



BMG Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Survey:
Ashby de la Zouch
2006

Prepared for:
Leicestershire County
Council & Leicester Shire
Economic Partnership

Prepared by:
BMG Research



Because people matter.

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1 Introduction

Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership commissioned BMG to conduct a customer satisfaction survey in 17 town and village centres across Leicestershire, to inform the establishment of baselines to support Local Area Agreement (LAA) work. The intention of the survey has been to understand the issues specific to each settlement with a view to developing action plans for intervention. This report summarises the findings from Ashby de la Zouch (which will be referred to as Ashby throughout this report).

Report contents

Section 2 of this report looks at why respondents visited Ashby, frequency of visits, attractions and events and what, if anything, would encourage more people to visit the centre on a regular basis. Section 3 examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Ashby, considering whether the centre is a good place to shop, work and live as well as discussing the various services available in the area and the surrounding environment. Section 4 looks at how respondents in Ashby perceived crime and safety, and which issues were seen as big problem areas, whilst Section 5 summarises the key findings from the survey. Finally, section 6 concludes the main findings and provides recommendations.

Sampling methodology

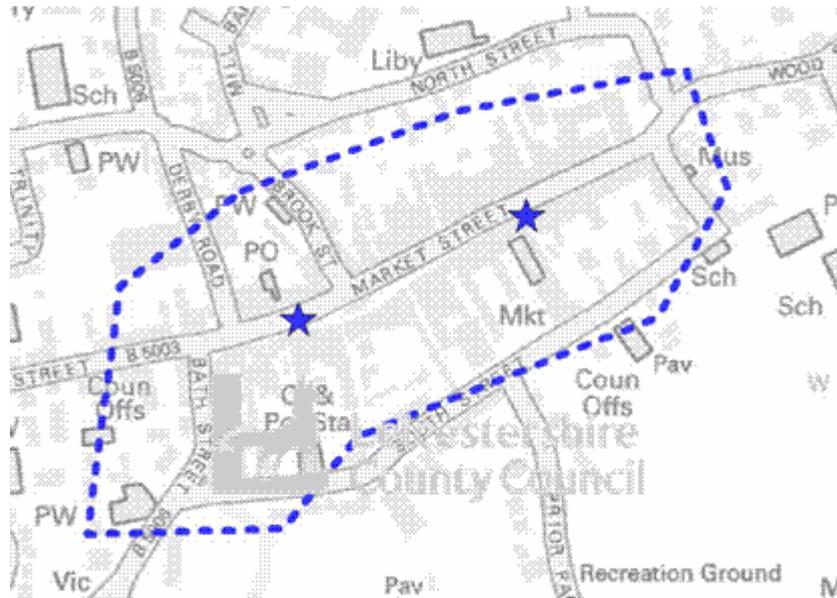
In total, 3000 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size, meaning that the target for some of the villages was only a little over 100 in total, whilst for Loughborough it was over 300. Within the total sample, and for each centre, quotas were also established to control for:

- Age group;
- Ethnicity (white and non-white respondents);
- Gender;
- Interviews conducted on weekdays and Saturdays;
- Interviews conducted during the daytime and evening (after 5.30);
- Interviews conducted on market days and non-market days (where centres had a market).

The client identified a number of locations in the centre of each settlement where interviews took place – these were typically within the main shopping areas, often in or around the main market squares or retail developments. Interviews took place over a six week period through July and August 2006, following a pilot in Loughborough and Shepshed which indicated no problems in delivering the questionnaire.

Below is a map of the sampling points in Ashby:

Figure 1



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 Leicestershire County Council. LA100019271.

Source: Leicestershire County Council

Respondent Profile

Within Ashby, 150 interviews were achieved. Of the sample, gender was almost evenly split; 51% being male and 49% female. 15% of respondents in Ashby were aged 16-24, 34% were aged 25-44, 37% were aged 45-64, with the remaining 10% being of retirement age (65+). This was a fair reflection of demographic population as collected by the Census in 2001. Within Ashby as reported by the 2001 Census, 12% of the population were aged between 16-24, 35% were aged between 25-44, 33% were aged between 45-64 and 20% were aged 65 and over.

The vast majority of respondents in Ashby (97%) described themselves as white British, with just 1% of respondents of other White origin, 1% of Bangladeshi origin and a further 1% of other Asian origin. According to the 2001 Census, 98% of those within Ashby described themselves as white.

By economic status, 68% of respondents in Ashby were in work (63% employed and 5% self-employed). The largest proportion of those respondents not in work were retired (15% of the total Ashby sample). 7% of respondents were in education or training, 6% of respondents were not in work because they were looking after children or other dependents or the home, whilst 4% were not in work due to an illness or disability. Only 1% of respondents were claiming benefits.

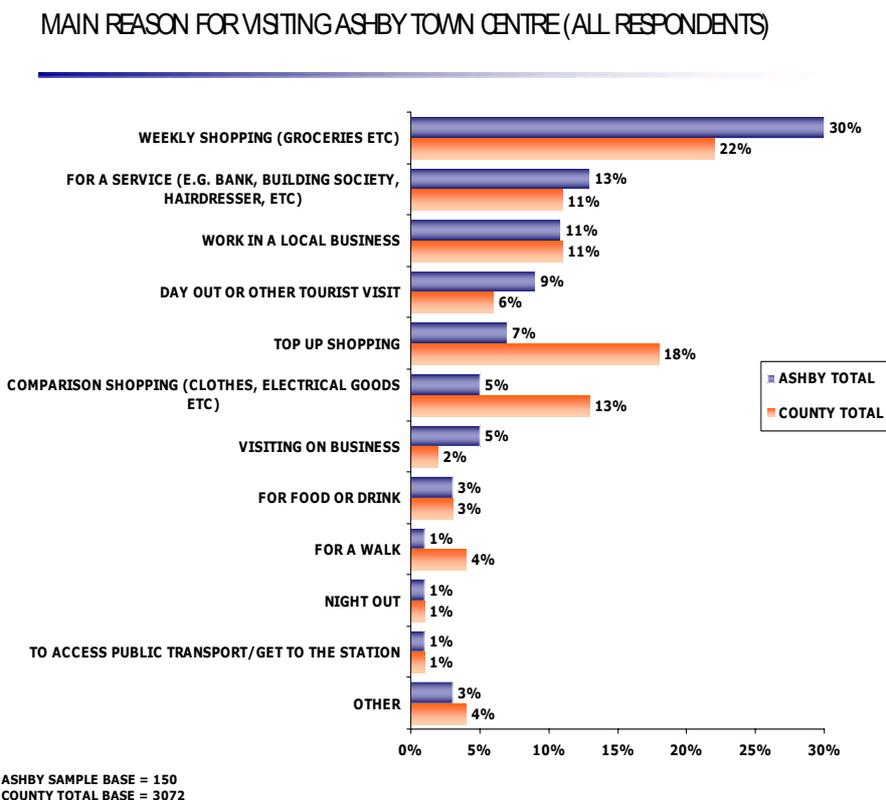
2 Visiting the Town Centre

Visits

This section looks at the reasons why people visited Ashby, their mode of transport for their visit, the frequency of visits as well as attractions and events.

Reasons for visiting the town centre

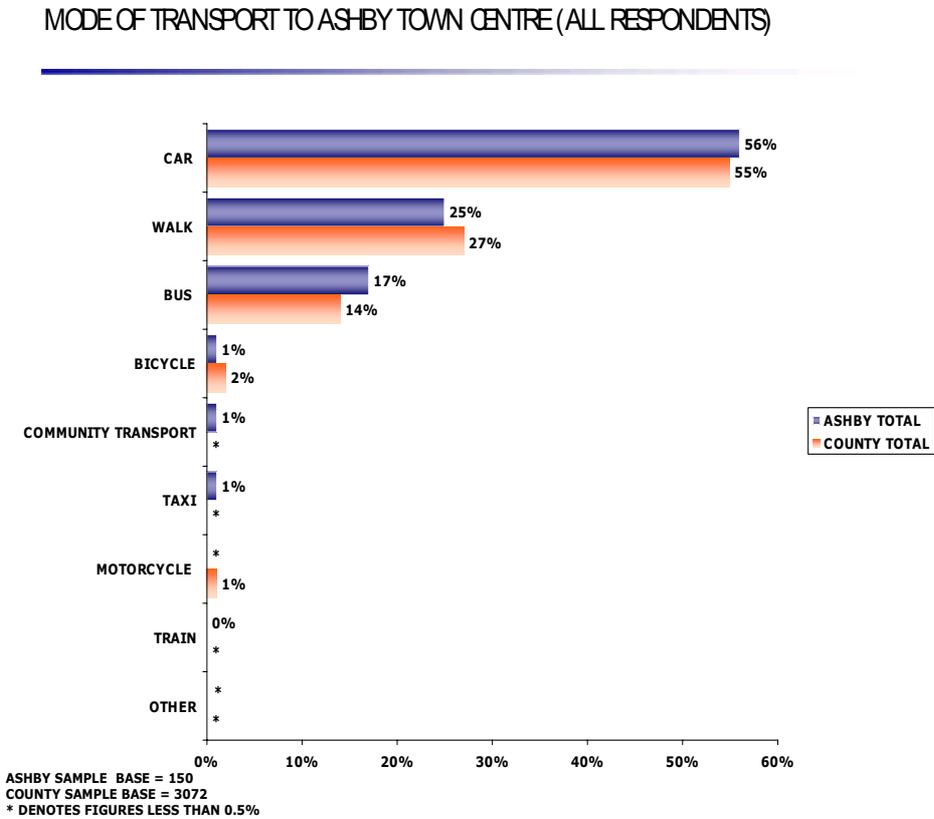
Figure 2



The intention of the survey was to speak to a cross-section of people present in the centres of the towns and villages, who may have been present for a whole range of purposes. Shopping trips of various sorts accounted for just over two-fifths of visits to Ashby (42%), compared with the total county figure (53%). 13% of respondents in Ashby were visiting the centre for services such as banking compared to 11% in the county. Just over one in ten were present because they worked in the centre, whilst just a little under one in ten were tourists. Whilst only a small number of visitors were present primarily for food or drink, it is likely that this would have been a secondary reason for many of the visitors there for other reasons.

Mode of transport used to get into the centre of town

Figure 3

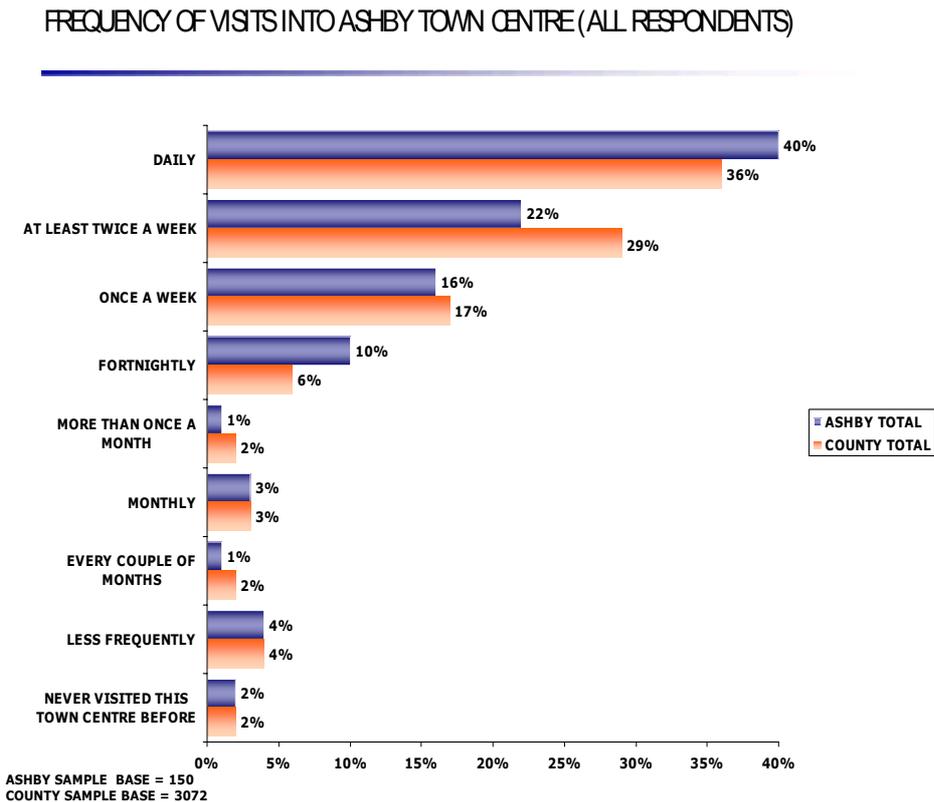


Just over half of trips into the centre by respondents to the survey were made by car. It is particularly notable that a quarter of respondents walked into the centre – whilst this will no doubt be due to the timing of the survey in the middle of the summer, it does also indicate the extent to which the small size of Ashby may be encouraging access on foot. This figure is slightly less than the county total of 27% who walked into the centre. 17% arrived by bus (compared to the county total of 14%), 1% arrived by bicycle, 1% arrived by community transport and a further 1% arrived by taxi.

Frequency of visits

As illustrated in the graph below, two-fifths of respondents reported that they visited the centre daily (40%), whilst just over a fifth visited at least twice a week (22%) and 16% visited once a week. 2% of those in Ashby were visiting for the first time, which was the same figure as for the county as a whole.

Figure 4



Just over two-fifths of respondents visited Ashby on a weekday, whilst 16% visited at weekends. A fifth of respondents visited Ashby both at weekends and on weekdays.

The majority of respondents (69%) visited Ashby during the day (before 5.30pm), with 6% visiting the centre only in the evening (after 5.30pm). Over a quarter of respondents visited the town centre both during the daytime and evening (27%).

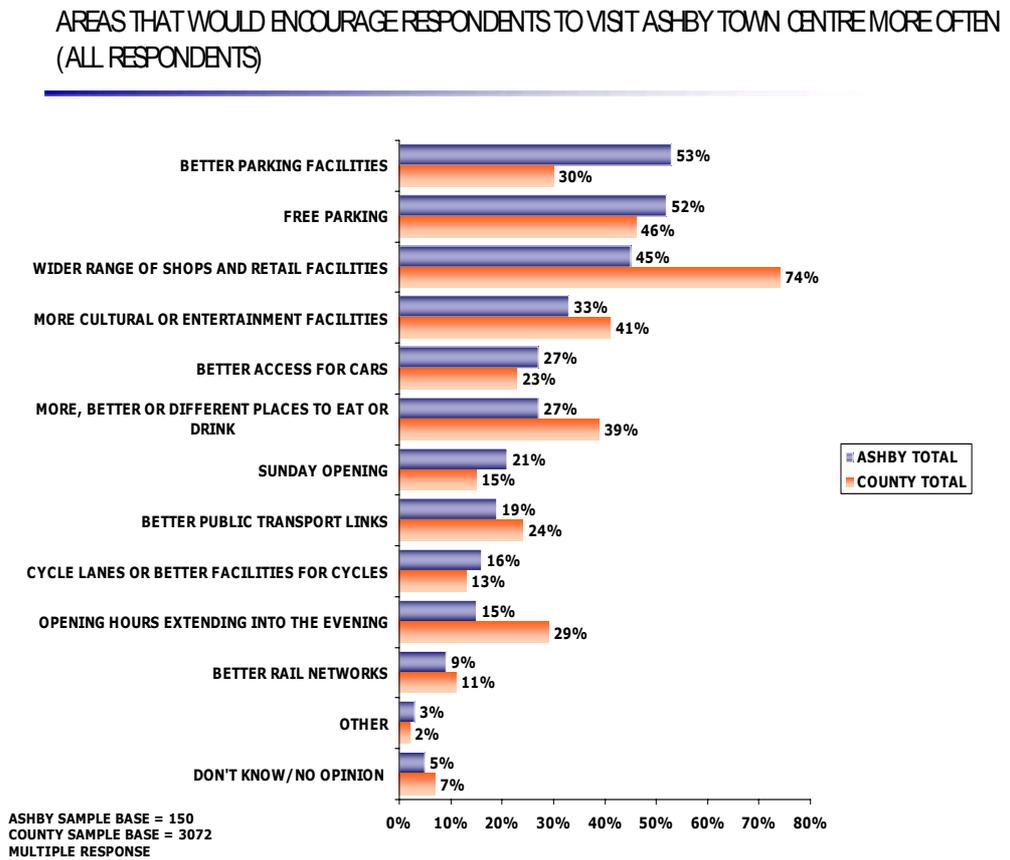
Of those people only visiting in the evening, 12% visited Ashby town centre in the evening at least twice a week, 12% of respondents visited fortnightly and 11% visited once a week. Friday evenings proved to be a popular day to visit the centre amongst respondents, with 40% choosing to do so, whilst 20% visited mainly on a Saturday or Sunday evening.

Encouraging more people to visit the centre

Respondents were asked to identify those issues which would encourage them to visit Ashby more often. They were able to cite more than one issue. Having better parking facilities (53%) and free parking (52%) were cited as two areas that would encourage respondents to visit Ashby more often. 45% of respondents cited a wider range of shops and other retail outlets as being a way of encouraging more visits.

Improvements in other attractions in the centre – cultural and entertainment venues, and better places for food and drink – were also very important, underlining the importance accorded to centres which offer a wider range of activity than merely retail. The extension of opening hours, particularly evening opening, was also important for some visitors.

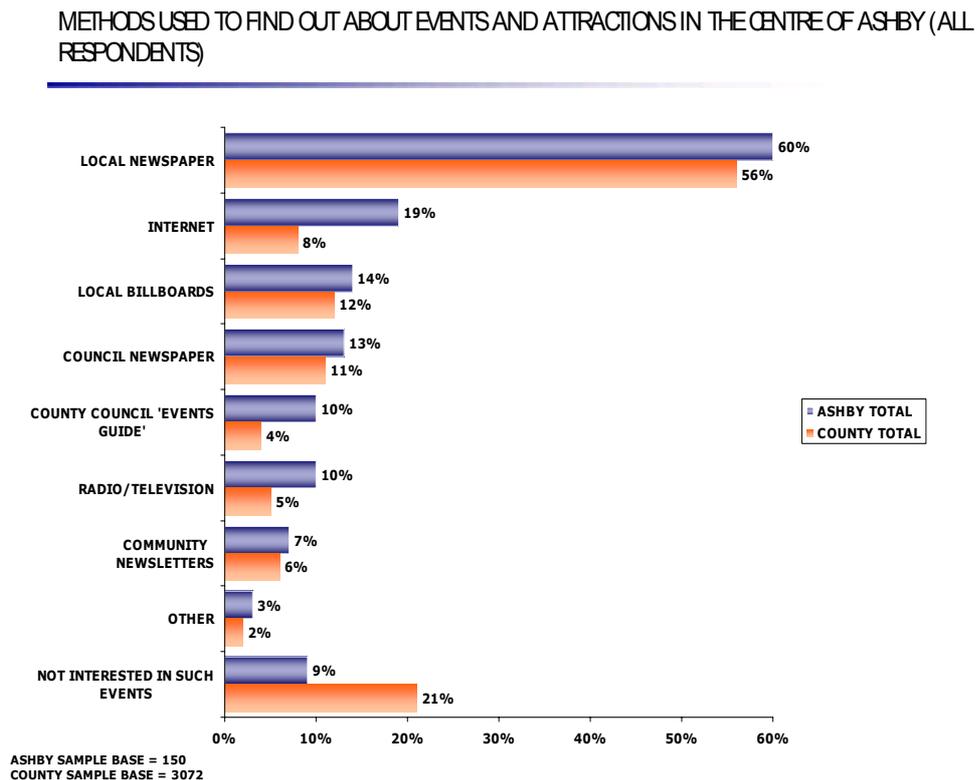
Figure 5



Attractions and events

As is clear from Figure 6 below, local newspapers were overwhelmingly the most likely source of information about local events and attractions taking place in Ashby, with other sources only modest in their importance by comparison. Notably, the internet was also a popular method of finding out about events and attractions in Ashby compared to the rest of the county (19% Ashby, 8% county total).

Figure 6



When respondents were questioned about whether they had attended any events in the town centre recently, only 10% said that they had. Of these 10%, three people said they had attended a fair, another three people said they had attended the Jurassic Park or Dinosaur event, whilst six people said they had attended another event in the town.

Respondents were asked what made the town centre unique, different or special in Ashby. Just over a quarter (26%) cited its history or heritage, followed by the market (9%), the layout of the town (3%) and that it was a safe area and low crime levels (3%). Other notable answers included:

- Born here or live here (3%);
- Castle (2%);

- Cleanliness (2%);
- Flower displays and scenery (2%);
- Character (1%);
- Community spirit (1%);
- Culture (1%);
- Events (1%);
- Friendly people (1%);
- Good atmosphere (1%);
- Location (1%);
- Shop or shopping centre (1%);
- Small market town or village (1%); and
- The size (1%).

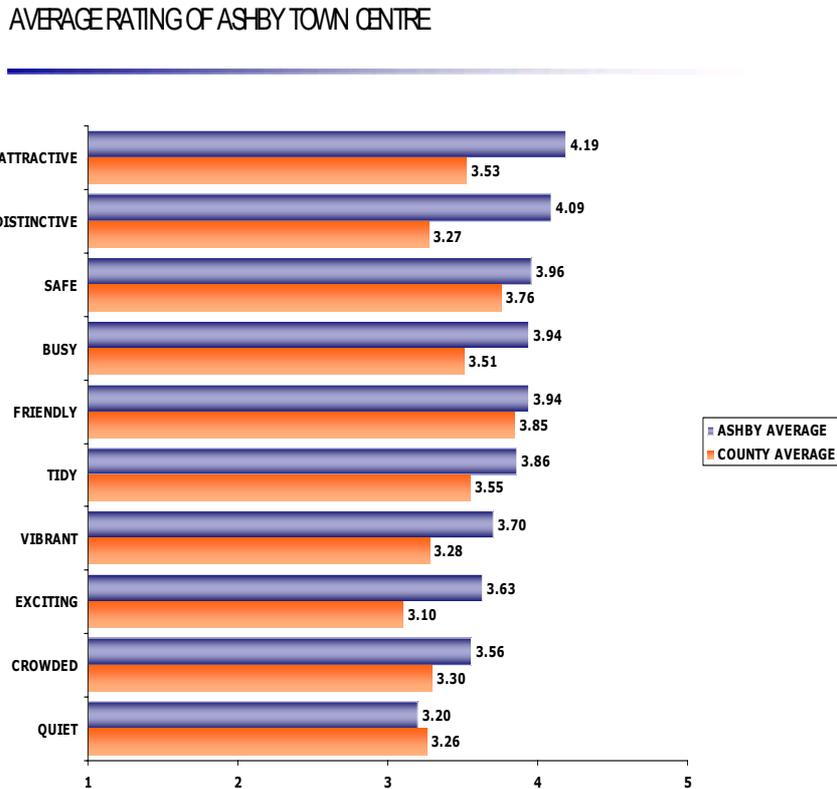
3 Attitude towards the centre

This section examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Ashby, considering whether the centre is a good place to shop, work and live as well as discussing the different services available in the area.

Description and attitudes towards the centre

Respondents were asked to say to what extent they agreed with a series of words to describe Ashby on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. Overall, Ashby was most likely to be described as 'attractive', 'distinctive', 'safe' and 'busy' and 'friendly'. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Ashby was least likely to be described as 'quiet' and 'crowded'.

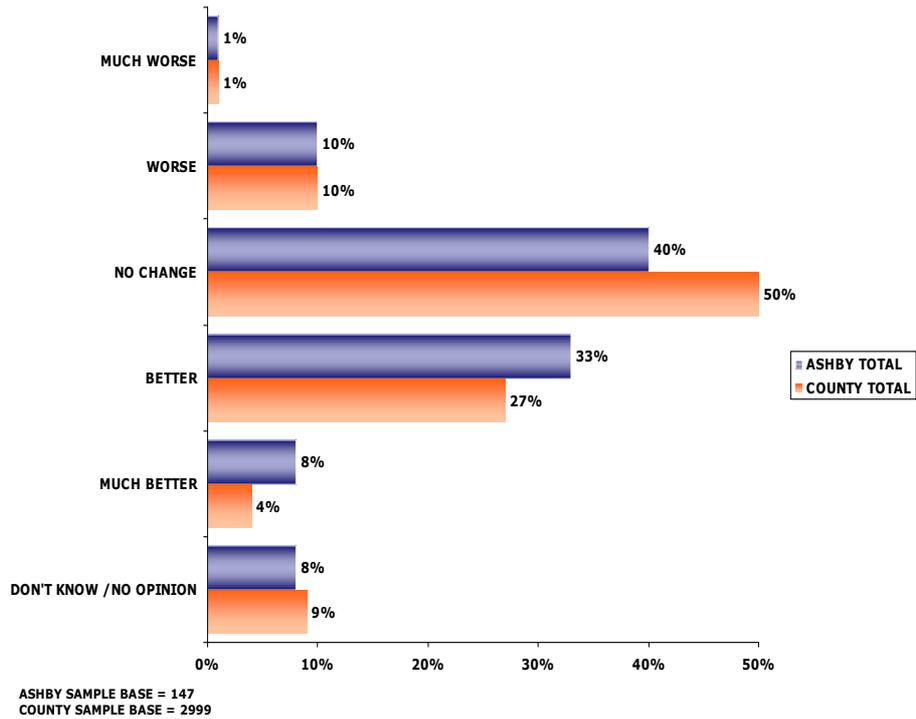
Figure 7



41% of respondents reported that Ashby had got better or much better within the last 12 months, whilst 40% of respondents didn't report any overall change in Ashby. Only 11% said that it had got worse or much worse, as shown below:

Figure 8

WHETHER ASHBY TOWN CENTRE HAS GOT BETTER OR WORSE WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



All respondents were asked for their view on how well Ashby served different groups in the population. The results for each of these groups are shown in Table 1 below. It was clear that amongst the total population of respondents in Ashby, there was greater concern about how the centre serves young people than for any other group. 16% of respondents thought the centre was very poor or poor for young people, and this is followed by 6% of respondents who thought that the centre was very poor or poor for disabled people. Respondents tended to think that the best served groups were shoppers, visitors, elderly people and families.

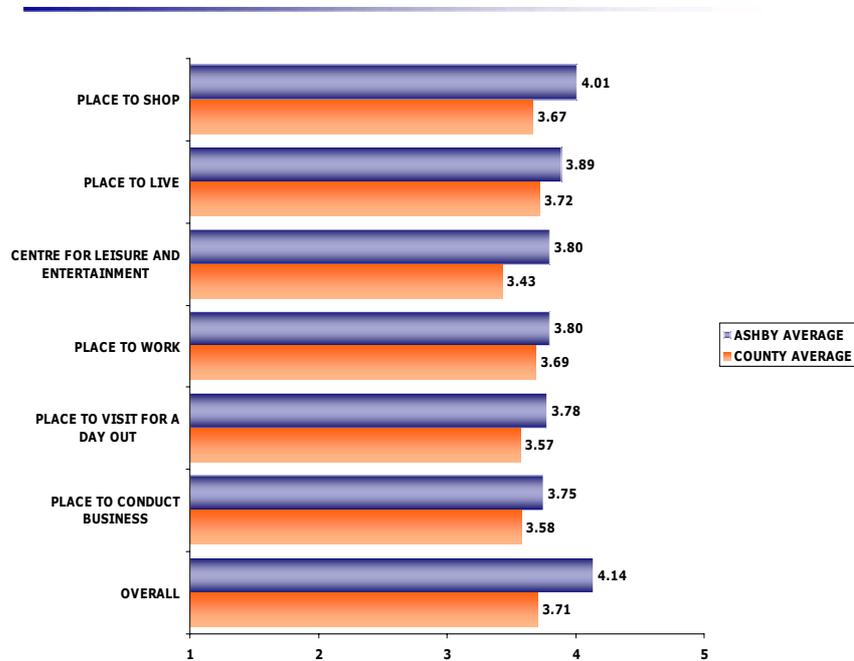
Table 1

RATING OF ASHBY FOR VARIOUS GROUPS							
	Very poor	Poor	Neither good nor poor	Good	Very good	DK/no opinion	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	%	
Visitors	0	4	21	45	30	1	4.01
Elderly people	0	4	19	48	23	7	3.96
Families	1	1	22	48	24	3	3.95
Shoppers	1	4	16	57	21	1	3.95
People with disabilities	1	5	26	35	23	9	3.83
Young people	1	15	21	45	10	7	3.52
SAMPLE BASE: 150							

How good are the centres as places for particular activities?

Figure 9

RATING OF ASHBY AS A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ETC (ALL RESPONDENTS)

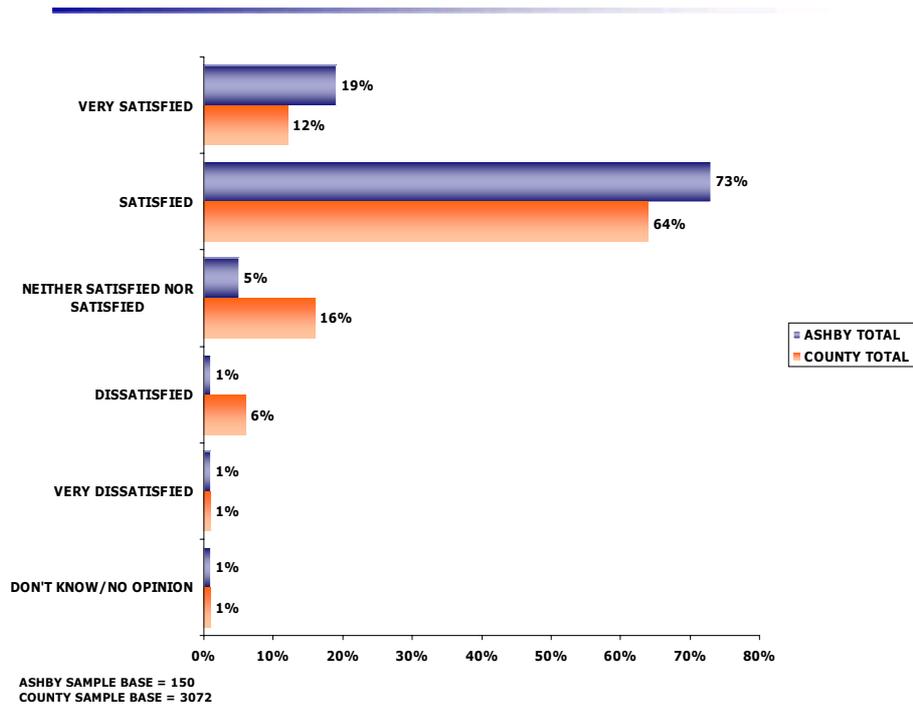


Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the most positive score, Ashby was rated as 4.14 which was slightly higher than the County average of 3.71 – that is they are well above average, good but not very good. Ashby was considered a good place to shop (with a score of 4.01), a good place to live (3.89), a good centre for leisure and entertainment (3.80) as well as a good place to work (3.80).

Overall, satisfaction was very high amongst respondents as they considered Ashby a good place to shop, visit and to do business (92% were very satisfied or satisfied). The graph below demonstrates that the overall level of satisfaction for Ashby was higher than the total for the county.

Figure 10

OVERALL SATISFACTION WITH ASHBY AS A GOOD PLACE TO SHOP, VISIT AND DO BUSINESS
(ALL RESPONDENTS)

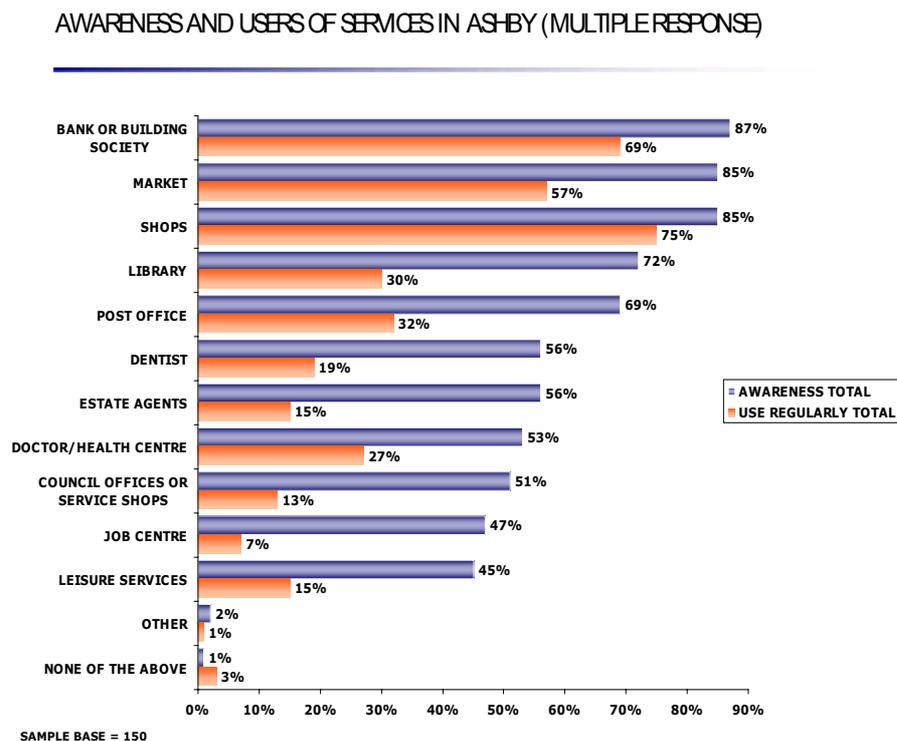


Services available in the centre

Services available in the centre of Ashby were rated on the basis of awareness and on how often respondents used them.

As shown below respondents were more likely to be aware of services such as banks & building societies, the market and shops and these are the services which were also most regularly used. However, there were some services that people were aware of but were less likely to use regularly. For example 72% of respondents were aware that there was a library in Ashby but only 30% used the service. Furthermore, respondents were aware of health services within the centre of Ashby but fewer people used them on a regular basis - 56% of respondents were aware that there was a dentist in Ashby and only 27% were regular users, whilst 53% of respondents were aware of a doctor's or health centre in Ashby, but 27% of respondents were regular users. Moreover, 47% of respondents were aware that there was a job centre, with 7% of respondents using the service on a regular basis.

Figure 11



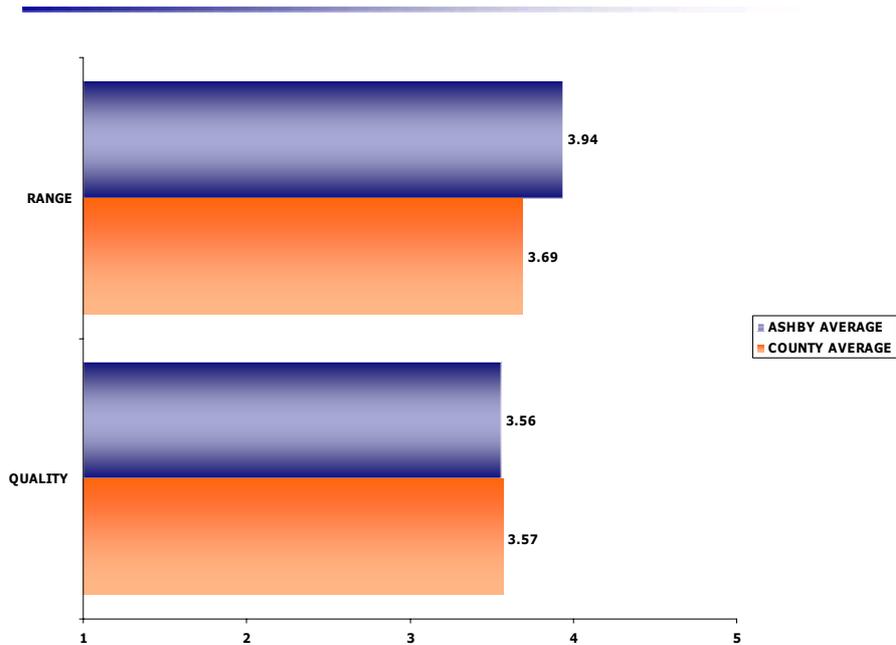
Respondents were questioned as to their opinions about the market in Ashby. The majority (70%) of respondents agreed that there was a wide range of products available to buy in the market.

Just over half of respondents in Ashby said that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs very well or quite well (51%). 37% reported that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs adequately and one in ten said it did not meet their needs.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality in places to eat out in Ashby on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were more positive about the range than the quality as shown in figure 12, a pattern which reflected the position across the county as a whole.

Figure 12

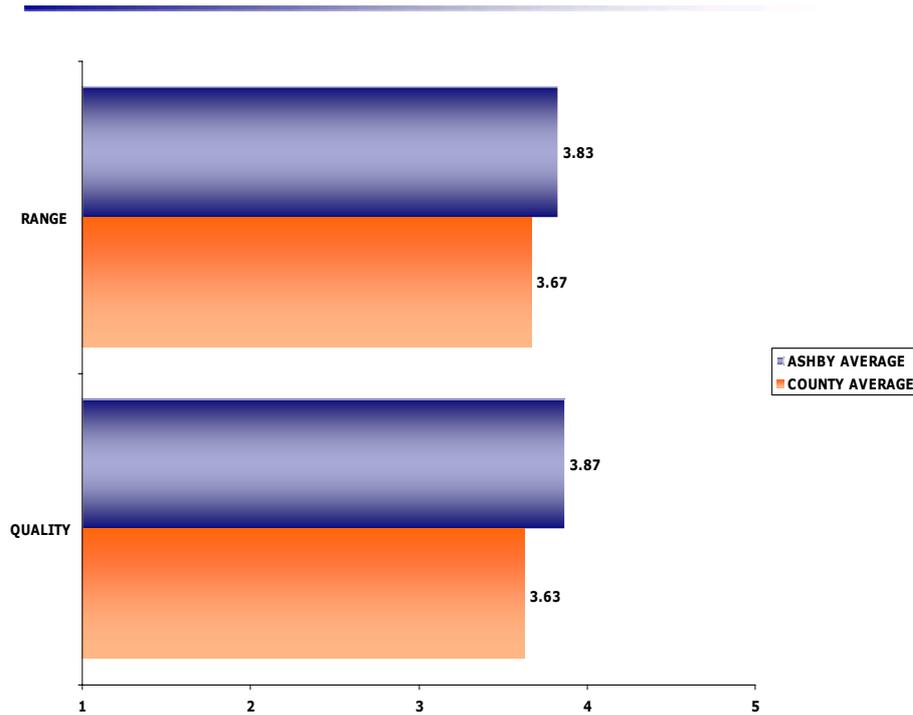
RANGE AND QUALITY OF THE PLACES TO EAT OUT IN ASHBY



Respondents were then asked to rate the quality and range of pubs, bars and clubs in Ashby on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were slightly more positive about the quality than the range of pubs, bars and clubs in Ashby, as shown below. This was a reversal of the position county-wide, though real differences are small.

Figure 13

RANGE AND QUALITY OF PUBS, BARS AND CLUBS IN ASHBY



Town Centre Environment

Respondents were given a series of statements about the environment of the town centre and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Table 2

WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CENTRE OF ASHBY						
	Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	1	11	17	51	19	3.77
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	1	10	21	44	22	3.76
Shop fronts are well maintained	5	8	17	49	20	3.73
Street lighting is good	1	11	20	45	17	3.70
The parks are well maintained	4	12	14	46	21	3.70
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	3	10	21	49	17	3.67
The public toilets are clean and tidy	1	11	22	30	19	3.65
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	3	9	29	37	19	3.60
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	1	7	21	23	10	3.57
The centre is well planted in summertime	1	18	24	35	19	3.54
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	5	23	15	41	13	3.34
There is sufficient seating in and around the centre	3	32	8	43	10	3.25
There are enough baby changing facilities	3	16	23	13	8	3.13
There are enough public toilets	3	33	19	17	15	3.09
SAMPLE BASE: 150						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

Overall, respondents had positive views about the environment and facilities available in the centre of Ashby. Respondents felt that the design and layout of the centre was attractive (70% agreed or agreed strongly), the shops were well maintained (69% agreed or agreed strongly) and that the pedestrian signage was relevant, clear and easy to understand (66% agreed or agreed strongly). On the other hand, 36% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed that there were enough public toilets in Ashby. This was followed by there was sufficient seating

in and around the centre (35% disagreed or strongly disagreed) and seating in and around the shopping areas were well maintained (28% disagreed or strongly disagreed).

Respondents were then asked to respond to a series of statements about aspects in and around the centre of Ashby and asked whether they agreed or disagreed with them.

Table 3

WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT ASPECTS IN AND AROUND THE CENTRE OF ASHBY						
	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	1	10	21	36	25	3.80
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	1	12	16	51	18	3.73
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	4	7	19	55	15	3.69
The centre needs more local, independent shops	2	10	27	37	23	3.69
The road network provides easy access into the centre	2	9	24	43	17	3.68
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	1	13	19	47	15	3.63
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	6	11	17	42	19	3.61
Roads in the centre are well maintained	5	10	19	53	11	3.56
There is enough car parking available	1	30	13	37	9	3.27
There is too much traffic noise in the centre	7	20	31	28	13	3.19
Car parking costs too much	7	21	21	31	11	3.18
Roads in the centre are congested	9	22	19	41	8	3.18
The centre could do with more high street chain stores	11	26	25	16	18	3.03
There is too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre	11	22	29	20	10	2.96
SAMPLE BASE: 150						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

As demonstrated in the above table 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that pedestrians could walk around the centre without

feeling threatened by traffic – the statement on this list with which respondents most strongly agreed. In descending order of agreement, this was followed by the level of service of shops being of a high standard (69%), road signs making it easy for cars to access the centre (61%) and that the centre was accessible for disabled people and older people (61%). Nearly two-fifths of respondents (37%) disagreed with the statement that the centre could do with more high street chain stores.

Respondents were given a list of options and asked to say which issues they thought most needed attention in Ashby. The most frequently cited responses were more parking (55%), more independent shops (31%) and more leisure facilities (25%). When asked to prioritise their *top three* areas of improvement, respondents cited parking facilities (49%), more independent shops (21%) and a greater range of shops (16%).

4 Crime and safety

This section looks at how respondents in Ashby perceived crime and safety, and which issues were seen as big problem areas.

As shown in the table below, of a series of issues on which the opinion of respondents was sought, groups of people hanging around the street was seen as a big problem by the largest proportion of respondents in Ashby (26% considered this a very big problem or big problem). This was followed by people being drunk and rowdy in public spaces (20%), rubbish and litter lying around (19%) and fly tipping (18%). Areas that were seen as less of a problem included people not treating each other with respect and consideration (72% considered this either not a problem, or only a small problem), assaults and other violent crime (61%) and street canvassers (60%).

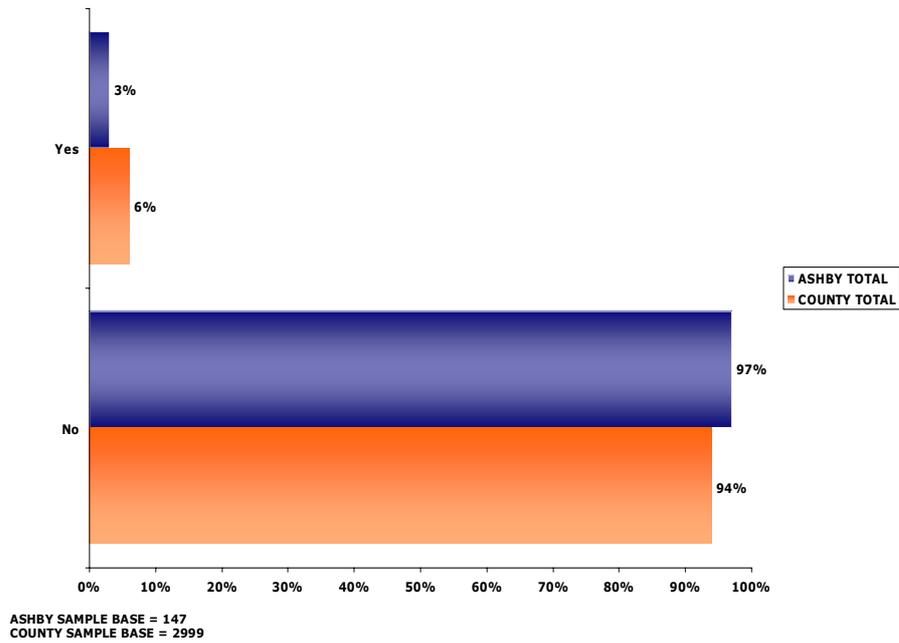
Table 4

AREAS THAT ARE SEEN AS PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRE OF ASHBY						
	Very big problem	Big Problem	Neither big nor small	Small Problem	Not a problem at all	Mean score
	%	%	%	%	%	
Groups of people hanging round the streets	3	23	27	16	29	3.48
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	5	15	23	23	23	3.52
Rubbish and litter lying around	3	16	31	23	27	3.55
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	4	13	29	27	27	3.6
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	3	15	20	25	25	3.61
Fly tipping	5	13	20	23	33	3.69
Road safety or speeding	5	9	19	26	27	3.71
People using or dealing drugs	3	7	20	23	21	3.73
Street canvassers	3	13	18	25	35	3.79
Vehicles being stolen	3	11	16	17	33	3.82
Property being stolen from a vehicle	1	9	17	25	27	3.84
Aggressive begging	2	13	19	19	37	3.85
Personal theft (pick pocketing)	2	9	15	23	31	3.9
Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	0	11	16	23	34	3.96
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	1	6	17	25	36	4.06
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	0	7	19	27	45	4.12
Racial harassment	0	5	16	16	40	4.17
SAMPLE BASE: 150						

Respondents were questioned about whether they had ever felt worried about being assaulted or harassed in Ashby within the last 12 months, 97% of respondents said that they had not compared to the county total of 94%.

Figure 14

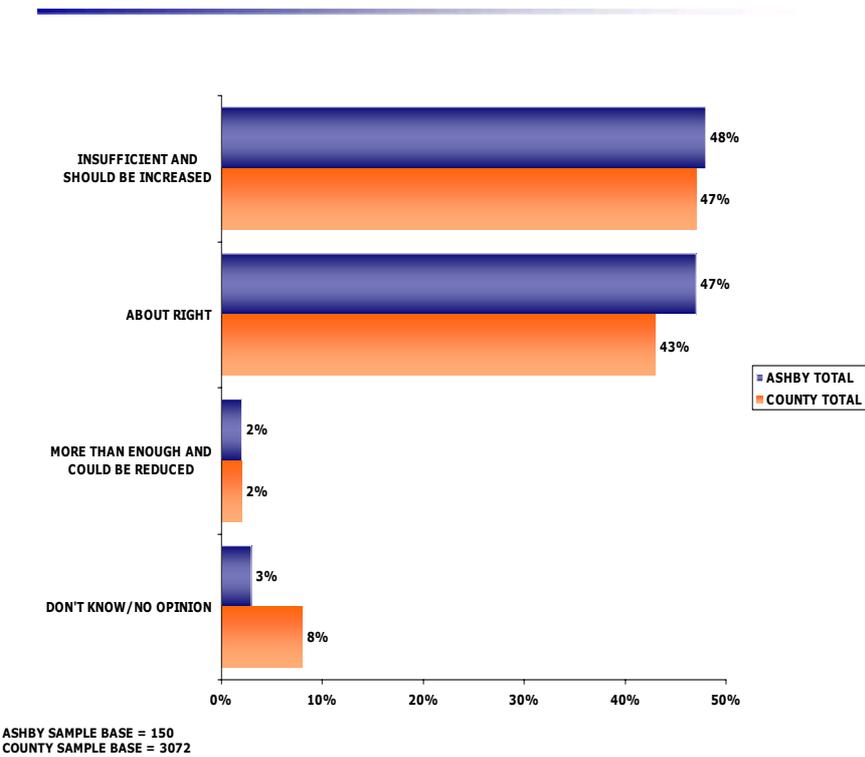
WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EVER FELT WORRIED ABOUT BEING ASSAULTED OR HARASSED IN ASHBY WITHIN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Although the majority of respondents said that they were not worried about being assaulted or harassed, 48% felt that the police presence in the centre was insufficient and should be increased, whilst 47% felt that it was about right.

Figure 15

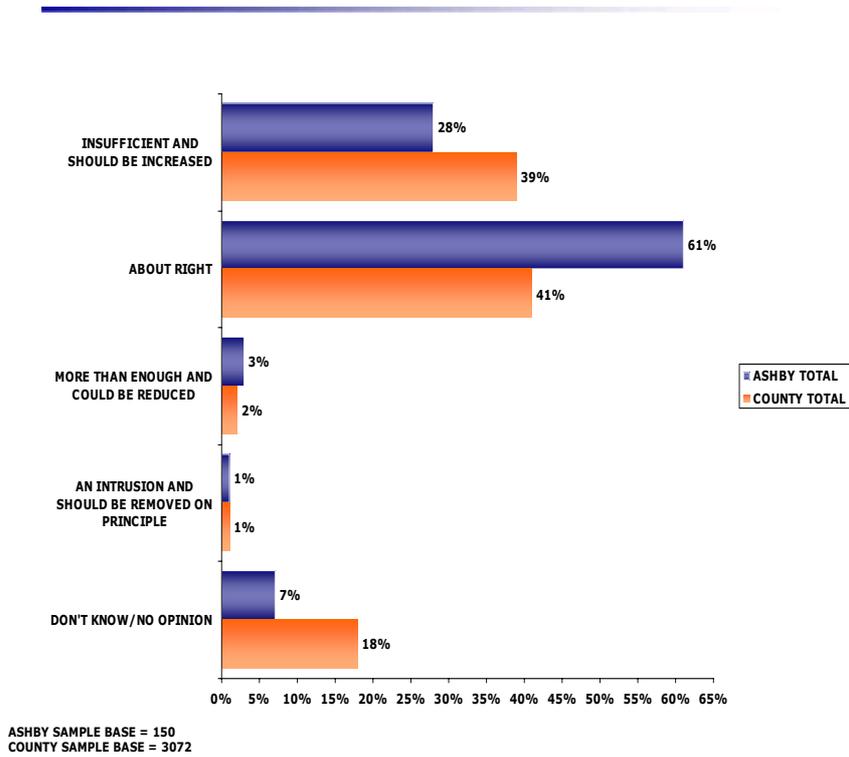
PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF ASHBY



When questioned about the presence of CCTV in Ashby, 61% of respondents felt it was about right, which was higher than the county total of 41%. 28% of respondents said the presence of CCTV was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 16

PERCEPTIONS OF CCTV PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF ASHBY



5 Summary

Visiting the town centre

- Shopping trips accounted for the largest proportion of trips to Ashby.
- Just a little over one in ten respondents worked in local businesses.
- The majority of visitors arrived in Ashby by car, with the second most common method being on foot and the third being by bus.
- Two-fifths of respondents visit the centre daily.
- Better car parking facilities, free parking and having a wide range of shops and retail facilities were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Ashby more often.

Attractions and events

- The local newspaper was identified as the most widely used method of finding out about attractions and events in the centre (60%), whilst the least used method was community newsletters (7%).
- One in ten people had attended an event in the centre.

Attitudes towards the centre

- Overall, Ashby was most likely to be described as 'attractive', 'distinctive', 'safe' and 'busy'.
- 41% of respondents reported that the centre had got much better or better within the last 12 months, whilst 40% reported no change. One in ten said it had got worse.
- Respondents felt that the centre of Ashby catered better for shoppers and visitors than it did for young people and disabled people.

Services available in the centre

- Banks & building societies, the market and shops were the top three services that respondents were most aware of and most likely to use on a regular basis in Ashby.
- Just over half of respondents in Ashby said the variety of retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs very well or quite well.

Town Centre Environment

- Overall, respondents were positive about the environment and facilities in and around the centre.
- Respondents felt that pedestrians could walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic and the road signs made it easy for cars to access the centre.
- Car parking facilities, more independent shops and a greater range of shops were seen as the areas that needed the most attention within Ashby.

Crime and safety

- People hanging around the street, people being drunk and rowdy in public spaces, rubbish and litter lying around and fly tipping were seen as the most significant problems in Ashby.
- Nearly all respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the town centre within the last 12 months.
- There were mixed views on the level of police presence in Ashby, as 48% of respondents felt it was insufficient and should be increased whereas 47% felt it was about right.
- 61% of respondents felt the presence of CCTV was about right, whilst 28% of respondents said it was insufficient and should be increased.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, respondents were positive about Ashby. It was rated above the county average as a good place to live, work, shop along with a number of other activities. Moreover, respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with Ashby and a large proportion felt that Ashby had got better or much better within the last 12 months.
- Many respondents were aware of and users of services such as banks or building societies, the market, shops, library and the post office in Ashby.
- Findings indicated that Ashby catered better for shoppers than it did for young people and disabled people. This is an area that should be looked into and it demonstrates how the centre serves different groups of people.
- Better car parking facilities, free parking and having a wide range of shops and retail facilities were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Ashby more often.
- Facilities such as public toilets and seating were areas identified by respondents as aspects of the town centre with the most scope for improvement, although most respondents were satisfied with the existing provision of these facilities.
- Respondents felt more attention should be given to independent shops, a greater range of shops and car parking facilities as areas for improvement.
- In terms of crime and safety issues, people hanging around the streets, people being drunk and rowdy in public spaces and rubbish and litter lying around were seen as the most significant issues.