

**North  
Berwick  
Town  
Centre  
Strategy**

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2018

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**Supplementary  
Guidance to the East  
Lothian Local  
Development Plan  
2018**

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# **NORTH BERWICK TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY**

## **1.0 Purpose of the North Berwick Town Centre Strategy**

- 1.1 The North Berwick Town Centre Strategy forms a part of the adopted East Lothian Local Plan 2018 (LDP). It is supplementary guidance focusing on the changes that the Local Development Plan is planning to the town of North Berwick and the implications of that change for the town centre. The LDP introduces new planning policies adopting the town centre first principle and has detailed planning policies for town centres to guide development.
- 1.2 The strategy looks in more detail than the LDP into the town centre. A health check of the town centre is provided, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats are considered and its performance as a place with coordinated actions for improvement and regeneration.
- 1.3 In addition to the LDP and its supporting documents, the town centre strategy draws on the work done by the North Berwick Town Centre Charrette in 2015 and takes account of the Council's emerging Local Transport Strategy as well as relevant parts of the North Berwick Coastal Area Partnership Area Plan. It is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications that affect the town centre.

## **2.0 Policy Context**

### **Local Development Plan Policy for Town Centres**

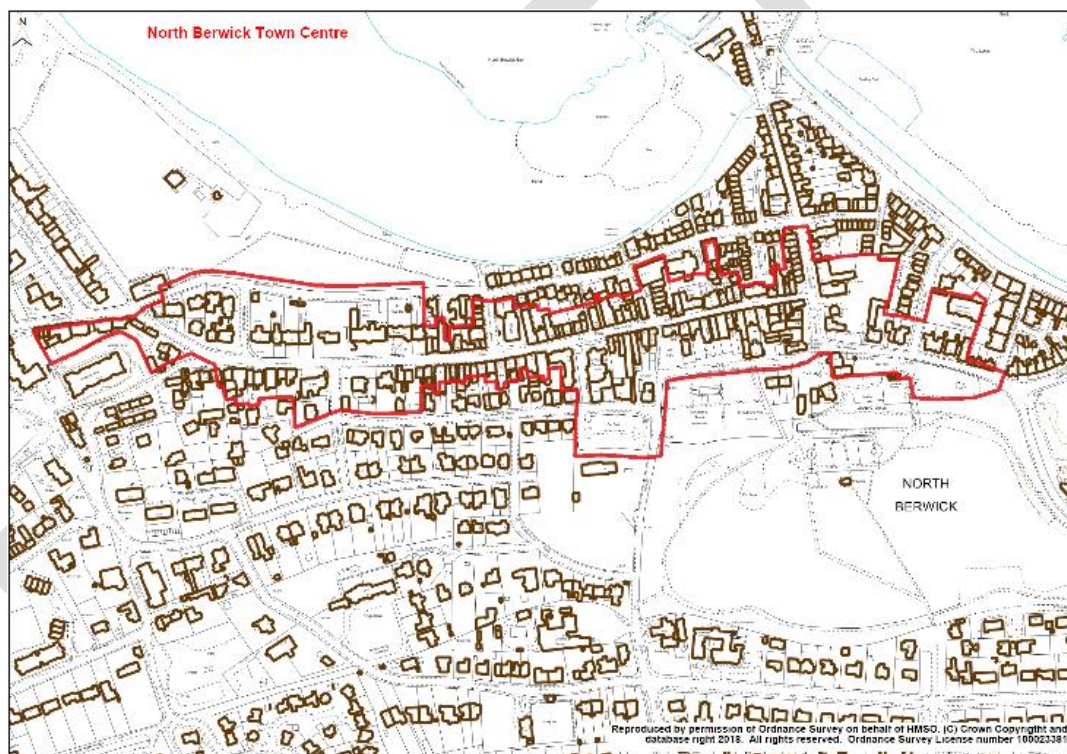
- 2.1 The adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP) promotes the Town Centre First Principle which requires that uses that would attract significant footfall must consider locating to a town or local centre first and then, sequentially, to an edge of centre location, other commercial centre or out of centre location. This is designed to support town centres in the long term and help to ensure that they are vibrant and sustainable.
- 2.2 To further support town centres and to minimise the length of time commercial premises lie vacant the principle of a change of use between retail, business, office, restaurant leisure and entertainment is supported. As town centres evolve there could be pressure to change uses to residential; this may be acceptable in non-ground floor or backland locations but will only be acceptable in a ground floor location where there is evidence that it is no longer viable as a town or local centre use.
- 2.3 The policy on hot food outlets supports hot food outlets in town and local centres provided that there will be no significant impact on local amenity, including cumulatively with other existing take-aways in the area and are consistent with other LDP policies including in relation to parking and road safety.
- 2.4 The town centre strategy is proposed to be approved as supplementary guidance to the LDP. It therefore remains approved until the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 is replaced. The strategy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate based on regular health checks to ensure it remains up to date and effective.

### 3.0 Form and Content of the North Berwick Town Centre Strategy

3.1 The North Berwick town centre strategy adopts a strategic approach to guide the improvement of North Berwick town centre. Following analysis from a health check of the town centre a series of Actions is made to address the issues arising in the town centre. Each action is given an indicative short, medium or long timescale with identified lead and joint working parties for its implementation. The health check can be regularly updated and actions can be monitored and if required revised in future.

### 4.0 Background

4.1 The LDP defines the North Berwick town centre, one of six defined town centres in East Lothian. This is the spatial area where the LDP policies outlined in paragraph 2.0-2.5 above apply and also the spatial area where the town centre strategy actions that follow apply.



4.2 North Berwick has experienced significant growth over the last 20 years with new residential areas completed and under construction within and on the edge of the town. The LDP housing sites at Ferrygate and mixed use site at Tantallon Road are under construction in 2018 and planned to complete in 2020 and Mains Farm, the previous Local Plan mixed use site is also due to complete in 2020 There is also further smaller scale housing development planned or under construction at Aberlady, Gullane and Dirleton in the North Berwick High School catchment area.

4.3 North Berwick town centre is wholly included in the designated North Berwick Conservation Area which covers not only the oldest parts of the town around the harbour, but the High Street and much of the town's expansion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it developed as a holiday and recreational area on completion of the town's

railway. The purpose of a conservation area is to ensure that new development preserves or enhances the architectural and historic character of the area and that should ensure over time ensure that the area is improved and enhanced. The North Berwick Conservation Area Character Statement and other supplementary planning guidance to the LDP on Cultural Heritage and the Built Environment, which contains guidance on development in conservation areas including shopfronts and advertisements are important in setting standards for improving the overall environment of the Conservation Area.

## **5.0 North Berwick Town Centre Analysis**

- 5.1 North Berwick town centre's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) are included in a table contained in Appendix 1. This has helped to inform the proposed actions for the town centre strategy.
- 5.2 The SWOT analysis has been prepared following the collection of data in an up-to-date Health Check for North Berwick. The following points have been identified in the Health Check and subsequent SWOT:
- 5.3 The North Berwick ward is the smallest in East Lothian with 13.2% of the population of East Lothian living there. Overall the age distribution in North Berwick Ward when compared to Scotland has proportionally more non-working population, 6.9% more than the East Lothian rate. The population is set to grow, with a total of 1220 houses planned for North Berwick by 2025. An additional 2 hectares of land is allocated for employment. The town centre is located to the north of the settlement and is in an ideal location to draw existing and new population to its shops and businesses as it is so close to the sea. Vacancy rates have varied in North Berwick ward and showed the 2015/16 figure increased to an 8 year high, however these vacancy rates are still lower than the East Lothian average. Weekly footfall on North Berwick High St has increased by 14.25% since 2013/2014 and remains steady. However, with more people residing in the town it is to be expected that more will use its central facilities. It is also one of the busiest High Streets in East Lothian similar to Dunbar which has a larger population.
- 5.4 The town centre is well used and there are a wide range of uses represented in the town centre. Residents do the majority of their convenience food shopping in North Berwick. Any additional expenditure appears to go to Haddington. 83% of people who live in North Berwick visit the town centre on a weekly basis or more frequently, 26% visit daily and 59% travel by car but parking availability has been classed a poor by residents.
- 5.5 North Berwick has the highest proportion of shops out of all 6 settlements in East Lothian. Additionally North Berwick currently has the highest proportion of restaurants/cafes in any town centre (This equals 19 class 3 units). Therefore 60% of the North Berwick population visit the town centre after 6pm, showing that North Berwick is adapting to modern trends. For residents of North Berwick the top priority for improving their area is more/better parking.

- 5.6 The street has on-street short stay parking and a number of car parks behind the High Street with easy access to the main shopping area. However, lack of enforcement can see low turnover of spaces. More/better parking is identified by residents as a much needed improvement.
- 5.7 In 2017 a design charrette was held in North Berwick to examine in detail the issues of the town centre. The results provide an informed public view expressed at a point in time. The charrette covered improving walking with wider footpaths and access at the east end of High Street, improvements to help people get around, street and public realm improvements, traffic and parking, character of the town centre, quality and amenities, sustainable and active travel and safer streets that reduced the feeling of threat from moving vehicles and making the town centre more orientated towards people. North Berwick High Street is busy with vehicles and there is opportunity to provide a new car park to increase capacity and reduce cars circulating the town centre searching for parking.
- 5.8 The Citizen's panel survey (2018) identified a need for a wider range of shops, more parking and a more attractive town centre environment.
- 5.9 Overall, North Berwick has relatively strong town centre, one which was shortlisted in 2017 for a Great British High Street Award, but it could also be more vibrant and even better used by local residents and visitors alike. A sustainable and vibrant community is an important objective for the future of the town centre.

## **6.0 Regeneration Strategy for North Berwick town centre**

- 6.1 North Berwick has grown with new residents bringing their spending power to the town. In North Berwick 83% of the population visit the town centre in the evening at least once a month. This is reflected in the convenience expenditure, where a significant proportion is retained in the local centre of North Berwick and any losses from North Berwick and Dunbar appear to be leaking to Haddington. The town centre will only continue to attract people if it is a safe, attractive place to visit with good access including available parking. That is the basis for a successful town centre which needs to adapt to cater for the needs of both the existing and new population.
- 6.2 The town centre is performing well in terms of having few vacancies, the average vacancy rate over the last few years is circa 3%, well below the East Lothian and Scottish average. Footfall has varied, increasing in the last two years, which is to be expected given the arrival of new residents to the town and bucks the national trend of declining footfall. The local evening economy is the most successful of any town in East Lothian with 60% of residents using the town in the evening. However, to continue to be successful and to make the most of its assets the town centre requires investment in the following:
- High Street public realm – North Berwick High Street is the focus of the town centre but retains its medieval characteristics at its eastern end with a narrow space between its buildings that has to accommodate one-way traffic, horizontal parking on one side and narrow footways on either side. With limited space there is insufficient pavement width to allow people to

window shop without other passers-by forced in to the road to get past. Although slow moving the through traffic is constant and there is conflict between vehicles and pedestrians.

- Town centre buildings and closes - Repair and enhancement of buildings in North Berwick town centre for example, the appearance of some businesses on High Street could benefit from improved advertisements more in keeping with the traditional character of the street and some parts of the town centre could benefit from coordinated exterior colour schemes, in keeping with the tradition of painted buildings elsewhere in the town.
- Making the most of its heritage – while North Berwick town centre is attractive, most of its buildings are small scale and vernacular. Its landmark buildings are those built as churches, some of which are in need of further repair and could be better interpreted for visitors.
- Public spaces – within the town centre there is very little civic space pushing more events towards the harbour. Civic space is needed to allow places where people can gather or sit to appreciate their surroundings. Quieter often green spaces can benefit town centre users seeking respite from busy streets. Some spaces require some improvement and enhancement.

## **7.0 Main Issues and Actions in North Berwick Town Centre**

7.1 This section outlines the main issues and actions required within North Berwick town centre. It provides an indication of timescale and details of who will lead action to implement each project.

### **Diversity of Land Use**

7.2 North Berwick is classified as an Independent town<sup>1</sup> i.e. it has a high number of assets in relation to its population; a strong diversity of jobs and residents travel shorter distances to travel to work and study. It attracts people from neighbouring towns to access its assets and jobs. It is a town that has a high level of commuting which is to be expected when it has a rail line with direct services to Edinburgh, and is also a town that attracts significant numbers of tourists and visitors, particularly in the summer months.

7.3 The population of the town is older than the national average with a high proportion of the town's residents of retired and over 75.

7.4 With a static number of commercial units within the town centre and a range that is diversifying slightly away from retail towards more service and café/restaurant uses, North Berwick town centre is adjusting to modern trends. A high proportion of residents visit the town centre in the evening.

- High Street is narrow and congested with cars, pedestrians and bins
- High levels of commuting particularly to Edinburgh

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<sup>1</sup> Understanding Scottish Places, Scotland's Towns Partnership  
<https://www.scotlandstowns.org/understanding-scottish-places>

- Insufficient parking
- Relatively high number of holiday lets that are not occupied all year round in town centre
- Walking conditions along the eastern end needs improvement

## 8.0 ACTIONS FOR NORTH BERWICK TOWN CENTRE

### Movement and Access

8.1 Planned housing and employment growth in North Berwick will increase vehicle movements in and around the town but the town will be able to cope with this increase. Actions for this include:

- High Street Improvements
- Environmental Improvements to Forth Street and Market Place
- Reorganisation of Town Centre Car Parking

North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 1 High Street Improvements				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
High Street Action Plan	East Lothian Council Road Services	1. Assess and address competence of recommendations of the charrette report for High Street. 2. Confirm final design 3. Identify funding 4. Prepare detailed design 5. Traffic Orders as necessary		Preparatory work has commenced on assessment of recommendations

8.2 Detailed design is required to find the most advantageous design for High Street that meets the needs of all its users and produces an attractive and high quality street environment. A traffic model is being prepared to test future proposed changes. The economic needs of the street must be catered for, including sufficiently wide footways, places where service vehicles can stop, and an appropriate amount of public parking. The High Street needs to be properly accessible to everyone and improvements will be required to encourage more people to walk or cycle to the town centre.

8.3 However, North Berwick town centre has a historic street pattern that physically constrains space within its streets. This results in narrow streets with narrow footways and a one way traffic flow system in Forth Street and High Street. Given the high number of older people in the town (26.5%) it is important that the town centre caters for everyone and that people feel it is safe to use. The charrette findings suggested that between Quality Street and Market Place improvements

should be made for pedestrians to make it a more accessible and walkable place with removal and repositioning of parking space and introduction of a low speed design approach. To be successful these works should also be installed using high quality materials.

North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 2 Environmental Improvements to Forth Street and Market Place				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
1.Prioritise pedestrian movement on Forth Street with footway level crossings over access and lightly used roads. 2.Consider one way traffic flow in Market Street and additional parking 3.Improvement to pends and closes between High Street and Forth Street	ELC Road Services/ Area Partnership / external funders	1.Examine feasibility 2.Draft Design Proposals 3. Consult 4. Seek funding 5.Detailed design 6.Prepare Traffic Orders		This project has not yet commenced

8.4 Improvements were proposed for pedestrian and traffic movements and parking in Forth Street and Market Place with the latter potentially providing additional parking to replace any lost on High Street and with the suggestion that it be made a one way street. On Forth Street the proposal was to give priority to pedestrians walking on footways alongside the road where there were crossing points over access and lightly used roads, by making the crossing points flush with the footways and requiring vehicles to drive up and over them when they crossed. Improvements were also proposed to pends and closes leading from High Street to Forth Street and to those to which the public have access between Forth Street and the sea. These measures would improve the experience of walking around North Berwick town centre. A visual example of what was proposed is shown below:





Indicative sketch (R) from charrette report on how North Berwick High Street might look without parked vehicles and with wider footways. Priority is given to the pedestrian with vehicle movement slowed by narrow lanes and crossing points.

North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 3 Reorganisation of Town Centre Car Parking				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Reorganisation of town centre car parking	ELC Road Services	1. Approval of Parking Management Strategy as part of Local Transport Strategy 2. Implementation of short, medium and long stay		If the ELC Parking Management Strategy is approved this work will commence

8.5 The proposed Parking Management Strategy which forms part of the Local Transport Strategy has been approved and the town centre will be served by the reorganisation of the existing town centre car parks. This may require additional signage and every effort should be made to keep permanent signs to a minimum to minimise sign clutter. The Parking Management Strategy has proposed designation of different parking areas for different parking stay periods, indicated below:

<i>Where</i>	<i>Proposed Duration</i>
<i>On street</i>	limited waiting
<i>The Glebe car park</i>	short stay
<i>Kirk Ports/Law Road car park</i>	short stay
<i>The Lodge</i>	short stay
<i>Quality Street</i>	short stay
<i>School Road car park</i>	short stay
<i>Community Centre car park</i>	medium stay
<i>Sports Centre</i>	medium stay
<i>Castle Hill</i>	medium stay
<i>Recreation ground</i>	long stay
<i>High School</i>	long stay

#### **Built Environment and Public Spaces**

8.6 North Berwick town centre is located within the designated North Berwick Conservation Area the character and appearance of which requires to be preserved or enhanced. Actions to maintain its character are:

- Shopfronts and Advertisements
- Improving Small Spaces, Environmental improvements and Making the Most of the Heritage
- External Repair of Privately Owned Buildings in Multiple Ownership
- Improve Access to the Town Centre
- Public Wi-fi

<b>North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 4 Shopfronts and Advertisements</b>				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Improve the quality of shopfronts and advertisements in High Street	ELC Planning Service and Economic Development and Strategic Investment / Commercial premises owners, occupiers and lessees	Improvements will be encouraged at the time of advertisement consent applications or planning applications to alter shopfronts		Ongoing

8.7 The charrette report also proposed that further improvements are required to some shopfronts and advertisements in the High Street to complement the buildings in which they are located and to enhance the overall quality of High Street, Market Place, Westgate and Quality Street. Advertisement consent is granted for a five year period therefore should in time improve as further applications for advertisement consent are made. Shopfront alterations and advertisements must comply with the Council’s supplementary planning guidance on Cultural Heritage and the Built Environment.

<b>North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 5 Improving Small Spaces, Environmental Improvements and Making the most of the Heritage</b>				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Improving the appearance small spaces within the town centre as identified in the Charrette report e.g. lighthouse corner; undertake repairs to the ruined structure of St Andrews Kirk and improving understanding of its role in the history of the town	Community/Area Partnership / ELC / external funders/private owners	1.Explore support for and feasibility of whole wall painting and/or other improvements at lighthouse corner 2. Update conservation architect’s survey report for St Andrews Kirk structure and seek external funding 3.Develop ideas for future town trails or similar projects to help make the most of the heritage of the town.		A new interpretation board has been installed at St Andrews Kirk

8.8 North Berwick is an attractive and historic town centre. Every town has differently used spaces within the town centre; these might include civic space suitable for gatherings or events and smaller, landscaped spaces often quieter space off the main streets where people can sit and rest. North Berwick town centre does not have any sizeable civic spaces which is why many events are held elsewhere such as the harbour. The charrette identified that the town’s narrow streets do make it a friendly place to be in and small spaces such as the round seating area by the Blackadder Church in High Street are important for social meetings. These small spaces are important to a town centre and need to be kept in good order. Taken together improvements to such spaces can encourage people to spend longer in the town centre. The heritage of the town is important too and old St. Andrews Kirk and graveyard on Kirk Ports is an asset to the town as a green area as well as for its heritage value. Even ruined buildings require some maintenance to ensure public

safety and it would be desirable if its distinctive domed tower roof could be reinstated. Further understanding of the importance of such buildings is necessary.

<b>North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 6 External Repair of Privately Owned Buildings in Multiple Ownership</b>				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Consider statutory action if necessary to occupied town centre buildings to ensure common repairs	ELC EDSI and Planning Service / private owners	1 Consider buildings that require repairs to common elements for statutory action if necessary		This work will be ongoing.

- 8.9 Privately owned buildings, often those in multiple ownership, in town centres can be vulnerable to disrepair and this is common across Scotland. Few buildings in North Berwick town centre appear to be in poor external condition with only one building on the national Buildings at risk register, the Baptist Church Hall on Victoria Street. Where any building is in disrepair its owners are responsible for those repairs. In a town centre the appearance of a building in disrepair can affect the overall attractiveness of the town centre therefore it is important that buildings are kept in good repair. Where necessary the Council has powers to intervene and require owners to undertake repairs. In some situations this can lead to the compulsory acquisition of affected buildings. Compulsory purchase of buildings or land can be an option to undertake a significant improvement to a town centre.

<b>North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 7 Improve Access to the Town Centre</b>				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Encourage pedestrian and cycle access to North Berwick town centre	ELC /Community	1. Connect local and longer distance routes to improve access to North Berwick town centre by bike 2.Improve paths where necessary		Ongoing

- 8.10 The North Berwick charrette identified a need to improve walking and cycling routes to and from North Berwick town centre. New housing areas are always connected to any existing paths in the area to ensure active travel is encouraged but some paths require improvement or new links to encourage their use.

North Berwick Town Centre Strategy: Action 8 Public Wi-fi				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Provision of public wi-fi in North Berwick town centre	ELC Development	Establish the feasibility of and funding for free public wi-fi provision to support the town centre		Survey work has been undertaken

- 8.11 The availability of public wi-fi would be an asset to North Berwick town centre. It offers potential to boost tourism with information potentially available via the internet and potential for direct marketing by businesses within the town centre. It would also help generally towards increased digital inclusion.

## 9.0 The Way Forward

- 9.1 This strategy forms statutory supplementary guidance to the Local Development Plan. The health checks can be updated regularly and the strategy should be monitored and revised in line with revisions to the LDP Action Programme.

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### **STRENGTHS**

- The town centre is located central in the town and has uses that draw people located within it e.g. health centre, library, sports centre and High School.
- Characterful street with shops and businesses
- New people will be living in North Berwick following extensive new housing developments (1513 units by 2025) and may use the town centre, supporting businesses and potentially helping to create new ones.
- Good number of town centre car parks and access lanes to the town
- Proximity of Ross High School provides additional High Street spend
- Good public transport links by bus
- Community group Blooming Belters has enhanced the town's appearance using floral displays
- Low business vacancy rate
- Good quality exemplar building restorations through CARS\* scheme
- New I supermarkets within walkable distance of town centre
- Range of sizes of commercial units

### **WEAKNESSES**

- Volume of traffic within High Street detracts from the enjoyment of the street by pedestrians (although national Air Quality Standards are met)
- Vacant former Coop buildings detract from the look of the town centre.
- High proportion of retail expenditure made outwith the town (79% for convenience goods)
- Some poor quality shopfronts and advertisements detract from the appearance of the street
- Residents are choosing to travel to other shopping areas (primarily Musselburgh and Haddington)
- Can be difficult to find a parking space as many are occupied all day long
- No branding/marketing of the town centre or coordination of businesses
- Perception that there should be a wider range of shops
- Pedestrian footways narrow in places
- North Berwick Town Centre has the lowest proportion of shops compared to the other East Lothian town centres.
- Over half of all North Berwick residents do not visit the town centre after 6pm
- Restaurants/cafes represent only 3% of the total units in North Berwick

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme offers grants for high quality repair and restoration projects for buildings and shops
- The former Coop Buildings in the centre of the town are being converted to new shops and residential properties
- Re-landscaping of civic space within the town centre
- Re-landscaping and tidying up of the open space between Lindores Drive and the former Infants School to create more useable and attractive space
- Proposed new Fraser Centre will attract more people to the town centre
- Former Infants School requires a new use to support the town centre
- On and off street parking can be managed to enforce short, medium and long stay parking to ensure that town centre users can find parking easily
- Installation of public wi-fi could allow specific marketing, attract people and allow businesses further advertising opportunity
- Encourage path links from new residential developments to town centre
- Claw back leaked expenditure through increasing range/quality of shops
- Encourage Class 3 uses in an attempt to increase the evening offer
- New development could provide an alternative through route, thereby reducing the volume of traffic in the town centre.
- Parking charges could raise income that could benefit the town centre

### THREATS

- Volume of new traffic in North Berwick as a result of new development could continue to adversely affect the town centre until a one way gyratory traffic flow scheme can be introduced
- High volumes of traffic could cause air pollution to rise triggering the need for an Air Quality Management Zone
- Lack of maintenance by building owners could harm the appearance of town centre buildings making it less attractive to new businesses
- In longer term Blindwells new settlement may also attract people away from North Berwick town centre
- Loss of civic space at Civic Square to create one way system and link Bridge Street to Well Wynd
- Parking charging could be introduced which may deter people from visiting the town centre
- Changes of use from shops (Class) 1 may increase Sui Generis (hot food take-away offer) instead of restaurants (Class 3)
- Online shopping



## NORTH BERWICK Health Check

### POPULATION

The latest available population estimates state that **13,719** people live in the North Berwick Coastal (NBC) ward, 13.2% of the population of East Lothian as a whole, making it the smallest ward in the county.

Across the ward approximately:

- 42.9% of the population live in the town of North Berwick
- 17.5% of the population live in Gullane
- 11.3% in Aberlady
- 28.3% reside in smaller rural settlements

### **Age Distribution (National Records of Scotland, 2016 mid-year estimates)**

	<b>North Berwick Coastal Ward</b>	<b>East Lothian</b>	<b>Scotland</b>
% of the population (0-15)	17.4	18.2	16.9
% of the population that are (16-64)	56.1	62.2	64.6
% of the population that are 65 or over	26.5	19.6	18.5

Overall the age distribution in North Berwick Ward when compared to Scotland has proportionally more non-working population, 6.9% more than the East Lothian rate and fewer people of working age.

### HOUSING

In 2017, the number of households in East Lothian was 45,301. This is a 1.2% increase from 44,749 households in 2016. In comparison, the number of households in Scotland overall increased by 0.7%.

Between 2016 and 2026, the number of households in East Lothian is projected to increase from 44,749 to 50,070. This is an 11.9% increase, which compares to a projected increase of 6.4% for Scotland as a whole.

In 2016, there were 6,292 dwellings in the NBC ward.

The Housing Land Audit for 2017 states the total committed sites in North Berwick will yield **482** units. In accordance with the LDP the potential new housing development sites proposed for the ward will yield **738** units taking the total to **1220** potential new homes in North Berwick ward by 2025.

The average household size for East Lothian is 2.3.

## **RETAIL PATTERNS**

Town centre catchments:



### **CONVENIENCE – EXPENDITURE AND POTENTIAL SPARE EXPENDITURE AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Table 5.3 of the RCS (2015) shows convenience shopping patterns (with main food and top-up combined). This highlights the following from 2015:

#### **NORTH BERWICK**

In Zone 5,  $\frac{3}{4}$  of expenditure is kept inside North Berwick with the majority of the remainder going into Haddington (Zone 4). The Aldi is now trading in North Berwick and it was projected that this would consume the over trading. There will be minimal spare convenience expenditure in North Berwick.

### **COMPARISON – EXPENDITURE AND POTENTIAL SPARE EXPENDITURE AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The majority (70%) of expenditure takes place outside East Lothian, namely at Ford Kinnaird (Edinburgh) and Edinburgh Town Centre. The Retail Capacity Study (2015) concludes that there is substantial forecast comparison expenditure growth relating to the residents of East Lothian, so capacity is not a barrier to new comparison retail development in the Council area. However, forecast for expenditure indicate that only a small proportion of the leakage could be retained in East Lothian. The reason is that East Lothian does not have any major shopping centres. It is more probable that leakage of comparison expenditure to major destinations outside East Lothian will increase. Trends in internet shopping are also having a major effect.

The main issue will be to support the existing comparison retail floorspace in the town centres in East Lothian, through encouraging improvements to the quality and range of comparison

shopping, in conjunction with other measures to improve the attractiveness of the town centres as destinations.

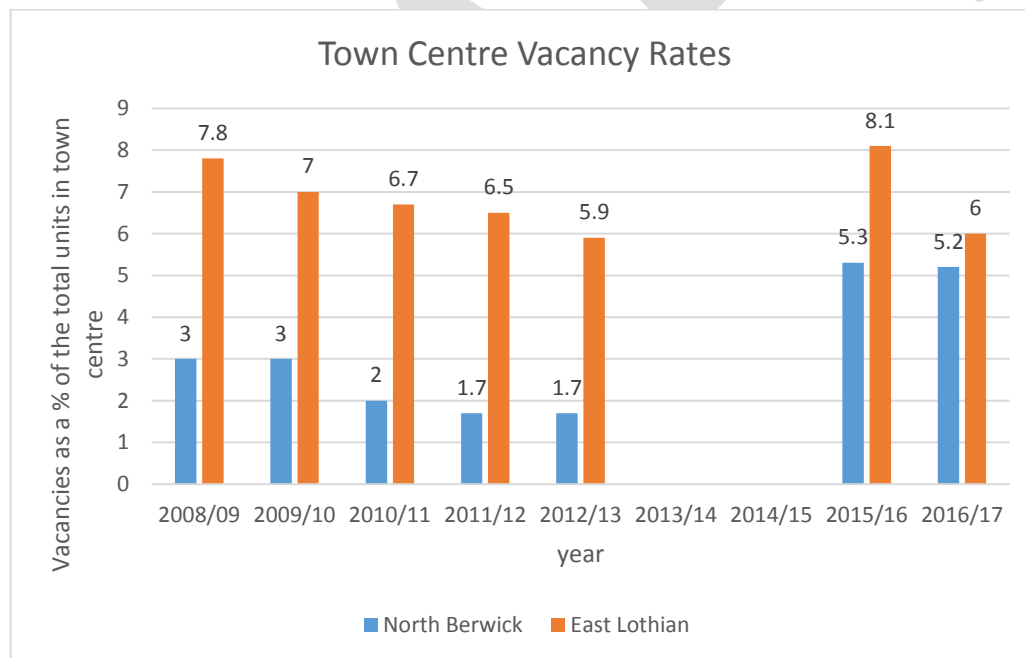
### **BLINDWELLS**

The RCS concludes that under 2015 market conditions there is limited scope for a larger supermarket (despite the leakage in surrounding zones of Prestonpans and Tranent), however, as Blindwells develops out there may be opportunity for a larger supermarket over the longer term. In terms of major non-food retail development, a key factor is the location of Blindwells relatively close to Fort Kinnaird. It is only just over 6 miles or 11 minutes drive time, with very good accessibility along the A1. It may be too close for major comparison retail development at Blindwells to succeed, however, an updated appraisal inclusive of non-retail town centre uses is required.

### **TOWN CENTRE ASSESSMENTS (quantitative)**

**Vacancy data** (measured as a percentage of available retail units in the area)

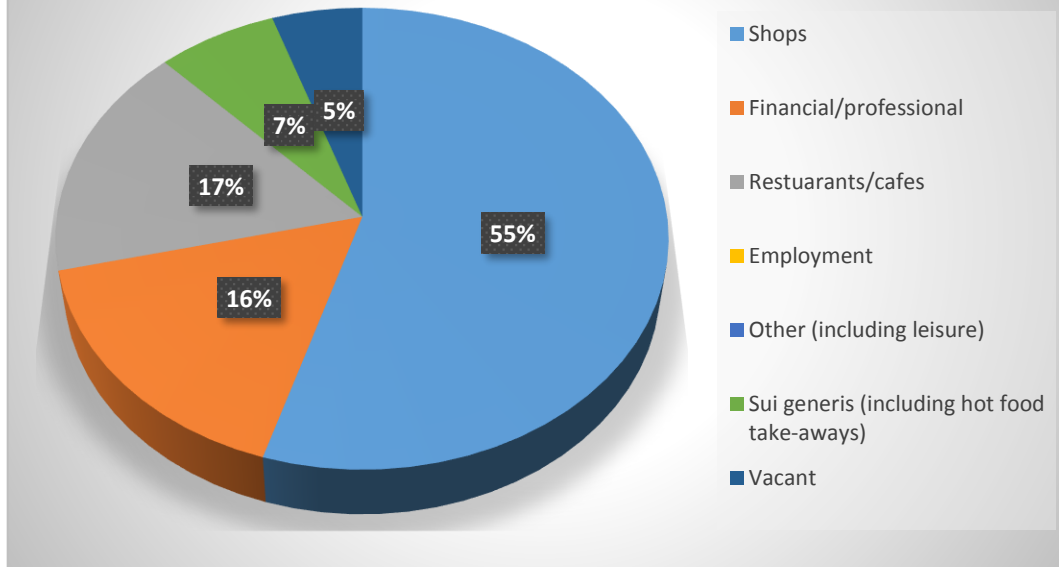
Vacancy rates have varied in North Berwick ward and showed a decline between 2008/09 and 2012/13, however the 2015/16 figure increased to an 8 year high. The 2016/17 figure shows North Berwick vacancy rates to be lower than the East Lothian average.



### **Town Centre uses**

It is of interest to monitor the uses currently occupying the town centre units. The following charts demonstrate the spread of use classes in North Berwick, using data from the 2017 retail survey:

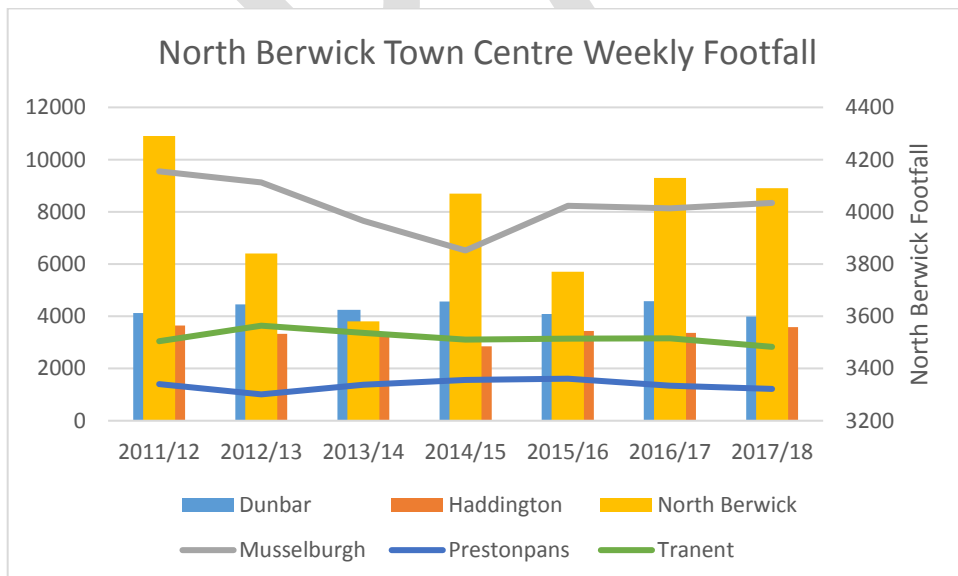
## North Berwick Town Centre - 2017



### Footfall

Pedestrian counts are undertaken annually in each town centre to establish weekly footfall rates for East Lothian's High Streets. The observations are November based and are not reflective of seasonal differences.

### **NORTH BERWICK**



Weekly footfall on North Berwick High St has increased by 14.25% since 2013/2014 and remains steady. In 2015/16 vacancy rates in the NBC ward were at an 8 year high of 5.3%.

Weekly footfall rates per head of ward population are 0.28 visits per person, behind Musselburgh (at 0.41 visits per person) and Dunbar (at 0.29 visits per person).

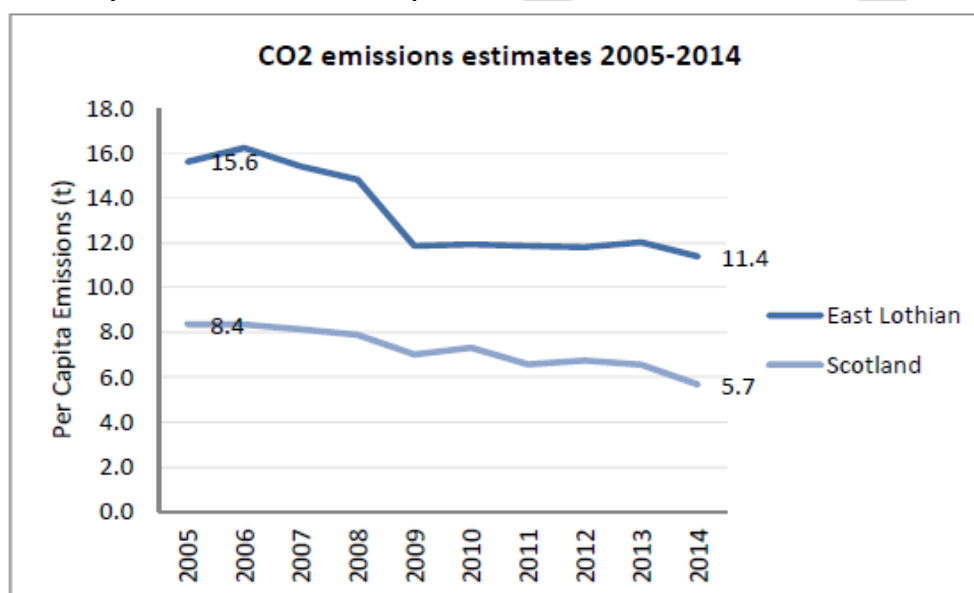
## **AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION**

In association with other plans the LDP will help to maintain or enhance air quality objectives. It will do this because it has taken these factors into account when selecting locations for development and by ensuring its development strategy is complemented by air quality mitigation measures. It will seek to integrate land use and transport and minimise the need to travel as well as the distance travelled. It will do this by promoting town centres as accessible locations for a mix of land uses and services and providing community services locally.

Currently air quality in East Lothian is very good. The Council has been annually reviewing and assessing local air quality since 2003. The majority of pollutants have been screened out in assessments and exceedences of air quality objectives for these pollutants across East Lothian are not considered likely.

In East Lothian there has been an overall decrease of 27.1% in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions between 2005 and 2014. However in 2014 East Lothian had an estimated 11.4 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per capita. This was the second highest rate in Scotland out of the 32 local authorities.

### **CO<sub>2</sub> Emission estimates per capita (tonnes per capita) in East Lothian and Scotland (UK Government 2016)**



The East Lothian Residents' Survey (2017) reported that 8% of respondents in the ward felt that traffic congestion was the most important thing in making somewhere a good place to live, compared to 10% across East Lothian.

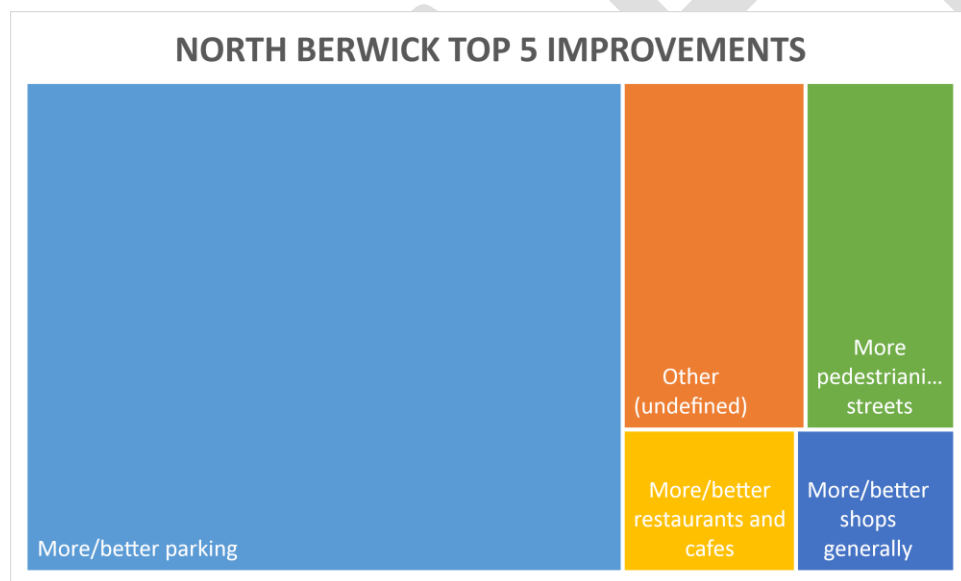
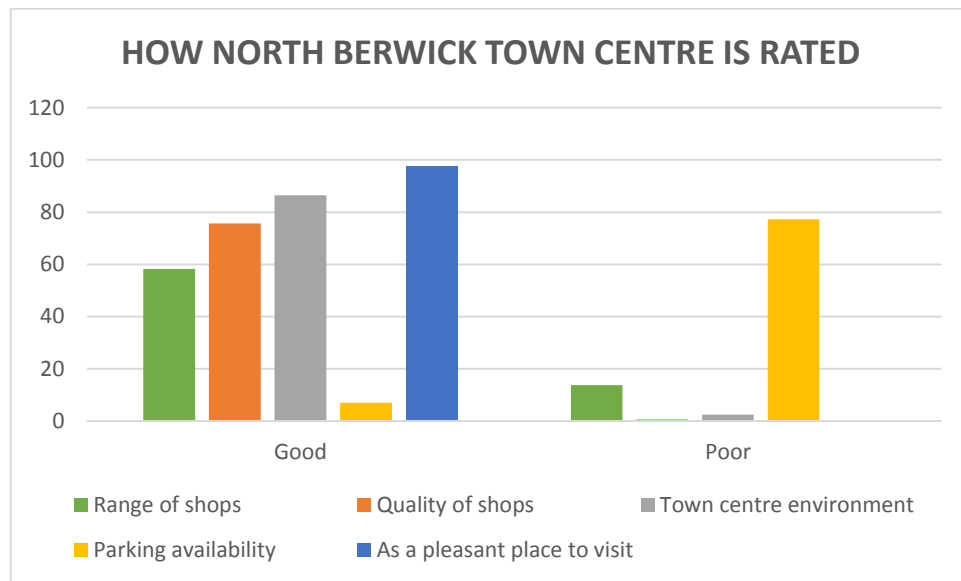
### **TOWN CENTRE PERCEPTIONS (qualitative)**

The following are the results from the 2015 RCS telephone survey:

#### **NORTH BERWICK**

83% of people who live in North Berwick visit the town centre on a weekly basis or more frequently. 26% visit daily. 34% people walk to the centre, 59% travel by car and less than 3% travel by bus. The majority of respondents recognise North Berwick Town centre as a pleasant place to visit with a good town centre environment. The quality and range of shops are also classed as good. Parking availability is the only feature of the town centre to be classed as

'poor'. Unsurprisingly there was overwhelming support (58%) for more/better parking as a feature of the town centre which would make people visit more often.



60% of people who live in North Berwick visit North Berwick Town Centre in the evenings (after 6pm). 14% do so on a weekly basis. The majority of respondents stated 'nothing' or 'don't know' to the question *what would make you visit North Berwick Town Centre more often in the evenings?* There is not therefore a top 5 list of improvements sought. Instead it is useful to measure what the night time economy offers. In this respect, 83% of those who use the town centre in the evening do so to visit restaurants or cafes, others to buy take-aways, visit pubs or wine bars or for a walk/stroll.

**Discussion**

In Haddington, Dunbar and North Berwick at least 50% of the population visit the town centre in the evening at least once a month. In North Berwick the figure is as high as 83%. These centres are more geographically remote and distanced from Edinburgh. This is also reflected

in the convenience expenditure, where a significant proportion is retained in the local centres of Haddington, North Berwick and Dunbar, and any losses from North Berwick and Dunbar appear to be leaking to Haddington. In all three centres the improvement sought is more/better parking.

Considering the use classes at play in each town centre, all town centres support approximately 50% shops (class 1 retail). North Berwick has the highest proportion of shops at 55%. The previous Local Plan supports retailing and restricts change of use in town centres, but the new Local Development Plan 2016 introduces greater flexibility (Policy TC2) allowing for change of use between retailing, restaurants, businesses and offices and leisure and entertainment. This may see a wider mix of uses over the coming years and is something to consider in future monitoring. Greater flexibility may assist in increasing the night time offer.

Currently the highest proportion of restaurants/cafes in any town centre is found in North Berwick (This equals 19 class 3 units). Whilst restaurants/cafés is not a full indicator of the evening offer, it does offer some insight. Another side of the evening economy is represented by public houses/wine bars. These are difficult to identify when analysing use classes as, along with other uses, are defined as sui generis. However, sui generis includes hot-food take-aways, the majority of which provide an evening service.

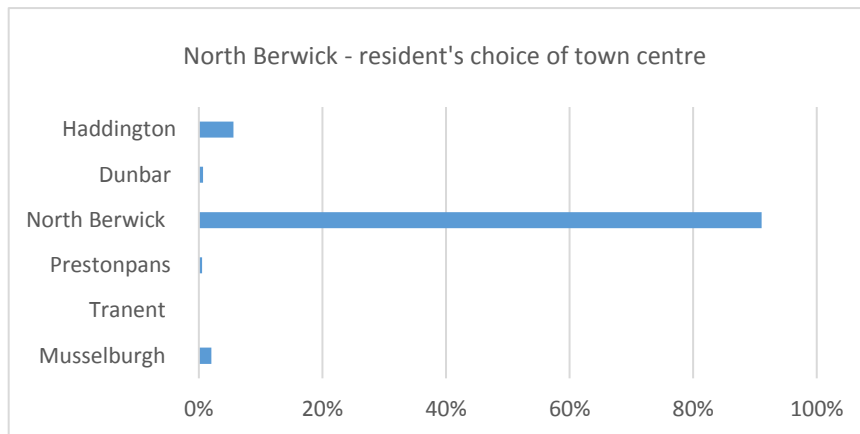
In conclusion it can be seen that the highest proportion of restaurants/cafes are located in the centres of North Berwick, Haddington and Dunbar – where there is the greatest use of the centres after 6pm. For residents of North Berwick the top priority for improving their area is *more/better parking*.

#### **Citizen's panel – Survey 2018**

East Lothian Citizens' Panel survey from Spring 2018 provides the most up-to-date information available on town centre usage and perceptions. A total of 682 responses were received – 193 postal and 489 online. The emerging patterns are shown in the following analysis.

Question 5 of the spring 2018 Citizen's Panel questionnaire asked 'which of the following town centres do you visit most often for shopping, leisure and to access services'? Possible answers were Musselburgh, Tranent, Prestonpans, North Berwick, Dunbar and Haddington. It should be noted that there is no option to provide an alternative town centre, so the results show 100% results across the 6 centres. It is of most use to monitor which town centre local residents to those centres use.

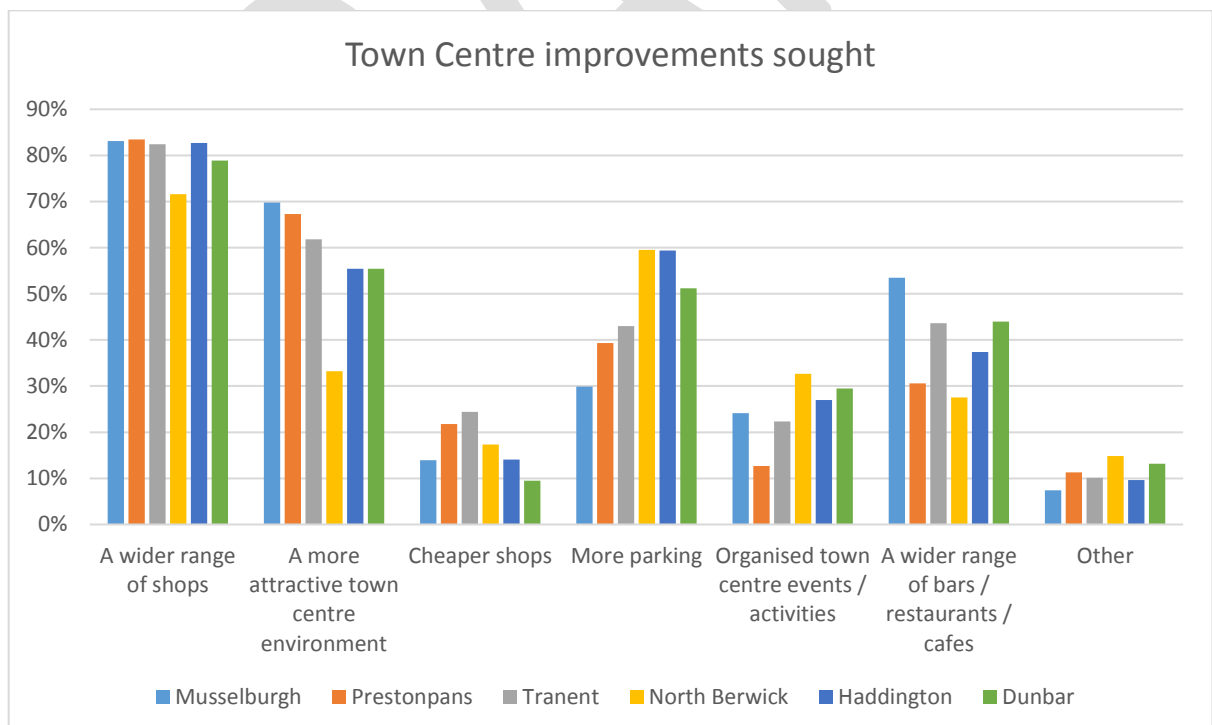
*Which town centre do people visit most often for shopping, leisure and services?*



Around 90% of North Berwick residents choose North Berwick town centre to visit most often. Again, this reinforces the 2015 RCS findings which found that ¾ of convenience expenditure is kept inside the North Berwick zone (Zone 5) and the majority of the remainder goes to Haddington. A number of North Berwick residents chose Haddington as their preferred centre to visit in the Citizen’s Panel survey.

Three years on and the survey results indicate similar trends –North Berwick residents choose to shop in their local town centre, although North Berwick residents do also visit Haddington.

Question 8 of the spring 2018 Citizen’s Panel asks ‘which 3 factors would be most likely to encourage you to use your local town centre more?’ The results are highlighted below:



The results for each North Berwick’s top three issues show:

1. A wider range of shops
2. More parking
3. A more attractive town centre environment



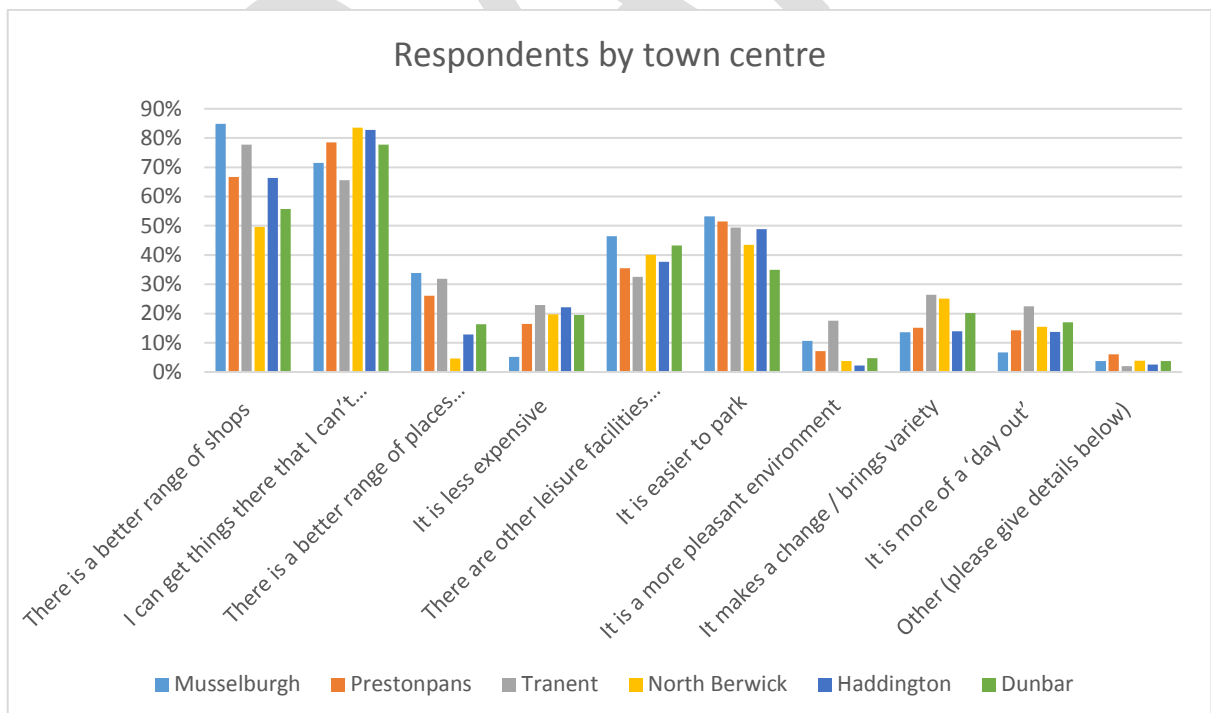
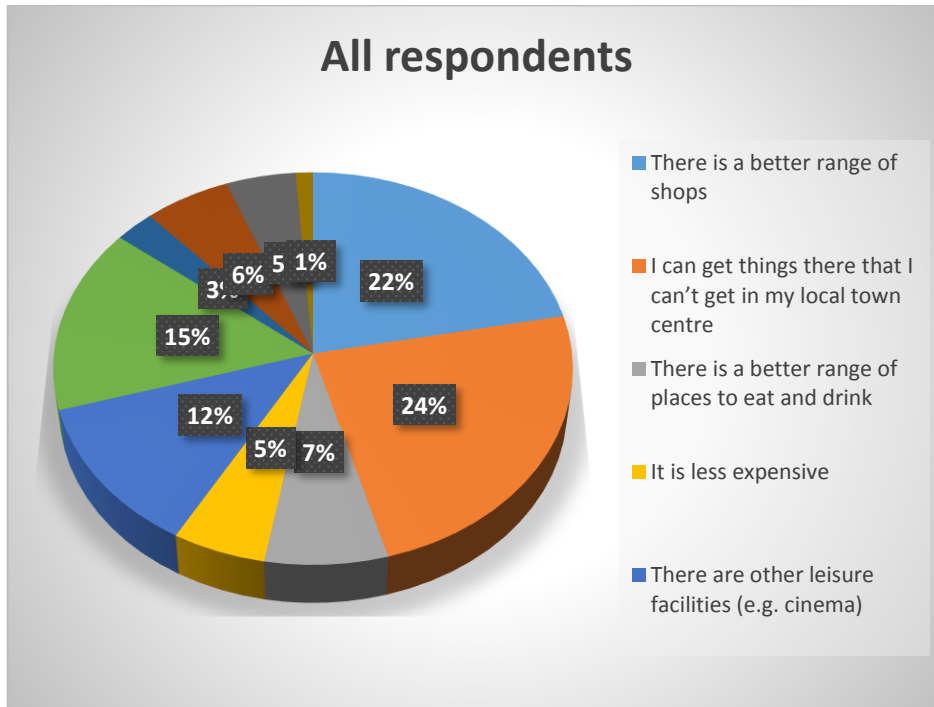
There is also a requirement for organised town centre events/activities. There is less concern in respect of cheaper shops for North Berwick. Whilst a wider range of shops and more parking were identified in the 2015 RCS telephone survey, the town centre environment was voted as 'good' for North Berwick.

Question 9 of the spring 2018 Citizen's Panel asks 'how often do you visit an out-of town retail park for shopping or leisure activities?'



A large proportion of people visit an out of town retail park between once or twice a month or rarely/never. This is most likely because proximity to Edinburgh and the available out-of-town centres is further to travel. Very few people use an out-of-town retail centre daily. This is a good sign that suggests town centre usage, however, it should be borne in mind that the majority of out-of-town retail centres, such as Fort Kinnaird, are predominantly the sale of convenience goods, which few people buy daily.

Question 10 of the spring 2018 Citizen's Panel asked 'If you go to an out-of town retail park for some shopping or leisure activities, rather than to your local town centre, what would be your reasons for doing so?'

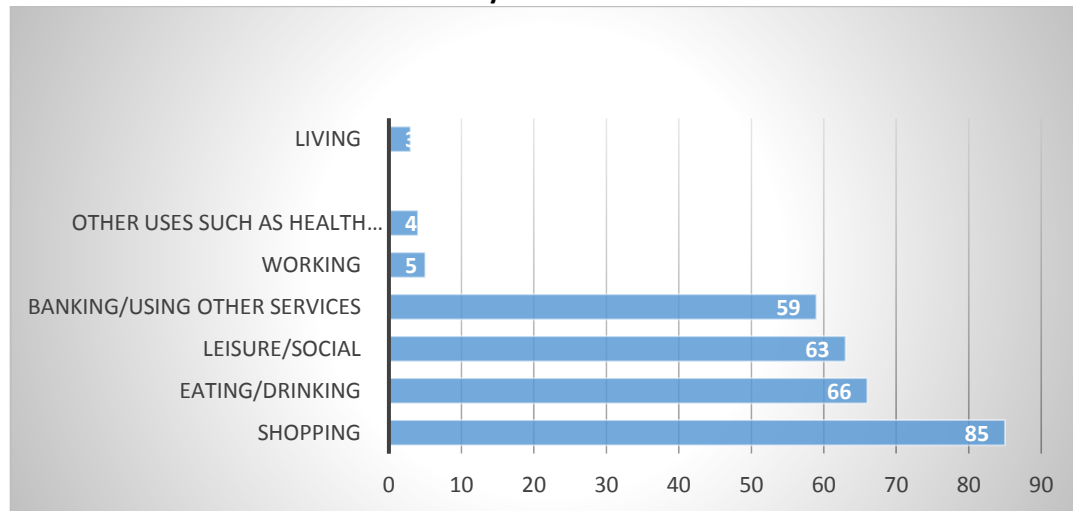


As expected people 84% refer to the ability to get things that are not available in their town centre and 50% state a better range of shops. Whilst it is possible to encourage an increased range of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities in the East Lothian town centres, proximity to the Edinburgh offer and, in particular, Fort Kinnaird will always play a part. It is extremely accessible, especially for the west of the district. The only other consideration to be

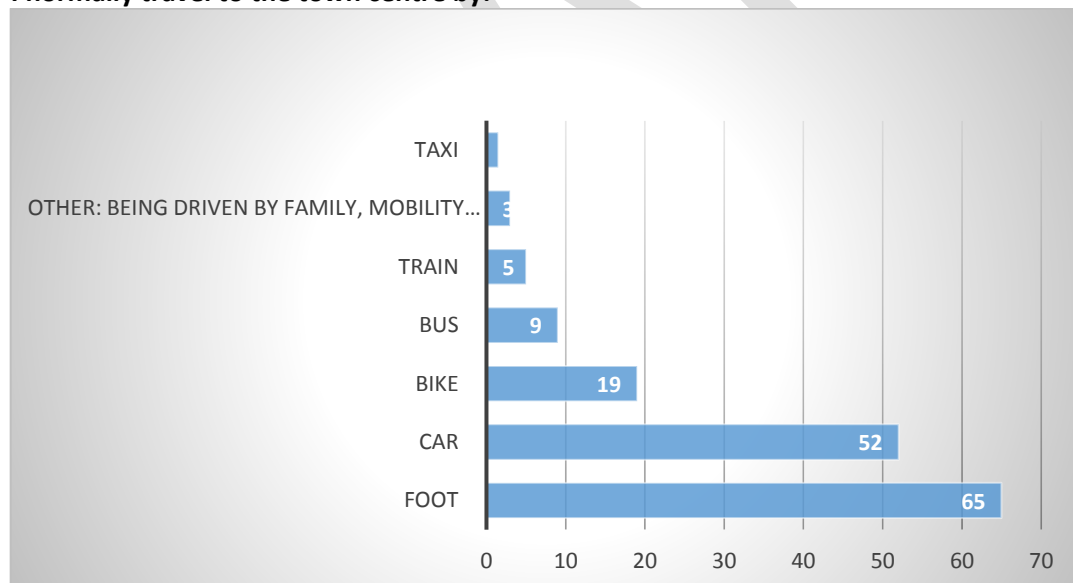
highlighted is the availability of parking. 44% of respondents claim it is easier to park at out-of-town centres than their own town centre. Whilst this is not an overwhelmingly large response, previous analysis indicates town centre parking is considered an issue.

### **North Berwick Charrette**

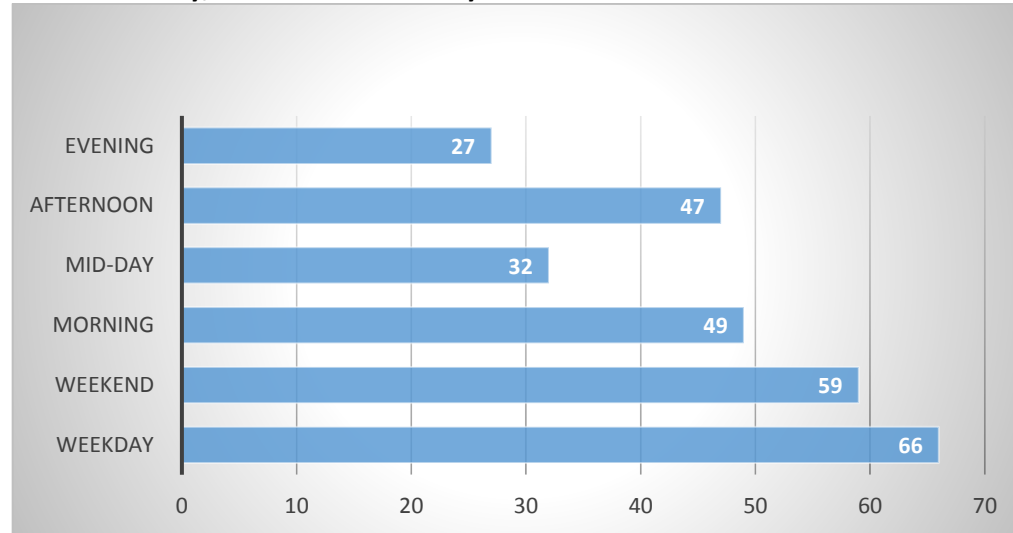
**I use North Berwick Town Centre mostly for:**



**I normally travel to the town centre by:**



### The time of day/week I am most likely to visit the town centre is:



### If I could make one improvement for North Berwick Town Centre, it would be...

#### North Berwick Town Centre would be perfect for me if...

#### I hope that in 10 years time North Berwick Town Centre will...

Analysis of the responses to these questions highlighted the following:

- **Pedestrianisation** in different forms is suggested, from **full to limited-time pedestrianisation** with consideration for Blue Badge and servicing access.
- A need to **retain car access** is felt, with a range of options suggested from keeping **access as it currently is, to limiting access by time** or for Blue Badge or servicing only.
- **Safer streets** are wanted, reducing the feeling of threat from moving vehicles through **wider pavements, with even surfaces**.
- **New uses** in the Town Centre are sought such as **markets or festivals**.
- The **character and vibrancy** of the Town Centre needs to be retained. This includes ensuring that there is a **diversity of retail** in the Town Centre and preventing the street from being filled entirely with one type, such as coffee shops.
- **Independent shops** are popular and being able to retain the ones that are there and attract new independent shops was identified as an important aspect of the Town Centre's character.
- **High Street quality** needs to remain high. Some shop fronts and buildings require maintenance or to be cleaned to ensure that the quality of the Town Centre remains high.
- **Community transport** including Park and Ride was suggested. A community bus service that serves the town with a regular route was mentioned multiple times.
- **Social spaces** – people inevitably meet others then know when they are in the Town Centre, having more places that are pleasant to stop and chat without having to step into the roadway to let people by were suggested.
- There are many other ideas for the Town Centre included additional toilets and changing facilities, clean pavements, more cycle racks and venues for arts and performances.

On the matter of Pedestrianisation, while a full range of options were discussed, the analysis of responses highlighted that the majority of viewpoints sit in the middle range, viewing this

as more nuanced than as a straight yes/no issue, rather something that needs to have degrees of flexibility built into it.

### **Town centre walk and talk**

The elements that scored low (3 or less), were:

- Moving around: difficulty for pedestrian movement, especially around the east end of the High Street and Law Road.

Traffic and parking: Parking was not considered an issue in itself, the management was considered poor and people do not know where to park.

- Housing and community: the range of housing was considered very restricted, mostly higher priced properties. One of the main reasons was the presence of holiday/second homes, which removes housing stock.

The elements that scored high (5 or more), were:

- Public transport: the area is very well connected with a good train and bus service
- Street and space
- Natural space: the area is rich in natural space i.e. the Lodge, the beach etc.
- Play and recreation
- Identity and belonging: the area has a strong identity but some felt that not everyone feels included

### **Movement and Connectivity**

- Create wider footways, particularly on the east end of High Street, to make the place more attractive and accessible.
- A low speed town centre, ideally lower than 20mph. This is to reduce the threatening feeling some people experience around traffic.
- Encourage different modes of transport – walking, cycling, and bus. This could include shuttle buses from the station to the town centre, and a wander bus that runs a route around the town.

Improved cycle routes into the town centre, such as along Beach Road.

- Explore pedestrianisation using timing to manage it, for example a seasonal pedestrianisation or restricted from 10am to 4pm.
- Improve wayfinding, with signage to the beach, centre, greenspaces, community facilities and other key points of interest.

### **Traffic and Parking**

- Ticketed parking in the town centre – first 20 minutes free, then charge after this.
- Manage the existing car parks more efficiently, prevent all day parking to free up more spaces for people visiting or shopping in the town centre.
- Ensure Blue Badge access to the town centre is retained.
- Enhance use of car parks that are under-used such as at the Recreation Park or the High School at weekends.
- Car park expansions, including multi-storey, at station, St Andrew Street, Imperial car parks.
- Resident parking schemes if a more restrictive parking regime is introduced in the town centre.

### **Equal Access**

- Improve access between train station and the Town Centre by marking out and enhancing a pedestrian route for those with restricted mobility.
- Note that not all who have additional access needs will have a Blue Badge.

- Planning for a dementia friendly town centre – consider the design, keeping consistency and familiarity as much as possible. Consult with these groups prior to finalising change.
- Benches and rest areas for people to sit and relax – including the idea of friendship or buddy benches, an idea for creating sociable places as sitting indicates you would like conversation or companionship.
- Improve the position and availability of Blue Badge parking including considering how to increase turnover of some Blue Badge spaces for those ‘popping in’.
- Improved access to the beach for wheelchair users.

### **Facilities**

- Business space somewhere in the Town Centre – collaborative, hot-desk space for small companies, home workers, tele-commuters etc. Potential at the Police Station.
- Shoe shop in Town Centre
- Indoor play centre – that has provision and activities for full age range. Nothing has replaced Space skatepark leaving a gap for those who used this.
- Arts centre with performance space.
- Additional public toilets at the station and western end of the Town.

### **Sustainability**

- Moving away from car travel to active forms of travel, such as walking and cycling, would be a primary way of making the Town more sustainable.
- Sustainability should permeate every decision about change, it should be a key category that projects are measured against.

### **Outcomes:**

- General footway widths
- Dealing with side street junctions that are excessively wide, with relatively high traffic flows
- Marked, informal, possibly raised crossings to help people walk between the sea front and the High street.
- Continuous footways across very lightly-used side streets
- More comprehensive remodelling of junctions that are busier than those junctions in point 2.
- Major improvements to walking conditions along whole street sections (the eastern end of High Street was identified as a priority for the Town Centre)
- Creation of a Town-wide 20 mph zone
- Signalised crossings and junctions to be re-timed to reduce waiting times for pedestrians

### **Parking**

Comments from the Charrette exercise on parking were;

- **Width of the pavements** needs to be addressed; currently they are a barrier to access. Getting the space to add width was more difficult, with a range of ideas being proposed from removing car parking to ‘herring-bone’ parking in specific areas and more radical solutions such as rebuilding one side of the high street 2 metres back to create more space.
- **Crossings on High Street** – both old and young people highlighted the lack of crossings on High Street as an issue. This has an impact on the confidence that these

groups have in using and accessing the town centre. Introducing crossing points where people are sure that they have priority would make a positive difference.

- **Managing deliveries and waste collection**, this is an issue that can create a rolling road block down the High Street, as well as having an impact on the character and amenity of the town centre. School pupils had some very creative ideas for changing this, from using management to ensure these activities take place at suitable times, to conveyor belts or tracks that run down the street for deliveries which could double up as transport for people with mobility issues.
- **Seasonal events**, creating space in the town centre by removing car traffic would allow for markets, festivals or street parties to take place seasonally.
- Other innovative ideas suggested included: **push-cart hire** scheme for carrying equipment to the beach, a **community bus loyalty scheme** to encourage people to use community bus schemes, **attractive walking and cycling routes** to make this a better option than the car and **using technology to limit the number of vehicles** that are on High Street at any one time.

The Parking Management Strategy for East Lothian notes the following for North Berwick

#### Problems & Issues

- Significant seasonal parking problems linked to tourism. Insufficient off-street parking to accommodate peak demand leading to on-street overflow parking affecting residential parking.
- On-street overflow parking around The Glebe car park and North Berwick railway station
- Lack of enforcement of parking restrictions leading to deliberate violation
- Lack of provision for long-stay parking creating long-stay on-street parking
- Lack of Blue Badge parking on High Street
- Retailers experience difficulties with deliveries including abuse of loading bays and double parking on the carriageway
- Signage to off-street car parks could be improved
- Short-term on-street problems at peak school travel periods around schools
- Aspirations to promote High Street as a pedestrian area with limited parking

#### Parking Solutions

- Control through Decriminalised Parking Enforcement
- Implementation of parking management hierarchy defining designated short-stay, medium-stay and long-stay parking locations
- Proposed extension to existing resident's parking area along with ongoing review of Resident's Parking Schemes
- Continuous review of the requirement for Controlled Parking Zones
- Potential new car park to increase capacity and reduce cars circulating the town centre searching for parking
- Consider the introduction of on –off street parking charges
- Provision of designated long-stay car parks
- Ongoing review of Blue Badge parking
- Ongoing review of waiting and loading provision
- Review and implementation of improved signage to off-street car parks where required