DEWSBURY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT 2001
FACT SHEET 5: PERCEPTIONS OF THE TOWN

£10

Introduction

This document, produced by Kirklees MC's Planning Service, is designed to provide supplementary information on the surveys of business and shopper/visitor perceptions of Dewsbury to accompany the 2001 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 Dewsbury town centre during May and June 2001 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.

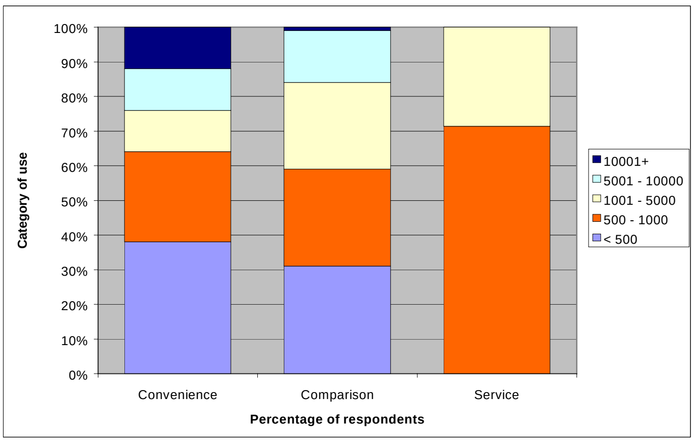
Businesses: Self-completion questionnaires were distributed by hand to 265 businesses and 131 market traders within the town centre. Whilst the response from market traders was poor (only 16 completed questionnaires), the response from town centre businesses was satisfactory (32% completed questionnaires).

Shoppers: A sample of 371 visitors to Dewsbury were interviewed at various locations around the town centre over several days in May and June 2001.

Business survey: main findings

Business characteristics: 80% of all returns were from comparison goods traders of which 59% occupy shop units of 93 sq.m. (1000 sq.ft.) or less. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the nature of use and size of unit.

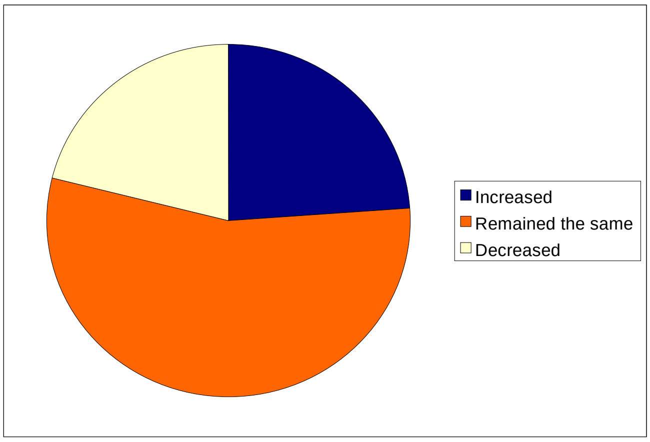
Figure 1: Nature of use and size of unit (sq.ft.)



Only 15% of respondents are members of the Dewsbury Chamber of Trade and over half (59%) are independent traders. The majority (61%) 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 11% of respondents.

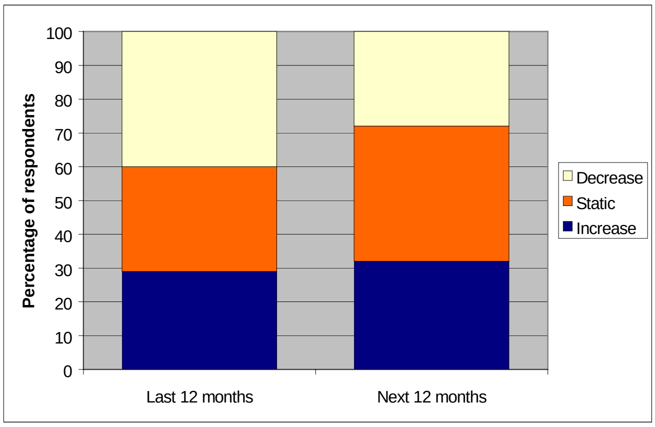
Employment: Figure 2 shows the changes experienced by respondents during the last 12 months in respect of employee numbers. Clearly, over half (55%) recorded that their staff numbers had not changed whilst 23% registered and increase. The employment sector in the town continues to be characterised by part time jobs, and by a predominantly female workforce. This is also particularly true of the convenience goods retail sector where only 23% of employees are full time.

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



Turnover trends: Two thirds of respondents recorded that they had experienced increasing or static turnover during the last 12 months. Optimism for the future is reflected in the high number of respondents expecting increases or static turnover for the next 12 months – amounting to 68%. These trends are shown in Figure 3.

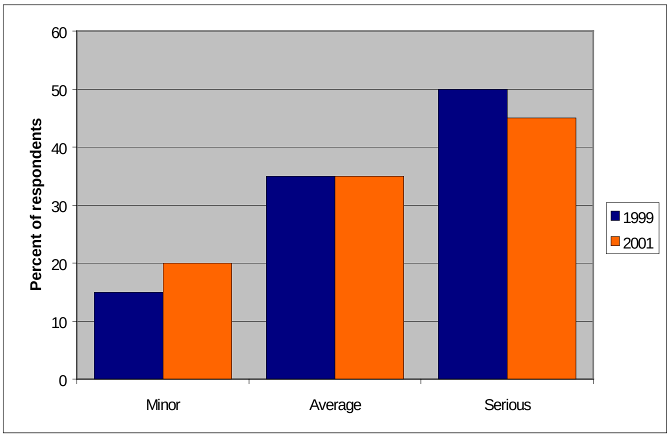
Figure 3: Trends and predictions in turnover



74% of those experiencing increases in turnover during the last 12 months are expecting this to continue during the coming 12 months.

Crime in the town centre: 44% of businesses considered crime to be a serious problem in Dewsbury (compared to the 50% of respondents with this view in the 1999 assessment). Of these, 96% had experienced some form of crime during the past 12 months. However, the experience of crime was also high amongst those who did not consider it as a serious problem. The perception of crime is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The problem of crime (1999 and 2001)

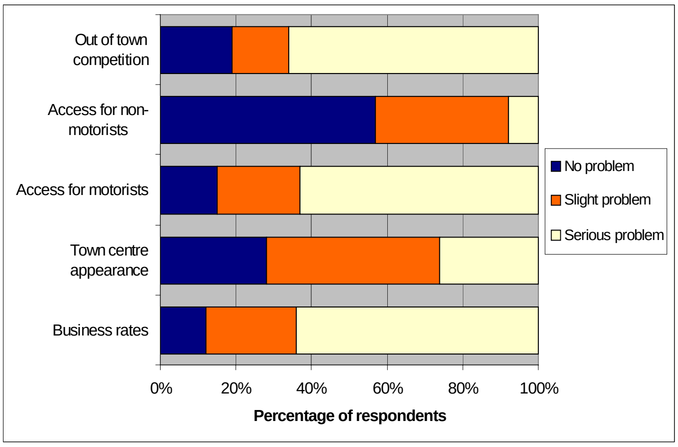


Major concerns relate to burglary/theft, shoplifting and vandalism in particular. In terms of the actual crimes experienced by traders, shoplifting is by far the most common (61% of crimes identified). It was suggested by 56% of respondents that more policing would allay fears of crime in the town centre.

Parking and accessibility: The availability of car parking was considered to be a serious problem to the town by 85% of business respondents, with the cost of parking also being of great concern. Paradoxically, the car parking to floorspace ratio achieved in Dewsbury exceeds that of all other towns in Kirklees and many others in West Yorkshire. Dewsbury has a ratio of 76.9 spaces per thousand square metres of retail floorspace. A further point to note is that only 24% of shoppers interviewed in the town had difficulty finding a place to park.

Town centre problems: Figure 5 shows the issues affecting business performance in the town. The most serious concerns relate to out of town competition, access for motorists and business rates (identified as a serious problem by 66%, 63% and 64%, respectively).

Figure 5: Issues affecting business performance

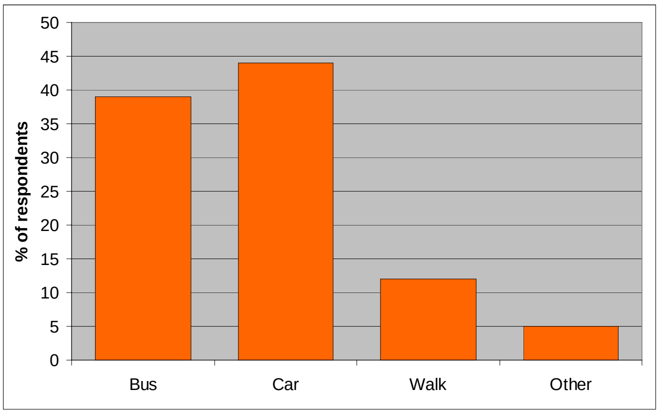


Improving the town: When asked how they would most like to see the town centre improved, 28% of respondents cited car parking as the main issue, with town centre development, environmental improvements and safety and security being mentioned by 28%, 19% and 10% of respondents, respectively.

Shoppers survey: main findings

Accessing the town centre: It is clearly evident from Figure 6 that public transport continues to be a well used means of accessing Dewsbury town centre. The town is served by an excellent network of bus services connecting it to surrounding areas.

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

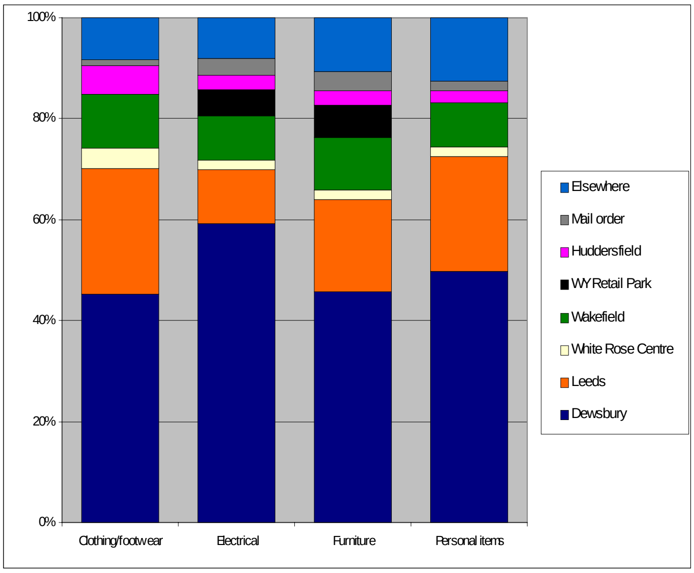


Of those survey respondents travelling into town by car, only 24% had difficulty finding a place to park. 64% of those interviewed were visiting the town for shopping purposes with 28% using town centre services such as banks.

Shopping preferences: Exactly half of respondents do their main grocery shopping at stores within the town centre – with Sainsbury's being the most popular destination. A significant number of those interviewed (16%) visit Heckmondwike for their main food purchases. However, 47% of shoppers use Dewsbury only for top-up food purchases or none at all.

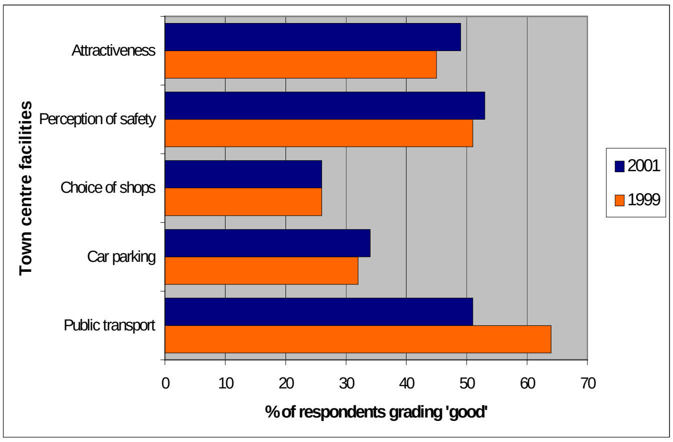
Figure 7 illustrates the preferred destinations for the purchase of different types of goods. Dewsbury fairs well but competition is evident from Leeds and Wakefield in particular, which have a significant draw of custom from Dewsbury shoppers. The quality and choice of shops was identified by 60% of interviewees as the reason for taking their custom elsewhere. This opinion is reflected in the grading of town centre facilities by respondents, where 74% considered Dewsbury's choice of shops to be only 'average' or 'poor'.

Figure 7: Preferred shopping destinations



Town centre facilities: Figure 8 gives the changes in grading of various town centre facilities since the 1999 shoppers survey. It concentrates on the 'good' grades accorded to each aspect and shows that more shoppers now have a positive opinion of car parking, safety and town centre attractiveness.

Figure 8: Positive grading of facilities



Business questionnaire survey: full results

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

1. Nature of business

	No. of respondents	% of total
Convenience goods	10	12
Comparison goods	68	80
Service uses	7	8
Total	**85**	**100**

2. Length of time trading in Dewsbury Town Centre

	No. of respondents	% of total
Less than 1 year	4	4
1-2 years	7	7
3-4 years	9	9
5-9 years	19	19
10-14 years	17	17
15-24 years	16	16
25 years or more	29	28
Total	**101**	**100**

3. Sales floorspace (sq.ft.) – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
500 or less	22	26
501 – 1,000	24	28
1,001 – 5,000	18	21
5,001 – 10,000	11	13
10,001 and above	2	2
Not stated	9	10
Total	**86**	**100**

4. Number of staff employed

Response = 82		
	Males	**Females**
Full time	162	172
Part time	132	435
Total	**294**	**607**

5. Number of employees from an ethnic minority background - excludes market trader responses

	Males	Females
Full time	17	9
Part time	29	29
Total	**46**	**38**

6. Changes in staff (previous 12 months) – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increased	20	23
Remained the same	47	55
Decreased	18	21
Not stated	1	1
Total	**86**	**100**

7. Business part of a larger company – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	35	41
No	51	59
Total	**86**	**100**

8. Turnover in the last 12 months

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increased	29	29
Remained the same	31	30
Decreased	39	38
Not stated	3	3
Total	**102**	**100**

9. Turnover: 49 (48%) of respondents gave specific details of turnover.

10. Prospects for the next twelve months

	No. of respondents	% of total
Increasing turnover	32	31
Static turnover	41	40
Decreasing turnover	28	28
Not stated	1	1
Total	**102**	**100**

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

	No. of respondents	% of total
Minor problem	20	20
Average	36	35

Serious problem	45	44
Not stated	1	1
Total	**102**	**100**

12. Nature of crime as a problem in Dewsbury town centre - excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total crimes
Shoplifting	31	23
Vandalism/Anti-social behaviour	25	19
Burglary/theft	46	34
Drugs	10	7
Fraud	3	2
Car crime	10	7
Other	2	2
None	8	6
Total	**135**	**100**

13. Experience of Crime

Response = 102	No. of respondents	% of total crimes
Shoplifting	62	61
Vandalism	25	25
Burglary	12	12
Personal attack on employees	8	8
Alcohol/drug related crime	26	25
Other	6	6
None	20	20

14. Proportion of turnover lost to crime in the last 12 months – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
1 %	6	7
2 %	5	6
3 %	4	5
4 %	1	1
5 %	3	3
10 %	3	3
None	64	75
Total	**86**	**100**

15. Security measures taken to reduce business losses – excludes market trader responses

Response = 86		
	No. of respondents	**% of total**
Alarms	59	68
CCTV	22	26
Product tagging	9	10
Shutters	26	30
Security staff	7	8
Other	12	20
None	15	17

16. Security measures introduced/upgraded in the last 12 months – excludes market trader responses

Response = 20		
	No. of respondents	**% of total**
Alarms	8	9
CCTV	11	13
Product tagging	2	2
Shutters	3	3
Security staff	1	1
Other	2	2
None	66	77

17. Benefit of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Great benefit	25	31
Average benefit	32	39
Little or no benefit	24	30
Total	**81**	**100**

18. Perceptions of safety in Dewsbury town centre – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Very safe	28	33
Average	35	42
Very unsafe	21	25
Total	**84**	**100**

19. Suggestions to improve the perception of safety and security – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total suggestions
Policing	48	47
CCTV	12	12
Lighting	1	1
Improve driving conditions	2	2
Prevention of gangs hanging around	4	4
More pedestrianisation	1	1
Clear up empty premises (used for drug abuse)	1	1
Other	2	2
None	30	30
Total	**101**	**100**

20. Views on the general availability of car parking

	No. of respondents	% of total
No or little problem	12	12
Average	3	3

Serious problem	84	85
Total	**99**	**100**

21. Problems with car parking

	No. of respondents	% of total
Not enough spaces	32	22
Cost	55	37
Lack of long stay spaces	14	10
Security	4	2
Parking too far from centre	15	10
Other	13	9
None	14	10
Total	**147**	**100**

22. Extent to which business rates are considered a problem – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
No problem	10	12
Slight problem	19	24
Serious problem	51	64
Total	**80**	**100**

23. Extent to which town centre appearance is considered a problem – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
No problem	21	28
Slight problem	35	46
Serious problem	20	26
Total	**76**	**100**

24. Extent to which access for motorists into Dewsbury is considered a problem – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
No problem	12	15
Slight problem	17	22
Serious problem	50	63
Total	**79**	**100**

25. Extent to which access for non-motorists into Dewsbury town centre is considered a problem – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
No problem	39	57
Slight problem	24	35
Serious problem	5	8
Total	**68**	**100**

26. Extent to which out-of-town competition is considered a problem – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
No problem	15	19
Slight problem	12	15
Serious problem	51	66
Total	**78**	**100**

27. Member of the Dewsbury Chamber of Trade – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	13	15
No	71	85
Total	**84**	**100**

28. Suggested improvements to the town centre

	No. of respondents	% of total suggestions
Safety and security	10	10
Car parking	31	28
Reduce business rates	2	2
Environmental	14	13
More town centre development	21	19
Increased number of events	1	1
Introduce a Sunday market	1	1
Fewer charity shops	1	1
Improved vehicle access	4	4
Other	9	8
None	15	13
Total	**109**	**100**

29. Awareness of the Town Centre Manager – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	45	52
No	41	48
Total	**86**	**100**

30. Importance of the role of a Town Centre Manager – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Very important	17	32
Average importance	17	32
Not important	20	36
Total	**54**	**100**

31. Sunday trading

	No. of respondents	% of total
Currently trading on Sundays	16	16
Intending to trade on Sundays	5	5
Only trade on Sundays at certain times of the year	18	18
No intentions to	62	61

trade on Sundays		
Total	**101**	**100**

32. Use of the Internet to sell goods– excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	15	18
Yes, but only through parent co.	7	8
Not currently, but intending to	7	8
No	57	66
Total	**86**	**100**

33. Proportion of goods sold over the internet – excludes market trader responses

	No. of respondents	% of total
1% - 5%	3	43
6%-10%	2	29
11% - 15%	1	14
15%+	1	14
Total	**7**	**100**

34. Ethnicity of trader/owner

	No. of respondents	% of total
Asian – Indian	5	5
Asian – Pakistani	4	4
White	89	87
Arabian	1	1
Not stated	3	3
Total	**102**	**100**

Shoppers questionnaire survey: full results

The following tabulated results relate to each of the questions asked of shoppers/visitors to Dewsbury town centre.

1. Gender

	No. of respondents	% of total
Male	68	18
Female	303	82
Total	**371**	**100**

2. Age

	No. of respondents	% of total
<18	2	1
18-30	103	28
31-45	97	26
46-64	100	27
65+	54	14
Not stated	15	4
Total	**371**	**100**

3. Origin

	No. of respondents	% of total
Home	312	85
Work	42	12
Somewhere else	11	3
Total	**371**	**100**

4. Mode of transport

	No. of respondents	% of total
Bus	145	39
Car	164	44
Motorcycle	1	0
Bicycle	0	0
Train	7	2
Walked	44	12
Taxi	8	2
Other	2	1
Total	**371**	**100**

5. Difficulty in parking

	No. of respondents	% of total
Yes	40	24
No	126	76
Total	**166**	**100**

6. Purpose of visit

	No. of respondents	% of responses
Shopping	249	64
Hairdressers	47	12
Banks/services	32	8
Other t.c. facilities	30	8
Work/education	20	5
Social/visiting	11	3
Total	**389**	**100**

7. Proportion of food shopping undertaken in Dewsbury

	No. of respondents	% of total
All	90	24
75%	48	13
50%	60	16
25%	108	29
None	65	18
Total	**371**	**100**

8. Preferred grocery store

	No. of respondents	% of total
Dewsbury - Safeway	35	9
Dewsbury – Sainsburys	87	23
Dewsbury – Kwik Save	30	8
Dewsbury - Netto	17	4
Dewsbury – Marks & Spencer	3	1
Dewsbury - Fultons	1	0
Dewsbury – no store stated	17	5
Batley –Any store	29	8
Heckmondwike –Any store	54	16
Huddersfield – Any store	9	2
Leeds –Any store	6	2
Morley – Any store	19	5

Wakefield – Any store	25	7
Others	27	7
No preference/response	12	3
Total	**371**	**100**

9. Frequency of shopping trips to Dewsbury for different goods (%)

	Daily	2/3 times per week	Weekly	Monthly	Less Often	Never	No Answer	Total
Shops	53 (14)	132 (36)	127 (34)	26 (7)	23 (6)	8 (2)	2 (1)	371 (100)
Banks	13 (3)	46 (12)	143 (39)	51 (14)	26 (7)	91 (25)	1 (0)	371 (100)
Library	8 (2)	7 (2)	37 (10)	37 (10)	27 (7)	254 (69)	1 (0)	371 (100)
Post Office	3 (1)	10 (3)	91 (24)	29 (8)	51 (13)	185 (50)	2 (1)	371 (100)
Sports Centre	5 (1)	10 (3)	31 (8)	16 (4)	36 (10)	267 (72)	6 (2)	371 (100)
Pubs/ cafes etc	9 (2)	48 (13)	80 (22)	32 (9)	46 (12)	155 (42)	1 (0)	371 (100)

10. Preferred centre for the purchase of clothes, electrical goods, furniture, and personal items (%)

	Clothes/ footwear	Electrical goods	Furniture	Personal items
Leeds	88 (24)	37 (10)	54 (14)	71 (19)
Dewsbury	162 (44)	203 (55)	137 (37)	154 (41)
White Rose Centre	15 (4)	6 (2)	6 (2)	6 (2)
Wakefield	38 (10)	30 (8)	31 (8)	27 (7)
Mail order	4 (1)	11 (3)	11 (3)	6 (2)
Meadowhall	6 (2)	2 (1)	2 (1)	8 (2)
Bradford	7 (2)	9 (2)	8 (2)	7 (2)
Birstall	0 (0)	18 (5)	19 (5)	0 (0)
Huddersfield	20 (5)	10 (2)	9 (2)	7 (2)
Sheffield	1 (0)	2 (1)	3 (1)	2 (1)
Batley	1 (0)	4 (1)	2 (1)	4 (1)
Other	15 (4)	11 (3)	17 (5)	18 (5)
No preference/ response	14 (4)	28 (7)	72 (19)	61 (16)
Total	**371 (100)**	**371 (100)**	**371 (100)**	**371 (100)**

11. Reasons for shopping elsewhere

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
Convenience	66	28
Better choice/quality of shops	141	60
More attractive centre/change	15	6
Better parking	6	3
Other	8	3
Total	**236**	**100**

12. Use of the Internet for shopping

	No. of respondents	% of total
Internet shoppers	52	14
Non-internet shoppers	315	85
Total	**367**	**100**

13. Nature of goods bought using the Internet

	No. of respondents	% of respondents
CDs/DVDs/Videos	11	21
Insurance/Banking	3	5
Books/magazines	9	17
Holidays/flights	8	15
Clothes	7	14
Other	7	14
Not stated	7	14
Total	**52**	**100**

14. Assessment of Dewsbury town centre facilities

	Good	Average	Poor	Total
Attractiveness	180	161	29	370
%	(49)	(43)	(8)	(100)
Perception of Safety	197	138	35	370
%	(53)	(37)	(10)	(100)
Choice of shops	98	162	111	371
%	(26)	(44)	(30)	(100)
Leisure facilities	61	125	49	235
%	(26)	(53)	(21)	(100)
Car parking facilities	97	94	91	282
%	(34)	(34)	(32)	(100)
Public transport	161	104	51	316
%	(51)	(33)	(16)	(100)

Although every care and effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the data and statements contained in this publication, Planning Services does not accept responsibility for any errors or inaccuracies which may have occurred therein.

Produced by:

The Town Centres Team
Planning Services
Kirklees M.C.
P.O. Box B93
Civic Centre III
Off Market Street
Huddersfield
HD1 2JR

Tel: 01484 221628
Fax: 01484 221613
Email: carol.dean@kirkleesmc.gov.uk