

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy

2019

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

“Dunbar town centre will serve the needs of all its users and be recognisably a part of a historic burgh, with links to its attractive harbours, coast and the John Muir Way, making it a go-to destination for local people and visitors.”

DUNBAR TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY

1.0 Purpose of the Dunbar Town Centre Strategy

- 1.1 The Dunbar Town Centre Strategy forms a part of the adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP). It is statutory Supplementary Guidance focusing on the changes that the Local Development Plan is planning to the town of Dunbar and the implications of that change for the town centre. The LDP introduces new planning policies adopting the 'Town Centre First Principle' (Policy TC2) and has detailed planning policies for town centres to guide development.
- 1.2 This Town Centre Strategy looks in more detail than the LDP into the town centre. A health check of the town centre, analysis of its strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities and its performance as a place and coordinated actions for improvement and regeneration are provided.
- 1.3 In addition to the LDP and its supporting documents, the Dunbar Town Centre Strategy takes account of the Council's approved Local Transport Strategy and Local Housing Strategy as well as the Dunbar and East Linton Area Partnership Area Partnership Area Plan and the Dunbar Conservation Area Management Plan. The town centre strategy will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications that affect the town centre.
- 1.4 The Vision for Dunbar town centre is:
- 1.5 *"Dunbar town centre serves the needs of all of its users with inspiring shopping and leisure opportunities and a diverse evening offer. It is recognisably a part of a historic burgh, with links to its attractive harbours and the John Muir Way, making Dunbar a go-to destination for locals and visitors alike."*

2.0 Policy Context

Local Development Plan Policy for Town Centres

- 2.1 The adopted East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 (LDP) promotes the Town Centre First Principle which requires that uses that attract significant footfall must consider locating to a town or local centre first and then, sequentially, to an edge of centre location, other commercial centre or out of centre location. This is designed to support town centres in the long term and help to ensure that they are vibrant and sustainable.
- 2.2 To further support town centres and to minimise the length of time commercial premises lie vacant, the principle of a change of use between retail, business, office, restaurant leisure and entertainment is supported. As town centres evolve there could be pressure to change uses to residential; this may be acceptable in non-ground floor or backland locations but will only be acceptable in a ground floor location where there is evidence that it is no longer viable as a town or local centre use.
- 2.3 The policy on hot food outlets supports these outlets in town and local centres provided that there will be no significant impact on local amenity, including

cumulatively with other existing take-aways in the area and are consistent with other LDP policies including in relation to parking and road safety.

- 2.4 The town centre strategy once approved will be Supplementary Guidance to the LDP, in place until the East Lothian Local Development Plan 2018 is replaced. The strategy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate based on regular health checks to ensure it remains up to date and effective.

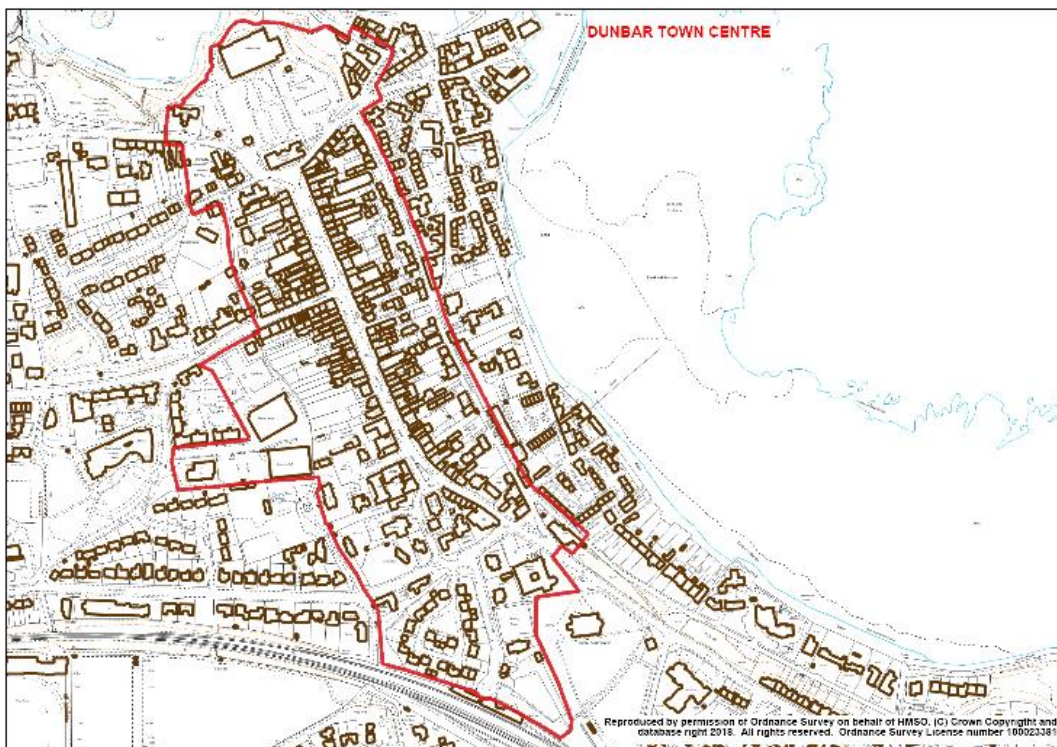
3.0 Form and Content of the Dunbar Town Centre Strategy

- 3.1 The Dunbar Town Centre strategy adopts a strategic approach to guide the improvement of Dunbar town centre. A health check of the town centre is undertaken followed by a series of actions to address the issues arising in the town centre. Each action is given an indicative short, medium or long timescale with lead and joint working parties for its implementation identified. These can be regularly updated in future.

4.0 Background

- 4.1 The LDP defines the Dunbar Town Centre as one of six defined town centres in East Lothian. This is the spatial area where the LDP policies outlined in Section 2 above apply and also the spatial area where the Town Centre Strategy actions that follow apply.

Map1. Designated Dunbar Town Centre Area



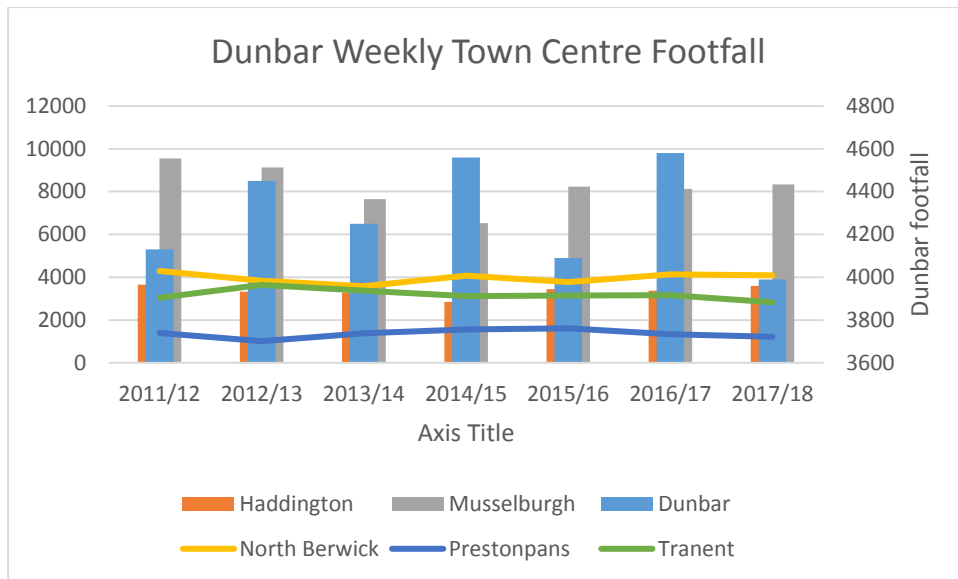
- 4.2 Dunbar has experienced significant growth over the last 15 years with the Hallhill developments to the south, expansion to the south east and at Belhaven. Its population has increased to an estimated 8,293. The LDP plans for further growth in

the town with housing allocations at Hallhill North (250), Brodie Road (50), Newtonlees (250) and Beveridge Row (90). Land at Hallhill South West is still being built out for 500 houses. These developments will increase the population to over 10,000. Further housing is also planned at East Linton, Innerwick and Spott within the catchment area of Dunbar Grammar School. The LDP also allocates approximately 22 hectares of land for employment at Dunbar and East Linton.

- 4.3 Much of the town centre is included in the designated Dunbar Conservation Area which covers the oldest parts of the town around High Street and towards the harbour as well as some of its Georgian and Victorian expansion. The purpose of a conservation area is to ensure that new development preserves or enhances the architectural and historic character of the area over time. The Dunbar Conservation Area Character Statement and other Supplementary Planning Guidance to the LDP on Cultural Heritage and the Built Environment, contains guidance on development in conservation areas including shopfronts and advertisements which are important in setting standards for improving the overall environment of the Conservation Area.

5.0 Dunbar Town Centre Analysis

- 5.1 Dunbar Town Centre's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) are included in a table contained in Appendix 1. This has helped to inform the proposed actions for the town centre strategy.
- 5.2 The SWOT analysis has been prepared following the collection of data in an up-to-date health check for Dunbar. The following points have been identified in the health check and subsequent SWOT:
- 5.3 The ward of Dunbar includes Dunbar and East Linton, with 67.1% living in Dunbar/West Barns. The population is set to grow, with a proposed total of 1350 houses planned for Dunbar by 2025. Dunbar is easily accessible by road since the A1 was upgraded to dual carriageway to Edinburgh though there is scope for improvement southbound towards Berwick on Tweed and Newcastle. Local rail services have improved though there are fewer stopping long distance trains than a number of years ago. Bus services have received significant investment since East Coast Buses took over from First Group in 2015 leading to faster and more comfortable journeys between Dunbar and Edinburgh. Border Buses provide daytime links to Eyemouth, Berwick on Tweed and Edinburgh and there is a local town service provided by a number of services.
- 5.4 Tourism is significant to Dunbar's economy. Dunbar's strengths relate to being the birthplace of John Muir, the founder of America's National Parks, with the John Muir Birthplace visitor attraction in High Street and the long distance footpath, now running from Dunbar to Helensburgh, the John Muir Way. The path is attracting additional tourists and visitors to the town and in so doing contributing to the local economy. Other attractions such as East Links Family Park, John Muir Country Park and the Leisure Pool also attract significant numbers of visitors.
- 5.5 Dunbar has seen a rise in vacant buildings. Town Centre vacancy rates are higher than the average for East Lothian. The footfall has fluctuated from year to year going from the highest in 4 years in 2014/15 to the lowest the next year, then rising to the highest in 6 years in 2016/2017 and recently dropping to a 7 year low in 2017/18.



- 5.6 There are a wide range of uses represented in the town centre, with almost half being shops (Class 1). There are a higher proportion of Sui Generis uses (which can include pubs and bookmakers) than there are restaurants for use after 6pm. Although over 50% of residents visit the Town Centre after 6pm, this is not frequently and the majority go once a month or less.
- 5.7 Dunbar is more geographically remote and distanced from Edinburgh and this is reflected in the convenience expenditure, where a significant proportion (66%) is retained in the local centre of Dunbar, and any losses appear to be leaking to Haddington. The improvement sought for the centre is more/better parking with 56% citing parking availability as poor.
- 5.8 The Citizen’s panel survey (2018) identified a need for a wider range of shops, a more attractive town centre environment and more parking.

6.0 Regeneration Strategy for Dunbar town centre

- 6.1 Dunbar’s heyday as a popular tourist destination fell away in the late 1970s and the town entered a period of economic decline. This was revived by investment in the town’s infrastructure through the Dunbar Initiative which won a British Urban Regeneration Award in 1999 and by a Townscape Heritage Initiative 2004-2010. Dunbar has undergone periods of regeneration.
- 6.2 However, significant problems still remain in the town centre with many buildings, often those in multiple ownership, in poor external condition. Some upper floor and backland accommodation is long vacant and sub-standard. The former Abbey Church, a landmark listed building at the south end of High Street, has been mostly disused for the last 50 years and is in need of investment and a new purpose. Other buildings in and on the edge of the town centre including the former Assembly Rooms on Church Street are also long vacant and in poor condition. Although the main streets were comprehensively re-landscaped in the 1990s under the Dunbar Initiative many historic private closes off High Street would benefit from environmental improvement.

- 6.3 Dunbar's town centre can benefit from the presence of new residents when new houses are occupied. However, the town centre will only continue to attract people if it is attractive to users, residents and investors. An initiative in 2018 by the Community Council to facelift High Street buildings by repainting building facades has significantly benefitted the town's appearance. However, this has not remedied underlying building defects such as defective gutters and downpipes or render that may be reaching the end of its life. The town also needs to ensure that parking space is available for the length of stay that drivers require and that the town also encourages easy access to the town centre on foot or by cycle. Lack of enforcement currently can see low turnover of spaces. More/better parking is identified by residents as a much needed improvement.
- 6.4 To be successful the town centre requires investment to provide the following:
- A positive new use for long vacant buildings that harm the overall appearance of the centre such as the former Abbey Church, 86-88 High Street, old Lothian Hotel, The Dolphin building and 46-48 High Street
 - Redevelop vacant sites and derelict buildings including small sites within the backlands off High Street, Castle Street and Church Street including the Black Bull Close buildings.
 - Encourage owners to undertake comprehensive repair and restoration work to several buildings in the town centre. Previous grant awarding initiatives have demonstrated can be very effective in enhancing the overall appearance of the town centre. Examples of tenement properties in need of repair include but are not limited to, nos. 63-67, 46-48, 74-78, 78-80, 86-88, 1 West Port etc.
 - Encourage visual improvements to the quality of shopfronts and advertisements on High Street to be more in keeping with the traditional nature of the street.

7.0 Main Issues in Dunbar Town Centre

- 7.1 This section outlines the main issues and actions to address them within Dunbar town centre following the analysis. It provides an indication of timescale and details of who will lead actions to implement each project.

Diversity of Land Use

- 7.2 Dunbar is classified as an independent to interdependent town i.e. it has good diversity of jobs and residents generally travel shorter distances to work or to study. The town attracts people from neighbouring towns to access some of its assets and jobs. Statistically, Dunbar has circa 2,000 jobs an increase of 3% between 2009 and 2014.¹
- 7.3 Dunbar Town Centre is located within the historic core of the town. Since the town has expanded the town centre is no longer in the physical centre of the built up area and therefore has to work harder to encourage all the town's residents to use it. No town centre can compete well unless it is an attractive place to be in and contains a good range of attractions for people. The town centre therefore needs to be in good

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

repair and to pay attention to detail to keep it as such, including the maintenance of buildings and the streetscape, its commercial frontages and advertisements, and its ability to provide parking and access to public transport for its users.

- 7.4 Footfall trends within Dunbar Town Centre over the last 7 years, are very varied (see 5.5 above) within Dunbar compared with a more stable pattern since 2013/14 elsewhere in East Lothian as generally fewer people visit the High Street for retail purposes. However with a larger population to draw on the town centre it should be capable of attracting its new residents on a more frequent basis.
- 7.5 With a static number of commercial units within the town centre and a range that is diversifying slightly away from retail towards more services and café/restaurant uses, Dunbar town centre is adjusting to modern trends.
- 7.6 Dunbar Town Centre is centred on High Street and West Port. The town centre contains 106 commercial premises most of which are located on the ground floor of historic buildings. While this adds character to the overall shopping experience it also limits the ability of premises to expand. Dunbar's population has been steadily expanding since 2001 and this trend will continue until at least 2024. The town centre has an expanding catchment population to draw on however this has not prevented a rise in vacancy rates.
- 7.7 A local centre has also been established at Spott Road on the edge of the town with a supermarket, garden centre, fast food restaurant and hotel and as well as servicing A1 traffic, is a local draw for houses to the south of the town, this may be a cause of reduced footfall and increased vacancy in the town centre. With increasing population there is no need to consider the reduction in size of the town centre commercial area and the strategy concentrates on improving conditions within the town centre to make it as attractive an environment as possible for the town.
- 7.8 Analysis has shown that there is a range of retail, services and café restaurant uses in Dunbar Town Centre. There are fewer leisure and office uses. There is currently no shared business hub facility in the town centre though this has been under discussion for some time and could be an additional facility that could benefit the town if the right location can be identified.

8.0 ACTIONS FOR DUNBAR TOWN CENTRE

Movement and Access

- 8.1 Actions include:
- Street surface material repairs within Dunbar Town Centre
 - Reorganisation of town centre car parking
 - Improve access to the town centre

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 1 Street Surface Material Repairs within Dunbar Town Centre				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
The materials used in street works to each street in the town centre will be those contained in Appendix I of the Dunbar Conservation Area Management Plan	East Lothian Council	This work is ongoing on an as necessary basis		The streets are being maintained on this basis.

8.2 Dunbar High Street was landscaped to a consistent design using high quality materials for footways, kerbs, parking areas and crossing points in the 1990s. Street furniture was colour coordinated with black lighting columns, posts for traffic signs, benches and bins. The design of the street uses mini roundabouts and on street servicing to slow traffic. Wide footways and short crossing points gives plenty space for pedestrians and has allowed for the placing of flower containers. Nameplates based on historic names or uses of closes were installed. The design qualities of this streetscape should be maintained. Although street furniture should be kept to a minimum to minimise clutter, where new street furniture is required it should be of a design that complements the materials used in the street. The footways at West Port, Victoria Street and Abbeylands were also relaid in materials that match the High Street.

8.3 The Area Partnership prioritised maintenance for High Street infrastructure in its Area Plan and this work is ongoing. Appendix 1 of the Dunbar Conservation Area Management Plan contains a section on approved street finishes on each street in the conservation area and this will be carried forward for Road Services to implement as and when necessary.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 2 Reorganisation of Town Centre Car Parking				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Reorganisation of town centre car park stay length	ELC Road Services	1.Implementation of short, medium and long stay		The Local Transport Strategy has been adopted, therefore this work will commence

- 8.4 The Parking Management Strategy has been adopted as part of the Local Transport Strategy and the town centre will be served by the reorganisation of the existing town centre car parks. Dunbar is served by the following currently free to use parking spaces:

	<i>Proposed Duration</i>
<i>On street spaces</i>	short stay
<i>Abbeylands</i>	short stay
<i>Bleachingfield</i>	medium stay
<i>Hallhill Sports Centre</i>	medium stay
<i>The Vennel</i>	medium stay
<i>Dunbar Leisure Pool</i>	medium stay
<i>Countess Crescent (Blue badge holders only)</i>	medium stay
<i>Lauderdale Park car park</i>	Medium / part long stay

- 8.5 These car parks will be reorganised to define them as short, medium and long stay car parks to ensure that parking is available when it is required and for the requisite length of time that people want. Some may be trialed first to test that they are of the correct duration. Availability of parking is important to the success of the town centre and this measure is aimed at ensuring that people who are using the town centre can find parking.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 3 Improve Access to the Town Centre				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Encourage pedestrian and cycle access to Dunbar town centre	ELC Road Services / Sustrans / Area Partnership	Investigate the need for additional or improved foot and cycle path links to access Dunbar town centre from outlying residential areas		The need for path links are assessed and required to be installed as part of the planning approval process for new development. New path links are being considered.

- 8.6 Dunbar High Street lies in the centre of the town and is accessible by walking and cycling along several path routes. Some however would benefit from improvement to encourage their use and new path routes or links should be identified. Sustrans is working with ELC to look at new path routes within Dunbar. A new path access to the south side of Dunbar Rail Station is to be implemented following a feasibility study. To encourage cycling more, safe cycle parking must also be provided. While

cycle parking is available at some destinations additional town centre cycle parking should be available as part of access improvements.

Built Environment and Public Spaces

8.7 Dunbar town centre is located within its designated Dunbar Conservation Area the character and appearance of which requires to be preserved or enhanced. This includes improving the overall quality of buildings in High Street including shopfronts and advertisements. Actions include:

- Shopfront and Advertisements
- Encourage the repair of stone walls within the town centre
- Public Wi-Fi

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 4 Shopfront and Advertisements				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Improve the quality of shopfronts and advertisements in Dunbar town centre	ELC Planning Service and Economic Development and Strategic Investment / Commercial premises owners, occupiers and lessees	Improvements will be encouraged at the time of application for advertisements or shop alterations		Ongoing

8.8 Further improvements could be made to some shopfronts and advertisements in the High Street to complement the buildings in which they are located and to enhance the overall quality of High Street. New advertisements almost always require advertisement consent and shopfront alterations and advertisements must comply with the Council’s LDP Supplementary Planning Guidance on Cultural Heritage and the Built Environment. The Council will, as appropriate, exercise its powers to enforce planning controls for unauthorised development, breaches of condition or unauthorised work to a listed building to ensure that the overall appearance of the commercial units in the town centre is maintained as it should be.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 5 Encourage the Repair of Stone Walls within the Town Centre				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Encourage the repair of the stone boundary walls that contribute to the built character of Dunbar	The Ridge / ELC /Historic Environment Scotland	1. The Ridge is to seek funding to develop its traditional skills training and can then bid for other stone wall repair work.		Training schemes are well underway with seven trainees to date and walls repaired in the Ridge Garden project backlands.

8.9 One of the built features that makes up much of the character of Dunbar town centre is the historic use of natural stone boundary walls. In 2017 a programme of stone mason training was undertaken by The Ridge. It is supported by Historic Environment Scotland and has begun to address the repair of these walls within and adjacent to the Black Bull Close. This work is supported in principle as it adds to the historic character of the town. Behind the west side of High Street and adjacent to the Coop supermarket grounds lies an old retaining wall, known as the Monk's Walk, which is formed of two walls that once had a narrow path along them. The path has long been closed off but the high walls remain, though in places are in poor condition. If the walls were repaired and cleared of some of the unmanaged trees and bushes that have grown up alongside the path could be reopened with entry gates as a medieval walkway that would allow an appreciation of the historic burgh layout. This would also allow a circular path to and from High Street. This would be an addition to the town's tourist and visitor attractions.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 6 Public Wi-Fi				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Provision of public Wi-Fi in Dunbar town centre	ELC Development	Establish the feasibility of and funding for free public Wi-Fi provision to support the town centre		Initial survey work has been undertaken

8.10 The availability of public Wi-Fi would be an asset to Dunbar Town Centre. It offers potential to boost tourism with information potentially available via the internet and potential for direct marketing by businesses within the town centre. It would also help generally towards increased digital inclusion.

Regeneration of Buildings at Risk

- 8.11 A main issue for the town centre is to encourage the repair and reuse of those buildings that require improvement and the continued maintenance of the rest to ensure that the historic High Street continues to act as the unique selling point for the town centre.
- 8.12 Most of the buildings in High Street are statutorily listed buildings with several listed for their value as a group. These include buildings at 51-64, 76-82, 84-97, 137-140 High Street. Actions for improvement include:
- Sourcing Funding for Repairs to Buildings
 - Encourage Buildings at Risk to be brought into positive use
 - Statutory action to require external repair of privately owned buildings in multiple ownership
 - Encourage the redevelopment of vacant sites within Dunbar Town Centre

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 7 Sourcing Funding for Repairs to Buildings				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Seek national funding to award grants for repairs to buildings in Dunbar Town Centre	East Lothian Council in partnership with The Ridge	1. Preparation of a bid for a CARS for an appropriate part of Dunbar Conservation Area 2. Consider applications for other funding opportunities as they arise for Dunbar Town Centre		Survey work has commenced to identify potential projects

- 8.13 Financial assistance in the form of grants for general building repair buildings is no longer generally available. Owners of buildings remain responsible for their repair including to the common elements of a building such as the roof, chimneys, stair, gutters and downpipes. Where buildings, including listed buildings, fail to be kept in a good state of repair a statutory notice can be served on owners requiring its repair. If the notice is not complied with then the Council must undertake the work and claim costs back in full from the owners.
- 8.14 Periodically, funding organisations such as Historic Environment Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS)², have funding programmes to which bids can be made that provide grants to support the repair and enhancement

² Grants to support heritage-led regeneration in Conservation Areas

of properties within a conservation area. The Council supports such bids where there is both an identified heritage need and a strong economic case that supports the regeneration of the area. Despite the last major grant awarding programme in Dunbar completing in 2010, there are still a significant number of buildings in need of repair within the heart of the town centre that would justify a bid for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme (CARS). Accordingly, a bid will be submitted for Dunbar Conservation Area for 2019.

- 8.15 The Ridge, a local third sector organisation, runs traditional skills training in stone masonry and has repaired several old rigg walls in the backlands off High Street. This work should be an integral part of a proposed CARS bid for the town.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 8 Encourage Buildings at Risk to be brought into Positive Use				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Work with private owners to identify potential solutions to bring buildings back into positive use	East Lothian Council /Private Owners/The Ridge	1. Consider how a bid for a CARS scheme in 2019 or similar could help owners realise repair and reuse of their buildings 2. Explore all other means of encouraging the repair and reuse of these buildings		ELC and The Ridge has undertaken a feasibility study into the conversion of Black Bull Close into community uses

- 8.16 There are a number of buildings at risk within Dunbar Town Centre. These include:

Building	Details	Ownership
Abbey Church, High Street	Vacant B Listed former church	Privately owned
The Dolphin, 2 Queen's Road	Vacant three storey building with planning permission for conversion to 4 flats and 2 shops	Privately owned
46-48 High Street	Vacant three storey building	East Lothian Council
52 High Street (former Lothian Hotel)	Listed Building	Privately owned
86 High Street – upper floors above the Dunbar Value shop	Listed Building	Ownership unknown

Black Bull Close – derelict buildings to rear of 72-78 High Street	Listed Building	East Lothian Council
Old Stores to rear of 102-104 High Street	Listed building	Privately owned
Buildings to rear of Cossar’s Wynd	Planning permission granted for conversion of warehouse to a house	Privately owned
Corn Exchange, off High Street	Used by the town maintenance team and by the community Christmas Lights group	East Lothian Council

8.17 If repair work fails to be undertaken, buildings may deteriorate to the point where the building presents a public danger, such as the threat of a part of the building falling to the ground. When a property becomes uninhabitable because of its condition this is detrimental to the overall appearance of the town centre.

8.18 Positive reuse of these buildings would benefit the town centre both in terms of its appearance but also by their town centre use. There is opportunity to consider office or workshop use including use of a shared business hub, community use or by providing new residential accommodation that in turn provides new residents within the town centre to help support its economy. The Corn Exchange is currently undergoing external repairs to make it wind and watertight and should be complete by early 2019.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 9 Statutory Action to require External Repair of Privately Owned Buildings in Multiple Ownership				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Consider statutory action to occupied town centre buildings to ensure common repairs	ELC EDSI and Planning Service / private owners	1 Consider buildings that require repairs to common elements for statutory action if necessary		This project has not yet started

8.19 In addition to empty buildings at risk, an increasing number of occupied buildings in the town centre are becoming at risk from lack of maintenance to common areas, most commonly where a building has multiple private owners. If a grants scheme becomes available again in the town centre then owners of such properties may be eligible to apply for the larger proportion of the cost of external building repairs. However some owners may not apply and their buildings, if not maintained, could deteriorate to the point where they become dangerous or unfit for occupation. To prevent this and any subsequent adverse affect on the appearance of the town

centre, statutory action may be required to insist that repairs are completed. Such action would be most effective if there was a grants programme available that could assist with the costs of repair and therefore action should be considered in the short term.

Dunbar Town Centre Strategy: Action 10 Encourage the Redevelopment of Vacant Sites within Dunbar Town Centre				
Action and Location	Lead and Joint Working	Timing and Next Steps	Timescale: Short Medium Long Ongoing	Progress
Work with private owners to identify potential solutions to bring vacant sites into positive use in line with LDP policies	East Lothian Council /Private Owners	1. Identify the vacant sites within the town 2. Work proactively with owners on potential solutions		This project will be ongoing

8.20 Dunbar Town Centre also contains small areas of underused, vacant land. Much of this sits in the backlands behind High Street and therefore in less prominent locations, but other sites are more prominent. Where land is suitable for redevelopment in line with relevant LDP policies, and can be adequately accessed and serviced it should be developed, either to provide commercial space or residential development to attract additional people to the town centre. In the backlands, sites may not always be possible to access safely or may be difficult and expensive to build on. Public garden space or pocket park use may be a possible interim or longer term use on a suitable site.

9.0 The Way Forward

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

DUNBAR APPENDIX 1 – SWOT AND HEALTH CHECK

STRENGTHS

- Railway station and bus stops close to the town centre
- History and Historic Buildings in Conservation Area
- High quality landscaped town centre streets
- Sea and attractive harbours a short walk from the town centre
- John Muir Way ends in Dunbar Town Centre
- Attractions and facilities such as the swimming pool, John Muir Birthplace and Town House Museum, Health Centre located centrally
- Growing town with a further 2,500 people after new housing development who can be expected to use the town centre and supporting businesses and potentially helping to create new ones.
- Strong and active community including Dunbar Trades Association
- Community group Dunbar In Bloom has enhanced the town's appearance using floral displays
- Low commercial unit vacancy rate
- CCTV coverage discourages town centre crime
- Unique historic character of High Street

WEAKNESSES

- High proportion of retail expenditure particularly on comparison goods made outwith the town
- Town centre is relatively remote from new housing areas
- Buildings in poor repair in High Street and in the backlands
- Vacant and derelict buildings detract from town centre
- Vacancy rates on the rise
- Commercial premises are restricted in size on High Street
- Some lower quality shopfronts and advertisements
- Limited choice of hotels
- No large public function hall
- No business hub for co-working space
- Few multiple commercial businesses
- High levels of commuting from Dunbar particularly to Edinburgh
- Town centre closes are often dark and unwelcoming
- Footfall is low
- No youth club, indoor skate park or social venue for teenagers
- Few community or formal garden spaces in town centre for passive recreation
- Blocked gutters cause deterioration to buildings in High Street

OPPORTUNITIES

- On and off street parking needs managed to identify short, medium and long stay parking to ensure that town centre users can find parking easily
- People can day trip from Edinburgh to Dunbar
- John Muir Way walkers increasing year on year
- Residents of new housing will increase disposable income
- Belhaven Brewery developing more of a tourist and visitor role to historic brewery
- More speciality shops
- Further interpretation information for visitors
- Improved path links to town centre
- Encourage more town centre living in undeveloped buildings and sites
- Installation of public Wi-Fi could allow specific marketing, attract people and allow businesses further advertising opportunity
- Parking charges could raise income that could benefit the town centre
- The oldest parts of Dunbar could be branded as Old Town or Old Dunbar

THREATS

- If the local centre at ASDA/Garden Centre expanded it could attract residents away from the town centre
- Parking charging could be introduced which may deter people from visiting the town centre
- On line shopping
- Residents of new housing south of town may not feel the need to use the town centre
- Lack of investment in the repair of town centre buildings harms its appearance and economic prospects
- Lack of larger retail premises on High Street deters some investors

DUNBAR Health Check

POPULATION

The 2016 mid-year population estimates state that **14,041** people live in the Dunbar and East Linton ward. 13.5% of the population of East Lothian live in the Dunbar and East Linton Ward, meaning it is one of the least populated wards in East Lothian. 67.1% of the population of the ward live in Dunbar/West Barns.

Across the ward approximately:

- 67.1% of the population of the ward live in Dunbar/West Barns
- 27.8% reside in rural settlements
- 5.1% reside in East Linton

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

	Dunbar and East Linton Ward	East Lothian	Scotland
% of the population (0-15)	19.9%	18.2%	16.9%
% of the population that are (16-64)	60.2%	62.2%	64.6%
% of the population that are 65 or over	20.0%	19.6%	18.5%

The 2016 mid-year population estimates 20% of the population in the ward are aged 65 or over, this is projected to increase to 23.2% in 2027. Overall the age distribution in the Dunbar Ward is similar to East Lothian as a whole. However when compared to Scotland there are proportionally more children and those of a non-working age in Dunbar with fewer people of working age.

HOUSING

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

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

In 2016 there were 6,320 dwellings in the Dunbar & East Linton ward, equal to 13.5% of the total number of dwellings across East Lothian.

The Housing Land Audit for 2017 states the total committed sites in Dunbar will yield **468** units. In accordance with the LDP the potential new housing development sites proposed for the ward will yield **882** units taking the total to **1350** potential new homes in Dunbar ward by 2025.

The average household size for East Lothian is 2.3 people.

RETAIL PATTERNS

Town centre catchments:

CONVENIENCE – EXPENDITURE AND POTENTIAL SPARE EXPENDITURE AND OPPORTUNITIES



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

In Zone 6, Dunbar, 66% of the convenience shopping is undertaken in the area, most of the balance is done in Haddington. There is some under trading in Dunbar. The main opportunity is to strengthen the quality of the convenience shops in the town centre.

COMPARISON – EXPENDITURE AND POTENTIAL SPARE EXPENDITURE AND OPPORTUNITIES

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

The main issue will be to support the existing comparison retail floorspace in the town centres in East Lothian, through encouraging improvements to the quality and range of comparison shopping, in conjunction with other measures to improve the attractiveness of the town centres as destinations.

BLINDWELLS

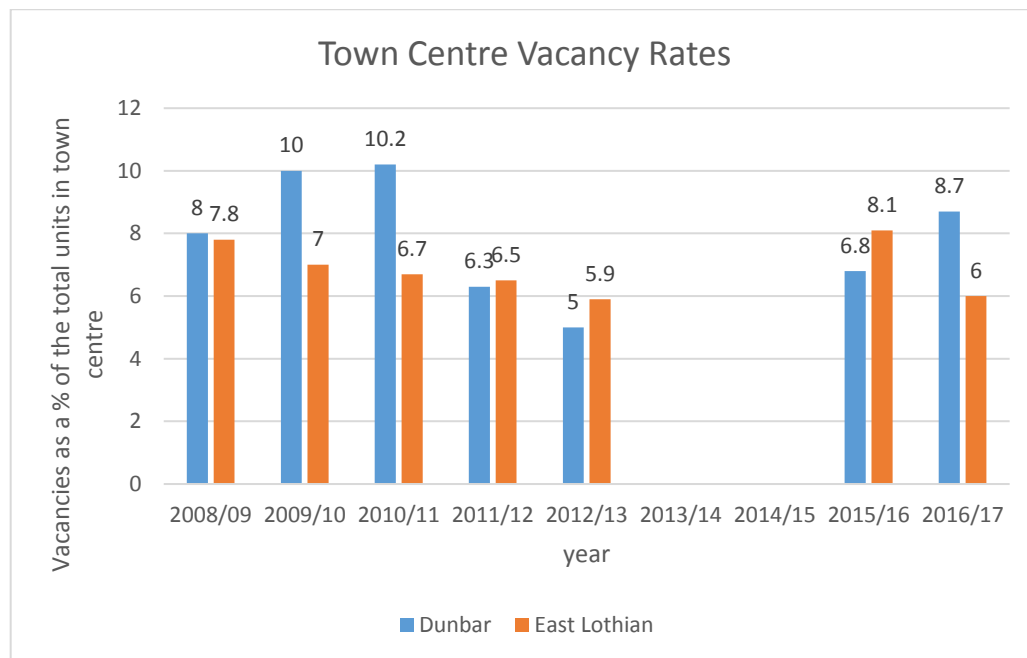
The RCS concludes that under 2015 market conditions there is limited scope for a larger supermarket (despite the leakage in surrounding zones of Prestonpans and Tranent),

however, as Blindwells develops out there may be opportunity for a larger supermarket over the longer term. In terms of major non-food retail development, a key factor is the location of Blindwells relatively close to Fort Kinnaird. It is only just over 6 miles or 11 minutes drive time with very good accessibility along the A1. It is probably too close for any major comparison retail development at Blindwells to succeed. From the appraisal, provision for development of a local centre to mainly serve the expanding population at Blindwells appears the most likely scenario to succeed.

TOWN CENTRE ASSESSMENTS (quantitative)

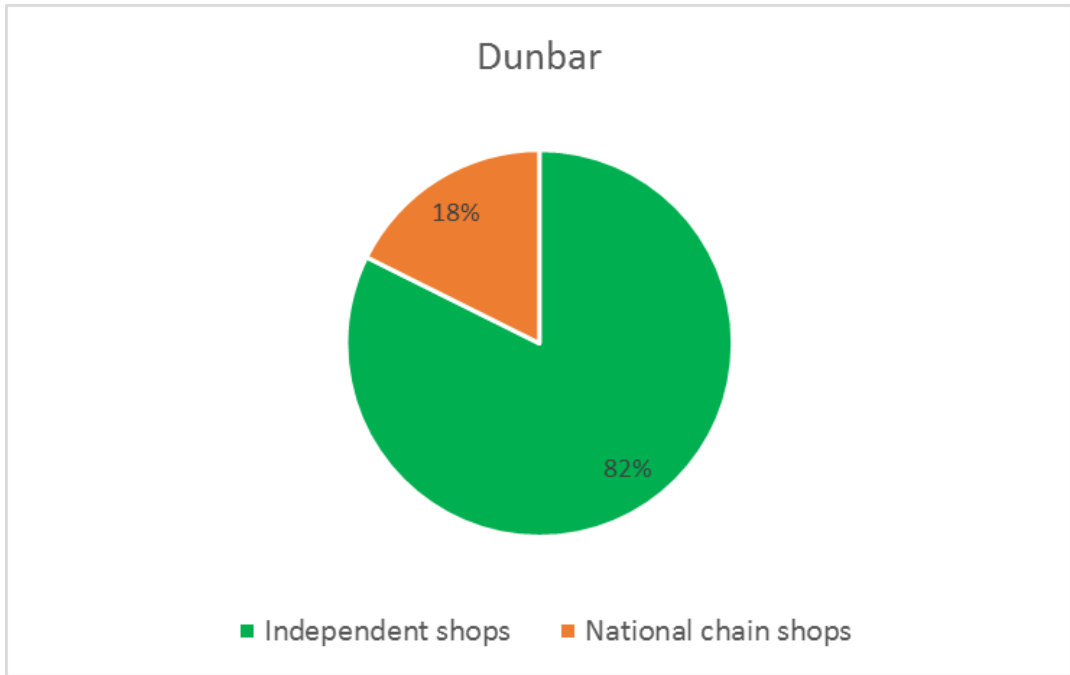
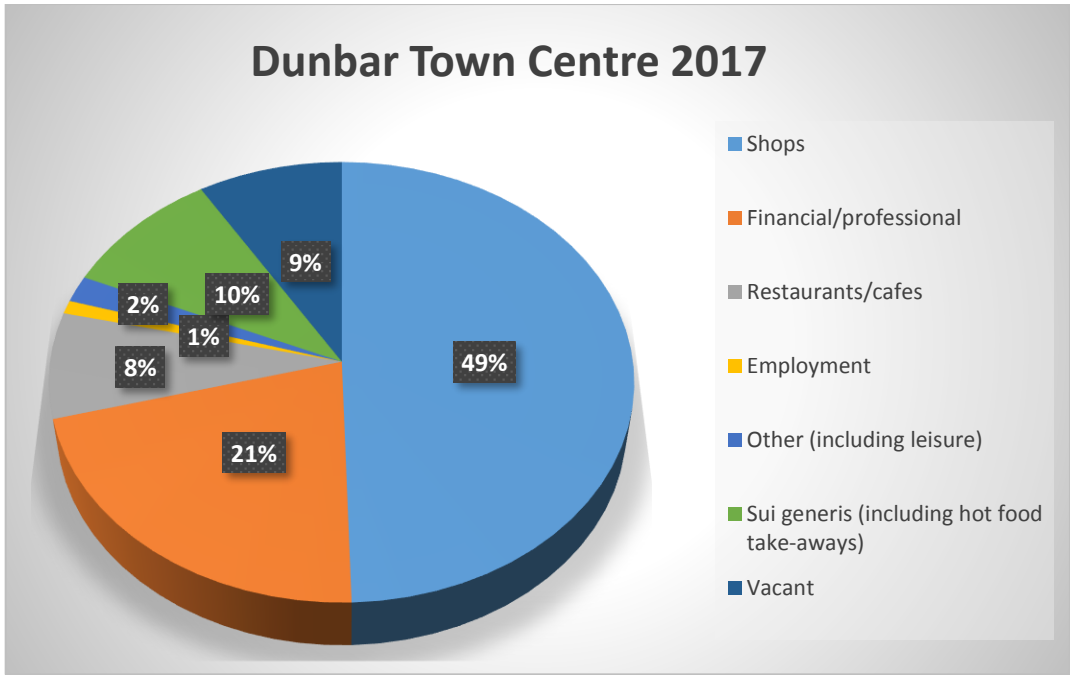
Vacancy Data (measured as a percentage of available retail units in the area)

- Vacancy rates increased by 1.9% in 2016/17 when compared to the last available figure in 2015/16
- The 2016/17 figure shows Dunbar & East Linton vacancy rates to be higher than the East Lothian average



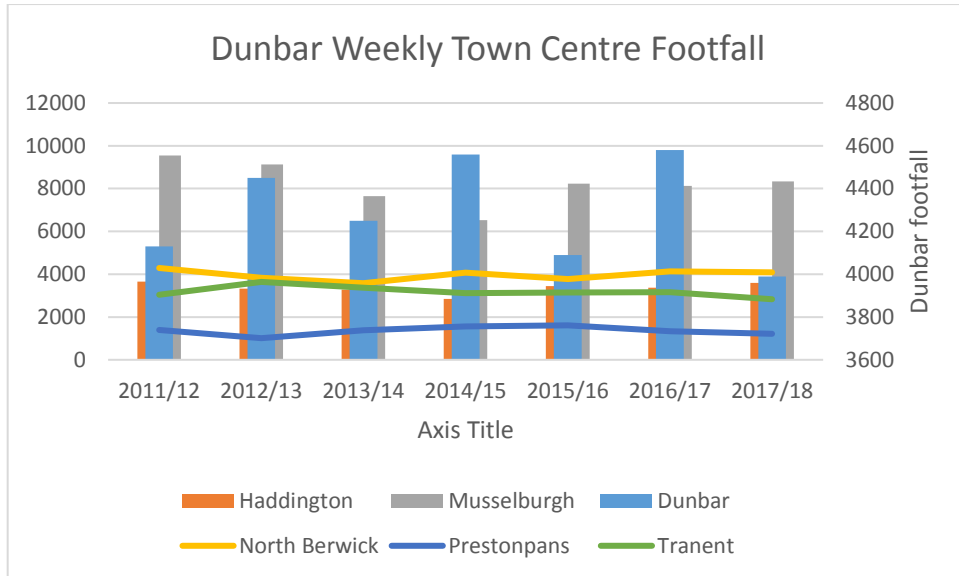
Town Centre uses

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



Footfall

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



Weekly town footfall in Dunbar town centre is at its lowest since 2011/12 and decreasing by 12.8% in one year (2016/17-2017/18), with vacancy rates increasing by 1.9% in the same year.

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

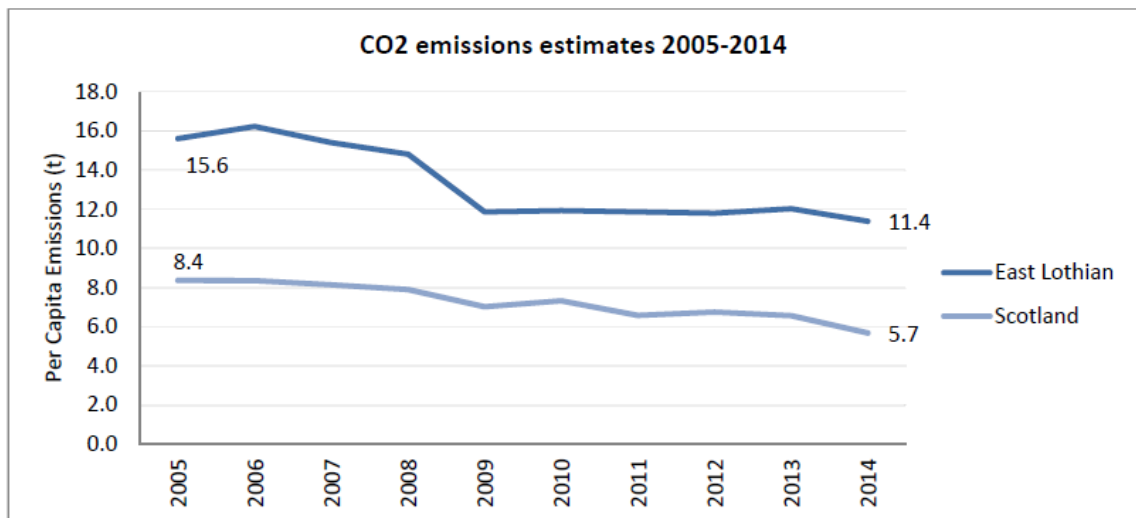
AIR QUALITY AND POLLUTION

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

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

In East Lothian there has been an overall decrease of 27.1% in CO2 emissions per capita. This was the second highest rate in Scotland out of the 32 local authorities. Industry and commercial accounted for 62.6% of CO2 emissions, followed by Transport (16.7%) and Domestic (16.5%).

CO2 Emission estimates per capita (tonnes per capita) in East Lothian and Scotland (UK Government 2016)

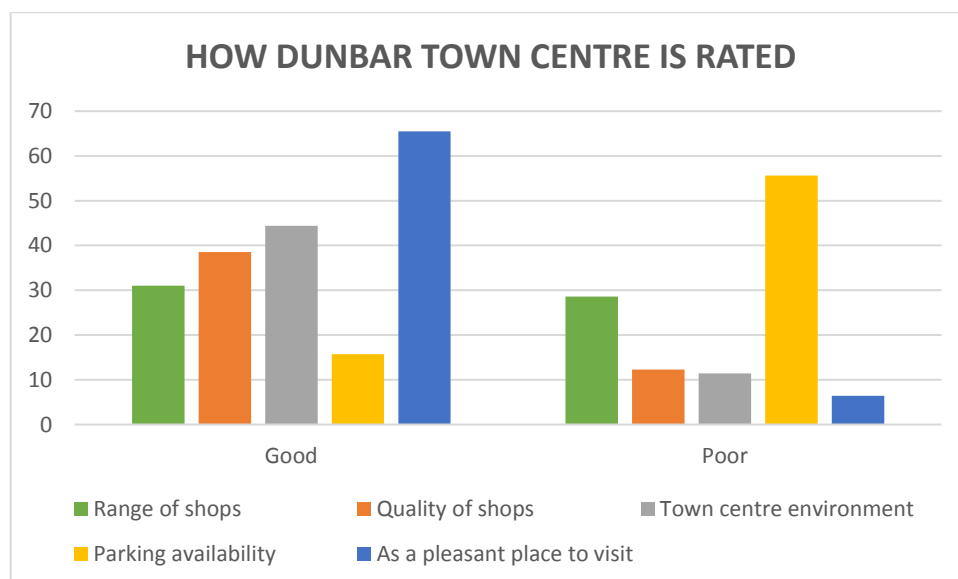


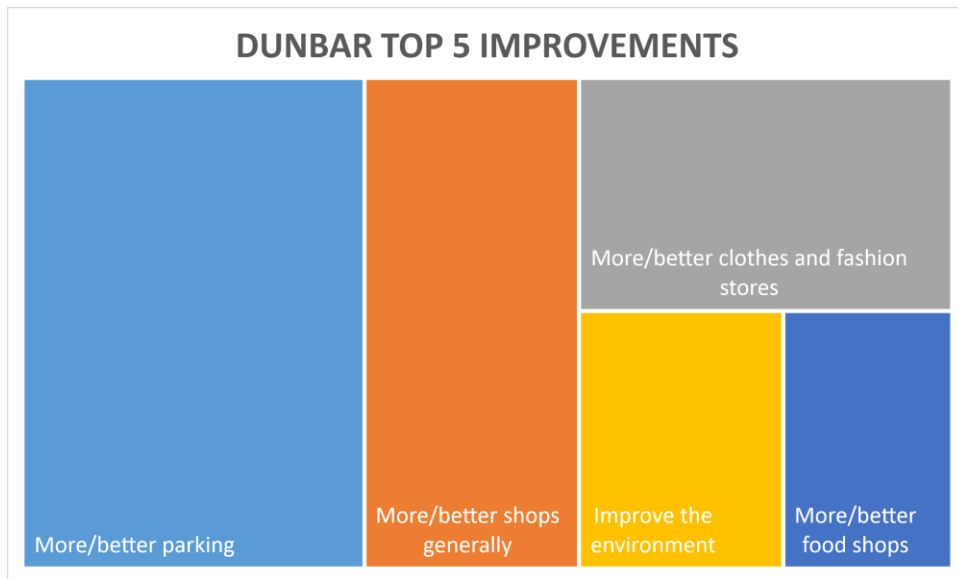
The East Lothian Residents’ Survey (2017) reported that 8% of respondents in the ward felt that traffic congestion was the most important thing in making somewhere a good place to live, compared to 10% across East Lothian.

TOWN CENTRE PERCEPTIONS (qualitative)

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

68% of people who live in Dunbar visit the town centre on a weekly basis or more frequently. 12% visit daily. 39% people walk to the centre, 50% travel by car and less than 5% travel by bus. Dunbar is rated as a good place to visit with a good town centre environment. Parking availability is the biggest issue for respondents with 56% citing parking availability as poor. The top 5 improvements sought are more/better parking, more/better shops and improvement to the environment.





Over 50% of the respondents from Dunbar visit Dunbar Town Centre in the evenings (after 6pm). However, the majority of those visit once a month or less (43%). The top 5 things that would make people visit the Town Centre in the evening are:

1. More/better restaurants and cafes
2. More/better pubs and wine bars
3. Other (Undisclosed)
4. More leisure facilities
5. Shops open later

Discussion

In Dunbar, Haddington and North Berwick at least 50% of the population visit the town centre in the evening at least once a month. In North Berwick the figure is as high as 82%. These centres are more geographically remote and distanced from Edinburgh. This is also reflected in the convenience expenditure, where a significant proportion is retained in the local centres of Dunbar, Haddington, North Berwick, and any losses from Dunbar and North Berwick appear to be leaking to Haddington. In all three centres the improvement sought is more/better parking.

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

Restaurants/cafes represent 8% of the overall town centre uses in Dunbar. Whilst restaurants/cafés is not a full indicator of the evening offer, it does offer some insight. Another side of the evening economy is represented by public houses/wine bars. These are difficult to identify when analysing use classes as, along with other uses, are defined as sui generis. However, sui generis includes hot-food take-aways, the majority of which provide an evening service.

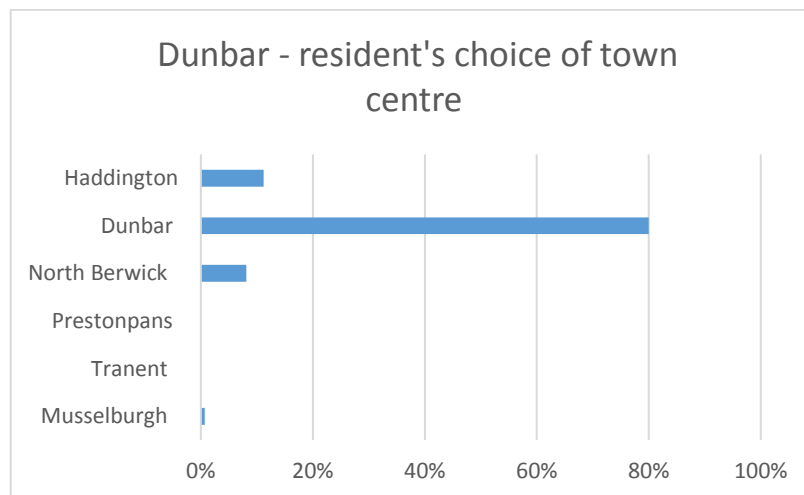
It can be seen that the highest proportion of restaurants/cafes are located in the centres of Dunbar, North Berwick and Haddington where there is the greatest use of the centres after 6pm. For residents of Dunbar the top priority for improving the evening economy are *more/better restaurants and cafes and more/better pubs and wine bars*.

Citizen's panel – Survey 2018

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

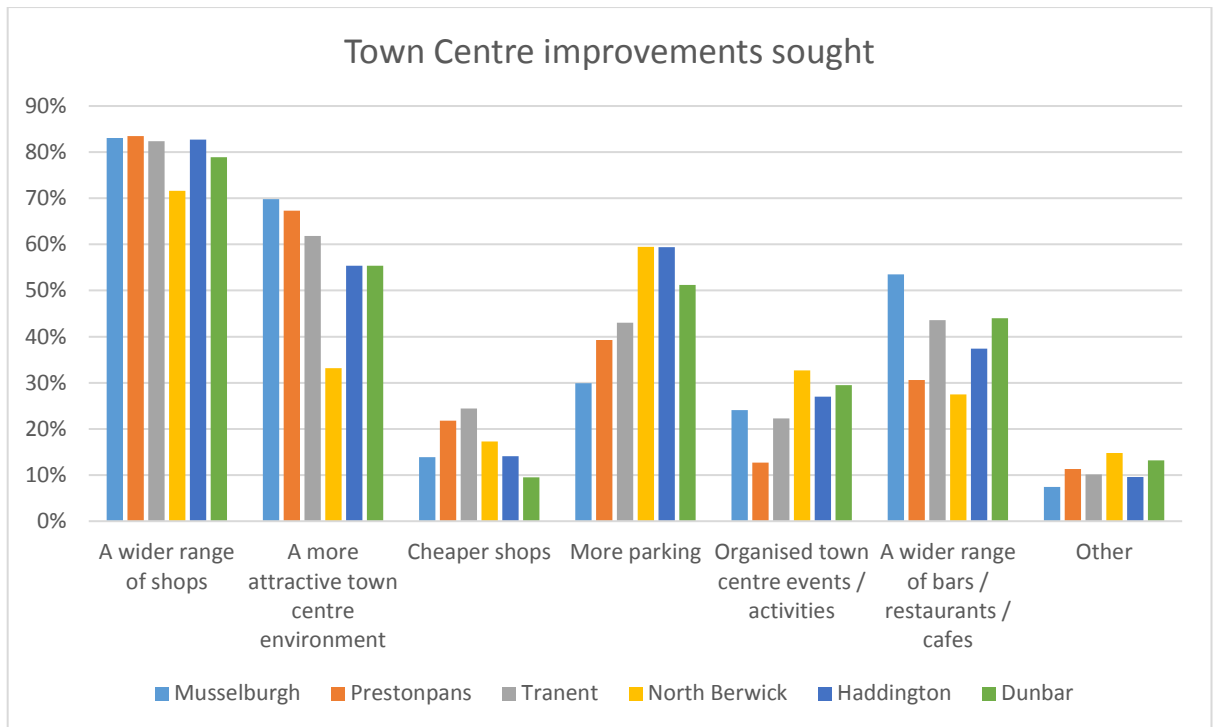
Question 5 of the spring 2018 Citizen's Panel questionnaire asked '*which of the following town centres do you visit most often for shopping, leisure and to access services*'? Possible answers were Musselburgh, Tranent, Prestonpans, North Berwick, Dunbar and Haddington. It should be noted that there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

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



The findings of the Citizen's panel questionnaire indicate that 80% of Dunbar residents visit Dunbar town centre more often than other East Lothian centres. Over 10% of residents choose to visit Haddington. This reinforces the 2015 RCS convenience expenditure assessment which found that 66% of convenience shopping is undertaken in Dunbar, most of the balance is done in Haddington.

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

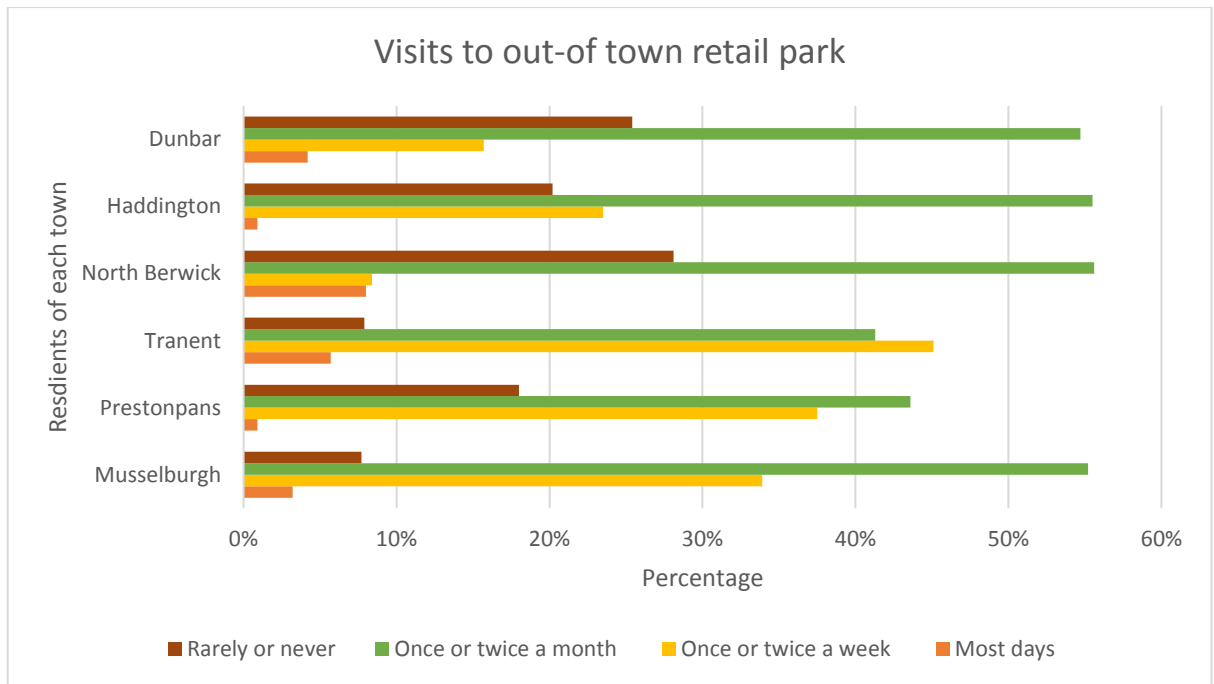


The results are similar for each town centre with the top three issues for Dunbar showing:

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

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

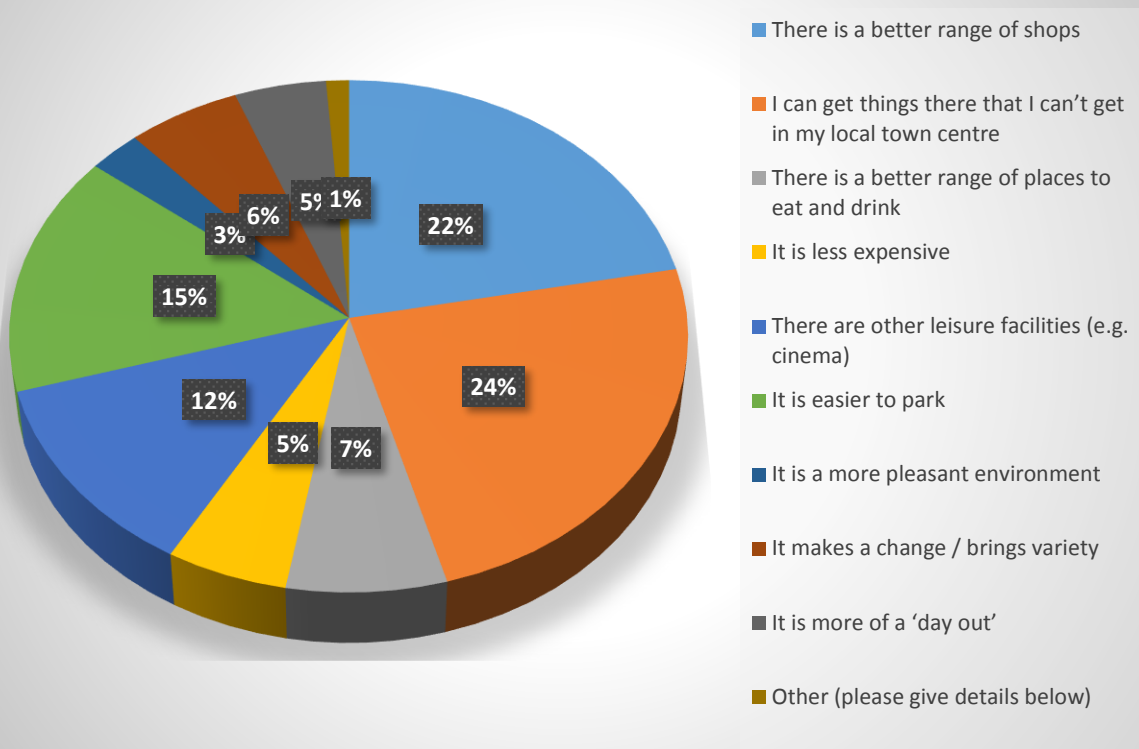
Question 9 of the spring 2018 Citizen's Panel asks 'how often do you visit an out-of-town retail park for shopping or leisure activities?'



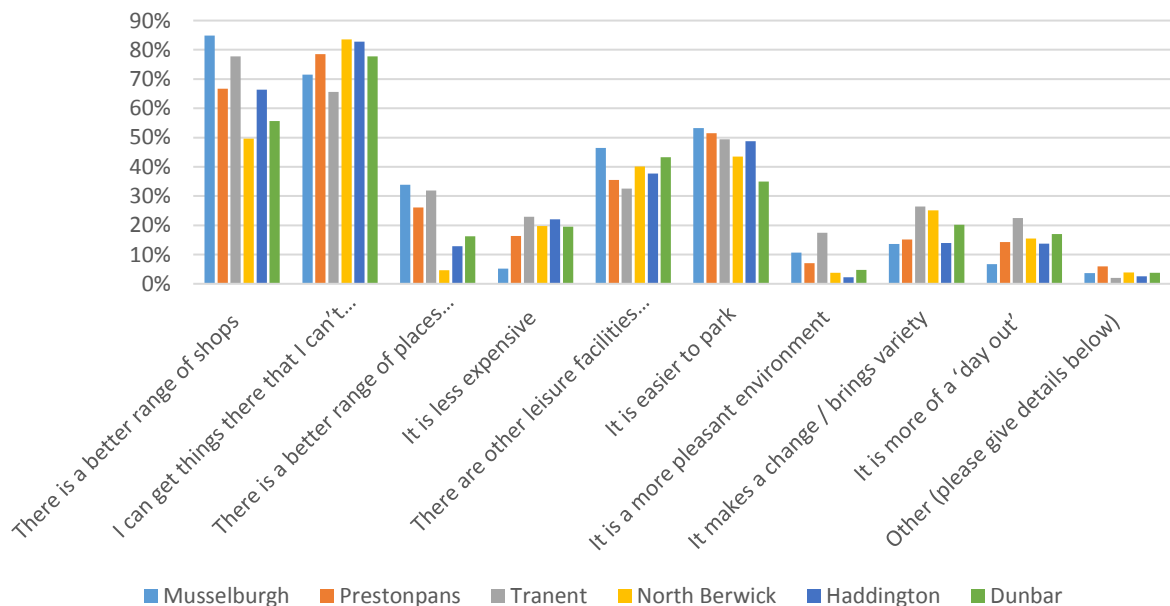
A large proportion of people visit an out of town retail park between once or twice a month with a high proportion of residents from Dunbar rarely or never visit an out-of-town retail park, most likely because proximity to Edinburgh and the available out-of-town centres is further than the communities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

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

All respondents



Respondents by town centre



78% refer to the ability to get things that cannot be gotten in Dunbar, whilst 56% state there is a better range of shops. Whilst it is possible to encourage an increased range of shops, restaurants and leisure facilities in the East Lothian town centres, proximity to the Edinburgh offer and, in particular, Fort Kinnaird will always play a part. It is extremely accessible,

especially for the west of the district. The only other consideration to be highlighted is the availability of parking. 35% of respondents in Dunbar claim it is easier to park at out-of-town centres than town centres. Whilst this is not an overwhelmingly large response, previous analysis indicates town centre parking is considered an issue.

Parking

Problems & Issues

- Lack of off-street car park management and on-street enforcement creating problems. In particular, long-stay parking by town centre traders and passengers using the railway station is leading to overflow parking on nearby streets around the railway station, within the town centre and around the harbour
- Lack of enforcement of existing parking restrictions causing congestion and bottlenecks, particularly around Church Street and Castle Street. Resident parking problems around Lammermuir Crescent and overflow on-street parking around Belhaven Hospital and Belhaven Brewery
- Safety concerns in relation to the layout of parking on High Street
- Lack of Blue Badge parking on High Street
- Current waiting restriction (60 minutes) is too short to allow people to undertake a range of activities in the town centre
- Difficulties with loading and servicing
- Difficulty introducing a new Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) designed to rationalise and consolidate a number of historic TROs
- Short-term on-street problems at peak school travel periods around schools

Proposed solutions to identified parking problems in Dunbar are:

- Control through Decriminalised Parking Enforcement
- Implementation of parking management hierarchy defining designated short-stay, medium- stay and long-stay parking locations
- Proposed creation of new resident's parking scheme
- Removal of bottlenecks to ensure smooth and efficient traffic flow
- Continuous review of the requirement for Controlled Parking Zones
- Ongoing review of waiting and loading provision
- Ongoing review of Blue Badge parking
- Consider the Introduction of on-off street parking charges
- Delivery of TRO amendments to ensure they are robust and legally enforceable