be a better retail offer (Figure 49).
• 38% of respondents mentioned shops when asked what improvements they would like to see to the shopping experience in Newbiggin town centre (Figure 50).

• Only 27% of respondents rated Newbiggin as a good or very good place to shop. 54% said that it was poor or very poor.

• As can be seen in section 12.2, Newbiggin is not used a great deal for shopping, with respondents mainly preferring to shop in Ashington, and to a lesser extent, Newcastle.

• However, surprisingly, 61% of respondents agreed with the statement ‘on the whole, Newbiggin offers a wide choice of quality shops’. Only 8% disagreed.

When asked what improvements respondents would like to see to the retail offer in Newbiggin, the most common suggestion (67% of respondents) was to have an increased variety of shops. More chain stores (29%) and more shops offering local produce (21%) were also mentioned (Figure 49).

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

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Increased variety of shops</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Chain Stores</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More shops offering local produce</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Northumberland Infonet Shopper Questionnaires

*Base: 63 respondents*
Figure 50: What you would like to see improved with the shopping experience in Newbiggin Town Centre?

![Bar chart showing percentage responses for different areas]

Base: 71

Respondents were also asked to give examples of suggested improvements to the retail offer in Newbiggin. A list of these responses is given in Appendix 2 (Q19). Food shops, and supermarkets in particular, were mentioned by a large number of people.

Parking (see section 9.2)

Less than half of respondents gave a positive rating for parking spaces and the safety/security of the parking facilities, and around one third gave a negative rating. Parking was also one of the most common responses when respondents were asked (a) what they would like to see improved with the shopping experience, and (b) how they would make the town centre better.

Road safety and traffic

27% of respondents mentioned road safety and 15% mentioned traffic when asked what the respondents would like to see improved with the shopping experience.
Toilets
18% of respondents mentioned toilets when asked what they would like to see improved with the shopping centre. Numerous comments on this subject were also made, saying that more (free) toilets were needed.

Appearance of the town
Poor ratings were given for the general state of the buildings in the town centre, and also the shop frontage. The former received good/very good ratings from 30% of the respondents and poor/very poor ratings from 45% of the respondents. Shop frontage was given an even worse rating with only 21% of positive ratings and 56% negative ratings.

Restaurants
Despite other eating and drinking venues receiving very good ratings, only 31% of respondents gave a positive rating for the restaurants and 62% gave a negative rating.
13.0 INVESTMENT

Redevelopment
The following developments are proposed for Newbiggin Town Centre;

- A £10 million investment from DEFRA and £1 million of other funds towards the breakwater, beach replenishment, installation of the ‘couple’ offshore sculpture and initial proposals for the Maritime Centre project.

- Support from GO-Wansbeck and the former Wansbeck District Council of more than £500,000 will be managed over the next three years for the ‘Go Build on your Heritage’ in Newbiggin initiative enabling conservation led restoration, repair and renovation of local historic and architectural character.

- The former Wansbeck District Council are also working with Newbiggin Arts Forum on a pilot merchandising project to promote the image of the village.
14.0 CONCLUSION

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

In the Town Centre, 46% of the floorspace use was for retail (Figure 3). Further to this relatively high percentage of retail floorspace, shopper’s perceptions of the range of retail provision was fairly positive with 61% agreeing or strongly agreeing to the statement “Newbiggin offers a wide choice of quality shops”, compared to just 9% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing (Figure 5).

Although there weren’t many verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the shopping experience (Appendix 2) the responses included that more shops were needed and that the range and choice of shops needed to be improved. More specifically, a number of respondents wanted to see more supermarkets which were cheaper than the existing Co-op. The verbatim responses to what shoppers would like to see improved with the retail offer (Appendix 2) also highlighted that more food shops were high on their priorities and a number of suggestions of shops they would like to see, were made. Additionally, figure 6 highlighted that there were more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience or retail service. This may indicate that shoppers would like to see less comparison retail than convenience or service, or they would like more variation within that particular category.

When looking at the perception of the general appearance of the town and more specifically, at the general state of the buildings and shop frontage, respondents gave a relatively negative rating (Figure 26). There were also various comments made about the appearance of the town which all related to making improvements to this in some way.
There was 13% of vacant floorspace in Newbiggin (see Figure 11). 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.

Accessibility into the town was not a problem for the shoppers interviewed with 75% (of those travelling by car) finding it very or fairly easy (Figure 14). However, 30% of these shoppers felt that the availability of parking spaces in the town centre was either poor or very poor. Appendix 2 also shows that two shoppers made comments specifically relating to parking and the danger of backing out onto the main road. Newbiggin also has relatively good bus connectivity, which is shown in Figure 18 by the frequency and number of destinations reached from Newbiggin. 5 out of 6 of the shoppers travelling into the town centre by bus on the day of the surveys also found it very or fairly easy to travel there. Figure 19 also shows that when looking at overall perception of the shoppers interviewed, approximately one half of respondents rated the quality, regularity and destinations served by public transport positively.

When looking at retaining shopper spend, less than 1% of Newbiggin residents shopped in Newbiggin. 34% of expenditure was lost to Ashington, 18% was lost to Newcastle and a further 13% to the Metro Centre (Figure 40). However, the current regeneration programmes may show that the percentage for Newbiggin will increase in the next few years and there will be a reduction in leakage to surrounding centres.

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

The original intention was that town centre health checks would be carried out biennially and there are various recommendations that would ensure that the next report improves and builds upon this initial “baseline” report. In subsequent years comparisons will be able to be made within the same town over a period of time, and also between towns which have the similar roles or functions, (e.g. market towns).

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

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

Section 8, Pedestrian Flows, analysed the footfall counts that had taken place within the town centres alongside the shopper’s surveys. As they had taken place on a “normal” weekday, a market day (where applicable) and a Saturday, it was not possible to estimate a weekly footfall count without including a footfall on a Sunday. This is something that would have to be considered next time.

Section 9, Accessibility, gathered all of the destinations reached from Newbiggin 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 ‘Q12 Can you tell me what, if anything, are the main problems with the shopping experience in Newbiggin Town Centre?’

**Shops**
- more shops (6 responses)
- more shops in general
- more bigger stores
- bigger range of shops, supermarkets
- more shops, supermarkets
- more supermarkets like aldi & netto
- more food stores
- improved supermarket
- competition for co-op
- competitor for co-op
- cheaper food shops
- wet fish shop & butchers
- sea front food
- more different types of shops eg clothes & shoes
- new shops, clothing shops, and shoe shops adult and children
- gift shops
- some nice gift shops
- needs people to open shops and pubs again

**Toilets**
- toilets (3 responses)
- more toilets (2 responses)
- toilets for visitors
- toilets free near beach and town centre
- toilets needed
Appearance of town

- needs a good tidy up (2 responses)
- tidy it all up
- revamp town centre
- shop fronts need revamping
- shop fronts need updating
- bins for dogs, dog litter
- clean up dog mess on pavements everywhere

Roads/crossings

- another crossing needed
- more pedestrian crossings
- pedestrianise the town centre
- new car parks, dangerous as you need to back out onto roads
- stop cars reversing onto main roads
- stop reversing out onto road

Other

- kids driving around in cars at night put people off walking down the street
- mini buses going around estates
- bank (proper one, and good quality restaurant)
- more facilities for caravan owners
- tourist facilities

Mixture of things

- more shops and more leisure
- more leisure, proper restaurants, free toilets
- more proper restaurants, free toilets near beach, and it town
- more tourist shops, toilets
- need bank, butchers
- toilets, litter bins
- toilets, supermarket

Don't know/nothing

- d/k (2 responses)
- nothing | good
Verbatim responses to ‘Q19 What improvements would you like to see to the retail offer in Newbiggin?’

Supermarkets/food shops
- a better supermarket
- asda / morrisons
- asda, lidl, aldi
- food shops (2 responses)
- food shops, butcher, greengrocer
- lidl
- lidl, aldi
- market
- more supermarkets like tescos
- more wet fish new butchers, new supermarkets

Non-food or mixture of shops
- a supermarket department store
- large supermarkets and department stores
- butcher, supermarkets, shoe shop
- butchers, diy, wet fish shop, more furniture shop
- butchers, hardware shop
- butchers, supermarkets, bank
- clothes, shoes, bank
- hairdressers, supermarket
- just general clothes, foods, kids clothes
- mothercare, marks + spencer, tesco, lidl or netto
- netto, lidl, bhs, m&s, simply food
- supermarket, bank, any food shops
- supermarkets, clothes shops
- shoe shop, supermarket
- littlewoods, bhs, netto, lidl
- department stores e.g. bhs and food stores like aldi & lidl
- more supermarkets, clothing and shoe shops
- more shoe and clothyes shops and big supermarket
- we need large clothes & shoe shop
• diy / dvd / cds shops needed
• asda or big supermarket and a bank
• shoe shops

General

• more of everything
• any shops to attract visitors
• more quality shops to make place look place
• reopen shops up/ everything
• some tourist attractions
• more upmarket shops / smaller shops
• bigger stores, more leisure
• better parking / don't let them back out
• all ok
Verbatim responses to ‘Q27 How would you make this town centre better?’

More shops/facilities
- more shops
- more shops in general
- more shops like fish shop and butchers
- asda/morrisons and a bank (2 responses)
- bank
- bigger shops, more leisure
- bigger stores and more leisure eg bowling, Frankie and Bennys, McDonalds

Toilets
- toilets for visitors
- toilets needed
- more toilets (new)
- more toilets near beach
- more free toilets near beach
- need more toilets in town centre and near beach

Appearance of town
- give shops a facelift
- keep it all old world
- make it look nice
- don't leave shops & pubs boarded up, it doesn't look nice
- get rid of empty shops, looks bad

Other
- pedestrianising the main street would be a benefit
- stop everything closing down, bring more attractions
- more fayres, car boot sales and markets
- more for tourists
Mixture of things

- need toilet blocks (free) near beach, cinema and bowling alley, pizza hut
- toilets / litter bins / cash points / banks
- free toilets on seafront, renovation of shop fronts

Don't know

- d/k
- d/k
The Corporate Research Unit

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