

MORPETH TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

InfoNet would like to point out that the majority of the data in this report was collected before the floods occurred in Morpeth. This is including the data collected in the shopper's questionnaires which took place in October 2007. Therefore, the floods would not have had an impact on the views and responses gathered from the shopper's questionnaires.

- 53% of the floorspace use in Morpeth was for retail.
- Shoppers felt generally the range and quality of shops need to be improved.
- There were more comparison retail (clothing, household goods, furniture, DIY and electrical goods) than convenience or retail service.
- There was 8% of vacant floorspace in Morpeth.
- The majority of vacant buildings (55%) and floorspace (48%) in Morpeth were situated in the Sanderson Arcade.
- Between 2007 and 2008, the amount of vacant floorspace had increased in the town centre.
- 69% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into the town centre by car.
- 34% of shoppers felt that the main problem with the shopping experience in Morpeth was parking.
- 39% of respondents thought that the availability of public parking spaces was poor or very poor. 52% of respondents also gave a poor or very poor rating for the cost of parking.
- Morpeth also has good bus and train connectivity with a wide range of destinations reached. 81% of shoppers interviewed found it easy to travel into the town centre by bus.
- Spring 2009 will see the opening of the "new" Sanderson Arcade. Retailers include Laura Ashley, Marks and Spencer's, Waterstones and Starbucks to name but a few, already signed up.
- Approximately one half of shoppers gave a positive response when rating the quality, regularity and destinations served by public transport. Part of the Sanderson Arcade development includes a new transport interchange and long stay car park increasing the number of parking spaces within the town centre.

- 6% of Morpeth residents shopped in Morpeth. 21% of expenditure was lost to Newcastle and a further 18% to Ashington and 16% to the Metro Centre.
- The recent floods (September 2008) resulted in 23 businesses still closed for business six weeks later.

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 Morpeth on shopper's overall perception of the town centre.