

BLYTH TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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

Recommendations

- The town centre should be monitored over a number of years to track changes.
- Comparisons can also be made with towns which have similar functions.
- Use class data will take all floors (from which businesses operate) within town centre buildings into consideration, as opposed to solely the ground floor.

- Investigate the location and quantity residential properties within the town centre.
- Work in partnership with local estate agents to gain further insight on property enquiries received.
- Align footfall counts across all town centres to enable fair comparisons. Additionally, footfalls to take place on Sunday to enable a weekly footfall to be estimated.
- A map to show all bus and train routes would prove useful in the analysis process.
- Investigate impact of crime initiatives on shopper's perception of crime and safety within the town centre.
- Investigate impact of future proposals for Blyth on shopper's overall perception of the town centre.