



# BMG Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Survey:  
Market Harborough  
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 Market Harborough.

## Report contents

Section 2 of this report looks at why respondents visited Market Harborough, 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 Market Harborough, 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 Market Harborough 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

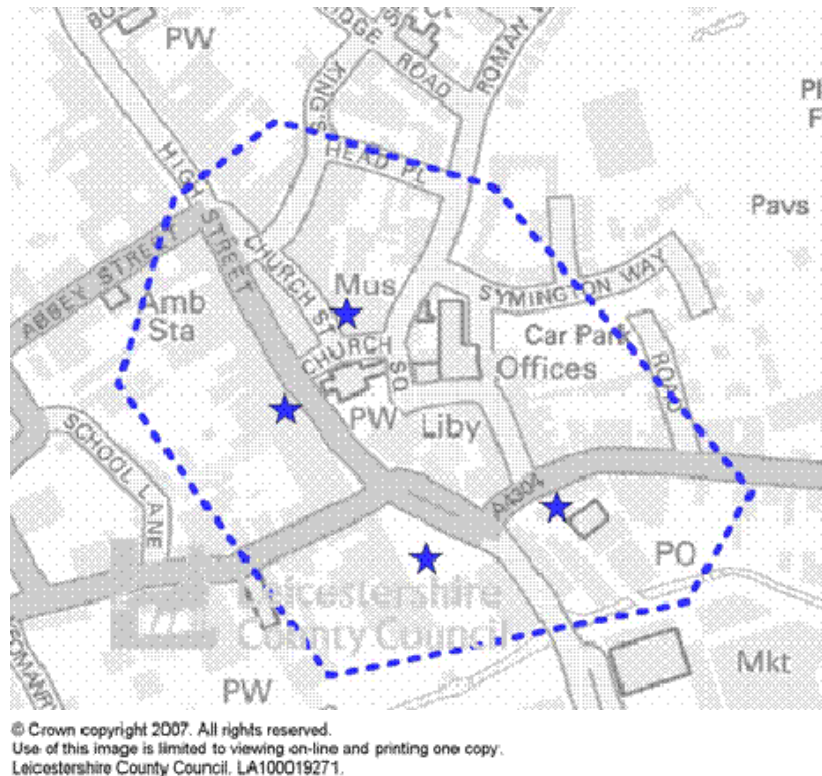
In total, 3000 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size, meaning that the target for some of the villages was only a little over 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 Market Harborough:

Figure 1



Source: Leicestershire County Council

## Respondent Profile

Within Market Harborough, 215 interviews were achieved. Of the sample, the majority of respondents were female (57%). 27% of respondents in Market Harborough were aged 16-24, 29% were aged 25-44, 23% were aged 45-64, with the remaining 19% being of retirement age (65+). As reported by the 2001 Census, within Market Harborough 11% of the population were aged between 16-24, 38% were aged between 25-44, 30% were aged between 45-64 and 21% were aged 65 and over.

The vast majority of respondents in Market Harborough (91%) described themselves as white British, whilst 1% described themselves as other white, 1% said white and Black Caribbean and 1% white and Asian. The remaining respondents described themselves as African (1%), Bangladeshi (1%), Caribbean (1%) and Indian (1%). According to the 2001 Census, 98% of the population of Market Harborough described themselves as white.

By economic status, 48% of respondents in Market Harborough were in work (46% employed and 2% self-employed). The largest proportion of those respondents not in work were retired (27% of the total Market Harborough sample). 17% of respondents were not in work because they were in education or training, 4% were looking after children or other dependents or the home. 2% of respondents were claiming benefits, whilst a further 2% were not in work due to an illness or disability.

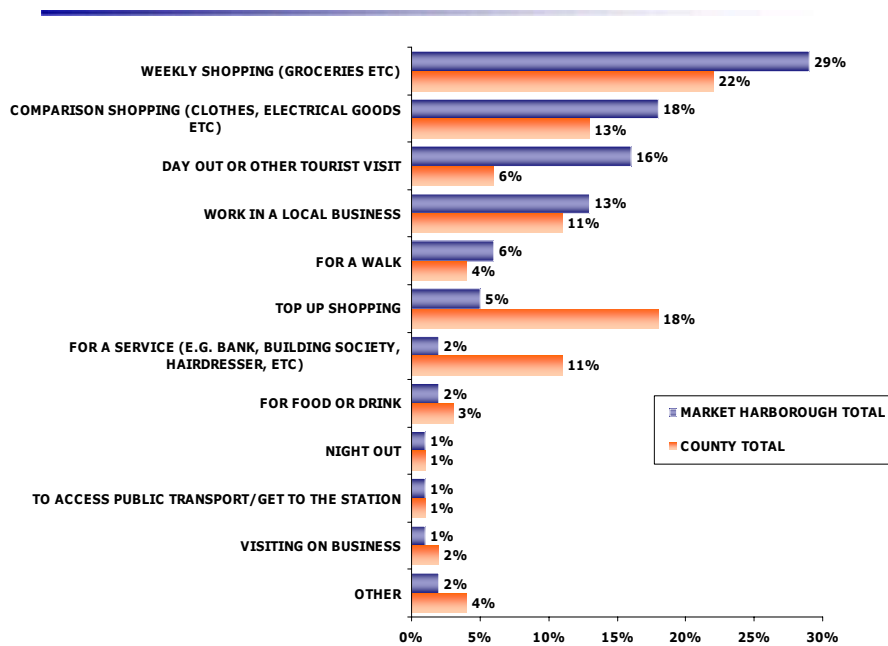
## 2 Visiting the Town Centre

### Visits

This section looks at the reasons why people visited Market Harborough, their mode of transport used to get to the centre, the frequency of visits as well as if they had visited any attractions and events in the centre.

Figure 2

MAIN REASON FOR VISITING MARKET HARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



MARKET HARBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 215  
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

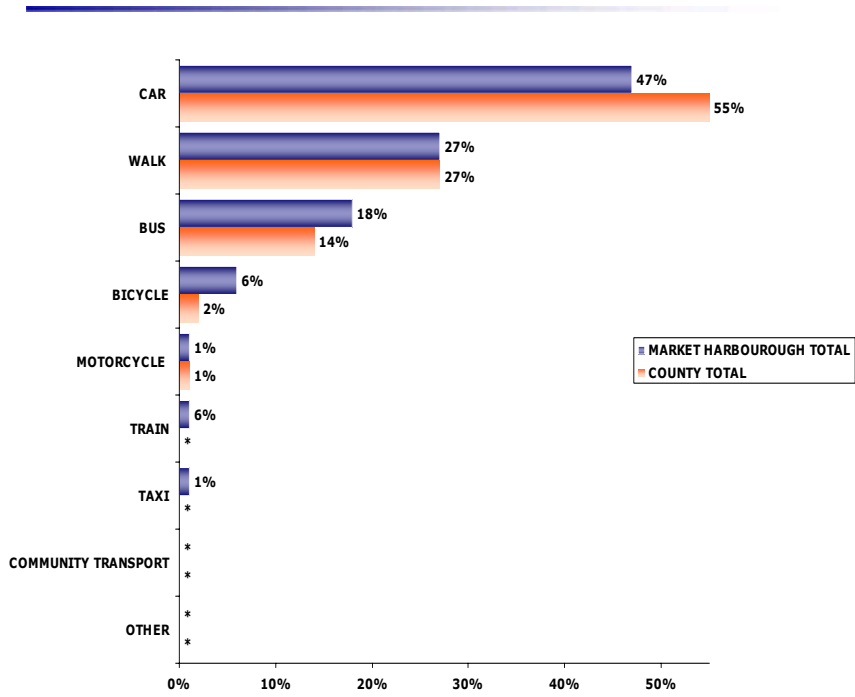
The intention of the survey was to speak to a cross-section of people present in the centres of the towns and villages, who may have been present for a whole range of purposes. Shopping trips of various sorts accounted for just over half of visits to Market Harborough (52%), which was similar to the total county figure (53%). Shopping trips were much less likely to be for top up shopping (5%) when compared to the County average (18%).

16% of respondents in Market Harborough were visiting the centre on a day out or as a tourist compared to 6% in the county. Just over one in ten were present because they worked in the centre whilst 6% of respondents said that they were out for a walk.

**Mode of transport used to get into the centre of town**

Figure 3

MODE OF TRANSPORT TO MARKET HARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE (ALL RESPONDENTS)



MARKET HARBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 215  
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072  
 \* DENOTES FIGURES LESS THAN 0.5%

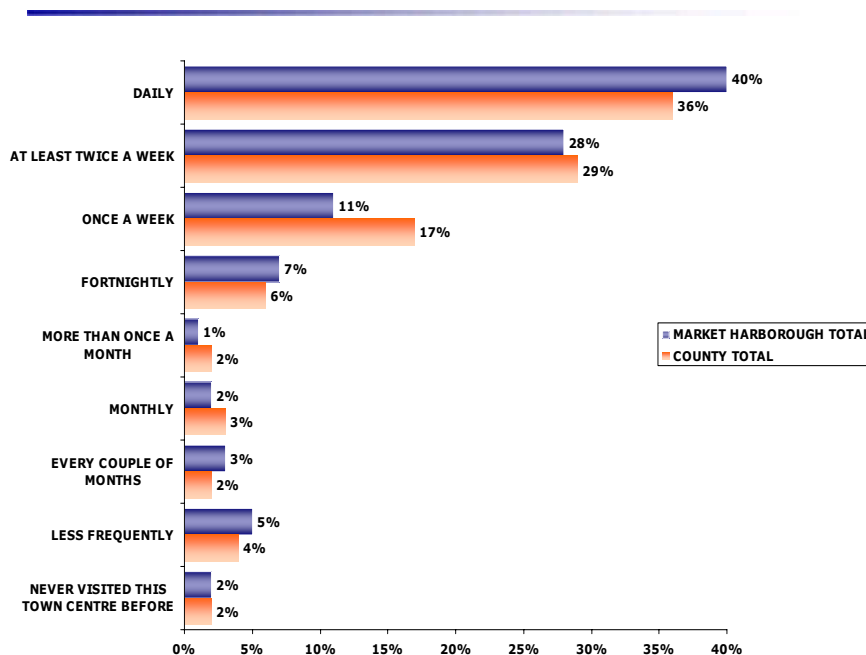
A large proportion of trips into the centre by respondents on the day of the survey were made by car, whilst just over a quarter of respondents walked into the centre (27%). 18% arrived by bus (compared to the county total of 14%) and 6% arrived by bicycle, which was slightly higher than the county total of 2%.

### Frequency of visits

As illustrated in the graph below, two-fifths of respondents reported that they visited the centre daily (40%), whilst over a quarter visited at least twice a week (28%) and 11% visited once a week. 2% of those in Market Harborough were visiting for the first time, which was the same figure for the county as a whole.

Figure 4

FREQUENCY OF VISITS INTO MARKET HARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE  
(ALL RESPONDENTS)



MARKET HARBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 215  
COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

Three-fifths of respondents visited Market Harborough both at weekends and on weekdays (60%), whilst just over a third of respondents visited on a weekday whilst 6% visited at weekends.

The majority of respondents (60%) mainly visited Market Harborough during the day (before 5.30pm), with 2% visiting the centre only in the evening (after 5.30pm). 38% of respondents visited the town centre both during the daytime and evening.

Of those respondents who only visited Melton Mowbray in the evening were asked how often they visited the centre. 16% of respondents visited Market Harborough town centre in the evening once a week, whilst 14% visited at least twice a week. Friday evenings proved to be a popular day to visit the centre amongst respondents, with 18% choosing to do so. 14% of respondents visited mainly on a Saturday or Sunday evening.

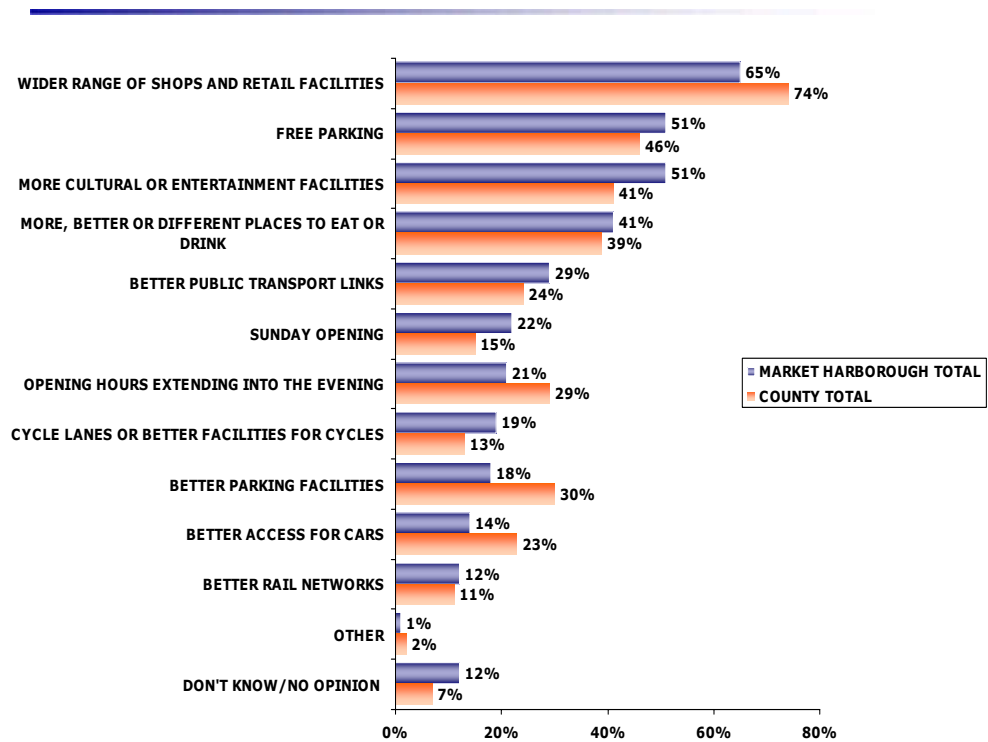
### Encouraging more people to visit the centre

Respondents were asked to identify those issues which would encourage them to visit Market Harborough more often. They were able to cite more than one issue. Having a wider range of shops and retail facilities (77%) and free parking (51%) were cited as two areas that would encourage respondents to visit Market Harborough more.

Improvements in having more cultural or entertainment facilities, better places for food and drink and better public transport links were also very important to some respondents. Sunday opening and extension of opening hours, particularly evening opening, were also significant for some visitors.

Figure 5

#### AREAS THAT WOULD ENCOURAGE RESPONDENTS TO VISIT MARKET HARBOROUGH TOWN CENTRE MORE OFTEN (ALL RESPONDENTS)

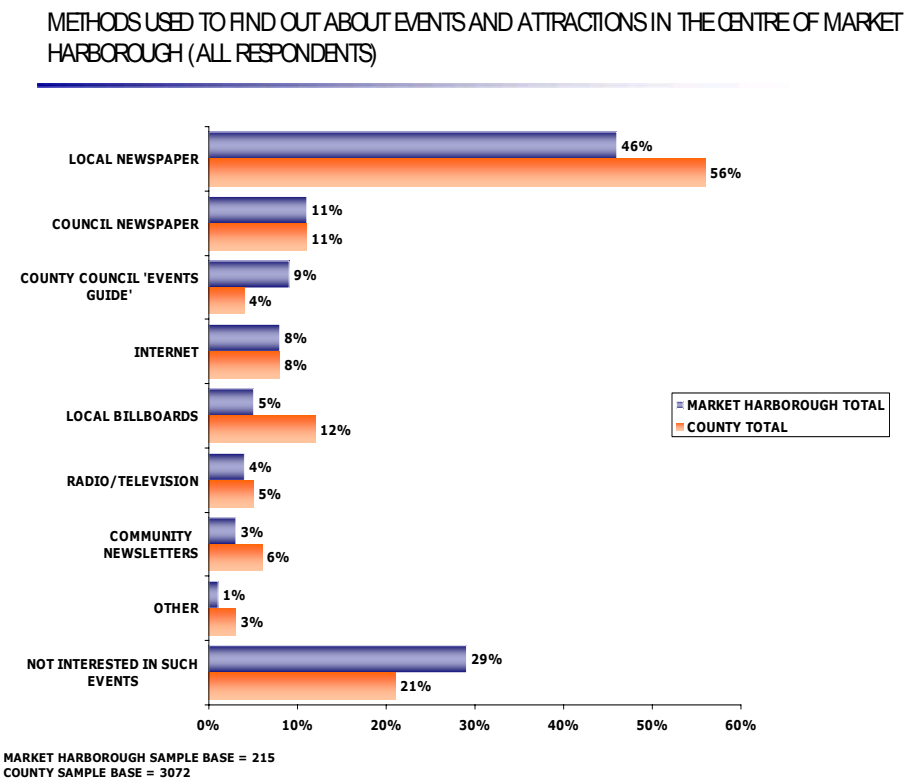


MARKET HARBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 215  
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 3072

## 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 Market Harborough, with other sources only modest in their importance by comparison. Notably, the council newspaper was also a popular method of finding out about events and attractions in Market Harborough which was the same as the rest of the county (11% Market Harborough, 11% county total). The least popular methods included community newsletters and radio or television.

Figure 6



When respondents were questioned about whether they had attended any events in the town centre recently, 24% said that they had compared to the county figure of 12%. Of these 24%, the most frequently cited events that were attended included the carnival (nineteen people), the Jurassic Park or Dinosaur event (ten people), farmers market (seven people) and the French market (seven people).

Respondents were asked what made the centre unique, different or special in Market Harborough. 15% of respondents said the market, 13% said the layout whilst 7% of respondents said the history and heritage of Market Harborough. Other notable responses included:

- Busy, vibrant and lively (7%);
- Safe area and low crime level (5%);
- The size (5%);

- Bell Street (4%);
- Quiet or peaceful (4%);
- Friendly people (3%);
- Small market town or village (3%);
- Born here or live here (1%);
- Cleanliness (2%);
- Community spirit (2%);
- Culture (2%);
- Parks (2%);
- Architecture and buildings (1%);
- Churches (1%);
- Good atmosphere (1%);
- The people and variety of people (1%);
- Schools and colleges (1%); and
- Shops and shopping centre (1%).

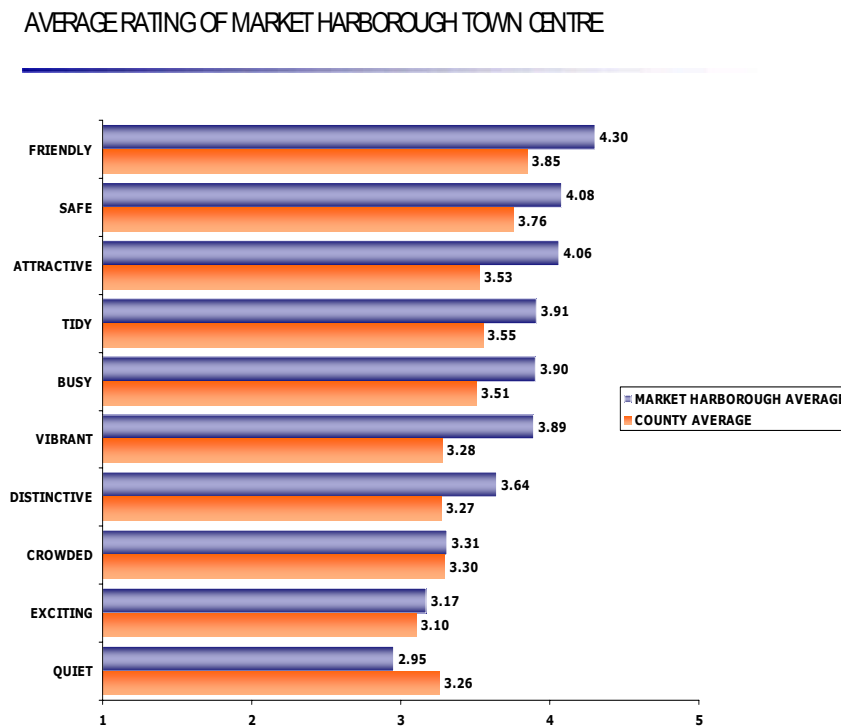
### 3 Attitude towards the centre

This section examines the attitudes of respondents to the different aspects of Market Harborough, considering whether the centre was 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 Market Harborough on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was strongly disagree and 5 was strongly agree. Overall, Market Harborough was most likely to be described as 'friendly', 'safe' and 'attractive'. At the opposite end of the spectrum, Market Harborough was least likely to be described as 'quiet' and 'exciting'.

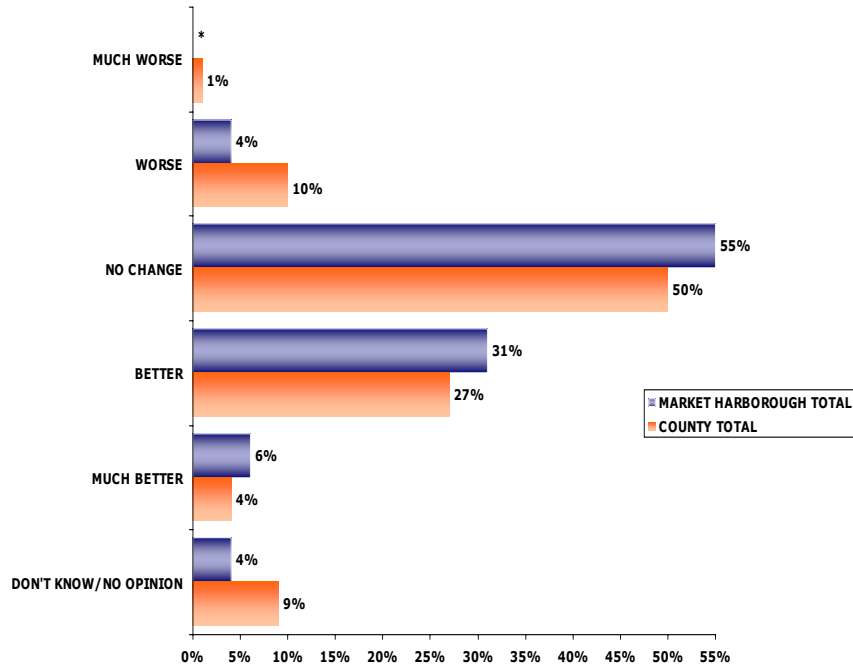
Figure 7



Whilst 55% of respondents didn't report any overall change in Market Harborough, nearly a third (31%) believed that it had improved, compared to just 4% who thought it had got worse, as shown below:

Figure 8

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



MARKET HARBOROUGH SAMPLE BASE = 210  
 COUNTY SAMPLE BASE = 2999  
 \*DENOTES FIGURE LESS THAN 0.5%

All respondents were asked for their view on how well Market Harborough served different groups in the population. The results for each of these groups are shown in Table 1 below. Respondents tended to think that the best served groups were elderly people, visitors and families. However, it was clear that amongst the total population of respondents in Market Harborough, there was greater concern about how the centre served young people than for any other group. 28% of respondents thought the centre was very poor or poor for young people.

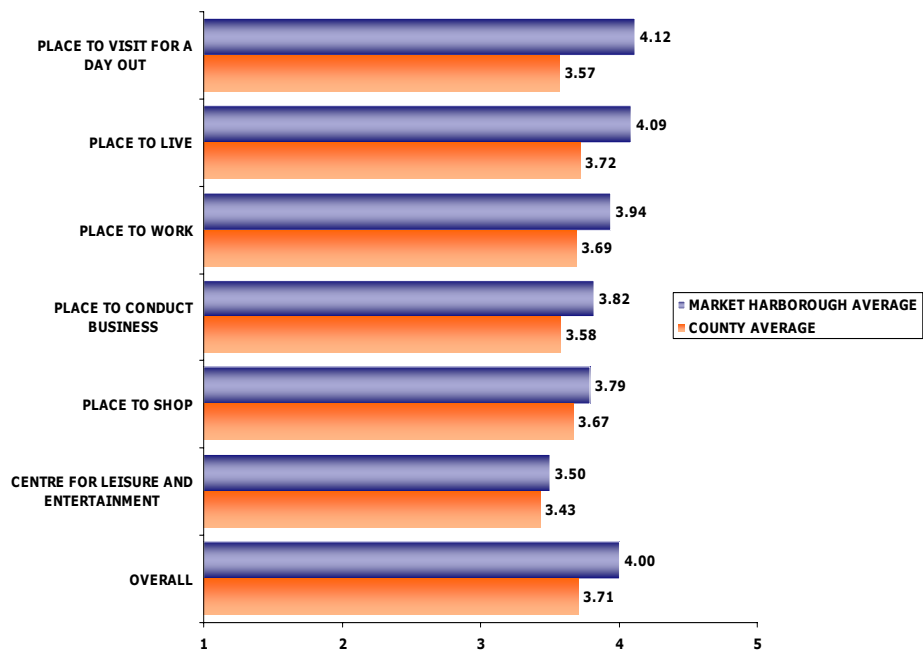
Table 1

<b>RATING OF MARKET HARBOROUGH FOR VARIOUS GROUPS</b>							
	<b>Very poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Neither good nor poor</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>DK/no opinion</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	
Elderly people	1	1	6	66	22	4	4.13
Families	1	3	8	59	25	3	4.11
Visitors	0	3	7	65	20	4	4.06
People with disabilities	1	1	13	61	10	14	3.91
Shoppers	2	3	14	64	15	1	3.89
Young people	9	19	25	36	3	7	3.06
<b>SAMPLE BASE: 215</b>							

**How good are the centres as places for particular activities?**

Figure 9

**RATING OF MARKET HARBOROUGH AS A PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, SHOP, ETC (ALL RESPONDENTS)**

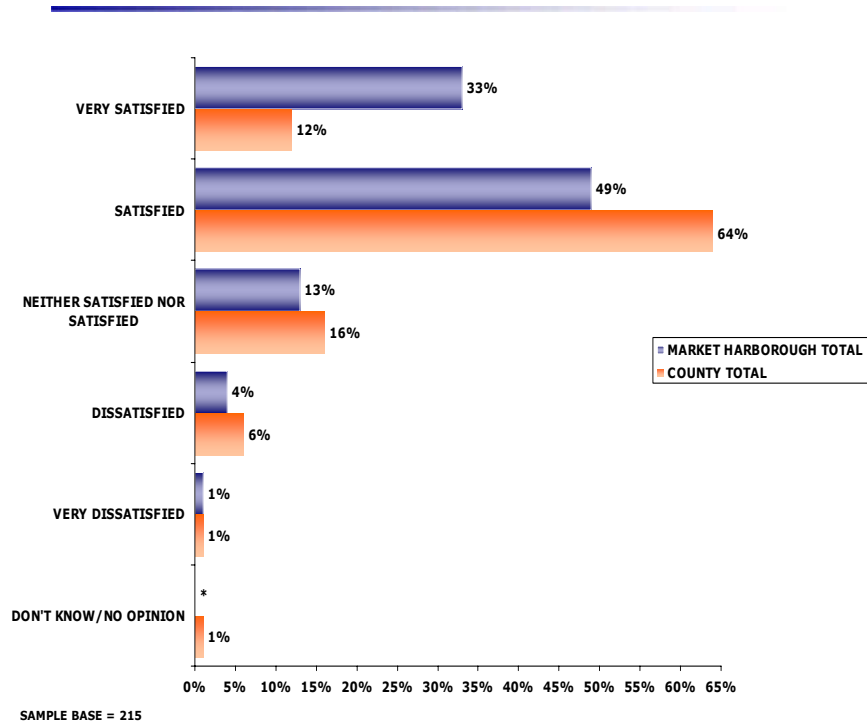


Overall, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is the most positive score, Market Harborough was rated 4.00, which was higher than the county average of 3.71 - that is Market Harborough was considered as good whilst the county was considered as well above average, good but not very good. This was also reflected in the individual accounts, most notably, Market Harborough was considered as a good place to visit for a day out compared to the rest of the county (4.12 Market Harborough, 3.57 county).

Overall, satisfaction was very high amongst respondents as they considered Market Harborough a good place to shop, visit and to do business. The graph below demonstrates that the overall level of satisfaction for Market Harborough was higher than the total for the county (82% Market Harborough, 76% county).

Figure 10

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

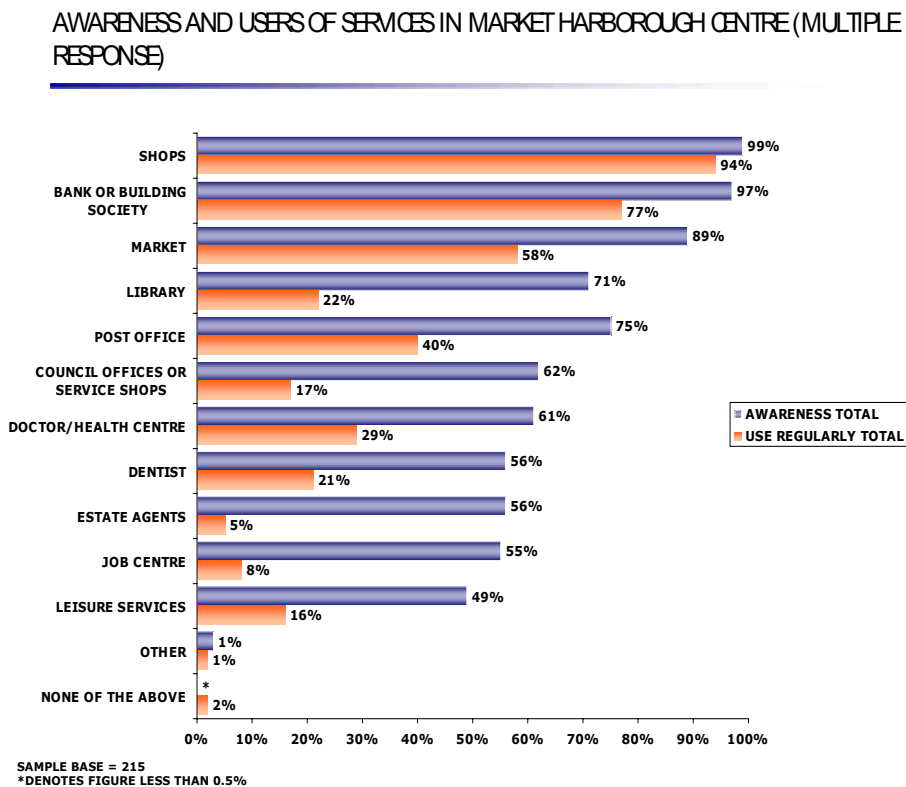


## Services available in the centre

Services available in the centre of Market Harborough 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 shops, banks & building societies and the market and these were 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 71% of respondents were aware of a library in Market Harborough but only 22% used the service. Furthermore, respondents were aware of health services within the centre of Market Harborough but less people used them on a regular basis - 61% of respondents were aware of a doctor's or health centre in Market Harborough, but 29% of respondents were regular users whilst 56% of respondents were aware that there was a dentist in Market Harborough whilst only 21% were regular users.

Figure 11



Respondents were questioned whether they agreed or disagreed that there was a wide variety of products available to buy from the market. 54% of respondents in Market Harborough agreed or strongly agreed that there was a wide variety of products available to buy from the market.

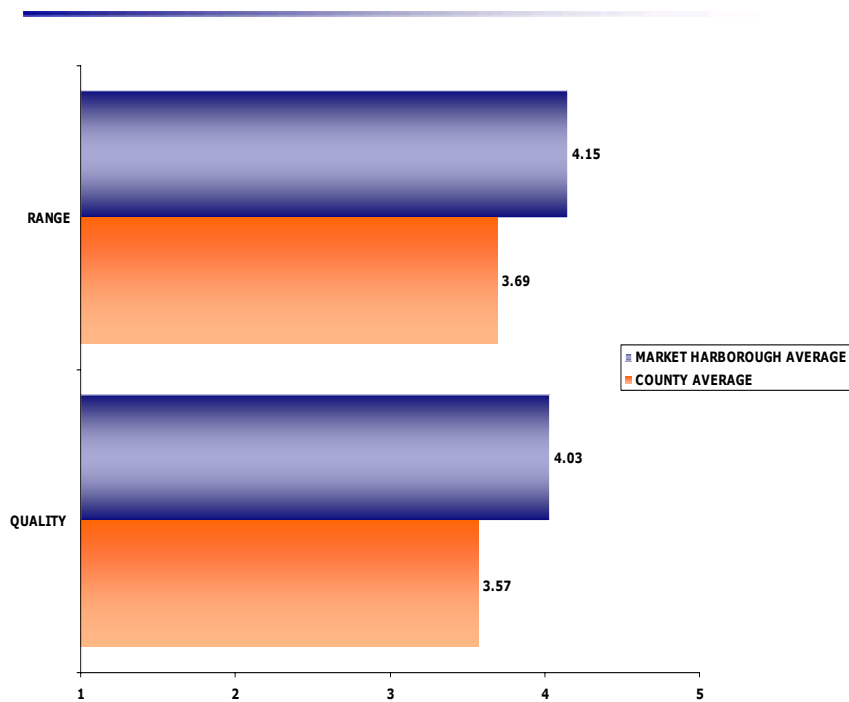
Respondents were questioned as to whether the retail outlets in Market Harborough met their shopping needs. Just over half of respondents said that the variety of the retail outlets and shops in the centre met their

needs very well or quite well (54%). 28% of respondents felt the variety of retail outlets and shops met their needs adequately whilst 17% said it did not meet their needs.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of places to eat out in Market Harborough 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. On a county-wide level, this pattern was the same. Figures for Market Harborough were higher than the county averages.

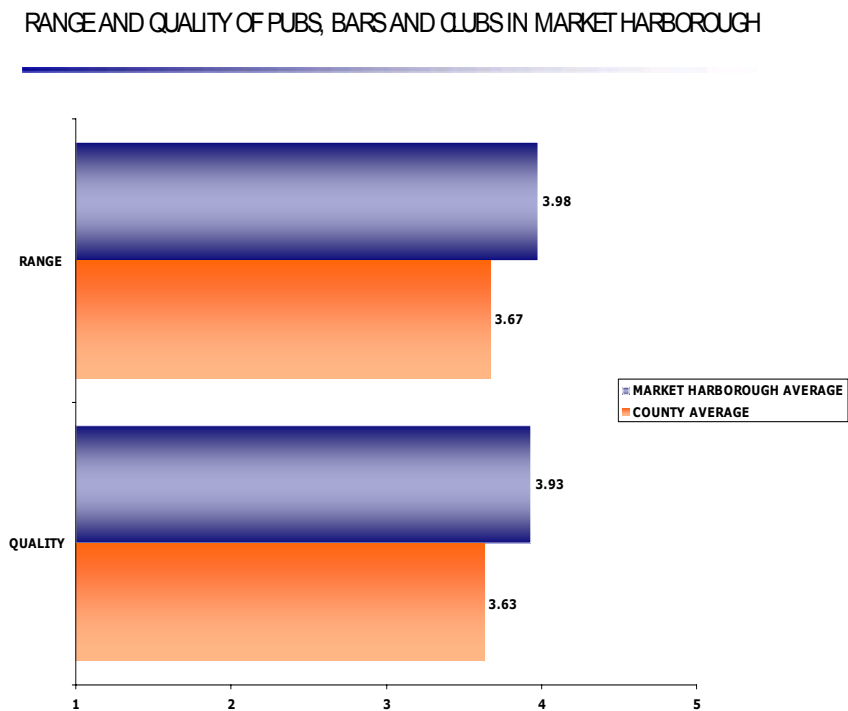
Figure 12

RANGE AND QUALITY OF THE PLACES TO EAT OUT IN MARKET HARBOROUGH



Respondents were then asked to rate the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in Market Harborough on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 was very poor and 5 was very good. Respondents were slightly more positive about the range than the quality of pubs, bars and clubs in Market Harborough, as shown below. This was also the same position on a county-wide level although the figures for Market Harborough were higher than the county averages for the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs.

Figure 13



## 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

<b>WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH</b>						
	<b>Disagree strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree strongly</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	
The centre is well planted in summertime	0	2	9	59	28	4.16
The parks are well maintained	0	3	8	57	27	4.13
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	0	2	16	51	2	4.11
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	1	2	9	66	22	4.07
Shop fronts are well maintained	1	3	11	64	20	4.00
There is sufficient seating in and around the centre	1	7	8	61	22	3.97
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	0	1	19	58	16	3.94
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	1	5	16	58	20	3.93
Street lighting is good	0	4	18	52	18	3.92
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	1	7	16	55	20	3.86
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	6	3	16	18	4	3.24
The public toilets are clean and tidy	18	12	19	33	7	2.99
There are enough baby changing facilities	6	8	16	15	2	2.98
There are enough public toilets	20	14	21	32	6	2.88
<b>SAMPLE BASE: 215</b>						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

Overall, respondents had positive views about the environment and facilities available in the centre of Market Harborough. Respondents felt that the seating in and around shopping areas were well maintained (88% agreed or agreed strongly), shop fronts were well maintained (84%) and there was sufficient seating in and around the centre (83%). Respondents tended to disagree that there were enough public toilets (34% disagreed or disagreed strongly), the public toilets were clean and tidy (30%) and there were enough baby changing facilities (14%).

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

Table 3

<b>WHETHER RESPONDENTS AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT ASPECTS IN AND AROUND THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH</b>						
	<b>Disagree strongly</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Agree strongly</b>	<b>Mean score</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	0	2	22	48	26	3.99
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	1	4	16	51	23	3.97
The centre needs more local, independent shops	3	7	18	37	34	3.94
The centre could do with more high street chain stores	1	11	14	36	34	3.93
Roads in the centre are well maintained	0	5	20	47	19	3.87
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	1	6	16	50	16	3.85
There is enough car parking available	2	9	10	41	19	3.83
The road network provides easy access into the centre	1	6	15	55	12	3.81
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	1	8	13	50	13	3.78
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	1	13	24	40	22	3.70
Roads in the centre are congested	2	10	23	39	18	3.65
There is too much traffic noise in the centre	5	22	32	32	9	3.17
Car parking costs too much	14	16	15	20	9	2.91
There is too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre	22	31	22	17	3	2.46
<b>SAMPLE BASE: 215</b>						

Note: Percentage no replies not shown

As demonstrated in the above table 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the centre was accessible for disabled people and older people and a further 74% agreed or strongly agreed that the level of service in shops was of a high standard. In descending order of agreement, this was followed by the centre needs more local, independent shops (71%), the centre could do with more high street

chain stores (70%) and the road network provided easy access into the centre. Nearly three-fifths of respondents (53%) disagreed with the statement that there was too much other noise (music, pubs and clubs) in the centre of Market Harborough.

Respondents were given a list of options and asked to say which issues they thought most needed attention in Market Harborough. The most frequently cited responses were a greater range of shops (50%), more leisure activities (44%) and more specialist shops (42%). When asked to prioritise their *top three* areas of improvement, the same issues arose again. Respondents cited a greater range of shops (45%), more leisure facilities (31%) and more specialist shops (24%).

## 4 Crime and safety

This section looks at how respondents in Market Harborough 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 round the streets was seen as a big problem by the largest proportion of respondents in Market Harborough (23% considered this to be a very big problem or a big problem). This was followed by dirty pavements and chewing gum (17%) and rubbish and litter lying around (16%). Areas that were seen as less of a problem included aggressive begging (83% considered this either not a problem, or only a small problem), racial harassment (77%) and people not treating each other with respect and consideration (75%).

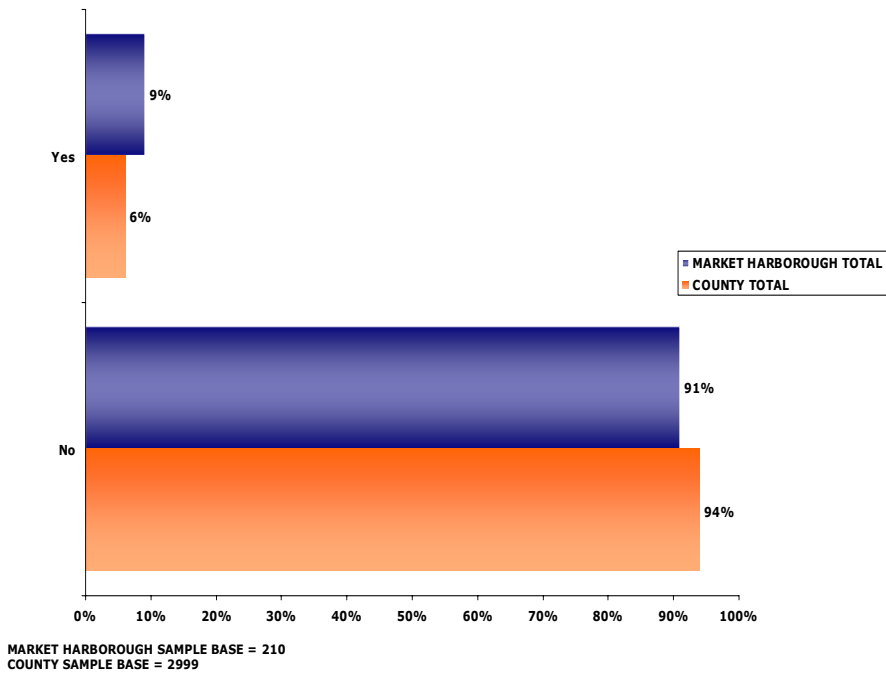
Table 3

AREAS THAT ARE SEEN AS PROBLEMS IN THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH						
	Very big problem	Big Problem	Neither big nor small	Small Problem	Not a problem at all	Mean scores
	%	%	%	%	%	
Groups of people hanging round the streets	7	16	20	19	33	3.56
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	6	11	21	25	34	3.74
Rubbish and litter lying around	5	11	17	37	29	3.75
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	4	9	14	32	36	3.91
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	4	3	16	29	42	4.08
Street canvassers	6	7	10	22	52	4.12
People using or dealing drugs	6	5	7	16	48	4.17
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	3	5	10	24	51	4.25
Road safety or speeding	1	3	14	28	46	4.26
Personal theft (pick pocketing)	2	6	8	18	47	4.26
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	2	4	13	13	52	4.3
Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	2	6	12	11	55	4.3
Fly tipping	1	5	10	21	50	4.34
Property being stolen from a vehicle	3	3	6	13	54	4.41
Vehicles being stolen	2	3	6	16	54	4.45
Aggressive begging	1	1	7	18	65	4.62
Racial harassment	0	1	5	13	64	4.68
<b>SAMPLE BASE: 215</b>						

Respondents were questioned about whether they had ever felt worried about being assaulted or harassed in Market Harborough within the last 12 months. 91% of respondents said that they did not feel worried about being assaulted or harassed compared to the county total of 94%.

Figure 14

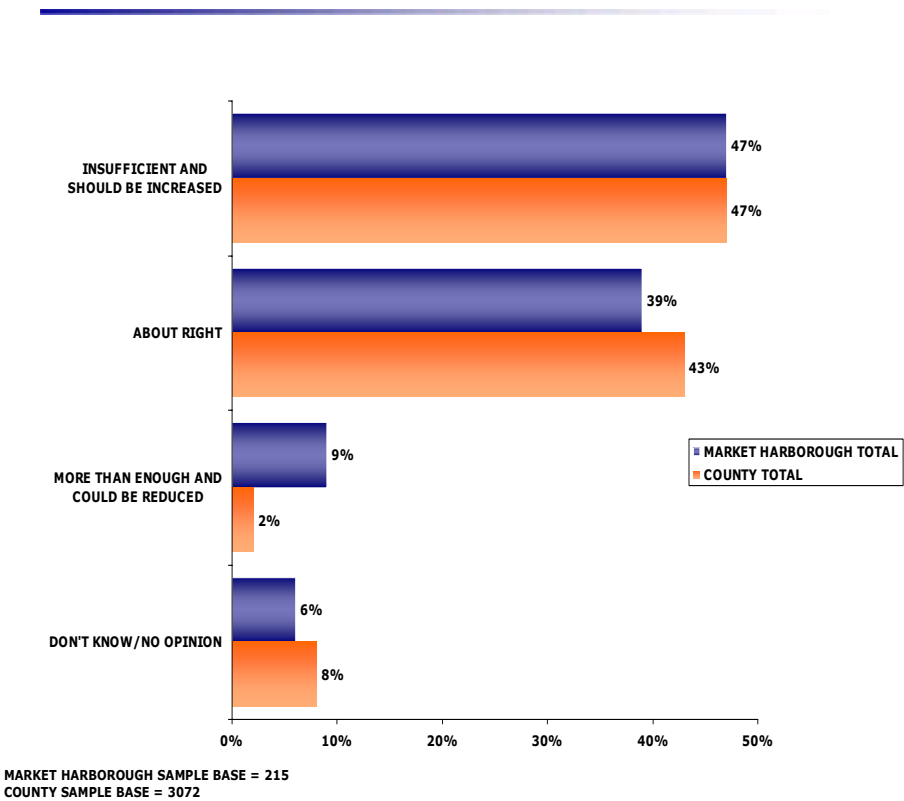
WHETHER RESPONDENTS HAVE EVER FELT WORRIED ABOUT BEING ASSAULTED OR HARASSED WHILST IN THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS



Respondents were then questioned about their perceptions of police presence within Market Harborough. 47% of respondents felt that the police presence was insufficient and should be increased whilst 39% of respondents felt the police presence in the centre was about right.

Figure 15

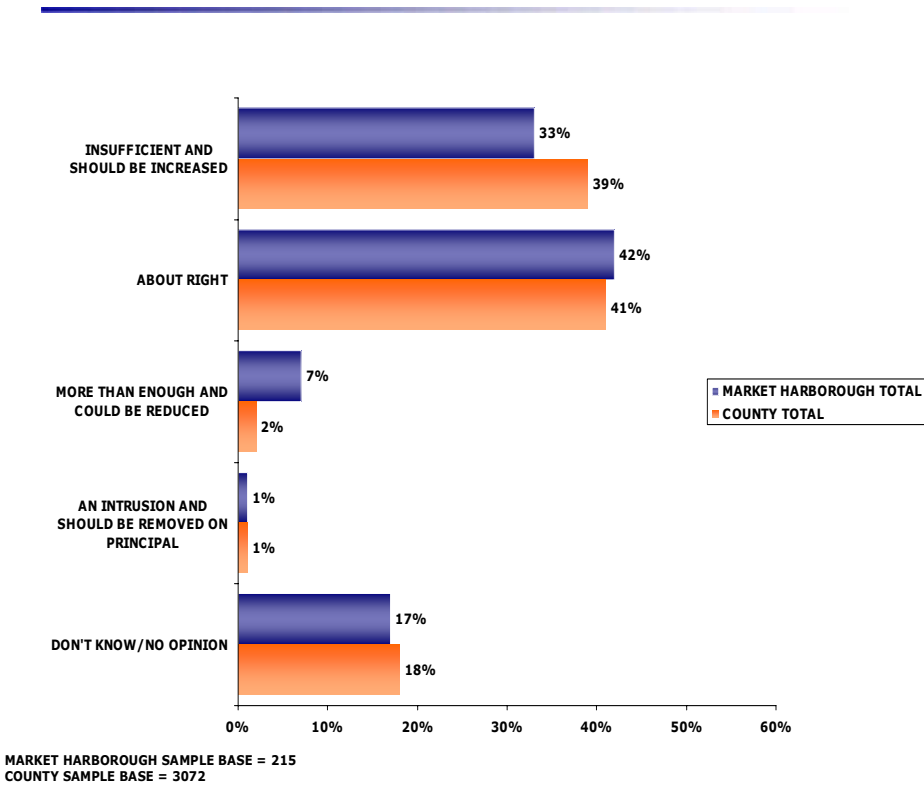
PERCEPTIONS OF POLICE PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH



When questioned about the presence of CCTV in Market Harborough, 42% of respondents felt that it was about right whilst a third of respondents felt it was insufficient and should be increased.

Figure 16

PERCEPTIONS OF CCTV PRESENCE IN THE CENTRE OF MARKET HARBOROUGH



## 5 Summary

### Visiting the town centre

- Shopping trips accounted for just over half of the trips to Market Harborough.
- 16% of respondents were in Market Harborough as a tourist or on a day out, whilst 13% of respondents worked in a local business.
- The largest proportion of visitors arrived in Market Harborough by car, with the second most common method being on foot and the third being by bus.
- Just over two-fifths of respondents visited the centre daily.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, more cultural or entertainment facilities and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Market Harborough 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, whilst the least used methods were Community newsletters and radio or television.
- 24% of respondents had attended an event in the centre.

### Attitudes towards the centre

- Overall, Market Harborough was most likely to be described as 'friendly', 'safe', 'attractive' and 'tidy'.
- Over half (55%) of respondents reported no change in the centre of Market Harborough within the last 12 months, 31% reported the centre had got better and 4% said it had got worse.
- Respondents felt that the centre catered better for elderly people, visitors and families than it did for young people.

### Services available in the centre

- Shops, banks & building societies and the market were the top three services that respondents were most aware of and were most likely to use on a regular basis in Market Harborough.
- 54% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that there was a wide variety of products available to buy from the market.
- Just over half of respondents in Market Harborough said the variety of retail outlets and shops in the centre met their needs.

## Town centre environment

- Overall, respondents were positive about the environment and facilities in and around the centre.
- Respondents felt that the seating in and around shopping areas was well maintained, the centre was well planted in summertime, the parks were well maintained and shop fronts were well maintained.
- Having a greater range of shops, more leisure facilities and more specialist shops were seen as the areas that needed the most improvement in Market Harborough.

## Crime and safety

- Groups of people hanging round the street, dirty pavements and chewing gum and rubbish and litter lying around were seen as the most significant problems in Market Harborough.
- 91% of respondents said that they had not felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the town centre within the last 12 months.
- 47% of respondents claimed that the level of police presence in Market Harborough was insufficient and should be increased, whereas 39% felt that it was about right.
- 42% of respondents felt the presence of CCTV was about right, whilst 33% of respondents was insufficient and should be increased.

## 6 Conclusions and recommendations

- Overall, respondents were positive about Market Harborough. 82% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with Market Harborough as a place to shop, visit and to do business. Moreover, although the majority of respondents reported no change within the last 12 months, 37% reported that the centre had got better or much better.
- Many respondents were aware of and users of services such as shops, the bank or building and the market in Market Harborough.
- Findings indicated that Market Harborough catered better for elderly people, visitors and families than it did for young people. This shows how the centre serves different groups of people.
- A wider range of shops and retail facilities, more cultural or entertainment facilities and free parking were the improvements most likely to encourage more people to come to Market Harborough more often.
- Public toilets and baby changing facilities were identified 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 be paid to a greater range of shops, more leisure facilities and more specialist shops within Market Harborough
- In terms of crime and safety issues, groups of people hanging around the streets, dirty pavements and chewing gum and rubbish and litter lying around were seen as the most significant issues in Market Harborough.