Leighton Buzzard

Town Benchmarking Report

June 2018

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Executive Summary

General

A1 Shops
Replicating the National Small Towns average, 51% of the commercial ground floor units in the town centre are A1 Shops whilst 14% are A2 Financial and Professional Services.

Retail Mix
60% of the A1 Shops are unique to Leighton Buzzard which is 5% lower than the National Small Towns average whilst 35% have a nationwide presence, 10% higher than the National Small Towns average.

Comparison Goods
Following the National (81%) pattern, the majority of A1 Shops (82%) in the town centre mainly sell Comparison goods.

Convenience Shopping
41% of Town Centre Users normally visit Leighton Buzzard for 'Convenience Shopping'.

Short Stays
72% of Town Centre Users spent less than 2 hours in Leighton Buzzard.

Regular Visitors
70% of Town Centre Users visited Leighton Buzzard at least once a week.

Market
20 Market Traders were present at the time of the audit in May 2018, higher than the 2016 figure (18) and the National Small Towns (15) average.

Saturdays Popular
Saturday (78%) was the most popular day to visit the town centre.

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Positive

Increased Footfall
Footfall in Leighton Buzzard has increased 21% from 2016 on a Market Day, rising from 291 to 351. The figure is vastly higher than the National Small Towns average of 93. On a Non-Market Day footfall has also increased from 170 persons per 10 minutes in 2016 to 180 in 2018. The Leighton Buzzard figure is more than double the National Small Towns average.

Lower than Average Car Parking Vacancy
Compared to the National Large Towns averages car parking vacancy rates are lower in Leighton Buzzard town centre. On Market Day, 13% of all the spaces were available, 18% lower than the National average, whilst on a Non-Market Day this increases to 25%, 12% lower than the National figure.

Business Performance and Confidence
Business performance and confidence has improved both longitudinally in Leighton Buzzard town centre and against the National Small Towns average. Concerning turnover 58% of traders indicated this had 'increased', 20% higher than the 2016 evaluation and the National Small Towns average. 42% of businesses indicated profitability had 'increased' whilst 50% stated that they expected their turnover to 'increase' over the next 12 months a 3% increase on 2016 and 6% higher than the National Small Towns average.

Daytime Economy
The overriding pattern was that Businesses were positive about the daytime economy in Leighton Buzzard, for example 'Places to Eat and Drink' (76%), 'Leisure Offer' (69%), Public Transport (66%), Market(s) (62%) and Footfall (59%) all scored positively.

Food and Drink Offer
69% of Town Centre Users classed 'Pubs/ Bars' as a positive aspect of Leighton Buzzard, with 66% stating 'Cafes/ Restaurants'.
81% of Town Centre Users rated 'Cafes/ Restaurants' as a positive aspect of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime.
91% of Businesses felt that 'Restaurants' were a positive aspect of the evening economy in Leighton Buzzard, whilst 83% reported 'Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs'.

Local Customer Base
'Potential local customers' (72%) was classed as the most positive aspect of operating a Business in Leighton Buzzard town centre. 'Residents' (48%) or 'Frequent Visitors' (44%) were how Businesses described their customer base.

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Higher Customer Spend

74% of Town Centre Users spent more than £10.01 on a normal visit to Leighton Buzzard, 13% higher than the National Small Towns average.

Low Vacancy Rates

At the time of the audit in March 2018, 5% of the ground floor units were vacant, lower than in 2016 (8%) and half the National Small Towns average. (10%)

Visits Recommended

66% of Town Centre Users would recommend a visit to Leighton Buzzard, similar to the 2016 and National Small Towns figure of 64% whilst nearly two-thirds stated that they would recommend a visit to the Saturday Market.

Room for Improvement

Safety and Anti-Social Behaviour

68% of Businesses and 64% of Town Centre Users felt that Safety was a negative aspect of the evening economy. 43% of Town Centre Users classed 'Safety' as a negative aspect of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime, which is 21% higher than in the 2016 evaluation. A major theme from the qualitative comments supplied was that the issue of 'Anti-Social Behaviour' needs to be addressed.

Car Parking

58% of Businesses felt that 'Car Parking' was a negative aspect of the daytime economy of Leighton Buzzard.
46% of Town Centre Users classed 'Car Parking' as a negative general aspect of Leighton Buzzard.

Retail Offer

48% of Town Centre Users rated 'Retail Mix' as a negative aspect of Leighton Buzzard. A large number of the qualitative comments also highlighted the need for improvements to the retail offer.

Introduction

The Approach

The People and Places Insight Limited Town Benchmarking System has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand measure, evaluate and ultimately improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on Key Performance Indicators selected by those involved in town centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

The process works by either People and Places Insight Limited being commissioned to complete the study, as in this case, or the client purchases an annual license for £350 plus VAT, collects the data and sends to People and Places for data entry, analysis and reporting.

The System

The Benchmarking system is divided into two sections:

- National Large Towns; consisting of those localities with more than 250 units
- National Small Towns; consisting of those localities with less than 250 units

Towns, depending on their size, contribute to either the Large or Small-Town analysis. The defined town centre area of **Leighton Buzzard** consisting of **237** units and is thus classed as a **Small** Town.

The analysis provides data on each KPI for the Benchmarked town individually and in a National context. The National figure is the average for all the towns which participated in Benchmarking during the last 18 months broken down into a **Large** and **Small Towns** system. For added value the People and Places Insight Limited Research Team have included the longitudinal Leighton Buzzard Benchmarking data from 2016.

The Reports

The People and Places Insight Limited Town Benchmarking report provides statistical analysis of each of the KPI's. The reports are used by a variety of key stakeholders such as Local Authorities, Town and Parish Councils, Business Improvement Districts, Local Partnerships, Retailers and Universities to;

- benchmark clusters of towns to ascertain high performers / under achievers
- understand their locality in a Regional, National and Typology context
- measure town centre performance year on year
- identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement
- measure the impact of initiatives and developments within the town centre
- act as an evidence base for funding applications
- create an action plan for town centre improvements

Case Studies of good practice in the use of Benchmarking data include;

Settle Area Regeneration Partnership; commissioned a Benchmarking exercise in 2012. Alongside providing a detached review of town centre performance, the Partnership wanted to understand the impact of HGV traffic flow on the town centre. Using the standardised questions within the Benchmarking system the quantitative and qualitative feedback from Business and Town Centre User Surveys identified the HGV traffic flow as being hugely negative to the visitor experience in the Settle, specifically first time visitors. Using the data as part of a wider economic assessment, Settle Area Regeneration Partnership were able to use the evidence to work with local transport companies and the Local Authority to install an out of town railhead and reduce HGV traffic flow by up to 40%.

Ourburystedmunds; Bury St Edmunds BID initially used Benchmarking to create a deliverable project plan for which the organisation could use for the first 12 months of inception. Subsequently the Key Performance Indicators have been measured each year to ascertain the impact of a wide range of projects and initiatives. Most noticeably the Town Centre User Surveys identified that a large number of visitors were unhappy over an increase in car parking fees throughout the locality. As a result, the BID were able to present the information to their Local Authority and oversaw the introduction of a 'Free Parking After 3pm' policy. Data from the Business Confidence, Footfall and Town Centre Users Surveys was also used to improve signage for first time visitors throughout the town centre.

Southam First; Stratford on Avon District Council (SDC) used Section 106 money to commission a Benchmarking review of Southam town centre. Key points from the analysis included improving the business economy, marketing the locality, the creation of a calendar of events and festivals and the development of a Farmers Market. SDC used the data as a detached, evidence-based tool to create a Town Centre Partnership consisting of a private and public mix to address the issues raised from the Benchmarking Report. A public event both highlighted the findings of the report and asked for nominations for Board and Working Group members. Within 2 months 'Southam First' was a fully functioning organisation delivering actions on a project plan which was based on the Benchmarking Review. The evidence led approach allowed for Southam First to apply successfully for funding from a wide range of bodies to ensure sustainability.

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Methodology

Each KPI is collected in a standardized manner as highlighted in the Table below.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	METHODOLOGY
KPI: Commercial Units; Use Class	Visual Survey of ground floor units in defined town centre area.
KPI: Commercial Units; Comparison/Convenience	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined town centre area.
KPI: Commercial Units; Trader Type	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined town centre area.
KPI: Commercial Units; Vacancy Rates	Visual Survey of A1 ground floor units in defined town centre area.
KPI: Markets	Visual Survey of total number of traders.
KPI: Footfall	Footfall Survey on a Market Day and Non-Market Day during the week.
KPI: Car Parking	Audit of total number of spaces and vacancy rate on a Market Day and Non-Market Day during the week.
KPI : Business Confidence Surveys	Hand delivered surveys with covering letter and freepost envelope to all businesses within the Business Audit.
KPI: Town Centre Users Surveys	Online Surveys.
KPI: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Distributed with Business Confidence Surveys and Businesses are asked to record the first 5 digits of a Post Code when a customer visits the unit over a set time period.

Key Findings

KPI: COMMERCIAL UNITS; USE CLASS

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the "commercial offer" throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

The following table provides a detailed breakdown of each of the Use Classes

Class	Type of Use	Class Includes
A1	Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes
A2	Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes
A4	Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs)
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises
B1	Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area
B2	General Industrial	General Industrial
B8	Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage

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C1	Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels)
C2	Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
C2A	Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, short term holding centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1	Non Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, church halls, law court. Non residential education and training centres.
D2	Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (but not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or area for indoor or outdoor sports and recreations (except for motor sports, or where firearms are used).
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, laundrettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

The following table provides a detailed analysis of the commercial offering in the town centre by Use Class. The figures are presented as a percentage of the **538** occupied units recorded.

		National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
A1	Shops	51	50	51	53
A2	Financial and Professional Services	13	14	14	14
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	8	11	10	8
A4	Drinking Establishments	4	4	4	4
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	4	3	3	3
B1	Businesses	3	4	4	4
B2	General Industrial	1	0	0	0
B8	Storage and Distribution	0	0	0	0
C1	Hotels	1	1	0	0
C2	Residential Institutions	0	0	0	0
C2A	Secure Residential Institution	0	0	0	0
D1	Non-Residential Institutions	7	5	5	5
D2	Assembly and Leisure	1	1	1	1
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	6	6	7	6
N/R	Not recorded	0	0	1	2

Replicating the National Small Towns average, 51% of the commercial ground floor units are A1 Shops whilst 14% are A2 Financial and Professional Services.

KPI: COMMERCIAL UNITS; COMPARISON VERSUS CONVENIENCE

A1 Shops selling goods can be split into two different types Comparison and Convenience.

Convenience goods – low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase. Defined as;

- food and non-alcoholic drinks
- tobacco
- alcohol
- newspapers and magazines
- non-durable household goods.

2. **Comparison goods** – all other retail goods.

- Books
- Clothing and Footwear
- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles
- Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- Hardware and DIY supplies
- Chemists goods
- Jewellery, watches and clocks
- Bicycles
- Recreational and Miscellaneous goods
- Hairdressing

The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers.

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The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which sell mainly Comparison Goods/ Convenience Goods.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Comparison	81	84	82	83
Convenience	19	16	18	17

Following the National (81%) pattern the majority of A1 Shops (82%) in the town centre mainly sell Comparison goods.

KPI: COMMERCIAL UNITS; TRADER TYPES

The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. National retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. However, the character and profile of a town often also depends on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a "unique selling point" and help distinguish it from other competing centres. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town.

The following shops are considered Key attractors by Experian Goad.

Department Stores	**Clothing**
BHS	Burton
Debenhams	Dorothy Perkins
House of Fraser	H & M
John Lewis	New Look
Marks and Spencer	Primark
	River Island
Mixed Goods Retailers	Topman
Argos	Topshop
Boots	
TK Maxx	**Other Retailers**
WH Smith	Carphone Warehouse
Wilkinson	Clarks
	Clintons
Supermarkets	HMV
Sainsbury's	O2
Tesco	Superdrug
Waitrose	Phones 4 U
	Vodafone
	Waterstones

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores / units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and Independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Key Attractor	7	10	11	10
Multiple	18	29	24	22
Regional	10	9	6	6
Independent	65	52	60	61

60% of the A1 Shops are unique to Leighton Buzzard which is 5% lower than the National Small Towns average whilst 35% have a nationwide presence, 10% higher than the National Small Towns average.

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KPI; COMMERCIAL UNITS VACANCY RATES

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres.

The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Vacancy %	*10*	*11*	5	8

At the time of the audit in March 2018, 5% of the ground floor units were vacant, lower than in 2016 (8%) and half the National Small Towns average. (10%)

KPI; MARKETS

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g. a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

The following table provides the average number of market traders at the main regular (at least once a fortnight) weekday market within the locality.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Traders	15	68	20	18

20 Market Traders were present at the time of the audit in May 2018, higher than the 2016 figure (18) and the National Small Towns (15) average.

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KPI: FOOTFALL

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it become, provided there is ample available disposable income in that population. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

Benchmarking footfall is conducted in specific locations for a set period, between 10.00am to 1.00pm, counting the people passing in both directions through a fixed point (e.g. an imaginary line across the road) for a precise ten minutes in every hour (e.g. 10.00–10.10am, 11.20am-11.30am, 12.40pm-12.50pm). Aside from the above basic rules are applied to the process;

- *An accurate stopwatch and a hand operated mechanical counter are used*
- *If a person walks passed more than once they are included in the count each time they pass through the 'line'*
- *Children under 12 are not included in the count*
- *Footfall counts are not conducted in the rain*

The following table provides the average number of people per 10 minutes between 10am and 1pm from the busiest footfall location in the locality on the relevant days recorded.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Market Day	93	310	351	291
Non-Market Day	83	241	180	170

Footfall in Leighton Buzzard has increased 21% from 2016 on a Market Day, rising from 291 to 351. The figure is vastly higher than the National Small Towns average of 93.

On a Non-Market Day footfall has also increased from 170 persons per 10 minutes in 2016 to 180 in 2018. The Leighton Buzzard figure is more than double the National Small Towns average.

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The tables below provide the figures from the individual footfall counts.

Market Day Footfall Count

	Lloyds, Market Square	Leck House to Perfect Parties, Lake Street	Metalyka, High Street	Rosehill Pharmacy, by Market
10-11	278	100	161	333
11-12	301	108	165	365
12-13	324	122	165	355
TOTAL	903	330	491	1053
AVERAGE	301	110	164	351

Non-Market Day Footfall Count

	Lloyds, Market Square	Leck House to Perfect Parties, Lake Street	Metalyka, High Street	Rosehill Pharmacy, by Market
10-11	148	69	98	194
11-12	194	75	102	152
12-13	174	81	86	194
TOTAL	516	255	286	540
AVERAGE	172	75	95	180

KPI: CAR PARKING

A large proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

Within the town on street and off parking within the core commercial offering were identified as being integral to the study. The following tables provide a summary of the Car Parking offering broken down into the;

- Percentage number of spaces in the designated car parks.
- Percentage number of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces in designated car parks
- Percentage of vacant spaces in designated car parks on a Market Day and on a Non-Market Day
- Percentage number of on street car parking spaces
- Percentage number of on street short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Percentage of vacant on street spaces on a Market Day and on a Non-Market Day
- Overall percentage of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces
- Overall percentage of vacant spaces on a Market Day and on a Non-Market Day

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	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Car Park:				
Total Spaces:	84	93	81	81
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	34	40	11	11
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	59	49	85	85
Disabled Spaces:	7	4	4	4
Not Registered	0	7	0	0
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	34	34	14	17
Vacant Spaces on a Non-Market Day:	40	38	27	21
On Street:				
Total Spaces:	16	7	19	19
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	81	85	82	82
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	13	4	0	0
Disabled Spaces:	5	11	18	18
Not Registered	1	0	0	0
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	15	12	9	3
Vacant Spaces on a Non-Market Day:	18	17	15	14

Overall	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Total Spaces:	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
Short Stay Spaces: (4 hours and under)	41	43	24	24
Long Stay Spaces: (Over 4 hours)	52	46	69	69
Disabled Spaces:	7	4	7	7
Not Registered	3	7	0	0
Vacant Spaces on a Market Day:	31	32	13	15
Vacant Spaces on a Non-Market Day:	37	37	25	20

On a Market Day only 3% of on street parking was vacant in the town centre.

Compared to the National Large Towns averages car parking vacancy rates are lower in Leighton Buzzard town centre. On Market Day, 13% of all the spaces were available, 18% lower than the National average, whilst on a Non-Market Day this increases to 25%, 12% lower than the National figure.

KPI: BUSINESS CONFIDENCE SURVEY

Concerning 'business confidence', by establishing the trading conditions of town centre businesses, stakeholders can focus their regeneration efforts on building on existing strengths and addressing any specific issues. The following percentage figures are based on the **29** returned Business Confidence Surveys.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Nature of Business				
Retail	58	54	54	73
Financial/ Professional Services	14	17	14	9
Public Sector	2	1	0	0
Food and Drink	13	14	21	18
Accommodation	2	0	0	n/a
Other	11	13	10	0
Type of Business				
Multiple Trader	9	9	10	6
Regional	7	10	7	9
Independent	84	81	83	85
How long has your business been in the town				
Less than a year	7	6	14	6
One to Five Years	21	24	14	41
Six to Ten Years	14	10	10	6
More than Ten Years	58	59	62	47

83% of respondents to the Business Survey were 'Independent' traders and 62% had been based in the town for 'More than Ten Years'.

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Compared to last year has your turnover	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Increased	38	41	58	38
Stayed the Same	30	32	12	41
Decreased	32	27	31	21
Compared to last year has your profitability				
Increased	32	34	42	26
Stayed the Same	35	33	15	38
Decreased	33	33	42	35
Over the next 12 months do you think your turnover will…				
Increase	44	43	50	47
Stay the Same	38	38	32	37
Decrease	18	20	18	17

Business performance and confidence has improved both longitudinally in Leighton Buzzard town centre and against the National Small Towns average. Concerning turnover 58% of traders indicated this had 'increased', 20% higher than the 2016 evaluation and the National Small Towns average. 42% of businesses indicated profitability had 'increased' whilst 50% stated that they expected their turnover to 'increase' over the next 12 months a 3% increase on 2016 and 6% higher than the National Small Towns average.

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What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Physical appearance	48	55	62	85
Prosperity of the town	39	44	62	70
Labour Pool	10	11	28	30
Geographical location	44	50	69	85
Mix of Retail Offer	28	39	62	48
Number of Vacant Units	n/a	n/a	24	15
Potential tourist customers	39	37	17	39
Potential local customers	75	77	72	91
Affordable Housing	13	12	48	45
Transport Links	33	40	59	79
Local Business Competition	n/a	n/a	55	76
Competition from Other Localities	n/a	n/a	38	39
Competition from Out of Town Shopping	n/a	n/a	21	24
Competition from Internet	n/a	n/a	17	21
Local Partnerships/ Organisations	17	26	48	56
Other	4	7	0	0

'Potential local customers' (72%) was classed as the most positive aspect of operating a Business in Leighton Buzzard town centre. 'Geographical location' (69%), 'Prosperity of the town' (62%), 'Mix of retail offer' (62%) and 'Transport Links' were also classed as positive aspects.

What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Physical appearance	19	22	17	13
Prosperity of the town	27	20	21	19
Labour Pool	14	17	21	31
Geographical location	8	4	11	3
Mix of Retail Offer	21	20	25	38
Number of Vacant Units	43	61	57	72
Potential tourist customers	9	10	43	44
Potential local customers	4	4	7	3
Affordable Housing	12	16	29	41
Transport Links	17	14	25	6
Local business competition	16	19	14	13
Competition from other localities	24	26	36	47
Competition from out of town shopping	37	38	50	69
Competition from the internet	38	48	54	69
Local Partnerships/ Organisations	3	3	18	6
Other	7	15	21	6

'Number of vacant units' (57%), 'Competition from internet' (54%) and 'Competition from out of town shopping' were classed as negative aspects of the town centre.

Has your business suffered from any crime over the last 12 months	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Yes	25	38	41	53
No	75	62	59	47
Type of Crime				
Theft	74	61	58	72
Criminal Damage	28	48	75	22
Abuse	13	25	42	50
Other	6	13	0	0

59% of Businesses reported that they had not suffered from any business crime over the last 12 months.

Additional Questions

How would you describe your customer base?	LB 2018 %
Residents	48
Workers	4
Frequent Visitors	44
Infrequent Visitors	4

'Residents' (48%) or 'Frequent Visitors' (44%) were how Businesses described their customer base.

On a normal trading day, how many customers are served at this premise/ location?	LB 2018 %
0	0
1-10	32
11-20	18
21-30	14
31-50	4
More than 50	32

32% of Businesses reported that on a normal trading day they served 'More than 50' customers, whilst the same figure indicated they served '1-10' customers.

What is your typical average transaction value?	LB 2018 %
£0-£5	11
£6-£10	15
£11-20	11
£21-30	4
£31-40	7
£41-£50	4
More than £50	48

48% of Businesses reported that the typical average transaction value was 'More than £50'.

What are the positive aspects of the daytime economy in Leighton Buzzard?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Footfall	59	61
Places to Eat and Drink	76	88
Car Parking	34	55
Market(s)	62	79
Events/ Activities	48	73
Marketing/ Promotions	34	52
Public Transport	66	73
Safety	38	58
Cultural Offer e.g. Theatre	55	61
Leisure Offer e.g. Gym/ Parsons Close Recreation Park	69	73
Other	0	0

The overriding pattern was that Businesses were positive about the daytime economy in Leighton Buzzard, for example 'Places to Eat and Drink' (76%), 'Leisure Offer' (69%), Public Transport (66%), Market(s) (62%) and Footfall (59%) all scored positively.

What are the negative aspects of the daytime economy in Leighton Buzzard?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Footfall	35	38
Places to Eat and Drink	19	8
Car Parking	58	63
Market(s)	27	21
Events/ Activities	23	21
Marketing/ Promotions	38	33
Public Transport	19	21
Safety	46	33
Cultural Offer e.g. Theatre	19	29
Leisure Offer e.g. Gym/ Parsons Close Recreation Park	4	13
Other	4	0

58% of Businesses felt that 'Car Parking' was a negative aspect of the daytime economy of Leighton Buzzard.

What are the positive aspects of the evening economy in Leighton Buzzard?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Footfall	26	32
Restaurants	91	80
Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs	83	60
Car Parking	52	64
Market(s)	9	24
Events/ Activities	30	52
Marketing/ Promotions	17	48
Public Transport	35	40
Safety	26	28
Cultural Offer e.g. Theatre	57	68
Leisure Offer e.g. Gym	43	64
Other	0	0

91% of Businesses felt that 'Restaurants' were a positive aspect of the evening economy in Leighton Buzzard, whilst 83% reported 'Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs' and 57% 'Cultural Offer'.

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What are the negative aspects of the evening economy in Leighton Buzzard?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Footfall	37	38
Restaurants	0	12
Pubs/ Bars/ Nightclubs	11	27
Car Parking	37	42
Market(s)	53	38
Events/ Activities	42	31
Marketing/ Promotions	47	23
Public Transport	47	42
Safety	68	46
Cultural Offer e.g. Theatre	5	19
Leisure Offer e.g. Gym	11	19
Other	0	0

68% of Businesses felt that Safety was a negative aspect of the evening economy in Leighton Buzzard 12% higher than in 2016.

What two suggestions would you make to improve the town's economic performance?

*Please note the comments have been copied directly from respondents so may include grammatical errors.

A number of the comments supplied by Businesses highlighted improvements to 'Parking'. 'Anti-Social Behaviour' was also cited.

- *Work closer with retailers. Improve parking*
- *More parking for people that work in the town. Connells staff seem to take up most of the waiting lists for the town car parks*
- *Better parking. Multi story now seen as too expensive and unsafe at times from groups of youths*
- *Traffic management- it is the road network, traffic lights, pedestrian crossings that create problems not the lack of car parking, there is plenty if people look. It should not take 30-40 min to get to Tesco from Morrisons in a car. It is quicker to go to Dunstable or Bletchley.*
- *Variety of shops- not everyone ant coffee shops and charity shops*
- *Reduce petty crime, drugs, theft, burglary. Constant breaking in and shoplifting are very real threats to individual businesses in town, which in turn discourages optimistic attitude towards our work. Independents offer the vibrancy that the town needs and we lack support.*

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- *More holistic approach to promoting events and trying in local businesses with such events. More events in towns and less sceptical/ red tape attitude towards organising and the effective publicity and marketing of such events*
- *A better-looking Market. More stalls.*
- *Better lighting at night. More police at night*
- *Deal with youth culture and riding bikes and disregard for pedestrians, rudeness in ships and litter and gangs.*
- *More actual retailers rather than more charity or coffee shops. M and S, Next etc*
- *Better parking pricing and availability. Co-ordinated marketing to include all shops in LB not just the High Street*
- *Increased community events and activities which are well publicised. Enhancing the appearance of the alleyways and mews with better cleanliness as there are gateways from the car parks and/ or highlights of LBs uniqueness/ history*
- *Free short-term parking. More parking. removing spaces in high street is a terrible idea*
- *Traffic. I would not shop in this town if it took me an hour to drive through it. Environment.*
- *Beggars, drinkers, shoplifters, drug abusers all thrown out of hostels in the daytime, Policing. This town is lawless we fear for our store every evening and there are break ins daily if an incident occurs no police attend. Shocking*
- *Develop land on south side of the High Street for more shops and parking. Improve public transport so that people from the town and surrounding villages can access the town frequently including evenings and synchronise with train times*
- *Reduce the rents in Waterbourne Walk Street so that empty units are affordable for new business. Signage for shops at Lower End of High Street, extending to Bridge Streets and Friday Street.*
- *Car parking charges are ridiculously high for such a small town. Give say one hour free in multi storey and other car parks to encourage the 'just need to nip and get customers'.*
- *Encourage a few more big name retailers. Not out of town sites though*
- *Reduce the amount of travellers sites that surround the town. Reduce the business rates or at least make them fairer*
- *Park and ride of affordable parking*
- *Better variety of shops.*
- *Better policing to tackle anti social behaviour*
- *For the car park to be manned once again*
- *Town park ranger to have a presence to clear up rubbish and do repairs and maintenance. Lighting in the town centre. When it is dark we do not feel safe in town with the anti social behviour*
- *Improve traffic flow and parking. Improve range of shops to include more well know retailers in the High Street*

- *Parking particularly for employed people within the town. Removing yellow double lines outside restaurants and offices (Bridge St) Lack of parking, evenings.*
- *Safety in the day and night is not good. No police presence or even a police station. Theft, assaults and crime are on the increase. Parking in the daytime is not sufficient*
- *Higher police presence. There are several beggars that have started to appear on the High Street. These men are not homeless and are intimidating to potential customers. They leave litter wherever they sit. Not acceptable.*
- *More encouragement to market traders on both sides of the High Street. This increased footfall and community spirit. LBC need to focus in on the independents and encouraging people to shop local and to keep the traditional high street alive.*
- *More diverse restaurants eg. vegan. I have lots of clients come from all over UK and world and more town info and the train station would be good. Places to go etc.*
- *Improve parking and signage to and from town centre and facilities. Stop the buses from the High Street. Empty, too fast and privately run.*
- *More attractive shopping to millennials. Maybe some big restaurants etc*

KPI: TOWN CENTRE USERS SURVEY

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained as what matters to regular visitors can be very different to someone who has never been to the place before. In total **1213** Town Centre User Surveys were completed. The following percentage figures are based upon the total number of respondents to each question.

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Gender				
Male	32	33	27	28
Female	67	66	71	72
Prefer not to answer	1	1	1	1
Age				
16-25	6	6	7	6
26-35	14	16	23	26
36-45	24	21	31	30
46-55	23	22	20	20
56-65	17	18	11	11
Over 65	15	17	7	7
Prefer not to answer	1	1	1	0
What do you generally visit the Town Centre for?				
Work	10	11	6	9
Market	n/a	n/a	6	n/a
Convenience Shopping	39	36	41	39
Comparison Shopping	5	10	2	9
Access Services	19	20	19	23
Leisure	16	12	16	10
Other	11	10	8	10

41% of Town Centre Users visited Leighton Buzzard for 'Convenience Shopping'.

How often do you visit the Town Centre	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Daily	21	17	11	13
More than once a week	37	35	30	30
Weekly	20	22	29	28
Fortnightly	7	9	13	10
More than once a Month	5	6	8	8
Once a Month or Less	10	10	9	10
How do you normally travel into the Town Centre?				
On Foot	38	29	36	34
Bicycle	1	2	2	1
Motorbike	0	0	0	0
Car	56	59	57	59
Bus	3	9	3	3
Train	0	0	0	0
Other	2	2	2	3
On average, on your normal visit to the Town Centre how much do you normally spend?				
Nothing	3	2	2	3
£0.01-£5.00	12	9	5	8
£5.01-£10.00	24	20	17	19
£10.01-£20.00	33	30	34	34
£20.01-£50.00	23	30	34	29
More than £50.00	5	10	6	7

70% of Town Centre Users visited Leighton Buzzard at least once a week.

57% of Town Centre Users travelled by 'Car'.

74% of Town Centre Users spent more than £10.01 on a normal visit to Leighton Buzzard, 13% higher than the National Small Towns average.

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What are the positive general aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Physical appearance	43	28	35	34
Cleanliness	36	26	25	27
Retail Offer	18	23	20	16
Customer Service	22	18	11	14
Ease of walking around the town centre	54	58	70	65
Convenience e.g. near where you live	66	62	72	71
Access to Services	56	56	65	60
Transport Links	18	19	10	10
Public Toilets	20	51	27	n/a
Car Parking	27	24	23	19
Markets	29	37	42	42
Other	7	6	4	4

'Convenience' (72%), 'Ease of walking around' (70%) and 'Access to Services' (65%) were classed as the most positive general aspects of the town centre.

What are the negative general aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Physical appearance	32	39	26	25
Cleanliness	24	34	30	27
Retail Offer	52	48	48	56
Customer Service	8	8	9	7
Ease of walking around the town centre	9	8	5	5
Convenience e.g. near where you live	4	5	3	4
Access to Services	12	6	2	3
Transport Links	14	12	13	13
Public Toilets	25	56	16	n/a
Car Parking	40	40	46	46
Markets	22	18	8	10
Other	15	16	25	19

'Retail Offer' (48%) and 'Car Parking' (46%) were classed as the most negative general aspects of the town centre.

From the 25% of Town Centre Users who supplied an 'Other' reason, 'Anti-Social Behaviour' and 'Traffic' were the two key themes to emerge.

How long do you stay in the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Less than an hour	37	20	18	21
1-2 Hours	43	51	54	60
2-4 Hours	12	21	21	14
4-6 Hours	2	3	3	1
All Day	4	4	3	2
Other	2	1	1	1
Would you recommend a visit to the Town Centre?				
Yes	64	61	66	64
No	36	39	34	36

72% of Town Centre Users spent less than 2 hours in Leighton Buzzard.

66% of Town Centre Users would recommend a visit, similar to the 2016 and National Small Towns figure of 64%.

Additional Questions

How often do you visit the Market?	LB 2018 %
More than once a week	11
Weekly	24
Fortnightly	12
More than once a Month	13
Once a Month or Less	41

41% of Town Centre Users visited the Market 'Once a Month or Less'.

On average, how much money do you spend on a normal visit to the Market?	LB 2018 %
Nothing	24
£0.01-£5.00	24
£5.01-£10.00	27
£10.01-£20.00	18
£20.01-£50.00-	7
More than £50.00	1

Three quarters of those who used the Market stated that they spent up to £10.00 on a normal visit.

Do you think the trading days of the Market meets customer needs?	**LB 2018 %**
Yes	*88*
No	*12*

88% of Town Centre Users felt the trading days of the Market meets customer needs.

Do you think the trading hours of the Market meets customer needs?	**LB 2018 %**
Yes	*88*
No	*12*

88% of Town Centre Users felt the trading hours of the Market meets customer needs.

Would you recommend a visit to the Tuesday Market?	**LB 2018 %**
Yes	*44*
No	*21*
Don't Attend	*35*

44% of Town Centre Users stated that they would recommend a visit to the Tuesday Market.

Would you recommend a visit to the Saturday Market?	**LB 2018 %**
Yes	*64*
No	*20*
Don't Attend	*16*

64% of Town Centre Users stated that they would recommend a visit to the Saturday Market.

On which days do you normally visit Leighton Buzzard town centre?	**LB 2018 %**

Monday	37
Tuesday	49
Wednesday	42
Thursday	43
Friday	49
Saturday	78
Sunday	31

Saturday (78%) was the most popular day to visit the town centre.

What are the positive aspects of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime?	**LB 2018 %**	**LB 2016 %**
Cafes/ Restaurants	81	71
Food Offer e.g. places to buy lunch	36	53
Leisure Facilities	10	6
Cultural Activities/ Events	23	19
Pubs/ Bars	34	32
Public Transport	18	18
Safety	19	17
Other	9	5

81% of Town Centre Users rated 'Cafes/ Restaurants' as a positive aspect of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime.

What are the negative aspects of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Cafes/ Restaurants	7	9
Food Offer e.g. places to buy lunch	11	8
Leisure Facilities	37	29
Cultural Activities/ Events	24	22
Pubs/ Bars	14	12
Public Transport	15	10
Safety	43	22
Other	24	18

43% of Town Centre Users classed ‘Safety’ as a negative aspect of Leighton Buzzard during the daytime, which is 21% higher than in 2016. 37% of Town Centre users rated ‘Leisure Facilities’ as a negative.

What are the positive aspects of Leighton Buzzard during the evening?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Cafes/ Restaurants	66	48
Food Offer e.g. places to buy takeaway food	35	44
Leisure Facilities	5	4
Cultural Activities/ Events	13	9
Pubs/ Bars	69	58
Public Transport	4	3
Safety	7	6
Other	7	5

69% of Town Centre Users classed 'Pubs/ Bars' as a positive aspect of Leighton Buzzard, with 66% stating 'Cafes/ Restaurants'.

What are the negative aspects of Leighton Buzzard during the evening?	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Cafes/ Restaurants	8	12
Food Offer	11	8
Leisure Facilities	22	20
Cultural Activities/ Events	19	20
Pubs/ Bars	16	19
Public Transport	29	23
Safety	64	53
Other	15	11

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Town Centre Users felt that 'Safety' was a negative aspect of Leighton Buzzard during the evening. Continuing the theme, a number of the comments under the 'Other' heading centred on 'Anti-social behaviour'.

What two suggestions would you make to improve the town centre?

*Please note the comments have been copied directly from respondents so may include grammatical errors.

'Cheaper/ Free parking' was a key theme to emerge, comments included;

- *Parking prices are extortionate and on a busy day, it is difficult to park . Once you've parked you then have to find the correct change to pay for it unless you stay for 4 hours as you can no longer pay by card under £3.50. None of this makes it a place people want to go*
- *Parking prices are pushing people out of Leighton Buzzard.... We regularly visit Stoney Stratford ... Parking is free ??? & we find shops friendly & welcoming..*
- *Free parking throughout the town to encourage people to use other car parks than supermarkets which get clogged*
- *Sort the car park prices out to encourage shoppers. £3.50 is more than Milton Keynes!!!! I know where I'd rather go! I used to have lunch in town and have a browse about - now I rush about to get errands finished within 30 mins!*
- *Provide an hour's free parking in the multi storey to encourage more visitors and relieve the pressure on the Waitrose Car Park*

'Anti-Social Behaviour' was another theme to emerge;

- *anti social behaviour is increasing in the town centre over the years due to the expansion of town so more police presents would make the residents feel safe.*
- *Better footfall from local police to stop the anti social behaviour which is being allowed to carry on by a small group of lads in the High Street and surrounding areas. Better lighting down the High Street at night.*
- *There is a lot of anti social behaviour going on with young people who are well known to the authorities. It's scary coming across groups on bikes who have no respect for anyone.*
- *Has been a huge increase in anti social behaviour during the day time. Sort out anti - social behaviour.*
- *Get a grip on the anti - social behaviour and begging (not the same people necessarily)*
- *Stop the anti social behaviour Stop the youths riding around on their bikes*
- *Anti social behaviour from groups of teens and homeless. More retail names like Next and Marks and Spencer's.*
- *More police, some very anti social behaviour people avoiding town because of this.*
- *Deal with the anti social behaviour from young people and travellers*
- *There has been an increase in anti - social behaviour that really needs to be stamped out before it becomes a more significant problem. A more visible police presence seems to me the most obvious solution*

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- *Improve the safety feeling of being in town. Maybe more police presence to dis encourage anti social behaviour*
- *Curfew and ASBOs on people with anti social behaviour . Higher police presence to reassure the elderly and young who are vulnerable*

'Improving the Retail Offer', specifically 'Clothes Shops' was also cited;

- *Leighton Buzzard is great for pubs and restaurants and clearly takes pride in having so many independent businesses but the town offers next to nothing in terms of "normal" shops selling clothes /shoes etc. There are very few general clothes shops for women (one plus size shop , New Look for teenagers and Peacocks where the quality is terrible) and no general clothes shops for men so unless you want to buy a suit or vintage clothing there is absolutely nothing on offer. As this is the case, I do ALL of my shopping in Milton Keynes. If Leighton Buzzard offered just a couple more shops (M&S or Next or something like that) I would do all my shopping there and would probably end up spending more in the independent businesses in the process but because there aren't any I rarely go into the town centre for anything other than to go to the pub.*
- *Should be a more variety of cloths shops for the younger generation there's more shops for the older generation such as peacocks and m&co one shop for all ladies (new look) select is a good shop it was a shame it went before*
- *Different range of shops , less charity shops /cafes, more affordable clothes shops .*
- *We are missing younger people clothing store choice - jeans, alternative clothing , shoes etc. Would be nice to see. Same applies for the high street stores. Don't want a high street full of charity shops or chain coffee shops , encourage independents.*
- *Need much less charity shops and barbers and more big chain clothes shops and shoe shops .*
- *A wider variety of shops if I want children clothes only have m and co to really get clothing , children,s shoes impossible as now only Clark's. End up having to go to Milton Keynes. Fill the empty retail units in waterborne walk,*
- *More clothes shops would be great, there's very little choice at the moment.*
- *A few more boutique ste clothes shops would be nice.*
- *Greater choice of shops more men's clothing and something like next would be good.*
- *More independent clothes shops for young females.*
- *More variety of children's and men's clothes shops .*
- *Better high street shops - esp clothing for children - too many charity / estate agents*
- *A better range of clothes shops suitable for men and children.*
- *More clothes shops*
- *more clothing shops for young people, topshop, H&M etc.*
- *More choice in retail , clothing shops*
- *Better choice of clothes shops e.g. joules or phase 8 or marks and Spencer.*

KPI: SHOPPERS ORIGIN SURVEY

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre visitors originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population.

The **349** postcodes gathered from businesses are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within a Post Code covering the town
- Visitors; those who live within a Post Code less than a 30-minute drive
- Tourists; those who live within a Post Code further than a 30-minute drive

	National Small Towns %	National Large Towns %	LB 2018 %	LB 2016 %
Locals	63	59	81	80
Visitors	22	24	13	14
Tourists	14	16	6	7

Following the 2016 pattern, 81% of Post Codes gathered were from 'Locals'.

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