BATLEY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT 2004
FACT SHEET 5: PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN

Introduction

This document, produced by Kirklees MC's Planning Service, is designed to provide supplementary information on the surveys of town centre businesses and shoppers/visitors that were undertaken as part of the 2004 Town Centre Audit (in A1 folded form). This is one of a series of Fact Sheets that contain detailed analysis of the indicators of town centre performance presented in the main publication.

Assessing perceptions: Methodology

Questionnaire surveys were undertaken in Batley town centre during July and August 2003 to gauge the views of shoppers/visitors and business owners/managers on various town centre issues. Tabulated full results from both questionnaires are given at the end of the Fact Sheet.

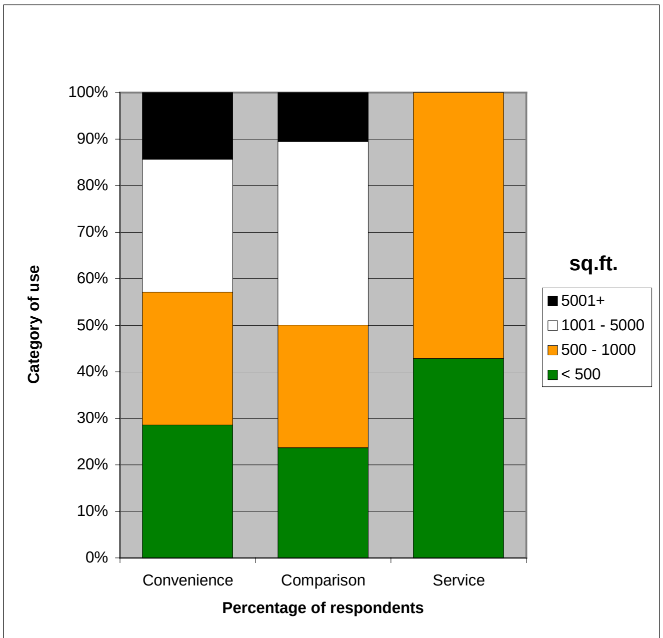
Businesses: Self-completion questionnaires were distributed by hand to 155 businesses within the town centre. The response from town centre businesses was 37.4% completed questionnaires.

Shoppers: A sample of 250 visitors to Batley were interviewed at various locations around the town centre over several days in July and August 2002 (weekdays and weekends).

Business survey: main findings

Business characteristics: 72% of all returns were from comparison goods traders of which 21% occupy shop units of less than 46 sq.m. (500 sq.ft.). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the nature of use and size of unit.

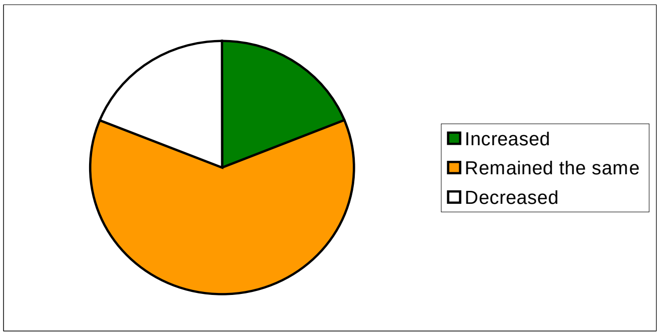
Figure 1: Nature of use and size of unit (sq.ft.)



Around two thirds (66%) of questionnaire respondents were independent traders. Just over half (52%) of business respondents have been trading in the town centre for more than 10 years. Traders that are new to the town (up to 2 years) constitute 26% of respondents.

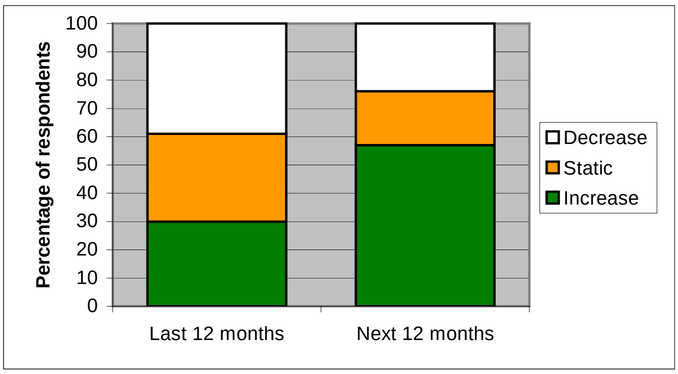
Employment: Figure 2 shows the changes experienced by respondents during the last 12 months in respect of employee numbers. Over half (62%) recorded that their staff numbers had not changed whilst 19% registered an increase. Retail employment continues to be characterised by part time jobs, and by a predominantly female workforce. This is particularly true of the convenience goods retail sector where 63% of employees are part-time.

Figure 2: Changes in staff numbers (last 12 months)



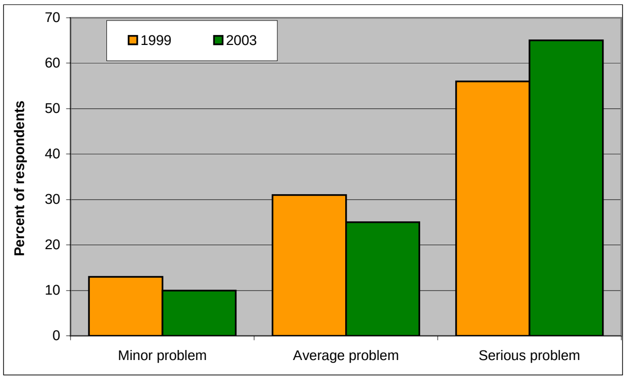
Turnover trends: Only 30% of respondents recorded that they had experienced increasing turnover during the last 12 months (August 2002 – August 2003). However, there is optimism for the future as 57% of respondents are expecting an increase in turnover for the next 12 months. This optimism is tied to Tesco attracting more people into the town centre, and the early construction of the pedestrian footbridge linking the new Tesco store to Commercial Street.

Figure 3: Trends and predictions in turnover



Crime in the town centre: 65% of businesses considered crime to be a serious problem in Batley. Of these, 89% had directly experienced some form of crime during the past 12 months. The perception of crime in both the 1999 and 2003 assessments is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The problem of crime (1998 and 2001)



Major concerns relate to shoplifting/theft, vandalism/damage, drug related problems and anti-social behaviour. In terms of the actual crimes experienced by traders, shoplifting is by far the most common (57% of respondents). This was followed by vandalism which has affected 43% of respondents. It was suggested by 80% of respondents that more policing would allay fears of crime in the town centre, whilst 32% suggested an expansion of CCTV camera coverage would benefit the town centre area.

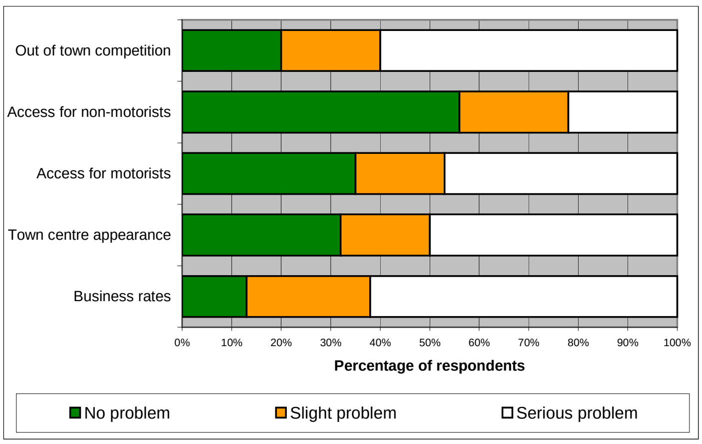
In response to the concerns over crime and the need to reduce business losses, 80% of respondents have introduced their own security measures, with a quarter of businesses upgrading security over the last 12 months. Security measures range from alarms and shutters to security staff and retail radio.

In terms of perceptions of safety, 30% of business respondents consider the town centre to be very unsafe during the day. This figure rises to 70% when they were asked to assess the town centre during the evening.

Parking and accessibility: 40% of respondents regarded the general availability of parking in Batley as a serious problem. The main parking problems were considered to be the location of parking (19%) and problems with parking restrictions (19%).

Town centre problems: Figure 5 shows the issues affecting business performance in the town. The most serious concerns relate to business rates, out-of-town competition and town centre appearance (identified as a serious problem by 62%, 60% and 50%, respectively). Access for motorists was also identified as a serious problem by 47% of respondents.

Figure 5: Issues affecting business performance

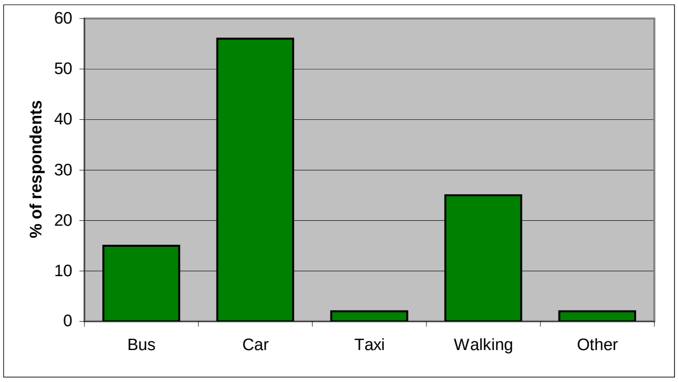


Improving the town: When asked how they would most like to see the town centre improved, 26% of respondents cited improvements to the general appearance of the town as the main issue, with enhanced retail offer and safety/security improvements being mentioned by 24% and 20% of respondents, respectively.

Shoppers survey: main findings

Accessing the town centre: Whilst public transport and walking continue to be popular means of accessing Batley town centre (40% of respondents), the car remains the most used mode of transport.

Figure 6: Mode of transport used to access the town centre



Of those survey respondents travelling into town by car, only 11% had difficulty finding a place to park. 52% of those interviewed were visiting the town for shopping purposes with a further 13% using town centre services such as banks.

Shopping preferences: 59% of respondents do their main grocery shopping at stores within the town centre – with Tesco being the most popular destination. Other local stores which are fairly well used include Asda at Morley and Morrisons at Heckmondwike (13% and 10% of respondents respectively).

Figure 7: Preferred shopping destinations

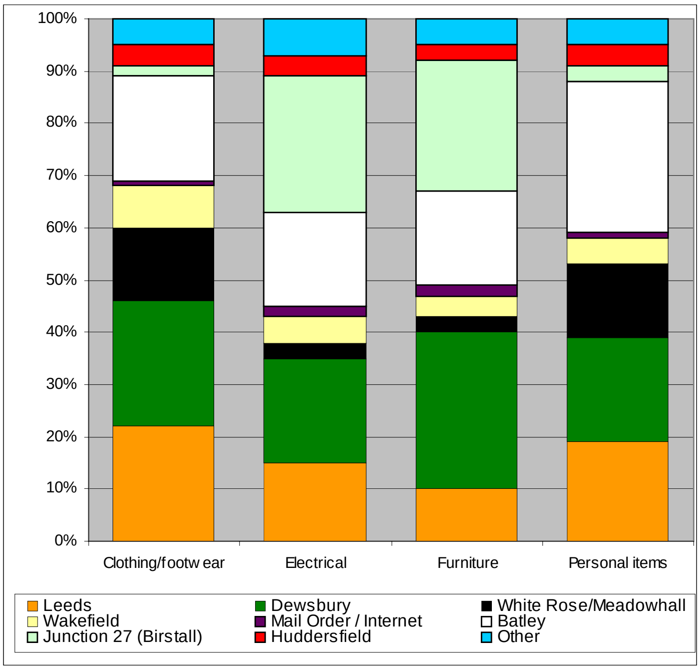
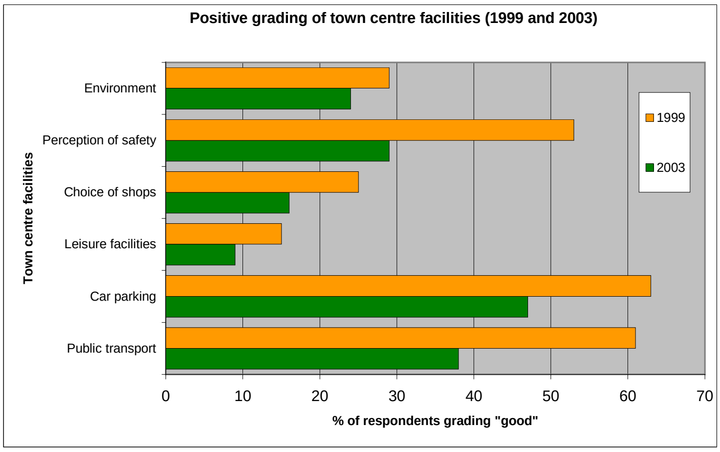


Figure 7 illustrates the preferred destinations for the purchase of different types of goods. Competition within Batley is evident for all categories, especially in terms of electrical goods and furniture from Junction 27 (Birstall) and Dewsbury.

The quality and choice of shops was identified by 73% of interviewees as the reason for taking their custom elsewhere. This opinion is reflected in the grading of town centre facilities by respondents, where 84% considered Batley's choice of shops to be only 'average' or 'poor'.

Town centre facilities: Figure 8 gives the changes in grading of various town centre facilities since the 1999 shoppers survey, concentrating on the 'good' grades accorded to each aspect. It shows that, in general, shoppers now have a much more negative opinion of all town centre facilities covered, especially public transport, car parking and their perceptions of safety.

Figure 8: Positive grading of facilities



Business questionnaire survey: full results

The following tabulated results relate to each of the questions asked of business managers in Batley town centre.

1. Length of time trading in Batley Town Centre

	No. of respondents	% of total
Less than 1 year	4	7%
1-2 years	11	19%
3-4 years	3	5%
5-9 years	10	17%
10-14 years	9	16%
15-24 years	10	17%
25 years or more	11	19%
Total	**58**	**100%**

2. Sales floorspace (sq.ft.)

	No. of respondents	% of total
500 or less	14	27%
501 – 1,000	16	31%
1,001 – 5,000	17	33%
5,001 – 10,000	1	2%
10,001 and above	4	7%
Total	**52**	**100%**

3. Number of staff employed

Respondents = 58			
	Males	**Females**	**Total**
Full time	64	100	164
Part time	77	193	270
Total	**141**	**293**	**434**

4. Number of employees from an ethnic minority background

Respondents = 45	Males	Females	Total
Full time	9	3	12
Part time	35	36	71
Total	**44**	**39**	**83**

5. Changes in staff (previous 12 months)

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increased	11	19%
Remained the same	35	62%
Decreased	11	19%
Total	**57**	**100%**

6. Business part of a larger company

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	20	34%
No	38	66%
Total	**58**	**100%**

7. Turnover in the last 12 months

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increased	17	30%
Remained the same	18	31%
Decreased	22	39%
Total	**57**	**100%**

8. Turnover: 27 (46.6%) of respondents gave specific details of turnover.

9. Prospects for the next twelve months

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increasing turnover	31	57%
Static turnover	10	19%
Decreasing turnover	13	24%
Total	**54**	**100%**

10. Businesses that have (over the last 12 months) invested in the following:

Respondents = 58	No. of respondents	% of total
Staff training	23	40%
Staff recruitment	15	26%
Information technology	10	17%
Property improvements	24	41%

11. Identification of crime as a problem in Batley town centre

	No. of respondents	% of total
Minor problem	6	10%
Average	14	25%
Serious problem	37	65%
Total	**57**	**100%**

12. Nature of crime as a problem in Batley town centre

Responses = 54	No. of responses	% of crimes	% of total responses
Vandalism / damage	22	23%	41%
Shoplifting/theft	38	40%	70%
Burglary / break-in	9	9%	17%
Anti-social behaviour	11	11%	20%
Crime against person	2	2%	4%
Drugs/drug related	14	15%	26%
Total	**96**	**100%**	**na**

13. Experience of Crime in the last 12 months

Respondents = 58	No. of responses	% of crime types experienced	% of total respondents
Shoplifting	33	32%	57%
Vandalism	25	25%	43%
Burglary	12	12%	21%
Personal attack on employees	5	5%	9%
Alcohol/drug related crime	14	14%	24%
Other	4	4%	7%
None	8	8%	14%
Total	**101**	**100%**	**na**

14a. Security measures undertaken to reduce business losses – yes or no

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	49	84%
No	9	16%
Total	**58**	**100%**

14b. Specific security measures taken to reduce business losses

Responses = 49	No. of responses	% of total security measures	% of respondents
Alarms	34	35%	69%
CCTV	17	18%	35%
Product tagging	7	7%	14%
Shutters	21	22%	43%
Security staff	6	6%	12%
Retail radio	8	8%	16%
Other	4	4%	8%
Total	**97**	**100%**	**na**

15a. Security measures introduced/upgraded over the past 12 months – yes or no

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	14	24%
No	44	76%
Total	**58**	**100%**

15b. Specific security measures introduced/upgraded in the last 12 months

Respondents = 14	Count of security type used	% of total security measures	% of respondents
Alarms	8	42%	57%
CCTV	3	16%	21%
Product tagging	3	16%	21%
Shutters	2	11%	14%
Security staff	1	5%	7%
Retail radio	1	5%	7%
Other	1	5%	7%
Total	**19**	**100%**	**na**

16. Benefit of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

	No. of respondents	% of total
Great benefit	15	29%
Average benefit	15	29%
Little or no benefit	21	42%
Total	**51**	**100%**

17. Perceptions of safety in Batley town centre during the day

	No. of respondents	% of total
Very safe	14	25%
Average	26	45%
Very unsafe	17	30%
Total	**57**	**100%**

18. Perceptions of safety in Batley town centre during the evening

	No. of respondents	% of total
Very safe	5	9%
Average	12	21%
Very unsafe	39	70%
Total	**56**	**100%**

19. Suggestions to improve the perception of safety and security

Responses = 44	No. of responses	% of safety improvements	% of respondents
Better/more policing	35	54%	80%
More CCTV	14	22%	32%
Zero tolerance of petty crime	3	5%	7%
Less vacancy	2	3%	5%
More security	3	5%	7%
Other	7	11%	16%
Total	**64**	**100%**	**na**

20. Extent to which business rates are considered a problem

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	7	13%
Slight problem	14	25%
Serious problem	34	62%
Total	**55**	**100%**

21. Extent to which town centre appearance is considered a problem

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	18	32%
Slight problem	10	18%
Serious problem	28	50%
Total	**56**	**100%**

22. Extent to which access for motorists into Batley town centre is considered a problem

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	19	35%
Slight problem	10	18%
Serious problem	26	47%
Total	**55**	**100%**

23. Extent to which access for non-motorists into Batley town centre is considered a problem

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	30	56%
Slight problem	12	22%
Serious problem	12	22%
Total	**54**	**100%**

24. Extent to which out-of-town competition is considered a problem

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	11	20%
Slight problem	11	20%
Serious problem	33	60%
Total	**55**	**100%**

25. Views on the general availability of car parking

	No. of respondents	% of total
Little or no problem	20	34%
Average problem	15	26%
Serious problem	23	40%
Total	**58**	**100%**

26. Other problems with car parking

Respondents = 21	**No. of respondents**	**% parking issues**	**% of respondents**
Restrictions	4	17%	19%
Car park locations	4	17%	19%
Inability to use market place	3	13%	14%
Car park security	3	13%	14%
Lack of long stay	2	8%	10%
Need workers car parking	2	8%	10%
Other	6	24%	29%
Total	**24**	**100%**	**na**

27. Perceived contribution to health and vitality of Batley

	Little/none	Average	Great	Total
Café / Restaurant	20 (36%)	12 (21%)	24 (43%)	56 (100%)
Pubs/Clubs	26 (46%)	15 (27%)	15 (27%)	56 (100%)
Pharmacy	4 (7%)	20 (36%)	32 (57%)	56 (100%)
Post office	4 (7%)	6 (11%)	46 (82%)	56 (100%)
Professional services	8 (15%)	14 (26%)	32 (59%)	54 (100%)
Cultural facilities	11 (19%)	16 (29%)	29 (52%)	56 (100%)
Entertainment venues	18 (33%)	16 (29%)	21 (38%)	55 (100%)
Markets	21 (38%)	9 (16%)	26 (46%)	56 (100%)

28. **Perceived contribution to the health and vitality of town centres in general**

	Little/none	Average	Great	Total
Café / Restaurant	5 (9%)	11 (20%)	38 (71%)	54 (100%)
Pubs/Clubs	12 (22%)	16 (30%)	26 (48%)	54 (100%)
Pharmacy	3 (6%)	16 (30%)	34 (64%)	53 (100%)
Post office	4 (7%)	10 (19%)	40 (74%)	54 (100%)
Professional services	9 (17%)	10 (19%)	34 (64%)	53 (100%)
Cultural facilities	8 (15%)	9 (17%)	36 (68%)	53 (100%)
Entertainment venues	10 (18%)	14 (26%)	30 (56%)	54 (100%)
Markets	6 (11%)	5 (10%)	42 (79%)	53 (100%)

29. **Suggested improvements to the town centre**

Respondents = 50	**No. of responses**	**% of suggestions**	**% of respondents**
Safety / security	10	14%	20%
Car parking	7	10%	14%
Reduce business rates	4	6%	8%
Appearance/ environmental	13	19%	26%
Improve town marketing	4	6%	8%
Improve retail offer	12	17%	24%
Improve markets	9	12%	18%
Improve amenities/public transport	5	7%	10%
More pedestrianised areas	4	6%	8%
Other	2	3%	4%
Total	**70**	**100%**	**na**

Shoppers questionnaire survey: full results

The following tabulated results relate to each of the questions asked of shoppers/visitors to Batley town centre. The total number of respondents was 250 of which 22 (9%) were male and 227 (91%) were female.

1. Ethnic Origin

	No. of respondents	% of total
White	237	95%
Black	0	0%
Asian	13	5%
Total	**250**	**100**

2. Age

	No. of respondents	% of total
16-25	29	12%
26-40	80	32%
41-60	111	44%
60+	30	12%
Total	**250**	**100%**

3. Origin on day of interview

	No. of respondents	% of total
Home	204	82%
Work	42	17%
Somewhere else	3	1%
Total	**249**	**100%**

4. Mode of transport into town

	No. of respondents	% of total
Bus	37	15%
Car	140	56%
Motorcycle	0	0%
Bicycle	0	0%
Taxi	6	2%
Walked	62	25%
Other	5	2%
Total	**250**	**100%**

5. Difficulty in parking

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	16	11%
No	124	89%
Total	**140**	**100%**

6. Purpose of visit

	No. of respondents	% of responses
Shopping	129	52
Hairdressers	9	4
Banks/services	32	13
Other town centre services	7	3
Work/education	43	17
Social/visiting	19	7
Medical Appointments	7	3
Other	4	1
Total	**250**	**100**

7. Preferred grocery shopping destination

	No. of respondents	% of total
Tesco, Batley	126	50%
Asda, Morley	32	13%
Morrisons, Heckmondwike	24	10%
Netto, Batley	14	6%
Sainsburys, Dewsbury	10	4%
Asda, Dewsbury	9	4%
Morrisons, Morley	6	2%
Others – Batley	8	3%
Others – Elsewhere	15	6%
No preference/response	6	2%
Total	**250**	**100%**

8. Preferred centre for clothes and footwear purchases

	No. of respondents	% of total
Leeds	52	22%
Dewsbury	59	24%
White Rose/Meadowhall	34	14%
Wakefield	19	8%
Catalogue/Mail Order	2	1%
Batley	48	20%
Junction 27 (Birstall)	6	2%
Huddersfield	9	4%
Other	13	5%
Total	**242**	**100%**

9. Preferred centre for the purchase of furniture

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Leeds	29	15%
Dewsbury	37	20%
White Rose/Meadowhall	5	3%
Wakefield	10	5%
Catalogue/Mail Order	4	2%
Batley	33	18%
Junction 27 (Birstall)	48	26%
Huddersfield	7	4%
Other	14	7%
Total	**187**	**100%**

10. Preferred centre for the purchase of electrical goods

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Leeds	24	10%
Dewsbury	69	30%
White Rose/Meadowhall	8	3%
Wakefield	9	4%
Catalogue/Mail Order	5	2%
Batley	41	18%
Junction 27 (Birstall)	58	25%
Huddersfield	7	3%
Other	12	5%
Total	**233**	**100%**

11. Preferred centre for the purchase of personal items

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Leeds	39	19%
Dewsbury	41	20%
White Rose/Meadowhall	30	14%
Wakefield	10	5%
Catalogue/Mail Order	3	1%
Batley	61	29%
Junction 27 (Birstall)	7	3%
Huddersfield	8	4%
Other	10	5%
Total	**209**	**100**

12. Reasons for shopping in towns/facilities other than Batley

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Near to home/convenience	29	14%
Better choice/quality of shops	151	73%
Shopping around for specific products	8	4%
Better parking/access	4	2%
All under one roof shopping	3	1%
Other	13	6%
Total	**208**	**100%**

13. Proportion of food shopping undertaken in Batley town centre

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
All	77	31%
75%	38	15%
50%	39	16%
25%	49	20%
None	46	18%
Total	**249**	**100%**

14. Frequency of shopping in Batley town centre

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	50	20%
2/3 times a week	94	38%
Weekly	67	27%
Monthly	13	5%
Less often	19	7%
Never	7	3%
Total	**250**	**100%**

15. Frequency of usage of Batley library

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	0	0%
2/3 times a week	6	2%
Weekly	24	10%
Monthly	24	10%
Less often	30	12%
Never	166	66%
Total	**250**	**100%**

16. Frequency of usage of pubs/cafes in Batley town centre

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	3	1%
2/3 times a week	18	7%
Weekly	41	17%
Monthly	26	10%
Less often	20	8%
Never	142	57%
Total	**250**	**100%**

17. Frequency of usage of Alexandra Mill

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	0	0%
2/3 times a week	2	1%
Weekly	1	1%
Monthly	23	9%
Less often	66	26%
Never	158	63%
Total	**250**	**100%**

18. Frequency of usage of Redbrick Mill

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	0	0%
2/3 times a week	0	0%
Weekly	5	2%
Monthly	20	8%
Less often	78	31%
Never	147	59%
Total	**250**	**100%**

19. Frequency of usage of the Discount Mill Village

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Daily	2	1%
2/3 times a week	2	1%
Weekly	27	11%
Monthly	74	29%
Less often	92	37%
Never	53	21%
Total	**250**	**100%**

22. Assessment of Batley town centre facilities

	Good	Average	Poor	Total
Environment	61	142	47	250
%	(24%)	(57%)	(19%)	(100%)
Safety	72	143	34	249
%	(29%)	(57%)	(14%)	(100%)
Choice of shops	40	85	123	248
%	(16%)	(34%)	(50%)	(100%)
Leisure facilities	16	56	109	181
%	(9%)	(31%)	(60%)	(100%)
Car parking	101	71	42	214
%	(47%)	(33%)	(20%)	(100%)
Public transport	62	59	41	162
%	(38%)	(37%)	(25%)	(100%)
Public toilets	5	25	124	154
%	(3%)	(16%)	(81%)	(100%)
Market	6	40	175	221
%	(3%)	(18%)	(79%)	(100%)
Cafe/Pub/ Restaurant	35	93	59	187
%	(19%)	(50%)	(31%)	(100%)

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