

North Lanarkshire Town Centre Health Checks Project Summary

1. Introduction

This paper provides an introduction to the North Lanarkshire Town Centre Health Checks project and highlights some of the practical resources that were produced as part of the health check process for Motherwell and Wishaw. These resources have been adapted so that they are not specific to North Lanarkshire but are applicable to any planning authority embarking on a Town Centre Health Check.

These resources are complemented by a [case study](#) that provides North Lanarkshire's perspective on the Town Centre Health Check process.

2. Context of North Lanarkshire Council's Town Centres project

North Lanarkshire Council and its partners have, for some considerable time, recognised the important role played by its town centres. This has been demonstrated by an on-going major capital investment programme in transportation and public realm improvements across its town centres for a number of years, guided by Town Centre Action Plans prepared during the period 2001-2006.

The Council recognised that the scope of the current Town Centre Action Plans was not sufficiently broad enough and did not adequately address all of the necessary factors required to support sustained economic activity and provided inadequate scope for partners to fully contribute to town centre regeneration.

In addition, the Council's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) identified the need for improved joint working within the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) with a joint commitment to achieve shared objectives. The SOA also acknowledged the role of town centres as centres of economic and social activity.

The general shift towards an 'outcomes approach' across Scottish public policy, the changing economic climate and the emphasis on the role of the CPP, provided an opportunity to develop and review the existing approach to plans for town centres and to produce a new generation of Town Centre Action Plans.

The first stage of the Town Centre Action Plan review process was to produce Town Centre Health Checks. These provide a base line position for the centres, examining a range of indicators which will be used to build a comprehensive picture of their performance to inform the vision and strategy.

The Health Checks feature a suite of indicators which are monitored on a regular basis to permit measurement of each centres' performance. This information will be augmented by the information collated from the business and customer surveys that can be accessed below.



3. Resources

The resources below can be used in their current form or adapted to meet the particular characteristic and circumstances of individual authorities. They are likely to be of most value to those who are either starting or are in the early stages of undertaking Town Centre Health Checks. They may also be relevant and useful to elected members involved in assessing design or planning applications.

a. Site appraisal/perceptions assessment

A perception assessment of the two town centres was written up by the Improvement Service from the perspective of people who had never visited the towns before. This was undertaken to identify issues regarding the legibility and connectivity of Motherwell and Wishaw as well as character, design and overall experience. This along with a site appraisal examined design issues that tied into policy (*Designing Streets*) and guidance (*Designing North Lanarkshire*).

Design Quality Checklist

The key issues that were identified by the perceptions assessment were used to create a Design Quality Checklist specifically for use in helping to develop town centres. This checklist is intended for use by the community to assess their town centre environment as part of the Health Check process.

The checklist criteria can also be used as guidance for members of a community and elected members who are involved in assessing town centres/ developments/ planning applications. It was not designed to be prescriptive but rather covers the general principles of good design in order to act as a supplement for existing design guidance produced within the relevant planning authority.

[Link to Design Quality Checklist.](#)

b. Customer survey

A questionnaire was developed to be distributed to the customers of Wishaw and Motherwell town centres. The main purpose of the questionnaire is to identify what people using the area think about their town centre and specifically what factors influence the extent they use it, including ease of access to movement around the town centre.

The attached customer survey has been adapted from the one produced for North Lanarkshire Council to produce a generic version that can be used by any planning authority. It can be used in its current format or adapted, for example to include more site specific questions that are an issue within the particular town centre.

[Link to Customer Survey.](#)

c. Business survey

A questionnaire was developed to be distributed to owners of businesses that operate within the town centres of Motherwell and Wishaw. Its purpose was to identify current issues businesses are experiencing and their future intentions and plans. The information gained from the business survey will be used by North Lanarkshire Council to assess and monitor town centre performance and to inform the town centre strategy and action plans. The overall remit of the questionnaire is to identify business owners' views on

existing town centres with a view to identifying potential improvements that will promote the local economy.

The attached business survey has been adapted from the one produced for North Lanarkshire Council to produce a generic version that can be used by any planning authority. It can be used in its current format or adapted, for example to include more site specific questions that are an issue within the particular town centre.

[Link to Business Survey.](#)

Information for the practical resources was collected through participant observation/action research and written by the Improvement Service and North Lanarkshire Council.

Design Quality Checklist

This Design Quality Checklist has been produced to be used by elected members with a planning remit and/or members of the community, to assess town centres/ developments/planning applications against the criteria below by asking themselves the following questions:

A. (Distinctiveness)

1. Does the town centre feel like a place with a distinct character? i.e. when you walk about the area would you say the streets are unique and the buildings are recognisable?
2. Are the buildings in the development of good quality with a design specific to the area?
3. Is it easy to know what direction to go in the town centre to get to where you want?
4. Is there good landscaping in the town centre? Such as trees and planting, open spaces, seating, pavements, pedestrian squares etc.

B. (Safe and pleasant)

5. Do public spaces and pedestrian routes feel safe? If you needed help, would there be people about to see you and help you?
6. Are the streets well lit and is there appropriate signage?
7. Is the public space well designed and is it well maintained?
8. What takes priority in the town centre cars or pedestrians?

C. (Easy to get to and move around)

9. Do the buildings and layout make it easy to find your way around? Are there clear open pedestrian routes? Think about people with needs such as the elderly, people with children, people with disabilities.
10. Are the streets pedestrian, cycle and vehicle friendly?
11. Is the car and cycle parking well situated so as to support the town centre and slow traffic speeds?
12. Does the town centre have easy access to public transport?

D. (Welcoming)

13. Are building entrances obvious, welcoming and do they face the street?
14. Is there a tenure and accommodation mix within the town centre that reflects the needs of the local community?
15. Does the town centre provide (or is it close to) community facilities such as schools, parks, play areas, shops, pubs or cafes?
16. Do you feel the development/town centre/car parking area etc. is well overlooked and safe?

E. (Adaptable)

17. Do the dwellings/businesses within the town centre have a useful external amenity area? i.e. space for bins, outdoor storage, deliveries etc
18. Do the internal building spaces and layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension?



19. Is the development within the town centre accessible for all? i.e. is it easy for people with any disability to navigate the area?

F. (Resource Efficient)

20. Do new developments have features to reduce their environmental impact and reduce water and energy use? How is waste managed? Is their provision for recycling?
21. Has the new development within the town centre made use of advances in construction or technology that enhance its performance, quality and attractiveness?



Customer Survey

This customer survey can be used as a tool for engaging with the users/customers of a town centre. It has been produced for Scottish planning authorities that are undertaking town centre health checks but will also be of relevance to other departments across local authorities looking to engage with town centre users.

1. About you

Gender: Male Female

Age: under 16 16-25 26-45 46-65 65+

Postcode _____

2. Why do you normally visit _____ town centre and how often?

| | Daily | Weekly | Fortnightly | Monthly | Occasional | Never |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Shopping | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Running errands such as post office/bank/ doctors/dentist/pharmacy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Public services (for example Job Centre, social work, Council customer services) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Socialising/restaurants/pubs | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transport/travel (for example to catch a bus or train) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School/nursery | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sports/leisure clubs or activities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other (please specify) _____ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



3. When you visit _____ town centre, how much time do you usually spend there?

- Under 30 minutes
- 30 minutes to 1 hour
- Between 1 hour and 2 hours
- Over 2 hours
- I live in the town centre

4. Between what times do you normally visit _____ town centre?

- Morning
- Early afternoon
- Late afternoon
- Early evening/evening
- Late night

5. How do you normally travel to _____ town centre? Please tick all that apply.

- Walk
- Public transport
- Car
- Taxi
- Cycle
- I live in the town centre

6. What other town centres or retail parks do you use?



7. Where do you normally do you main food shopping?

8. How much do you agree that the following things affect the amount you use _____ town centre?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Doesn't Apply |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| There is enough car parking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to get into the town centre by car | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to get into the town centre by public transport | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre if you are a person with a disability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre with pushchairs or young children | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough public toilets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough temporary events such as Christmas/farmers markets, children's events, festivals, sales, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough good quality leisure and recreation facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is a good mix of different shops | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are good places to socialise, e.g. cafes, pubs, day centres | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is suitable shelter from the elements | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is enough police presence/communication with the public | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

9. What do you think about how the town centre looks - for example, shop fronts, street signs, buildings and planting?



10. Are you happy with _____ town centre's public spaces, street furniture, open spaces, pedestrian areas?

11. Does crime or anti-social behaviour ever make you think twice about visiting _____ town centre? If so, please explain.

12. What do you like about _____ town centre?

13. What do you not like about _____ town centre?

14. What do you hope _____ town centre to be like in the future?



Business Survey

This business survey can be used as a tool for engaging with owners of businesses that are located within a town centre. It has been produced for Scottish planning authorities that are undertaking town centre health checks but will also be of relevance to other departments across local authorities looking to engage with owners of town centre businesses.

1. About your business

Business name _____

Business type _____

Postcode of business premises _____

Opening hours _____

Number of employees

Full time _____

Part time _____

How many of your employees do you estimate live in _____ town centre?

None Some Around half Most All

How long has your business been trading at the present location? _____

2. Would you describe your business as being a sole trader?

3. Does your business have a website?

Yes No

If yes, do you use the website for online sales?

Yes No

4. What are your expectations for your business in the next three years? (Please pick one)

a. In a largely similar state as it is at present

b. Similar in terms of size, but moving location
If so, where and why? _____

c. Growing your business but staying in your present location

d. Seeking to move outside your current unit in order to get larger premises

If yes, is this:

within the town centre

outwith the town centre



e. Closing down

If so, why? _____

5. How much do you agree that the following things affect your business in _____ town centre?

| | Strongly Agree | Agree | Neither | Disagree | Strongly Disagree | Doesn't Apply |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| There is enough car parking | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to get into the town centre by car | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to get into the town centre by public transport | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre if you are a person with a disability | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| It is easy to move around within the town centre with pushchairs or young children | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough public toilets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough temporary events such as Christmas/farmers markets, children's events, festivals, sales, etc | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are enough good quality leisure and recreation facilities. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is a good mix of different shops | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There are good places to socialise, e.g. cafes, pubs, day centres | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is suitable shelter from the elements | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| There is enough police presence/communication with the public | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Is the price of parking in _____ town centre reasonable?

 Yes

 No

7. Are the parking spaces conveniently located to enable people to access your premises?

 Yes

 No


If no, do you think it would help if measures were introduced to increase the availability of parking spaces?

Yes No

8. Can your customers with special physical requirements easily access your business? i.e. easy to access for a wheelchair, pram, mobility scooter.

9. On what day and approximate times do you most frequently receive delivery of goods? Are there any restrictions to receiving your deliveries? i.e. traffic level, lack of space etc.

10. Where does _____ town centre's biggest competition come from?

- _____ nearby town centre
- _____ nearby city centre
- _____ retail parks/shopping malls
- Supermarkets
- Other (please enter) _____
- Don't know

11. Do vacant units affect your business? Please explain.

12. Does crime or anti-social behaviour in _____ town centre ever affect your business?



13. What security arrangements do you have for your business? i.e. alarm, roller shutters etc.

14. Are you confident about generating income by trading in _____town centre?

Yes

No

15. Is there any support you feel businesses in _____town centre need?

