Sturminster Newton Town Centre Health Check

Contents

Background

Decisions affecting the town centre should be based on a clear understanding of how the town centre operates, what its strengths and weaknesses are, and what changes may come forward in the future (at a national and local level). Indicators such as vacancy levels, market sustainability, retailer representation and pedestrian flows can all help build up a picture of the vitality, viability and future of the town centre[1]. From this it should be possible to develop ideas that would form the basis of a planning blueprint for the town centre, both in the short and long term.

This paper reviews the evidence available on Sturminster Newton Town Centre, which has been used to inform the policy direction contained in the Neighbourhood Plan. The main evidence sources used in this report has been:

- The Neighbourhood Plan consultation events held in November 2014, which provided a useful insight into local people's concerns and aspirations for the town. Issues relating to the town centre featured prominently in the comments received.
- The Dorset Joint Retail Assessment (Nathaniel Lichfield, 2008) and Dorset Visitor Survey (Bournemouth University 2010) were also reviewed. However these are not particularly reflective of the current economic climate and therefore considered to be of limited relevance to the Sturminster Plan.
- Shop uses survey, undertaken in Summer 2015 by volunteers – details provided in **Appendix A**
- Parking use survey, undertaken in 2015 by volunteers – raw data and analysis provided in **Appendix B**
- A Town Centre Users Survey which was mounted by volunteers in September 2015. Town centre users were sampled on three days (Monday morning, Wednesday afternoon and Saturday morning) in the same week with interviewers positioned at four key points across the town. This survey followed as much as possible the method used in the Joint Retail Assessment (in that a sample that matched the demographic profile of the town (and North Dorset) was sought, and the survey used some of the same questions), so that conclusions could be drawn regarding possible trends. The full survey results are given in **Appendix C**.
- Discussions with retailer representatives during early 2016 – summarized in **Appendix D**

Brief History

The Dorset Historic Town Survey explains that the market in Sturminster would have been established by the 14th century. Local trades centred on cloth-making, together with related industries such as leather working, button and glove making. By the 19th century, Sturminster Newton's cattle market and the coming of the railway stimulated significant growth of the town. Sturminster Newton remained a prosperous market town for much of the 20th century, because of the success of the livestock market and the milk factory, which in turn attracted other agricultural suppliers and legal and financial services.

The towns fortunes began to decline in the latter part of the 20th century, with the closure of the railway in 1966. From 1997 the cattle market and then the Creamery factory closed. Although both large sites were redeveloped, the dramatic closures in effect changed overnight the purpose of the town centre from being dominated by agricultural functions to relying on retailing for its economic well being.

A Town Team was set up in 2015 working under the SturQuest umbrella and involving the residual Chamber of Trade, Hospitality and Commerce and largely made up of retail representatives. It was set up to help take action to reverse the perceived decline in the town centre. The Team see the theme of good quality local food and drink as being the way to market Sturminster Newton. At the current time, the Town Team's programme is focusing on

[1] National Planning Policy Guidance Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 2b-005-20140306 suggests a range of possible indicators to use in undertaking a Town Centre Health Check http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres/ensuring-the-vitality-of-town-centres-guidance/

managing events such as a Producers Market and Craft markets as well as looking at reusing empty shops as 'incubator' units for new businesses.

Planning policy context

The National Planning Policy Framework states that planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period (para 23). This can be achieved by

> defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages, and policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;

> retaining and enhancing existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introducing or creating new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;

> allocating a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres;

> allocating appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available;

> recognising that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and

> where town centres are in decline, planning positively for their future to encourage economic activity

Planning policies should ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise in a way that is sustainable (para 70). The Government have made some significant changes to permitted development rights in recent years – most relevant to Sturminster Newton town centre are:

- change from retail (Class A1[2]) to financial services (Class A2[3]) and vice versa (if there is a display window at ground floor level);
- change from retail/financial services (Class A1/A2) to food and drink (Class A3) (subject to prior approval);
- change from food and drink / drinking establishments / hot food takeaways (Class A3/A4/A5) to retail/financial services (Class A1/A2) (subject to the building not being a pub that has been nominated or registered as a community asset);
- change from drinking establishments / hot food takeaways (Class A4/A5) to food and drink (Class A3) to (subject to the building not being a pub that has been nominated or registered as a community asset);
- modify to include up to 2 flats within a retail/financial services (Class A1/A2) building, provided that the building retains the mix use and no part of the ground floor is used as a flat if it has a display window

The 2016 Local Plan includes a strategic policy for Sturminster Newton (Policy 19), as well as general policies on the District's town centres and economy. The policies ensure that there is no ground floor loss of shop space in primary areas or net loss of wider shops and other 'A-class' uses (i.e. pubs, cafes, estate agencies, banks etc) in secondary areas (but shops can change to other A-class uses and vice versa). Town-centre type uses[4] are generally encouraged in the defined town centre area. Outside of this area, the policy is to resist town centre type uses, by requiring applicants to demonstrate that their proposals could not be accommodated in the centre (or adjoining it) and would not have a significantly adverse impact on the town centre.

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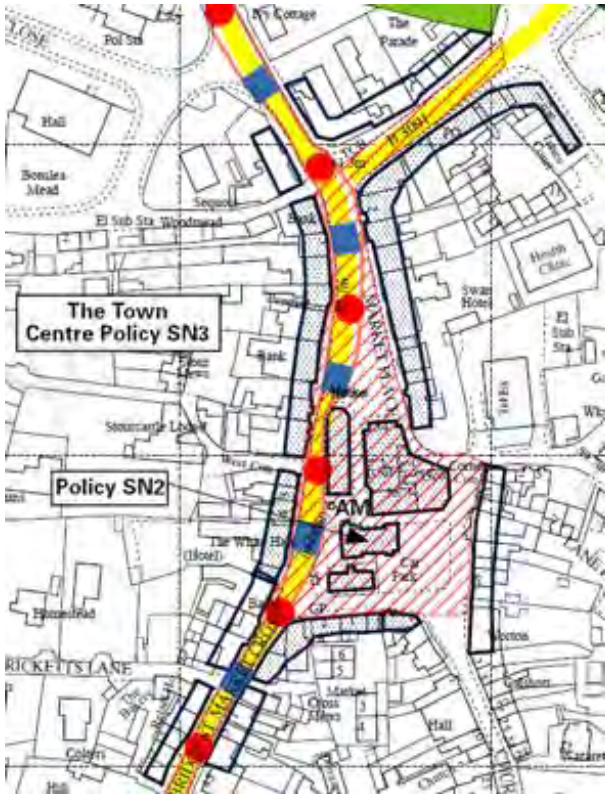
[2] A1: Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, undertakers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes

[3] A2: Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices

[4] Town-centre type uses: retail; leisure, entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (e.g. cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres, and bingo halls); offices; and arts, culture and tourism development (e.g. theatres, museums, hotels and conference facilities).



The boundaries where such policies relate are based on the previous 2003 Local Plan – as shown here, until such time as they are defined through either the Neighbourhood Plan or Part 2 of the Local Plan. The 2008 retail study suggested that these boundaries should be amended slightly (removing small areas and not distinguishing between primary and secondary areas because the centre is comparatively compact). The indicative map (key diagram) in the 2016 Local Plan shows Sturminster Newton town centre area including the area round The Exchange in the town centre.

Policy 19 makes clear that "The main focus for additional retail provision and other town centre uses will be the existing town centre and the redevelopment of the Station Road area. Any scheme for the Station Road area should be designed in accordance with the design and development brief for the area." The Station Road area is not currently defined through planning policy, but is defined in the 2008 Station Road Area Design & Development Brief. Policy 12 also refers to the retention of the outdoor weekly market (which currently takes place in Market Square and Station Road). General shopfront guidance has also been produced by the District Council, to ensure shopfronts are sensitively designed in relation to the building and the character of the town centre as a whole.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- Identifying the primary and secondary retail frontages that make up the town centre. This should make clear what retail uses may be appropriate outside these boundaries, and any flexibility for changes of use within the boundaries. The definition of both the town centre and shopping frontages are quite critical in directing where town centre investment will take place, and could also result in higher vacancy levels if restrictive policies are applied to areas which don't perform well.
- Reviewing the brief for the Station Road mixed use regeneration site, as this is an area where major change is likely to happen over the plan period, which has the potential to support the vitality of the town centre. There may also be other sites identified through the Neighbourhood Plan that are likely to be redeveloped, and could be critical in setting the tone and direction for the future of the town centre.

Town Centre Health Check

Location of retailing and diversity of offering

Getting new businesses to open in the town is not within the remit of the Neighbourhood Plan, but it is possible that it can bring about changes and a clear vision to attract new businesses. The 2008 retail survey showed that the majority of retail businesses in the town centre had been trading for over 10 years (57%), with just 4% of the businesses 'new' to the area (trading here for less than a year). The majority of businesses are leased (62%) with only 23% of units owner-occupied. In terms of plans to change the business, the majority (73%) of respondents stated that they had no plans to change. A very small minority (7%) had intentions to close or relocate out of the town centre. (Joint Retail Assessment 2008)

Table 7.1: Sturminster Newton Uses Mix

The table below provides a comparison of retail usage in the same area of the town from the Joint Retail Assessment (2008) and a survey undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan team in 2015.

	2008			2015		
	Total Units	(%)	GB Average %	Total Units	(%)	Difference
Comparison Retail	17	31.0%	48.3%	11	20.1%	**-10.9%**
Convenience Retail	6	10.9%	9.4%	4	7.2%	**-3.7%**
Services / Misc	27	49.1%	31.6%	34	61.8%	**+12.7%**
Vacant / Under Construction	5	9%	10.7%	6	10.9%	**+1.9**
Total	**55**	**100**	**100**	**55**	**100**	

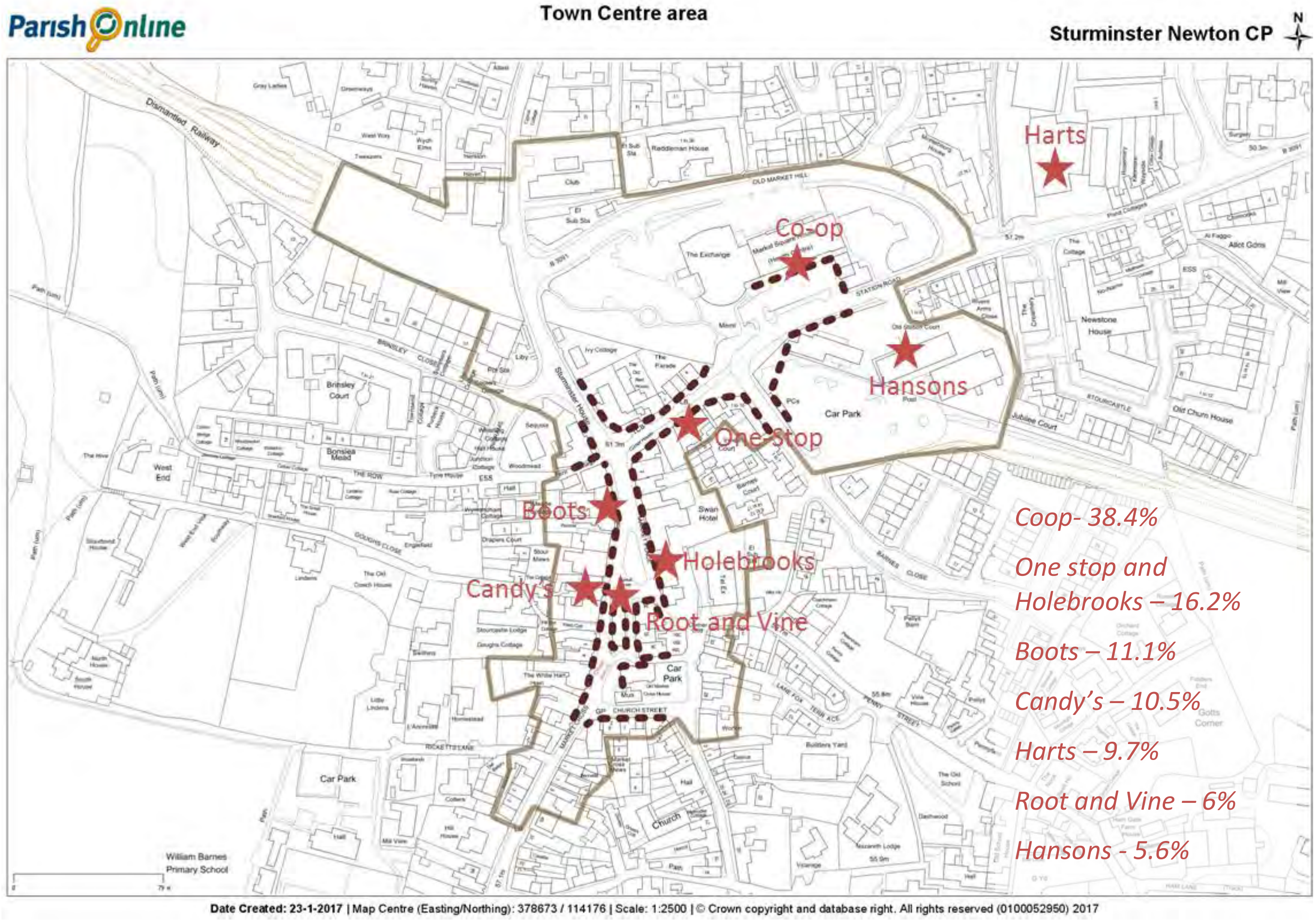
The 2008 study confirmed that Sturminster Newton has relatively fewer comparison shops compared with the rest of the UK and a higher reliance on services. Compared to Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton had fewer convenience shops and comparison shops. Observation suggests that Shaftesbury has been successful in retaining small food stores, which may have been a significant factor in the retention of other shops.

Between 2008 to 2015, our survey indicated that the balance of shops polarized further with the opening of more services e.g. estate agents and beauty parlours and the closure of some food stores (for example the bakery closed, although Oxfords bakery has subsequently opened a branch in the town). This change is in line with recent studies of the role of 21st century High Streets (e.g. Portas Report 2011) that indicate that the rise of internet sales is driving product based retailing out of high streets to be replaced with services. More recently changes in the finance sector has meant that 2 of the 3 banks in the town have closed.

Whilst Market Square contains the majority of retail outlets, the Exchange is the site of the town's modest supermarket, together with other key community uses (such as the medical centre). Also at this east end of the town are two retailing successes – Harts and Hansons – large stores which draw people to the town. Respondents in the 2014 consultation events recognised the areas round Market Square and the Exchange as the 'town centre'. Few people mentioned Bridge Street (the southern most end of the current town centre area) as being part of the town centre.

The limited retail offering in Sturminster Newton was mentioned by 21% people in the November 2014 consultation when asked what prevents more visitors coming to the town. 3% mentioned a lack of an alternative supermarket.

In their 2014 report Matrix surmise that there has been a northward drift of the town centre but they comment that the quality of linkage between the Exchange and Market Square areas is poor and the immediate environs of the Exchange is dominated by car use. The Neighbourhood team town survey in 2015 supports this view and shows that whilst 40.5% of respondents visited shops in both the original High Street and the newer northeast end including Station Road, 34.3% only shopped in the latter area. The Co-op was shown to be the most visited shop in the town (38.4% visited), with Holebrooks and the One Stop shop being joint second most visited (16.2%). The top eight most visited shops are spread throughout the town which means that potentially, there is good circulation around the town. Whilst this positioning is co-incidental, it is the golden rule of shopping centre design that the two most popular shops are placed at either end of the area. However, only 8 people mentioned visiting shops south of Candy's and this may become even more notable in light of a possible drop in footfall in this location with the possible relocation of the Primary school away from this end of the town. The impact of the more recent openings in this area – Oxford Bakery and Sweet Pea Café – have yet to be assessed.



The Joint Retail Assessment did not identify or evaluate any areas in Sturminster Newton that were considered suitable for large-scale redevelopment or expansion of the centre boundary. The Local Plan does identify the Station Road area (where Hanson's is located) as a location for further retail development as part of a mixed use regeneration scheme. This land is in multiple ownership with North Dorset District Council owning the major portion. It also covers the potential path of the Trailway through the town. Recently (2016) permission was granted to modernise Streeters (but not part of comprehensive plans to redevelop the wider area). There is also outstanding permission for a mix of shops and small residential units on the vacant site at the end of Old Market Hill, although at the time of writing there were no apparent plans to market or build.

Both the Exchange and Market Square have markets every week on a Monday – the Exchange also has an indoor market on Saturdays, and a market is held in the British Legion Hall (Bath Road) on most Saturdays. Respondents felt that markets could be improved and the majority wanted a wider variety of stalls. Of particular relevance to this study was the fact that 30% suggested relocation or bringing them into one area and 13% wanted improved access and pedestrian safety. In the 2015 Town centre survey only 27.2% of people questioned on that Monday said they had or were going to visit the market, although observation suggests that Monday morning is one of the busiest periods in the town. The data shows that the market appears not be drawing people from outside the town in any larger numbers than might normally occur, and the increase in footfall on Mondays is accounted for by a higher number of town dwellers. The Pitt Rivers Estate holds ancient rights to benefit from markets in Sturminster Newton and the current Monday market is largely managed and controlled by the Estate's agent. Any change to market arrangements in the town would need to be negotiated with the Pitt Rivers Estate.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- Create a more flexible policy basis is needed for the southern end of the town, to stimulate investment in this area and avoid prolonged vacancies.
- Improve links between the northeast end and Market Square with a possible new route to be created from the south end Station Road car park beside Barnes Close.

- Consider whether Harts should be contained within the town centre. Current planning restrictions for employment sites such as Butts Pond do not support retail development other than in limited circumstances.
- Consider how to reinvigorate the Monday Market, which has suffered a decline, although recent ad hoc producers markets run by the Town Team have been very popular.
- Review the guidance on the Station Road area, to check whether there is an appetite for its delivery from the landowners and developers, and whether it provides the necessary guidance and flexibility in the changing markets. It also may need to pick up on the implications for parking, access to Market Square and the Exchange and the Trailway.

Leisure and Tourism Assets

The Dorset Visitor Survey shows that walking is the most popular activity for tourist to the County and research around the Trailway has confirmed its potential economic value to the area. At the moment the Trailway ends in the Station Road car park and there is no signage to guide walkers into the rest of the town. The proposed route towards Stalbridge will need to cross two roads, one of them the major road through the town where there is currently no pedestrian crossing.

The Exchange is another major leisure and tourism asset for the town centre. It is an ideal venue for a wide range of functions, catering from small groups through to large conferences and shows. The Stour Hall is the largest space here at The Exchange with total theatre seating capacity of 300, half of which are tiered. With one of the widest stages in the county, it is ideal for all types of performance, and now has a 16ft wide cinema screen. There is a full catering kitchen and functioning bar available.

There are other tourism assets around the town centre most notably the Museum (just south of the Market Square) and restaurants, cafes and pubs. Hall and Woodhouse own the towns three pubs, and have recently undertaken a survey of their own to capture the needs of local residents in order to develop an investment strategy that will contribute to the success of all three venues.

The two 2014 Consultation events showed that residents were unhappy with the quality of the restaurants and pubs in the town.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- Provide a clear strategy for improvement and extension of the Trailway, in particular where the proposed route is likely to pass through the town centre.
- Consider how improvements in visitor facilities (such as the pub / cafes and tourist accommodation) might be supported and encouraged, including allowing appropriate changes of use, sufficient and convenient parking provision and good signage

Sturminster Newton as a North Dorset Market Town

The Joint Retail Study for Dorset (2008) researched where people living in Sturminster Newton, Marnhull and Stalbridge (as a single area) shop for food and how many people from other parts of Dorset shop in Sturminster. This can now be compared with the survey undertaken in September 2015 (just Sturminster Newton) and further data from this provide information about who uses the town centre and how this compares with other local centres.

The 2015 Town Centre survey showed that 35% of respondents were from outside the immediate parish with numbers of shoppers from Marnhull to the north, Manston to the east and Hazelbury Bryan to the south. This substantiates the town's role as a local hub. Of all respondents 42.5% said they visited the town centre twice a week or less whilst a significant proportion (32.7%) visited more than five times each week. There does not appear to be any significant differences between these two groups in terms of age profile or expenditure. Asked what primarily drew them to the town on that occasion many mentioned either working or travel to school in Sturminster (30.6%), a leisure activity such as lunch or coffee with family or friends, or walking (28.5%), visits to the medical centre, dentists or vets (13.4%), bank or Post Office (16.3%) or the Exchange (11.2%).

Convenience shopping patterns	Top 3 destinations
Food and grocery main shop for residents of **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge**	Sainsburys, Sherborne 16.2% Morrisons, Wincanton 10.5% Tesco, Shaftesbury 8.6% **Co-op, Sturminster Newton 3.8%** Internet, delivered 2.9%
Day to day top up food and groceries for residents of **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge**	**Co-op Sturminster Newton 10.5%** Sainsbury, Sherbourne 5.7% *Dikes, Stalbridge 3.8%* **Local shops Sturminster Newton 3.8%**

The figures show there is a firm pattern of Sturminster Newton residents buying their food provisions outside the town although some do use the town's food stores to 'top-up' their weekly shop.

The 2015 survey however shows that the most popular shopping destinations for Sturminster residents are Gillingham 31.3%, Blandford 16.9%, Yeovil 15.2%. These differences can probably be accounted for by the fact that the 2015 survey only covered Sturminster Newton and not as in 2008, Stalbridge and Marnhull both of which are further west nearer to Wincanton and Sherbourne. It may also reflect the opening of Asda and Lidl in Gillingham since 2008. The 2008 study showed that 82.9% of Sturminster Newton residents shop by car, however the 2015 survey shows that a far lower percentage of shoppers coming into Sturminster Newton by car (46.2%) with 49% walking. Most local residents have access to a car (the 2011 census shows that 84.2% of households have one or more cars) which means that their custom and choice is not dependent on walking distance or public transport routes.

The more recent town centre survey gives indications that other aspects of the 2008 data are not much changed today (apart from the limited use of the internet for purchasing in the 2008 survey, which is expected to have risen as access to technology and broadband and online shopping sites have increased). . In the 2015 survey 77.8% of respondents reported spending less than £25 and 40.1% less than £10 in their visit. The average household spend on groceries and goods in 2015 was £83.60 per week (Office of National Statistics), which suggests that those using the town do not consider it to be their main shopping destination.

Comparison products	Top location for residents of Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge
Clothing	Yeovil 53% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 1.3%**
Electrical products	Yeovil 34% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 13.3%**
Furniture and soft furnishings	Yeovil 37% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 9.5%**
Hardware and gardening	Yeovil 39% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 8.6%**
Services	
Restaurants and cafes	Yeovil 21.4% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 5.7%**
Health clubs	Wincanton 19% **Sturminster, Marnhull, Stalbridge 33.3%**

This pattern of out of area shopping is reflected in the purchase of Comparison products and Services. The notable exception is the consumption of health clubs.

It is clear from this analysis that Sturminster Newton is competing with (and losing out to) other towns which have better choice in both convenience and comparison goods shopping. All of these towns have populations significantly higher than Sturminster Newton. Although the population is forecast to increase, it will remain well below the level of the main competing towns.

The 2008 Retail Assessment suggests there is room to improve footfall in Sturminster Newton. Although most people (64%) said they were highly unlikely to change their habits when asked what might persuade Sturminster Newton, a significant proportion (14.3%) said better choice would make them shop here more, and this was echoed in the 2015 survey. Better parking was another popular suggestion (7.7%). Retailers questioned shared some of these views, and also mentioned the amount of traffic through the centre as an issue. The call by some in the community for another supermarket must be considered in the context of a current decline in High Street shopping nationally, and market uncertainty (particularly due to increasing mobility and internet shopping factors). Discussions with retailer representatives in 2015 indicate that although the population might support a slightly larger supermarket offer, it is unlikely that two supermarkets could operate successfully within the town.

Some change is needed either in the short or long term to alter local resident's loyalty, to persuade them to use the town centre as their destination of choice. The current strategy emerging from the Town Team is for more specialist shops using both High Street and internet sales – a strategy which seems to have some sound economic reasoning and potentially attract visitors. Nearly two in three Dorset visitors (64%) say that shopping is one of the top three activities during their stay (Dorset Visitor Survey). However local residents that have less disposable income are more likely to need cheap food outlets (and less so specialist products). Other town facilities such as banks, PO, cafes and journeys to and from school and work show that these are also important in bringing people into town.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- Consider how the projected increase in population (by more than 15%) plus potential income from increased visitors offers could arguably support an equivalent increase in retail offer, including an improved supermarket offer.
- Enabling a more flexible approach that supports further specialisation of shops and other active uses such as workshops, small business hubs, gyms and youth centres to help introduce new people (and therefore potential customers) and purpose to the town centre.

Traffic, Pedestrian flows and accessibility

Traffic and in particular its interaction with pedestrians, was identified as the most urgent issue facing the town in the November 2014 consultation event with a significant number of people citing the improvement of this, pavements and pedestrian access as being the most important change which could be bought about by the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst the town needs to accommodate those who pass through and visit the town by car (46.2% drive into town) the significant numbers who walk into town (49%) and the need for all pedestrians to circulate freely and safely should be given at least equal attention. Retailers also believe that traffic has a detrimental effect on the shopping experience in the town.

The projected increase in population and continuing growth in car ownership makes it inevitable that this issue will continue and potentially worsen further. In the past, proposals to deal with the traffic problem have included a bypass of the town centre, but the position of the town in relation to the Stour and its flood plain means that there are very few potential new crossing points to accommodate a new road. It may be possible to divert long distance traffic (particularly large HGVs) onto other roads further away from the town e.g. onto A350 or A357 via Templecombe, perhaps through imposing a weight limit on through traffic.

The 2014 survey helped to identify those places where people feel threatened by traffic in the town, and further survey work has been undertaken on traffic flows and the pedestrian experience of the key pedestrian / cycle routes. The survey showed that generally traffic flows well through the centre, relying on the fact that most people exercise courtesy and common sense and although some appreciable queues built up at times, particularly in the northbound direction and in the centre, they generally cleared quite quickly. Where drivers ignored the 'Keep Clear' areas or tried to assert their right of way moving south out of town, congestion tended to occur. The position of the pedestrian crossing at times also caused traffic to back up to the narrowest point of the High Street which meant that traffic in the opposite direction could not pass. The traffic lights at the bridge appear to be working well to filter traffic into the town at the south end in appropriately sized 'batches'. This survey also highlighted delivery lorries and cars stopping on the High Street and Bridge Street as being a major cause of traffic congestion. Whilst the survey identified that only lorries only make up 5% of traffic, they were very intimidating for pedestrians on the narrower pavements.

The narrowness of the pavement below Market Square and the very large pedestrian flows going and coming back from the primary school on Bridge Street make it very difficult for people in the contra direction to make any progress at these times. This pedestrian flow also coincides with the busiest time for road traffic in this area which exacerbates the problem. It is also quite difficult to cross the road from Market Cross to gain access to

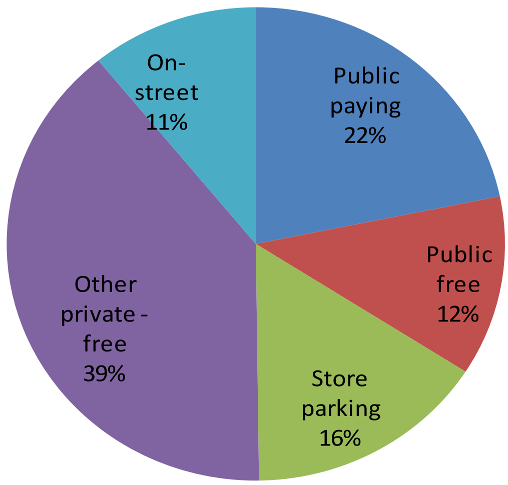
Candys. It was clear that provision for pedestrians makes walking and shopping in the south end of the town unpleasant and potentially unsafe.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- The strategic walkways through and connecting to the town centre should be identified, and a project included to make these safe and attractive for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Traffic management measures should be further explored to improve the public realm and reduce large HGV traffic through the town centre. This is likely to include more effective signage, the provision of designated unloading places, widened pavements and seating areas, provision of safe places to cross the B3092

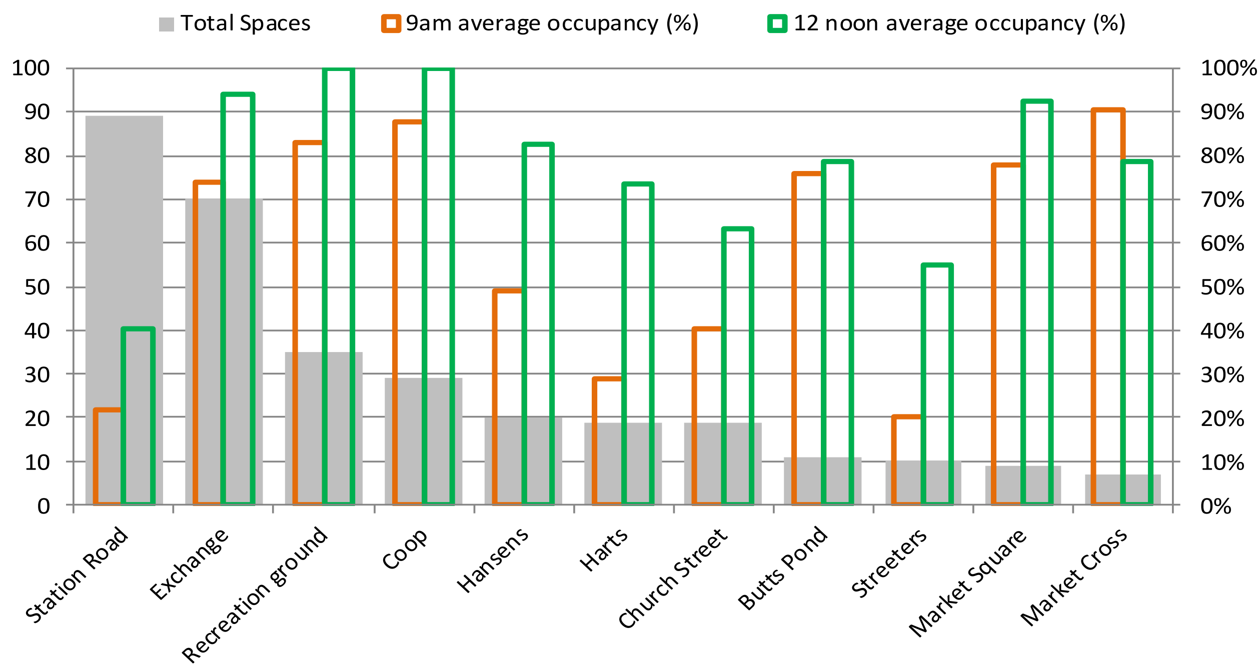
Parking

The 2015 Town centre Survey shows that 46.2% of people use a car to get into the town. Parking issues were mentioned by nearly half (43%) of people in the community when asked what prevents more visitors coming to the town. It was identified as the second most urgent issue facing the town in the November 2014 consultation event. Further questions about parking revealed respondents had several concerns - the location, cost and number of spaces (including disabled and cycle facilities) available in the town. It is also an issue that has been raised by retailers. For these reasons the Neighbourhood Plan team and a survey conducted a more detailed survey on the location and usage of parking spaces serving the town centre area in June 2015.



There are about 500 parking spaces in and around town, just over half of which are private store / business customer and staff parking. The largest of these are the Exchange / Medical Centre, the Co-op, Hansens and Harts. These make a significant cluster to the north of the town centre. The Councils operate a number of pay and display and free car parks, the largest being Station Road, the Recreation ground (free) and Church Street. These make up about a third of available parking spaces. There are also free on-street parking places in and around the town centre area.

Some car parks are much better used than others.



Those with particularly high occupancy rates include the car parks around The Exchange and the Co-Op, the car park at the Recreation Ground, the short stay car park in the Market Square and the area near the Market Cross, and the long stay car park at the entrance to Butts Pond industrial estate. This observation is supported by the data from the 2015 Town centre survey which shows that of those who drove into town, 20% parked in the Station Road car park whilst 41% parked in the spaces around the Exchange and Co-op, 30% in private spaces (eg Hansons) and 9% out of the town centre area.

The availability of free and convenient alternatives will inevitably lead to additional traffic movements searching for spaces, despite their generally high occupancy levels. Complaints have also been received from local residents about the problems arising from staff using on-street spaces in roads such as Brindsley Close. Station Road, the largest pay-and-display car park, appears to be significantly under-used. At the moment the District Council car parks are generating a revenue of about £40,000 (split between Station Road and Church Street car parks).

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- In terms of location, most of the town centre parking is located at the north/east end of town and offers a further reason why residents feel the 'centre' of the town has shifted towards this area.
- Although there appears to be an adequate number of total parking spaces, if the town centre offer is to grow it is likely that the current level will need to be retained. There is little coordination in terms of parking management (charging, length of stay and signage) to reduce unnecessary traffic movements and promote a pleasant visitor experience, and this could be identified as a possible project. Facilities such as toilets and electric car charging power points should be conveniently located in relation to the main car parks.

State of town centre environmental quality

Action for Market towns produced a number of case studies of town regeneration up to 2014. Key lessons learnt from these that are relevant to our study reinforce the importance of the townscape in establishing an identity for a town. This includes making sure historic streets are attractive and authentic, and that a limited palette of materials and colours to be used in street furniture and building. Authenticity and distinctness are both seen as important.

The design and state of streets and green spaces, leisure activities and social spaces are important factors in people's perceptions of the area (2014 consultation). Improving these aspects can not only make the town centre more pleasant and efficient to us but also develop a sense of civic pride and attract visitors. Sturminster Newton already has a Design Statement produced by Matrix which won an award from the Association of Town Planning. There is now an opportunity to include these guidelines, plus guidelines for signage, street furniture and shop fronts, within a development plan document.

Considerations for the Neighbourhood plan therefore include:

- Providing clearer guidance on shop fronts, signage and street furniture that is authentic and distinctive, in liaison with North Dorset District Council's conservation team.
- Providing ideas for improvements to the public realm that emphasise the distinctive identity and offer of the town

SWOT Analysis

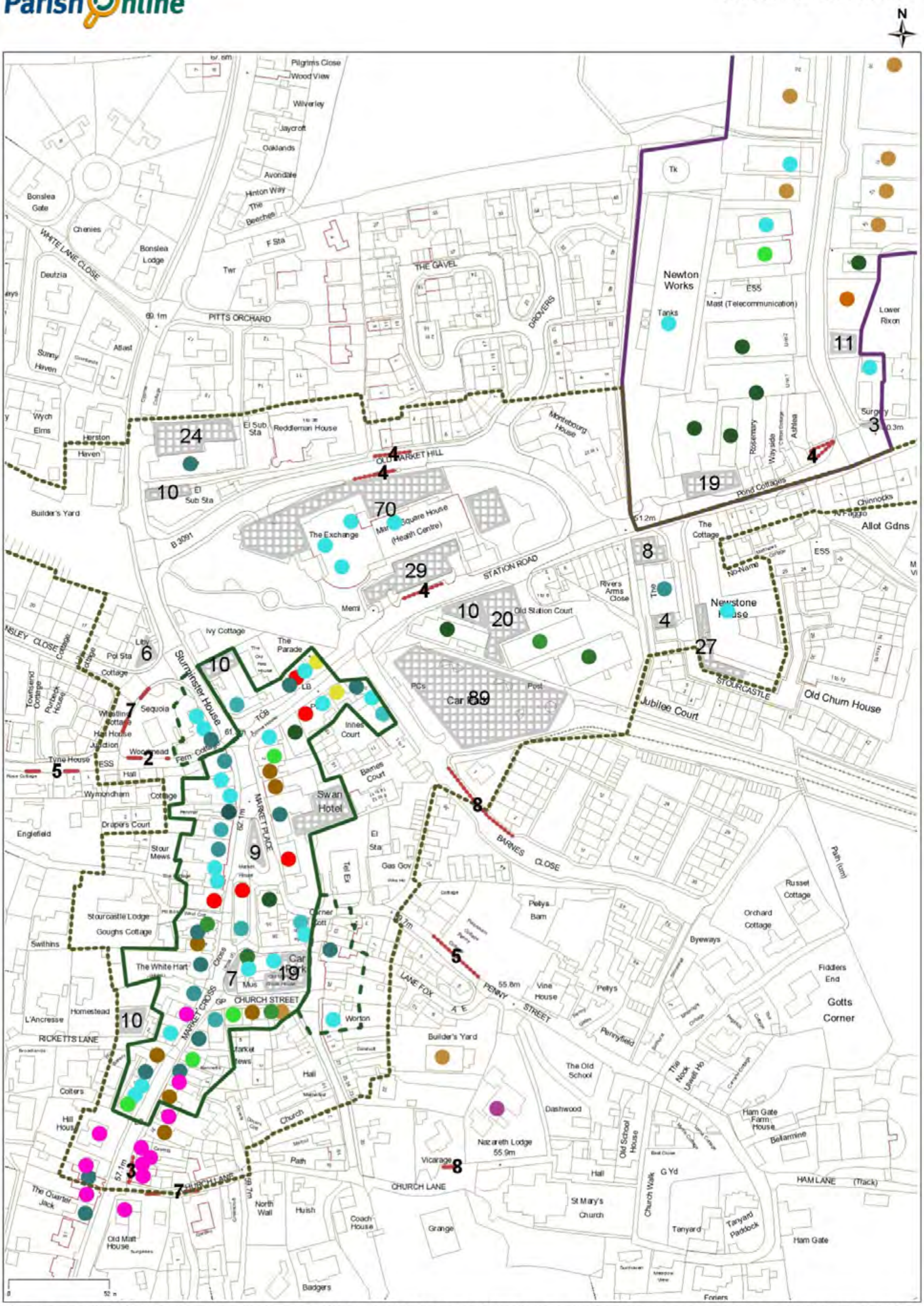
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Attractive Market Cross and historic environment in the south Identity as a 'market town' with weekly market presence Annual cheese festival attracting over 15,000 visitors Significant number of non retail facilities that draw people into town eg Exchange, banks, medical centre	Lack of clarity on arrival; routing and car parking not clear or managed effectively Poor pedestrian environment, particularly south of Market Square Declining market, and an outflow of shopping spend and little inflow (linked to limited retail offer) Trailway route through the town centre is not clear, other visitor facilities poor and/or not signed
Opportunities	**Threats**
Potential sites for development in the northern part of the town centre (Clarkes Yard and Station Road) provide scope to improve the town centre and mix of uses Design improvements (shop fronts and public realm) could achieve a better visitor experience and stronger town identity A flexible approach that enables further specialisation of shops and other active uses to attract in potential customers to the town centre Maximising the potential of the Exchange to bring in people (and revenue) eg through user as a conferencing centre Coordinated approach to car parks – improving the visitor experience and usage Over-arching strategy to re-route large HGVs away from the town centre	Loss of trade / footfall due to competition (nearby towns and internet shopping) and relocation of primary school, leading to potential shop vacancies, particularly at southernmost end of the town Increasing traffic through the town centre as the population grows, may further degrade the visitor experience and historic environment The failure to secure a clear and attractive route for the Trailway extension through the town centre and to the west, as key sites are developed

Appendix A: Town Centre uses survey – raw data

Map of town centre survey – for colour codes see next page

Parish Online

Sturminster Newton CP



Date Created: 17-8-2015 | Map Centre (Easting/Northing): 378765 / 114220 | Scale: 1:2500 | © Crown copyright and database right. All rights reserved (0100052950) 2015

Table of properties surveyed

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
TCB-VF-044	1 Church Street	Y	Beads With A Twist		comparison - hobbies and gifts	Beads, Jewellery,Repairs, Classes in Jewellery	S	Residential
TCB-VF-041	1 Church Street	Y	Pat Cross Kitchens		business - workshops	Pat Cross Kitchens	S	Residential
TCB-Vf-066	1 Retsel House Bridge St	Y	Noah's Ark		comparison - other	Pet shop	S	Ladies Hair Dresser
TCB-VF-036	1 Station Road	Y	Mona Lisa		service - eating and drinking	Small Italian Take Away	S	Storage
TCB-Vf-067	2 Retsel House Bridge St	Y	Vision Express		service - other	Optician	S	Ladies Hairdresser
TCB-VF-038	2 Station Road	Y	Bulgarian Food		convenience	Small food shop selling Bulgarian food	S	Residential
TCB-VF-068	3 Retsel House Bridge St	N	Used to be Newmans Racing		service - other	Empty but used to be betting shop	S	Gents Barbers
TCB-VF-039	3 Station Road	Y	The Kutting Station		service - other	Hairdresser	S	Residential
TCB-VF-025	35a Church Street	Y	John Romans Park Homes		service - other	Offices	S	Residential
TCB-VF-024	35c Corner Cottage	Y	Spear Travel		service - travel agents	Travel Agent	S	Residential
TCB-VF-040	4 Station Road	Y	Brainwave		comparison - charity	Charity shop	S	Residential
TCB-VF-064	48 Bridge St	Y			residential	Private Home	S	Residential
TCB-Vf-063	49 Bridge St	Y	Sturminster Fish Bar		service - eating and drinking	Fish and Chips takeaway	S	Residential
TCB-VF-062	50 Bridge St	Y			residential	Private home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-057	70 Bridge Street	Y			residential	Private home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-058	71 Bridge Street	Y			residential	Private home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-059	72 Bridge Street	Y			residential	Divided into two res properties.Former Clock Shop	S	Residential
TCB-VF-042	BATH ROAD	Y	ROYAL BRITISH LEGION		service - eating and drinking	Clubhouse with bar and kitchen	M	
TCB-VF-055	Bridge St	Y			empty retail unit	Formerly Jonathan Eckardt	S	Residential

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
						Films		
TCB-VF-051	Bridge Street	Y	Cafe Spice		service - eating and drinking	Indian Restaurant and Takeaway	S	Uncertain
TCB-VF-053	Bridge Street	N	Empty - Used to be Bignolds		empty retail unit	Used to be an accountant - for sale	S	
TCB-VF-049	Bridge Street	Y	Mama's Kitchen		service - eating and drinking	Greek Restaurant	S	Residential
TCB-VF-050	Bridge Street	Y	Stour Books		comparison - other	Second hand books and binding	S	Residential
TCB-VF-052	Bridge Street	Y			residential	Private house	S	Residential
TCB-VF-014	Bridge Street North	N			empty retail unit	Used to be Scribes		
TCB-VF-013	Bridge Street North	N	Was Laneys.Let to Est Agnt		empty retail unit	Currently empty but leased to Estate Agent	S	Same
TCB-VF-012	Bridge Street North	Y	Wessex Photos		comparison - other	Cameras and accessories and printing	S	Unknown
TBP-VF-031	BUTTS POND	N	?		empty non-retail unit	EMPTY PLOT	M	
TBP-VF-012	BUTTS POND	Y	AGRICENTRE		comparison - other	SUPPLIERS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS	L	
TBP-VF-018	BUTTS POND	Y	BROAD OAK MOTORS		business - workshops	CAR MECHANIC	S	
TBP-VF-015	BUTTS POND	Y	BUTLER FUELS / CERTAS ENERGY		comparison - other	SUPPLIERS OF OIL	M	
TBP-VF-026	BUTTS POND	Y	CAICE		business - workshops	MANUFACTURE OF ACOUSTIC PRODUCTS	L	
TBP-VF-019	BUTTS POND	Y	CALEVA PROCESS SOLUTIONS		business - workshops	MANUFACTURE OF PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS	M	
TBP-VF-030	BUTTS POND	Y	D C GARDEN MACHINERY		comparison - home and garden	GARDEN MACHINERY, SALES, REPAIRS AND SERVICING	S	
TBP-VF-016	BUTTS POND	Y	E.Q.SKILLS BASE		service - other	EDUCATION - TRAINING CENTRE	M	
TBP-VF-023	BUTTS POND	Y	EXCLUSIVE HTQ		business - workshops	COMMERCIAL AND HOME FURNITURE DESIGN AND	M	

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
						MANUFACTU		
TBP-VF-013	BUTTS POND	Y	F		service - other	SUPPLY AND ERECT SCAFFOLDING	L	
TBP-VF-002	BUTTS POND	Y	HARTS OF STUR		comparison - home and garden	Hardware, home goods, wholesale and internet	L	Same
TBP-VF-025	BUTTS POND	Y	HARVEY'S GARAGE		business - workshops	VEHICLE BODYWORK REPAIRS	S	
TBP-VF-011	BUTTS POND	Y	JORDAN AND FABER		business - workshops	Building Contractors	L	
TBP-VF-021	BUTTS POND	Y	MARK BILLEN		business - workshops	MOTOR MECHANIC AND MOT CENTRE	M	
TBP-VF-027	BUTTS POND	Y	NEWGLAZE		business - workshops	DOUBLE GLAZING INSTALLER	M	
TBP-VF-017	BUTTS POND	Y	NORDCAT		service - other	COMMUNITY TRANSPORT - OFFICE	S	
TBP-VF-014	BUTTS POND	Y	NORTHOVER FUELS		comparison - other	COAL MERCHANTS ALSO SUPPLYING HEATING OIL AND GAS	M	
TBP-VF-028	BUTTS POND	Y	OLIVES ET AL		business - workshops	FOOD PRODUCTS	M	
TBP-VF-009	BUTTS POND	Y	ROYAL MAIL		service - other	MAIL/PARCEL SORTING DEPOT	M	
TBP-VF-020	BUTTS POND	Y	S AND N HOME PRODUCTS LTD		business - workshops	MANUFACTURE OF HOME FRAGRANCE PRODUCTS	L	
TBP-VF-011A	BUTTS POND	Y	S.O.S.STORAGE		service - other	ONSITE STORAGE CONTAINERS AND CABINS FOR HIRE/SALE	M	
TBP-VF-006	BUTTS POND	N	?		comparison - other	DOUBLE GLAZING BEING DISMANTLED	M	
TBP-VF-007	BUTTS POND	Y	B H WHITE AND SONS		service - other	FARM EQUIPMENT SUPPLIERS	M	
TBP-VF-010	BUTTS POND	Y	CRANBORNE STONE		business - workshops	MASONRY CONTRACTORS - MANUFACTURE AND RETAIL	L	
TBP-VF-008	BUTTS POND	Y	dcm tyres wessex		business - workshops	supplying and fitting tyres and brakes	M	
TBP-VF-001	Butts Pond Industrial Estate	Y	Stalbridge Linen Services		service - other	Laundry	L	

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
TCB-VF-056	Casetta Bridge Street	y			residential	Private Home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-092	Charles Higgins Partnership	Y	Sturminster Newton medical centre		service - other	Medical Centre - GPs	M	Web design
TCB-VF-003	Church Street	Y	A Hammond and Son Ltd		service - other	Offices for builder	M	Offices
TCB-VF-026	Church Street	Y	Town House Dragon		service - eating and drinking	Takeaway Restaurant	S	Residential
TCB-VF-069	Clock House Bridge St	Y	Clock House Kebab and Pizza		service - eating and drinking	Takeaway pizza and kebab shop	S	Residential
TCB-VF-076	Cnr Market Cross Goughs Close	Y	Agnes and Vera		comparison - hobbies and gifts	Gifts and Homeware	S	Residential
TCB-VF-037	Cnr of Bath Rd and Station Rd	Y	Symonds and Sampson		service - estate agents	Corner shop front - estate agent	S	Offices
TCB-VF-011	Cnr of Bridge St and Stn Rd	Y	Sweet Solutions		service - other	Health, Beauty, Massage, Facials	S	Offices
TCB-VF-070	Corner Mkt Cross and Ricketts	Y	Sutcliffe and Co		service - other	Chartered Accountants Office	S	Offices
TCB-VF-048	Corner Ricketts Ln Mkt Cross	N	None		empty retail unit	Empty former bakery and workshops.Pot for dev	S	None
TCB-VF-091	Exchange Building	Y	Sturquest		service - other	Community office and Tourist Info	S	Chiropodist
TCB-VF-089	Exchange Building	Y	The Exchange		service - other	Lower gnd flr has meeting rms and large open area	L	The Exchange
TCB-VF-065	Hill House Bridge St	Y			residential	Private home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-004	INNES COURT	Y	croud.com - Moving to top Flr Exchange		service - mobile phone and computing	SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY	S	Residential
TCB-VF-005	INNES COURT	Y	GRASSBY AND CLOSE		service - other	FUNERAL DIRECTORS	S	Residential
TCB-VF-047	Market Cross	Y	Abbott and Slater		service - estate agents	Estate Agent	S	Residential
TCB-VF-075	Market Cross	Y	Cafe Expresso		service - eating and	Italian style cafe	S	Residential

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
					drinking			
TCB-VF-078	Market Cross	Y	Dorothy Rose		service - other	Nails and Beauty	S	Residential
TCB-VF-020	Market Cross	Y	Morton New		service - estate agents	Estate Agent	S	Office Store
TCB-VF-072	Market Cross	Y	Nat West Bank		service - banking and finance	High St Bank	M	Offices
TCB-VF-046	Market Cross	Y	Rustic Rose		comparison - other	Florist	S	Storage
TCB-VF-074	Market Cross	N	The Golden Lake		empty retail unit	Owned by other Chinese takeaway.Not open	S	Unknown
TCB-VF-045	Market Cross	N	Vacant - Used To Be BMV Gifts Trophies		empty retail unit		S	Vacant
TCB-VF-073	Market Cross	Y	White Hart Hotel		service - eating and drinking	Pub	M	Rooms for rent
TCB-VF-016	Market Place	Y	A Holbrooks		convenience	Butcher and Delicatessen	M	Residential
TCB-VF-085	Market Place	Y	Barclays Bank		service - banking and finance	banking	M	Offices
TCB-VF-083	Market Place	Y	Boots		service - other	Pharmacy and Chemist	S	Residential
TCB-VF-077	Market Place	Y	Candys		convenience	Newsagent and stationers	S	Residential
TCB-VF-084	Market Place	Y	Eyes Right		service - other	Optician	S	Residential
TCB-VF-080	Market Place	Y	Lloyds Bank		service - banking and finance	Bank	M	Vacant, office and residential
TCB-VF-018	Market Place	Y	Marsh and Son		comparison - home and garden	Audiovisual and Household Appliances.Oc 35 and 36	M	Offices and Residential
TCB-VF-019	Market Place	Y	Root and Vine		convenience	Green Grocer/ Fruit and Veg	S	Storage
TCB-VF-081	Market Place	Y	Roy Barrett		service - estate agents	lettings and sales	S	Accountant 2nd floor residential
TCB-VF-015	Market Place	Y	Swan Inn Hall and Woodhouse		service - eating and drinking	Bar and Restaurant	M	Same use
TCB-VF-082	Market Place	Y	The Market Place Dry Cleaning		service - laundries and dry cleaners	laundry and dry cleaner	S	Residential
TCB-VF-079	Market Square	Y	Simply Hair		service - other	Hairdresser	S	Residential

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
TCB-VF-031	Newstone House, Stourcastle	Care Home	Colten Care - Newstone House		residential other	Large care home	L	Care Home
TCB-VF-060	Old Malt House	Y			residential	Private home.Used to be Dentist -moved to Creamery	S	Residential
TCB-VF-022	Old Market Cross House	Y	Decor Amour		service - other	Hand-Crafted goods and bespoke stitching	S	Uncertain
TCB-VF-023	Old Market Cross House	Y	Enzo's		service - other	Hair Dresser	S	Uncertain
TCB-VF-021	Old Market Cross House	Y	Gallery 1		comparison - clothes and footwear	Ladies Fashion	S	Uncertain
TCB-VF-071	Old Tailors Cottage Mkt Cross	Y			residential	Private Home	S	Residential
TCB-VF-002	Penny Street	Y	HAMMONDS BUILDING CONTRACTORS		business - workshops	Offices and Builders Yard	L	
TCB-VF-001	Penny Street	Y	NAZARETH LODGE CARE HOME		residential other	Care home	L	Same
TCB-VF-061	Quarter Jack Bridge St	y	Comins Tea House		service - eating and drinking	Tea Room and wholesale	S	Residential
TBPR-VF-006	Richmar trading centre	Y	A J G JOINERY		business - workshops	JOINERY AND CARPENTRY	S	
TBPR-VF-005	Richmar trading centre	Y	HAZEL AND WEST		service - other	CONSTRUCTION / BUILDERS	S	
TBPR-VF-002	Richmar trading centre	Y	MOTLEY.CO.UK		service - mobile phone and computing	WEB DESIGN AND GRAPHIC DESIGN	S	
TBPR-VF-004	Richmar trading centre	Y	PARAGON SERVICES		service - other	CLEANING CONTRACTORS	S	
TBPR-VF-009	Richmar trading centre	Y	S.N.AMATEUR BOXING CLUB		service - other	BOXING CLUB AND GYM	M	
TBPR-VF-008	Richmar trading centre	Y	STURMINSTER JOINERY		business - workshops	JOINERY	S	
TBPR-VF-003	Richmar trading centre	Y	THE REVIVAL COMPANY		service - other	FIRE AND FLOOD RESTORATION, HEAT	S	

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
						SOLUTIONS		
TBPR-VF-007	Richmar trading centre	Y	VALE FIRE SAFETY		service - other	SUPPLY FIRE EXTINGUISHERS AND ALARMS, TRAINING	S	
TBPR-VF-001	Richmar trading centre	N			business - workshops	Not in use	S	
TCB-VF-035	Rixon hill	Y	BLACKMORE VALE VETERINARY		service - other	VETS	M	
TCB-VF-032	Rixon hill	Y	COWLEY AND SON		business - workshops	PLUMBING BUISINESS	S	
TCB-VF-034	Rixon hill	Y	FRIARS MOOR VETERINARY CLINIC		service - other	VETS	M	Same
TCB-VF-033	Rixon hill	Y	TOPS DAY NURSERY		service - other	CHILDCARE, DAY NURSERY	M	Same
TCB-VF-007	Station road	Y	FRIENDS OF BLANDFORD COMMUNITY HOSPITAL		comparison - charity	CLOTHES, BOOKS, BRICABRAC ETC	S	Residential
TCB-VF-028	Station road	Y	HANSONS		comparison - hobbies and gifts	SELLING FABRICS AND CRAFT MATERIALS	L	
TCB-VF-009	Station road	Y	ONE STOP		convenience	SHOP SELLING FOOD, NEWSPAPERS AND STATIONERY.	S	
TCB-VF-008	Station road	Y	POST OFFICE		service - other	POST OFFICE WITHIN ONE STOP SHOP	S	Residential
TCB-VF-027	Station road	Y	STREETERS		comparison - home and garden	CARPETS AND BEDS SALES	L	
TCB-VF-029	Station road	Y	THE ORIGINAL FACTORY SHOP		comparison - clothes and footwear	SELLING CLOTHES, SHOES, HOUSE AND GARDEN ITEMS	L	
TCB-VF-010	Station Road South	Y	Marsh and Son		comparison - home and garden	Warehouse for Marsh's white-goods	M	n/a
TCB-VF-006	Station road/innes court	Y	POETS CORNER CAFE		service - eating and drinking	CAFE	S	Residential
TCB-VF-030	Stourcastle	Y	NATIONAL FARMERS UNION		service - banking and finance	INSURANCE COMPANY AND TRADE UNION	M	Dental Clinic
TCB-VF-087	Sturminster House	Y	Farnfields		service - other	Law Firm	M	Offices

Ref number	Street or area	In use Y or N	Business name		Primary use	Details	Unit Size S M L	Upper floor use
	Market Place							
TCB-VF-086	Sturminster House Market Place	Y	Sturminster House Tea Room		service - eating and drinking	Cafe and sales of collectables	S	Offices
TCB-VF-088	Sturminster House Market Place	Y			service - other		S	Offices
TCB-VF-054	Talbot House Bridge Street	Y			residential	Private house	S	Residential
TCB-VF-090	The Exchange Building	Y	Town Council		service - other	Sturminster Newton Town Council Office	S	Offices
TCB-VF-043	White Lane Close	Y	Litton Furniture		business - workshops	FURNITURE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURE	M	

Appendix B: Parking Survey Raw data, Observations and Analysis

	Total Spaces	Disabled	Type	Ownership
Butts Pond	11	1	Long Stay	NDDC
Christian Fellowship	2		On Street	DCC
Church Street	19	1	Short Stay	NDDC
Coop	29	3	Long Stay	Private
Exchange	70	2	Short Stay	Private
Library	6	0	Short Stay	DCC
Market Cross	7	0	Short Stay	Private
Market Square	9	2	Short Stay	NDDC
Recreation ground	35	2	Long Stay	SNTC
Sequoia	7	0	On Street	DCC
Station Road	89	6	Long Stay	NDDC
The Row	4	0	On Street	DCC
Blackmore Vets	3		Customers only	Private
Friars Moor Vets	15		Customers only	Private
Hansens	20		Customers only	Private
Harts	19		Customers only	Private
Nat West	10		Customers only	Private
Newstone House	29		Customers only	Private
NFU	8		Customers only	Private
RBL	24		Customers only	Private
Reddleman House	10		Customers only	Private
SN Dental Care	4		Customers only	Private
Streeters	10		Customers only	Private
Symonds and Sampson	10		Customers only	Private
Tops Nursery	5		Customers only	Private

	Sat 13/6			15/6	Fri 19/9		Sat 20/6			22/6	Mon 29/6	
	9am	12pm	3pm	9am	9am	12pm	9am	10.30	12pm	9am	9am	12pm
Station Road	10	31	21	36	10	32	4	14	22	23	34	58
Exchange	18	/	7	70	/	/	/	/	/	/	67	66
Recreation ground	25	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	33	35
Coop	/	29	17	26	/	/	18	/	29	29	29	29
Hansens	/	15	13	15	8	20	10	/	19	8	8	12
Harts	/	15	/	/	4	/	7	/	12	7	4	15
Church Street	10	9	3	9	8	14	6	9	11	6	7	14
Butts Pond	/	5	/	/	10	10	5	/	/	10	/	11
Streeters	/	5	/	1	/	/	/	/	/	2	3	6
Market Square	9	8	5	/	6	8	6	8	9	/	/	/
Market Cross	6	6	6	7	7	6	5	3	4	6	7	6

/ not counted

Survey results and general observations

Parking areas in and around the town centre of Sturminster Newton can be divided into five types:

- NDDC controlled car parks including those at Station Road, Church Street and Butts Pond,
- Other public car parks including those at the Recreation Ground, the Market Square and the Library,
- Private car parks for the staff and or customers of commercial premises including those at The Co-Op, Hansens and Harts,
- Allocated roadside parking such as in Church Lane and The Row,
- Non-allocated roadside parking such as in Brindsley Close and Barnes Close.

The total number of parking spaces exceeds 510 of which at least 273 are in private car parks, approximately 187 in public car parks and roadside areas allocated for public parking with space for a further 50 or so vehicles in non-allocated roadside areas. 15 of the total spaces are marked for use by disabled people.

Some car parks are much better used than others. Those with particularly high occupancy rates include the free short stay car park in the Market Place, the area near the Market Cross, the Co-Op customer car park, the car parks around The Exchange and the Medical Centre, the free car park at the Recreation Ground and the free long stay car park at the entrance to Butts Pond industrial estate.

Station Road, the largest car park, appeared to be under-used at the time of the surveys to the extent that alternative uses might be considered, however would this continue to be the case as the planned expansion of the town adds population and cars? Also, what would be the effect on usage of this car park if town centre shops and amenities became more attractive to local residents and visitors? Will increased use of the Trailway encourage greater use of the car park? Would the car park be better used if it was free? Would better signage improve use of the Station Road car park?

The number of Disabled spaces would appear to be adequate except perhaps at the Co-Op, outside The Exchange and Medical Centre, and in the Market Place. The six Disabled spaces in the Station Road car park appeared to be under-used. One member of the public pointed out that Blue Badge holders now have to pay and the fact that the spaces are at the bottom end of the car park a disabled person faces a steep and lengthy journey to the top of the car park to reach the shops and amenities of the town centre, whereas, if you are lucky, you may be able to park for free at the Library or in the Market Place and access the shops by a much flatter and shorter route.

The car parks are spread out around the town and are very often not visible from the main roads into and through the town. It would be very easy for a visitor to drive up Bridge Street and through the old town centre, concentrating on negotiating the 'pinch points' and catching a fleeting glance of the (usually full) parking areas around the Market Cross and the Market Square, and to continue through the traffic lights on to Bath Road and so out of the town. Such visitors would possibly think "what a lovely old town, pity there was nowhere to park, perhaps we'll have better luck at the next town" and an opportunity has been missed.

Butts Pond car park appears to be very well used on week days and there were also up to a dozen cars parked on the roadside in the close vicinity, i.e. at the entrance to the industrial estate, on weekdays. Is this a problem? Would it be possible to enlarge the NDDC car park?

The survey was carried out in June. The situation may differ during the school holiday period when there might be more visitors to the town.

Neighbourhood Plan volunteer, July 2015

Appendix C: Additional Town Centre Survey

This report presents data obtained from a survey carried out in Sturminster Newton town centre in September 2015. The main purpose of the survey was to inform the town centre theme for the Neighbourhood Plan where the information already in the public domain was out of date and insufficiently focussed. This report presents the data.

Method

This survey followed where possible the method used in the 2008 Dorset Joint Retail Assessment in that a sample that matched the demographic profile of the town (and North Dorset) was sought it also used some of the same questions.

The Town Centre Survey was mounted by volunteers in September 2015. Running the survey in September was likely to give an 'average' picture of the town centre use, not affected by school holidays or inclement weather. Town centre users were sampled on three days in the same week. Monday morning and Saturday morning were chosen because they are the two busiest periods in the town centre and Wednesday afternoon was chosen because it was likely to represent a typical mid week afternoon. Interviewers were positioned at four key points across the town and were asked to stay here until they had completed approximately 20 questionnaires which fulfilled given age quotas. This took between one and two hours for each interviewer. The interviewer positions covered the main shopping areas of the town and were:

- Market Square
- Outside The Exchange/ Co-op
- Outside either Harts or Hansons
- Station Road

Sample age and gender profile

In total 216 people were interviewed. The age profile of the sample compared with the population of Sturminster Newton and North Dorset was as follows:

Age	Survey sample %	Sturminster Newton %	North Dorset %	Survey sample M/F % by age range
0 - 25	11.6	28.2	28.1	M 60 F 30
26 - 45	17.5	17.7	22.3	M 18.4 F 81.5
46 - 65	20.4	32.4	27.8	M 38.6 F 61.4
Over 66	38.4	29	21.5	M 22.9 F 77.1

The sample surveyed had fewer people interviewed in the 0-25 range than the typical profile for the area, and more in the over 65 age bracket. The lack of respondents in these age groups may reflect the actual usage of the area at certain days/times, but also those willing to be surveyed. Although gender was not considered an important variable, this was logged by interviewers and again the predominance of female respondents probably reflects the town centre user profile.

Where did you come from today?

35.6% of people questioned were from outside the parish leaving 64.4% who live inside the parish. Those from outside came from the following places

Main destinations and no. times mentioned	Mentioned less frequently		Outside Dorset
Hazelbury Bryan 8 Marnhull 7 Blandford 6	Poole 3 Sherborne 3 Child Okeford 3	Durrant Lydlinch Stock Gaylard	Doncaster 2 Leicester Castle Cary

Gillingham 6 Okeford Fitzpaine 6	Henstridge 3 Shaftesbury 2 Shillingstone 2 Stalbridge2 Hinton St Mary 2 Pulham Manston Bishops Caundle Stour provost	Wincanton Yeovil Milbourne port Motcombe Winterbourne Stickland Sutton Waldron Long Burton Milbourne port Farnham	Southampton

This shows that around one third of people come from many different destinations around Sturminster Newton which suggests that it is fulfilling a role as a 'hub' town. However, very few come from outside Dorset which supports the view that there is little traditional tourism to the town, although it is not known if some from surrounding towns have come for 'a day out' which can also be viewed as tourist activity.

How did you get here?

46.2% of respondents came into the town centre by car of which 26% came from inside the parish of Sturminster Newton

49% walked of which all lived in Sturminster Newton, no one said they had walked into the town from outside the parish

5% came by other forms on transport – 1 by mobility scooter, 7 by bicycle (5 of which come from outside the parish) and 3 by bus (of whom 2 were from Gillingham)

This shows that a fairly high percentage of local residents walk into the town centre. Although some people cycled into town from surrounding villages and towns (all starting points were accessible from the Trailway) there is no evidence here of people walking into the town using the Trailway or not. Bus use is also insignificant.

If you drove where did you park?

Car park	% parking here	Car park	% parking here
Exchange/Co-op/Medical centre	41%	Library and police station	7%
Market Square	3%	Private spaces – Harts, Hanson, British legion,	20%
Station Road	20%	Other out of town centre – Mill, Leisure centre, the Rec, etc.	9%

These results support a previous study of car park use carried out in 2015. Despite the relative size of the Station Road car park, under a quarter of people park here. Free parking around the Exchange and private spaces are more popular than Station Road where charges are levied.

Main reason for your visit today other than shopping?

When asked if they were visiting the town centre today other than to shop, 98 people mentioned a range of activities as their sole purpose for the visit or in addition to shopping.

School/work/or on lunch break from either	30.6%
Leisure e.g. walking, meeting family or friends	20.4%
Bank or post office	16.3%
Vets/doctors/dentist	13.4%
Visit to the Exchange	11.2%
Eating or drinking	8.1%

Which shops will you visit today?

The following shops were the top ten mentioned by respondents. The table is divided into three shopping areas – Market square and south, North end – Co-op, Hansons and Harts and Station Road.

Market square/cross and south	**%**	**Rank**
Holebrook's	16.2%	3=
Boots	11.1%	5
Market (based on 87 Monday responses only)	24.1%	2
Root & Vine	6%	10
Candy's	10.6%	6
Station Road		
One Stop	16.2%	3=
North end		
Co-op	38.4%	1
Harts	9.7%	7
Factory shop	6.4%	8
Hansons	5.6%	9

A significant number of other shops were mentioned by 4-5% of those questioned. These include the dry cleaners, Bulgarian shop, Agnes & Vera, the pet shop. Unspecified charity shops were mentioned by 4.6% people.

It is notable that the top ten shops are placed across the town and suggests movement between the three areas. 40.5% of people visited both the north (including Station Road) and south ends of the town, although 34.3% only visited the north end.

How much will you spend today?

Under £10	**£11- 25**	**£26-50**	**Over £50**
39.5%	37.8%	%14.2	8.5%

A third of people were spending relatively small amounts of money during one visit and over 70% of people spend less than £25. The data in the 2008 Joint Retail assessment stated that few people undertook their main weekly shop in Sturminster Newton but used the town's shops to for 'topping-up' during the week. There is an analysis of the co-relationship between frequency of visit and amounts spent below and this further unpacks this issue.

The above information may be useful for the Town Team who are planning to design a parking reimbursement scheme based on the amount individuals spend in the town. If the trigger for reimbursement is set below £25 the majority of shoppers parked in Station Road would qualify.

The table below shows expenditure per trip within each age range based on those who responded to both questions. Although there is no very clear pattern, the under 25s seem to spend the least whilst those 46-65 years tend to be higher spenders more likely to spend over £26. Over half over 65s spend between £11 and £25 per trip.

Spend / Age	**0-25**	**26-45**	**46-65**	**Over 65**
Under £10	52.2%	42.9%	38.3%	23.9%
£11-25	43.5%	37.2%	32.3%	53.9%
£26-50	0%	11.4%	17.6%	15.8%
Over £50	4.3%	8.5%	11.7%	6.3%

How many times a week do you come into town?

Markets can often be segmented by frequency of use and it is considered possible that a significant number of people may be frequent shoppers spending relatively small amounts on each occasion. The below analysis shows numbers of visits per week and then shows in each frequency range where they live, how much they spend and what age groups predominate. The sample of those who visited the town under once a week and who also answered the question about spend was small, and this data (in italics below) should be treated with caution.

No visits per week	Less than 1	1	2	3	4	5	6 & over
% of questioned	*4.9%*	21.8%	16%	17.2%	7.4%	11.1%	21.6%
Of which … Age profile							
Under 25 26-45 45-65 over 65	*11.1% 0% 33.3% 55.5%*	*6.6%* 20% 40% 33.3%	*13.3%* 23.3% 30% 33.3%	*5.71%* 20% 31.4% 42.9%	*0%* 26.6% 26.6% 46.6%	*16%* 28% 24%% 32%	*13%* 10.9% 32.6% 43.5%
Where they live							
Inside parish	*37.5%*	40%	53.2%	82.2%	75%	55.5%	94.3%
Out of parish	*62.5%*	60%	46.1%	17.8%	25%	44.4%	5.7%
Frequency of visit And spend							
£ 0-10	*16.6%*	22.7%	33.3%	38.8%	53.8%	50%	35.9%
£ 11-25	*50%*	12.9%	66.6%	41.6%	38.4%	30%	41%
£ 26-50	*33.4%*	27.2%	0%	16.6%	0%	20%	7.7%
0ver £ 50	*13.6%*	13.6%	0%	2%	7.6%	0%	15.4%

There appear to be two clusters of shoppers that we might describe as frequent users (6 visits and over) and the infrequent (1 and less visits per week). The infrequent visitors seem more likely to live out of the parish and seem likely to spend more than the in-towners on each visit. Frequent visitors are more likely to be in the older age group and spend somewhat less on each occasion.

Are there shops or facilities you would like but are not present in the town?

This analysis of these responses does not include any request outside the town centre area (eg a swimming pool). As was evident from previous consultation events, a better (cheaper, larger) supermarket was top of the wish list. Below are wants mentioned by over 4% of respondents.

Another Supermarket	21.7%
Clothes shop – particularly children, older ladies and men	17.5%
Bakers	10.6%
Garage/petrol station	8.3%
Shoe shop	6.9%
Stationer/art supplies/books	5.5%
Better eating/drinking places	5%
Better pharmcist	4.19%

Where else do you shop?

The 2008 Joint Retail assessment stated that residents of Sturminster Newton undertook their main shopping trips in Yeovil, Wincanton and Sherborne. This data was considered as at best out of date and possibly irrelevant because the sample included residents from Stalbridge and Marnhull both of which are located to the west. This town centre survey found that the following towns were mentioned:

Gillingham	34.2%
Blandford	18.5%
Yeovil	16.6%
Shaftesbury	11.8%
Sherbourne	10.6%
Poole	7.46%
Stalbridge	6.9%
Dorchester	6.5%
Bournemouth	3.3%
Wincanton, Bath	1%
Exeter, Winchester, Weymouth	.5%

People who shop in Sturminster Newton exercise choice by using a wide range of other shopping venues, the majority of which are within a 30 minute drive. The appearance of Gillingham as the top alternative shopping place is probably due to the arrival there of Asda and Aldi since the 2008 survey.

Analysis by day

Below are comparisons of spend and home location based on data obtained on each day of the survey. The sample is split quite evenly between each of the three days. This will help to see if there is a different profile of visitors dependant in day of visit.

Day	**Home location**	**Spend**
Average for all responses	In parish 64.4% Out of parish 35.6%	under £10 – 39.5% £11- 25 – 37.8% £26-50 – 14.2% over £50 – 8.5%
Wed 23rd September 29% of total responses	In parish 51.6% Out of parish 48.3%	under £10 51% £11- 25 - 30.6% £26-50 – 12.2% over £50 - 8.5%
Sat 26th September 35% of total responses	In parish 63.1% Out of parish 36.8%	under £10 - 22.4% £11- 25 - 47.7% £26-50 - 17.9% over £50 - 11.9%
Monday 28th September 36% of total responses	In parish 72.1% Out of parish 27.8%	under £10 - 40.4% £11- 25 - 48.4% £26-50 - 6.4% over £50 - 4.8%

There seem to be some differences between typical Monday, Saturday and Wednesday visitors. Whilst Saturday's seems to be close to the average, Monday (market day) has a lower than average percentage of visitors from out of the parish whilst Wednesday has the highest percentage of out of parish visitors. Wednesday visitors appear to be the lowest spenders per visit – with over half spending below £10. Whilst on Saturday almost two thirds of visitors spend between £11 and £50.

Appendix D: Retailer Discussions Summary

The following are brief notes of a meeting held with a managing director of a major supermarket chain in early 2016

Town shops and services

Approx 5,000 population likely to support a larger store than the present Co-op (possibly up to twice the size) however unlikely to support 2 competing stores

Unlikely that commodity based retail outlets will grow (because of internet competition) - so more service / leisure offer likely to be key investment sector e.g. florists, restaurants…

Could put town on the map by top chef restaurant. Pub offer – could be room for healthy competition – eg Fullers establishing a cider / pizza outlets may be interested in one of the pubs. Some restaurant chains finding that they can readily convert vacated banks.

Pop-up shops really successful in London / Bristol - weekly rent options. Other considering with link to market and business development support

Market stalls

Likely to provide flexible and additional retail offer that would bring in extra visitors and increase 'offer' to residents. Key location for this would be the current parking spaces outside the Swan. This could potential have 'cover' against the elements (possibly temporary, so could be put up and taken down). Could link to further market stalls back to back along Station Road and covered area at the market. Differential rents would also make this work well to ensure trader interest on different days - need to compete against other towns for market traders. Advertise to stallholders (eg via Blackmore Vale). Could make it more attractive to traders by providing online booking / payment facilities, themed offer (arts / crafts / handmade goods / local foods), good access to toilets (and hot drinks). Make sure this also ties in with all events at the Exchange, Carnival, Cheese Festival etc.

Parking and Public realm

Parking important - current offer at Station Road difficult to find and unattractive as arrival point. Alternative at Snooks would be better. Use of school site as temporary park and ride may provide some additional capacity.

Historic core potential to be much more attractive, and also better connected to car parks (eg link through Swan car park?)

Marketing 'message' for Sturminster Newton

Sell image / vision - local champions. Food / craft centre, plus flexible and supportive place for people to live and work. Build on branding from cattle market being one of oldest and largest continuous markets in England 'bringing it back'. Great rates and facilities for stall-holders.

Business development support

Start-up support would be beneficial, could also link to market (produce and sell)

Site specific ideas - summary

Area outside Swan – make more attractive / pedestrianize / market stall presence (semi-permanent).

Station Road car park could accommodate covered market idea on larger scale than outside the Swan - e.g. like Boqueria market in Barcelona. Could start / test by renting half the car park from NDDC and install cover.

Use of school site as temporary park and ride may provide some additional capacity.

Snooks Yard would make ideal car park for the town centre.

Link through from Station Road to Swan car park - new pedestrian route via telephone exchange / gas works redevelopment potential

The following are brief notes of a meeting held with business owners in the Station Road area in early 2016

Welcome and Introductions

Explained that the main purpose of the meeting was to involve the key landowners in the proposals that may go into the neighbourhood plan for the Station Road area. It was clear that the town centre was struggling for a number of reasons, many of which were also affecting other towns. It was important that the plan took a long term view, looking 15 if not 50 years ahead. The group had also been in contact with the owners of Clarkes Yard, who were potentially interested in looking at investment opportunities elsewhere in the town, and said they had been approached by a supermarket chain. There was also another piece of work (and economic development plan) that was taking a more detailed look at the changes in the economy and what opportunities there may be for the town to focus on.

Neighbourhood Plan – emerging ideas – traffic and movement

Indicative plan of a possible site layout for the Station Road car park and adjoining land was circulated. This aimed to improve the efficiency of the car park, make it easier for pedestrians and cyclists to cross, and make the area between the car park and the pedestrianized part of Station Road more effective (bus drop off, disabled parking and more pedestrian friendly). The plans would retain parking spaces in front of Streeters and Hansons, and could increase the amount of parking on the current site as it would mean that buses would not need a large turning area because of the one way system. In the long term the public toilets and adjoining land could be more easily redeveloped to include perhaps some offices / retail with flats over and undercroft parking.

Landowner feedback points:

- there are quite a few HGVs and lorries turning in the area and which could conflict with the pedestrian routes.
- concerned that the one way system would deter pedestrians from the area
- better pedestrian access could be achieved more readily by opening the Jubilee trail
- concerned about the loss of parking immediately outside the units
- agreement that disabled parking is not convenient and needs to be on level ground closer to the centre
- strong feeling that the focus should be on making the areas more accessible by opening up Station Road from the main high street for cars, plus better signage
- strong feeling that convenience of parking for shoppers and pricing are critical to volume of visitors – an early project should be to change the ticketing so that parking costs can be refunded by shopkeepers. Free parking in the long term would attract a lot of visitors
- the general area (and in particular the trailway and where it crosses over Station Road) should be made more attractive with better surfacing and tree planting, and the public toilets should be open all the time

Neighbourhood Plan – emerging ideas – market

The potential idea of a covered market had been raised, and views on this possibility were discussed. This could potentially be located in the Station Road car park area.

Landowner feedback points:

- although the goods sold may overlap with existing stores (which with competing shops has been bad for some businesses), when the car boot market was running this had really increased visitors to the town, and the same should be the case with a market and the increase in visitors should more than compensate for any overlap with shops
- country craft theme would work well – ie local food and drink plus artisans / crafts stalls
- slight concern that use of car park would limit number of visitors – though this hadn't been the case with the car boot sale

- suggestion of an alternative location along Station Road outside the post office (would need temporary covers as this has a bit of a wind tunnel effect)

Other ideas

Other suggestions made by the landowners:

- Better signage (brown signs?) to the key attractors which are the trailway, Harts and Hansons
- Paint railings at entrance to town
- Encourage better shop colours in Bridge Street (very 'brown' and drab)
- Contact Action for Market Towns – good ideas for promotion / marketing
- Business Improvement District could help raise funds for key improvements – businesses would need to know likely costs/ projects to see if it made business sense to invest
- Check quoted revenue earnings of car parks – seems high

Landowner – future intentions

None of the landowners had any current intentions to relocate – it was considered to be a good site (although it could be made more attractive)

None of the landowners had any current plans to make significant structural changes to their buildings

Conclusions / summing up

Key findings of the meeting as follows:

- Current traffic scheme as circulated clearly not supported, though there was general agreement that the disabled parking was in the wrong place, and that improving the paving / trailway experience should be pursued
- General agreement that a better market should be pursued
- Ideas needed to be modified and the wider town retailers involved in shaping the neighbourhood plan