

NORTHUMBERLAND

Northumberland County Council

NEWBIGGIN TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK REPORT – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared by: Lauren Widdrington & Alyson Forster

Tel: 01670 534757, 01670 534755

E-mail: alyson.forster@northumberland.gov.uk / lauren.widdrington@northumberland.gov.uk

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Contacts

Philip Hanmer – Research Manager

Tel: (01670) 533919

Laurie Turnbull – Research Assistant

Tel: (01670) 533038

Fax: (01670) 533967

E-mail: InfoNet@northumberland.gov.uk

Website: www.northumberlandinfonet.org.uk

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.

- 46% 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 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 Alnwick on shopper's overall perception of the town centre.