Newport {Shropshire} Town Team

AMT Benchmarking Exercise 2013

Introduction
Headline Messages
Key Findings
and
Survey Analysis

10th January 2014

Newport {Shropshire} Town Team

Introduction,
Headline Messages & Key Findings
From the
2013 Benchmarking Exercise

1. Introduction

Newport {Shropshire} Town Team was formed in February 2013 to revitalise the high street and to help evolve and sustain Newport's traditional market town centre as a vibrant commercial hub. Our focus has three dimensions:-

- Continuing to evolve the day-time economy to reflect changes in consumer behaviour;
- Building on Newport's limited night-time economy by developing its potential for a more diverse social and cultural offer; and
- Harnessing Newport's advantageous geographical location, its rich heritage, and our surrounding leisure opportunities to generate a much greater visitor economy.

One of the key challenges for the 'town team' is to establish a benchmark against which to measure progress over time both in terms of year-on-year comparisons and by assessing how Newport is performing against other towns with similar characteristics.

This is the first comprehensive *health-check* (or benchmarking exercise) carried out for Newport. The 'town team' has invested in a well-established benchmarking tool-kit developed by the national body ***Action for Market Towns***. Information was gathered in prescribed formats during October and November 2013 and has been submitted to AMT for analysis.

AMT will publish a comprehensive report in March / April 2014 for Newport and for over 100 other towns participating in the benchmarking exercise. This will provide a comparative analysis set in a local, regional and a national context.

Whilst we are awaiting the AMT report the 'town team' has initiated analysis of local data to develop this report. It provides a first insight into survey responses and offers an opportunity, along with key partners, to start to address emerging issues. This initial analysis shows there to be much to celebrate – one section of the report shows the number of positives outweighing negative views of Newport town centre by 4 to 1.

The report reveals that businesses located in Newport town centre create employment for over 1,000 people – and it is acknowledged that they are absolutely vital to sustaining our local economy.

Whilst the report highlights many encouraging signs it also shows that parts of the town centre economy remain fragile and are in need of continuing support. Around 10% of town centre businesses are less than a year-old, and a relatively small proportion of all businesses predict a fall in turnover in the coming year;

This survey and analysis also confirm that the two main issues for residents, shoppers, visitors and business owners affecting Newport town centre are car parking and street cleaning. This is no surprise given that the Town Council has been working hard to address these issues over the past year. However, it does emphasise a need for the town team, other local organisations and traders to play a more active role in supporting the Town Council if sustainable solutions are to be found.

2. Seven Headline Messages:-

1. Businesses located in Newport town centre provide employment for over 1,000 people and are critical to sustaining the local economy. Whilst there are some encouraging signs parts of the town centre economy remain fragile and in need of continuing support;

2. Residents, shoppers, visitors and traders are on balance much more likely to say something positive about Newport than they are likely to say something negative;

3. What Newport has in terms of its service & retail offer and its physical environment is highly valued by residents, shoppers, visitors and by traders;

4. In the retail sector there is a significant imbalance between convenience and comparison shops in the town centre. This situation may be worsened by development of new edge-of-town supermarkets;

5. Car parking remains the key issue for residents, shoppers, visitors and for traders alike – perceived issues are an absence of parking strategy for short and long stay parking, contravention of time limits caused by a lack of enforcement, and too few spaces;

6. Public cleansing and the absence of a good leisure / cultural offer are perceived as issues by half of all Newport shoppers & visitors;

7. Newport has not yet harnessed the opportunities presented by thriving indoor and street markets. The existing indoor market remains a hidden gem and, as a town centre focus, the market building needs major improvements to bring it back into full community use;

3. Key Findings:-

1. Shops and other businesses within the defined town centre area provide employment for over 1,000 people. About 6 in 10 of these jobs are in the service sector with 4 in 10 in retail businesses;

2. Newport’s town centre service sector is generally well-established. Only one half (50.05%) of town centre businesses are A1 (use class) retailers suggesting that Newport is already adjusting well to changes in consumer behaviour;

3. Newport appears to be under-represented in its high street convenience offer with just 8 (8%) convenience shops vs 89 (92%) comparison shops;

4. Vacant town centre premises represent 4.17% of all commercial premises and 8.75% (one in twelve) of retail premises;

5. Newport market appears to be constrained by its indoor location and limited days of operation;

6. On-street car parking is used to capacity (99.03%) on market days and operates near to capacity (89.32%) on non-market days;

7. Off-street car parking operates close to capacity (97.14%) on market days and at three-quarters capacity (73.43%) on non-market days;

8. One in ten (9.8%) of all businesses are less than one year old, with a further 28.6% (38.4% total) less than 5 years old;

9. Retail businesses tend to be less well-established with one in eight (12.2%) of A1 retail businesses less than one year old, and a further 35.1% (47.3% total) less than 5 years old;

10. Nearly half (46.4%) of all businesses and just over one third (36.5%) of all A1 retailers are more than 10 years old;

11. A majority of businesses are stable with ~75% reporting that turnover increased or stayed the same in the past year, and ~68% reported that profitability had increased or stayed the same in the past year;

12. However, one in seven (14.3%) businesses reported that turnover decreased and one in five (19.6%) reported that profitability had reduced in the past year;

13. Newport business operators remain optimistic with 87.5% projecting the same or greater turnover in the coming year, with only 7.14% projecting a reduction;

14. Car parking continues to be the most significant issue requiring action for business operators and for residents, shoppers and visitors;

15. Eight in ten (76%) of local businesses said they had not been affected by crime however nearly one in five (19.64%) had been victims of crime;

16. A majority (80%) of those crimes were divided equally between theft and criminal damage;

17. Over half (52.69%) of shoppers interviewed said that they were ‘convenience’ shopping, with nine out of ten (88%) visiting Newport town centre at least once each week;

18. Most shoppers travel by car (50.54%) or on foot (41.94%) to the town centre;

19. Nearly half (47.31%) of shopper respondents considered the cleanliness of the town centre to be poor or very poor;

20. Nearly six in ten (56.98%) of respondents were critical of the quality / absence of the leisure and cultural activities in the town centre;

21. Shoppers were 3.8 times more likely to say something positive rather than negative about Newport town centre;

22. Despite the above point almost four in ten (39%) shopper respondents said that car parking was a negative – this is high when taking account of the fact that only half of shopper interviewees travelled by car;

23. Six in ten (59.84%) of shoppers interviewed were locals (TF10 postcode), a further three in ten (31.24%) shoppers live within 30 minutes driving time, and one in eleven (9%) of shoppers lived further afield;

24. Despite one in eleven shoppers travelling into the town from locations more than 30 minutes driving time away the survey reveals little else about Newport’s significant potential as a visitor destination.

25. Of all other TF, SY, ST, WV and WS postcodes only TF2 (Muxton & Donnington) (7.56%), TF9 (Market Drayton) (6.98%), and ST 20 (Gnosall) (5.63%) registered more than 5% of Newport’s shoppers

Report Prepared by:-

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Newport {Shropshire} Town Team
10th January 2014

Newport {Shropshire} Town Team

Analysis of Benchmarking Data 2013

Introduction to AMT Benchmarking

This is the first year in which Newport {Shropshire} Town Team has participated in a formal benchmarking exercise using a tool-kit developed by the national representative body 'Action for Market Towns' (AMT).

Information across twelve key performance indicators (KPI's) was collected during October and November 2013 in accordance with the AMT methodology. That data has now been submitted to AMT for analysis alongside comparable information provided by over 100 towns, many with similar characteristics to Newport. AMT will publish in March / April 2014 a report providing local and comparative results for Newport.

The AMT benchmarking exercise is based on a defined 'town centre' area. For Newport this is represented by an area extending from Lower Bar to Upper Bar, including St. Mary St, High St, Stafford Road, a short section of Audley Rd, Bellman's Yard, Baddeley Court, the corner of Wellington Rd at Upper Bar, Abbey Court, Barclay Chambers, New St, and Salters Court.

This document provides an analysis of data collected for Newport and offers a preview of what is likely to emerge from AMT's work.

Data Collection

The Town Team Manager working with volunteers from Newport traders and businesses collected information in a form prescribed by AMT for the following 12 KPIs:-

1. Total number of commercial units
2. Number of comparison / convenience retailers
3. Number of key attractors / multiple retailers (as defined by AMT)
4. Number of vacant units
5. Number of market traders
6. Prime retail property yields
7. Zone A rents
8. Footfall counts
9. Car parking usage
10. Business confidence surveys
11. Town centre user surveys
12. Shopper origin survey

Commercial premises within the defined area are categorised in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 and its subsequent amendments.

1. Total Number of Commercial Units

The AMT benchmarking methodology defines which businesses should / should not be included i.e. the survey is limited to ground floor street facing businesses.

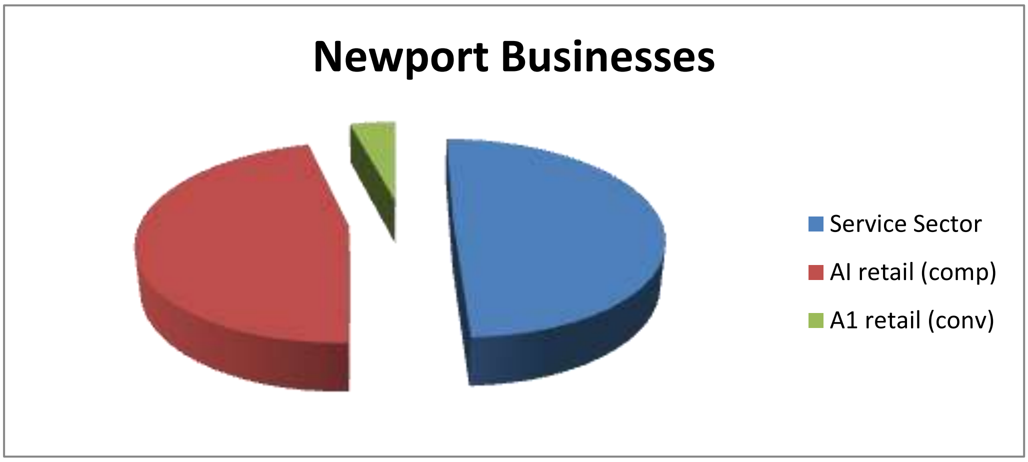
A total number of **192** businesses were identified within the defined area. 95 (49.5%) of these businesses are within the service sector and **97** (50.5%) are categorised as A1 (retail) uses.

2. Comparison / Convenience Retailers

Convenience goods are day-to-day purchases such as food, newspapers, tobacco & drinks. In contrast comparison goods are larger household and similar items that are purchased less frequently (e.g. clothing, white-goods, bicycles and sports equipment).

Comparison shops account for **92%** (89) of Newport's A1 (retail) uses with convenience shops representing just **8%** (8).

Figure 1



Ladies & gents hairdressers account for 21 (21.65%) of Newport's 97 A1 retail uses, and charity shops account for 6 (6.19%).

3. Key Attractors / Multiple Traders

The AMT benchmarking methodology provides definitions for key attractors, multiple traders, regional businesses, and independent shops. Results for Newport are:-

	Number	Percentage
Key Attractors	2	2.1
Multiple Traders	12	12.4
Regional Traders	3	3.1
Independent Shops	80	82.4
Total	**97**	**100.0**

Figure 2

4. Number of Vacant Units

The town team manager records vacant premises within the defined area on a monthly basis. The October 2013 vacant premises survey showed there to be 8 vacant premises.

- 8 vacant premises out of a total 192 premises equates to: 4.17%
- 8 vacant premises out of a total 97 A1 (retail) premises equates to: 8.25%

5. Number of Market Traders

The AMT benchmarking methodology requires data to be collected for regular (weekly) indoor and outdoor markets operating on week days only.

As a consequence information was collected relating only to the Friday indoor market, and not for the Saturday indoor market or for the monthly farmers markets.

Newport's indoor market operates on a Friday and it includes 27 traders, with all but one providing A1 (retail) goods.

6. Prime Retail Property Yields

Prime retail property yields are defined as the percentage rise per annum in capital value of those businesses / premises in prime retail locations.

Data was provided by two locally operating Estate Agents with an average value of **7% p.a.** submitted to AMT.

7. Zone 'A' Rents

Zone 'A' rents are defined as the rent achievable for the first 20 feet of shop space in prime retail locations.

Data was provided by two locally operating Estate Agents with an average value of **£30 per sq. ft** submitted to AMT.

8. Footfall Counts

Footfall counts were carried out on a busy (market) day and a quiet (non-market) day. They involved recording pedestrians crossing an imaginary line across the busiest part of the main shopping street. Following initial prior observations a location outside M&Co across to Temperton's Estate Agents was selected for this survey.

Table 1

Time	**'Busy' (Market) Day Count**	**Time**	**'Quiet' (non-Market) Day Count**
10.00 – 10.10 am	145 (dry)	10.00 – 10.10 am	74 (dry)
11.00 – 11.10 am	159 (light rain)	11.05 – 11.15 am	113 (dry)
12.05 – 12.15 pm	136 (rain)	12.00 – 12.10 pm	125 (dry)
Comments:	Friday 08/11/13 (market day): initially dry deteriorating to rain		Thursday 07/11/13 (non-market day): dry and cold throughout

9. Car Parking Usage

Similar to the footfall counts the on-street and off-street car parking surveys were carried out on a busy day and on a quiet day. Insofar as was possible the counts at each on-street / off-street locations were carried out at approximately the same time of day.

On-Street: A total of 103 on-street parking spaces were recorded in the defined area. Of these spaces 4 are dedicated for use by people with disabilities.

Table 2

Location	**Number of spaces**	**Busy Day spaces occupied**	**Busy Day % Occupied**	**Busy Day Illegal Parking (No.)**	**Quiet Day spaces occupied**	**Quiet day % Occupied**	**Quiet Day Illegal Parking (No.)**
Lower Bar	15	15	100%	0	14	93%	0
St. Mary St.	42	41	98%	2	37	88%	1
High St.	46	46	100%	4	41	89%	5
TOTAL	**103**	**102**	**99.03%**	**6**	**92**	**89.32%**	**6**

Off-Street: A total 670 off-street parking spaces were recorded in the defined area. Of these spaces 31 are dedicated for use by people with disabilities.

Table 3

Location	Number of spaces	Busy Day Spaces occupied	Busy Day % Occupied	Busy Day Illegal Parking (No.)	Quiet Day Spaces occupied	Quiet day % Occupied	Quiet Day Illegal Parking (No.)
Water Lane CP	19	11	58%	0	9	47%	0
Stafford St. CP	156	156	100%	2	145	93%	0
Waitrose CP	248	248	100%	0	126	51%	0
Coop CP	135	128	95%	0	119	88%	0
New St. CP	112	108	96%	0	93	83%	0
TOTAL	**670**	**651**	**97.14%**	**2**	**492**	**73.43%**	**0**

10. Business Confidence Survey

192 businesses were surveyed with **112** businesses providing a return for the business confidence survey, a **58.3%** response rate

The 112 respondents employ 241 full-time and 307 part-time staff. As this represents 58.3% of all businesses within the defined area it equates to 940 jobs in total.

74 retail (A1) traders responded indicating that they employ 116 full-time and 147 part-time staff equal to a total of 263 jobs. Projecting across all 97 A1 retail users in the defined area shows (152 f/t and 193 p/t) 345 jobs in the defined area.

Please note: the above figures do not include those jobs provided by the two main supermarket operators in the town centre (Waitrose & Coop), and therefore total town centre employment will exceed 1,000 jobs with about 40% in the retail sector and 60% in the service sector.

The 112 respondents are categorised as follows:

- A1 Retailers (74),
- Finance & Professionals Services (26),
- Pubs, Restaurants, Cafes & hot food outlets (9),
- Public sector / other (3)

Table 4

	All Respondents		A1 Retail Respondents	
Trader Type	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage of Respondents**	**No. of Respondents**	**Percentage of Respondents**
Key Attractor	0	0%	0	0%
Multiple Trader	10	8.9%	7	9.5%
Regional Trader	7	6.3%	4	5.4%
Independent	95	84.8%	63	85.1%
TOTAL	**112**	**100%**	**74**	**100%**

When asked how long they had been trading – businesses / traders replied:-

Table 5

	< 1 year	**1 – 5 years**	**6 – 10 years**	**> 10 years**	**TOTAL**
All Respondents No.	11	32	17	52	112
All Respondents %	9.8%	28.6%	15.2%	46.4%	100%
A1 Retail Respondents No.	9	26	12	27	74
A1 Retail Respondents %	12.2%	35.1%	16.2%	36.5%	100%

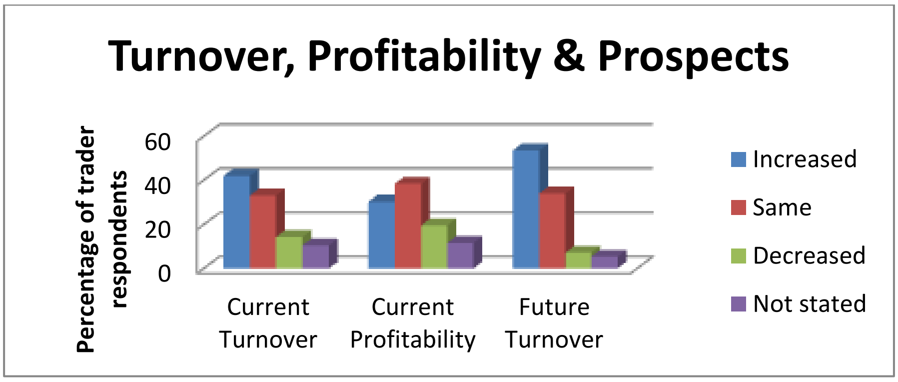
Figure 3

When asked about turnover and profitability – businesses / traders replied:-

Table 6

	Current Year Turnover		Current Year Profitability		Next year's Turnover	
	No.	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Increased	47	41.96%	34	30.36%	60	53.57%
Stayed the same	37	33.04%	43	38.39%	38	33.92%
Decreased	16	14.3%	22	19.64%	8	7.14%
Did not respond	12	10.53%	13	11.61%	6	5.36%

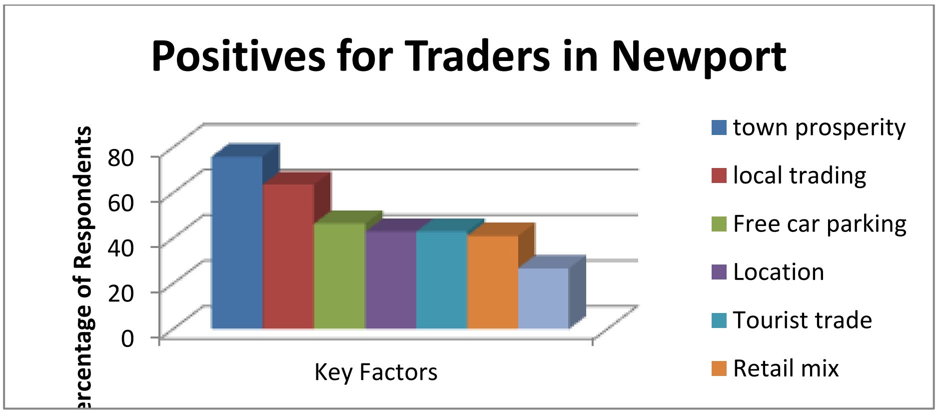
Figure 4



When asked for the positives about trading in Newport – businesses / traders replied:-

- ✓ Prospects for local trade – 75.9%
- ✓ Prosperity of the town – 63.6%
- ✓ 'free' town centre car parking – 46.4%
- ✓ Geographical location – 42.9%
- ✓ Prospects for tourist trade – 42.9%
- ✓ Balance of retail mix – 41.1%
- ✓ Markets – 26.8%

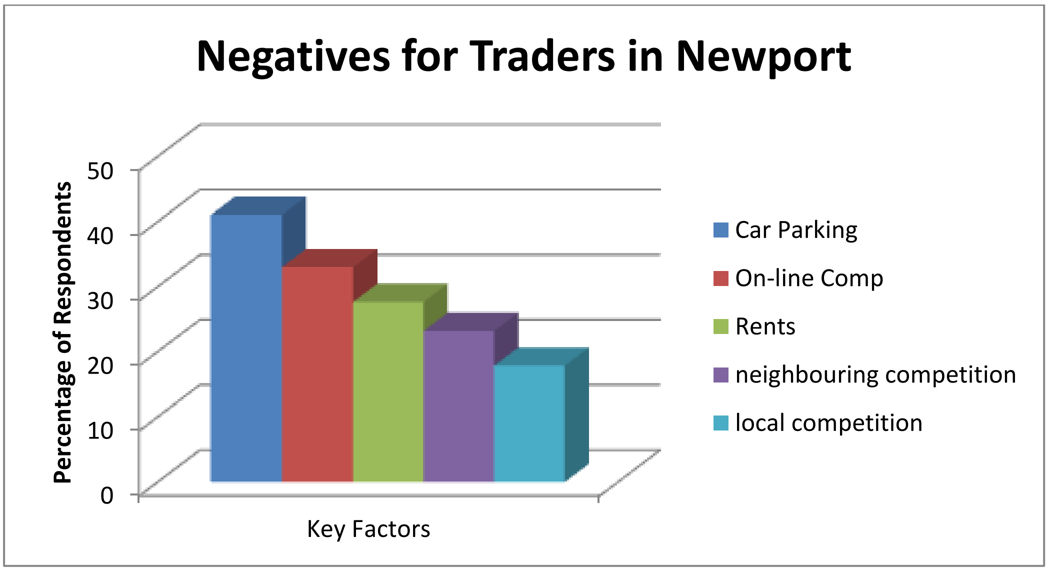
Figure 5



When asked for the negatives about trading in Newport – businesses / traders replied:-

- Car parking – 41.1%
- On-line competition – 33.0%
- Cost of rents / business rates – 27.7%
- Competition from neighbouring areas – 23.2%
- Competition within the town – 17.9%

Figure 6



When asked whether they had been affected by crime – businesses / traders replied:-

75.89% said NO, however 19.64% said YES, and 4.47% did not respond. Of those businesses / traders affected by crime:

- 42% had experienced theft
- 42% had experienced criminal damage
- 6% had been abused by customers
- 10% did not define how they had been affected

When asked about suggestions to improve Newport – businesses / traders replied:-

Table 7

Suggestions	Rank	Percentage in favour
1. Improve car parking (number of spaces, management, etc.)	1	48.21%
2. Market & promote the town centre	2	17.86%
3. Improve the retail mix (variety, quality & nationals)	3	12.50%
4. Reduce rents and business rates	4	10.71%
5. Improve public transport including ‘park & ride’	5	7.14%

6. Prevent edge-of-town supermarkets	6	6.25%
7. Improve street cleaning	7	5.36%
8. Improve signage to and within the town centre	8	4.46%
9. Improve the high street physical environment (i.e. shop fronts)	9=	3.57%
10. Improve the indoor market	9=	3.57%
11. Better business support / LA incentives	9=	3.57%
12. Improve outdoor markets	10=	1.79%
13. Better customer service	10=	1.79%
14. Provide edge-of-town supermarket(s)	10=	1.79%
15. Reduce the number of charity shops	10=	1.79%
16. Introduce a 'click & collect' scheme	11	0.89%

11. Town Centre Shoppers Survey

A total of 93 on-street shopper surveys were carried out during October and November 2013 at two locations – (i) High Street adjacent the Waitrose tunnel, and (ii) Central Square.

The gender profile for shopper respondents is 68 (73.1%) female and 25 (26.9%) male. The age profile for shopper respondents is:-

Table 8

	Age Profile (years) of town centre shopper survey respondents						
Respondents	**16 - 25**	**26 - 35**	**36 - 45**	**46 - 55**	**56 – 65**	**>65**	**Not stated**
Number	7	7	6	16	22	32	3
%	7.53%	7.53%	6.46%	17.20%	23.66%	34.41%	3.23%

When asked about the purpose of their visit to Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 9

	Purpose of shopper visit to Newport town centre					
	Work	**Convenience shopping**	**Comparison shopping**	**To access services (bank, library, etc.)**	**To access leisure services**	**Other reason**
Number	3	49	9	14	13	5
%	3.22%	52.69%	9.68%	15.05%	13.98%	5.38%

When asked how frequently they visited Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 10

	Frequency of shopper visits to Newport town centre							
	Daily	**>1 per week**	**weekly**	**fortnightly**	**>1 per month**	**<monthly**	**First visit**	**Not Stated**
Number	26	46	10	3	3	3	0	2
%	27.96%	49.46%	10.75%	3.23%	3.23%	3.23%	0%	2.15%

When asked about how they had travelled to Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 11

	Mode of travel for shopper visits to Newport town centre							
	Foot	**Bicycle**	**motorbike**	**car**	**Bus**	**Train**	**Other**	**Not stated**
Number	39	1	0	47	4	1	1	0
%	41.94%	1.08%	0%	50.54%	4.30%	1.08%	1.08%	0%

When asked to rate various aspects of Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 12

	Shopper ratings for various aspects of Newport town centre				
	Very good	**Good**	**Poor**	**Very Poor**	**Not Stated**
Physical Appearance					
Number	18	56	19	0	0
%	19.35%	60.22%	20.43%	0%	0%
Cleanliness					
Number	6	43	40	4	0
%	6.45%	46.24%	43.01%	4.30%	0%
Variety of shops					
Number	8	56	28	0	1
%	8.60%	60.22%	30.11%	0%	1.07%
Leisure & cultural activities					
Number	8	32	25	1	27
%	8.60%	34.41%	26.88%	1.07%	29.03%

When asked to identify 'positive' aspects and then separately 'negative' aspects of Newport town centre – the 93 shopper respondents replied:-

Table 13

Aspect	Positive aspects of Newport town centre		Negative aspects of Newport town centre	
	Number	%	Number	%
Appearance	77	83%	7	7%
Variety of shops	65	70%	14	15%
Choice & quality of restaurants	39	42%	21	22%
Access in and around the town	80	86%	3	3%
Leisure facilities	29	31%	24	26%
Cultural offer	13	14%	29	31%
Choice & quality of pubs	52	56%	4	4%
Public transport	51	55%	12	13%
Walking access	89	96%	0	0%
Locational convenience	78	84%	4	4%
Personal safety	84	90%	5	5%
Car parking	33	35%	36	39%
Markets	42	45%	31	33%
Other	0	0%	1	1%

When asked how long they stayed during a shopping visit to Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 14

	Length of stay for shopper visits to Newport town centre						
	<1 hr	1-2 hrs	2-4 hrs	4-6 hrs	All day	other	Did not state
Number	21	50	17	1	1	1	2
%	22.58%	53.76%	18.28	1.07%	1.07%	1.07%	2.15%

When asked how much they spent on an average visit to Newport town centre – shopper respondents replied:-

Table 15

	Amount spent on average during a shopping visit to Newport town centre						
	£0	£0 - £5	£5.01-£10	£10.01-£20	£20.01-£50	>£50	Did not state
Number	3	5	21	25	22	14	3
%	3.23%	5.38%	22.58%	26.88%	23.66%	15.03%	3.23%

12. Shopper Origin Survey

The shopper origin survey involved 25 local shops recording postcode information for shoppers visiting their businesses over a two-week period.

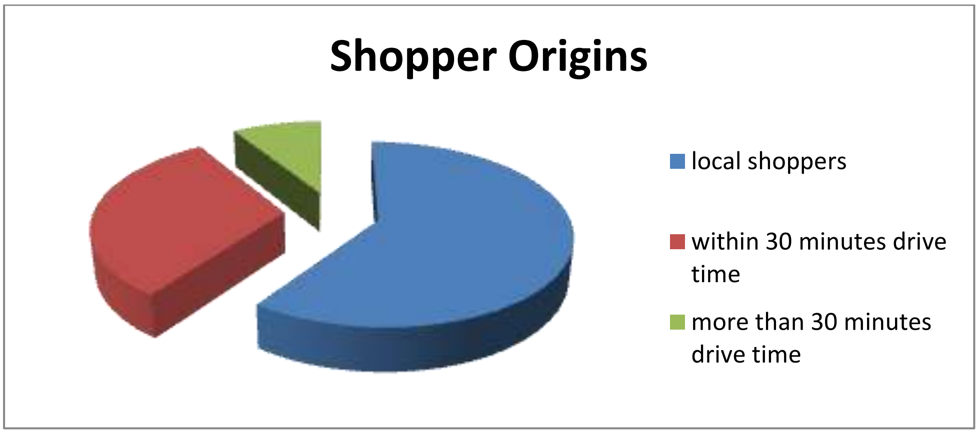
The shops were carefully selected to ensure geographical spread within the defined area of traders with differing products covering both convenience and comparison goods.

During the survey period a total of 1,706 postcodes were recorded as follows:-

Table 16

	Locals	Visitors (< 30 mins drive)	Tourists (>30 mins drive)	Total
No. of Postcodes	1021	533	152	1706
% of Postcodes	59.84%	31.24%	8.91%	100%

Figure 7



7.56% of respondents originated from TF2 (Muxton & Donnington) with a further 6.98% from TF9 (Market Drayton).

Remaining TF postcodes (TF1/TF3/TF4/TF5/TF6/TF7/TF8/TF11) all provided between 0.00% and 2.00% of shoppers

The survey showed that 0.88% originated from ST19 (Penkridge), 5.63% from ST20 (Gnosall), and 0.70% from ST21 (Eccleshall). Only 0.29 % originated from WV7 (Albrighton), and 0.23% came from WV8 (Codsall) postcodes respectively.

END