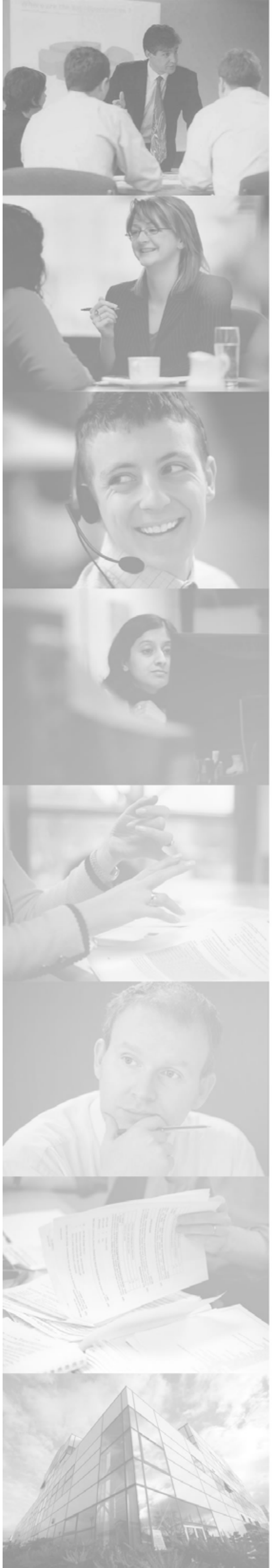


Research Report

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Research – Blaby

Prepared for: Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership

Leicestershire Town and Village Centres Research – Blaby

Prepared for: Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership

Prepared by: Chris Owen, Account Director, Emma Parry, Account Manager

March 2009

Produced by BMG Research

www.bmgresearch.co.uk

Project: 6932

Registered in England No. 2841970

Registered office:

7 Holt Court North
Heneage Street West
Aston Science Park
Birmingham
B7 4AX
UK

Tel: +44 (0) 121 3336006

UK VAT Registration No. 580 6606 32

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce Member No. B4626

Market Research Society Company Partner

ESOMAR Member (The World Association of Research Professionals)

British Quality Foundation Member

Market Research Quality Standards Association (British Standards Institute) BS7911 for Market Research - Certificate No. FS76713

Investors in People Standard - Certificate No. WMQC 0614

Interviewer Quality Control Scheme (IQCS) Member Company

Registered under the Data Protection Act - Registration No. Z5081943

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and method

Leicestershire County Council and the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership (LSEP) commissioned BMG to conduct an opinion survey in 17 town and village centres across Leicestershire. This was to monitor progression against baselines set in 2006 by means of a similar survey. The aim 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 Blaby and makes comparisons with averages across all the town and village centres included in the survey as well as the results of the 2006 survey amongst respondents interviewed in Blaby.

1.2 Sampling methodology

In total, 3,016 interviews were planned across the 17 settlements. The sample structure called for a minimum of 100 interviews per settlement, with the remaining 1,300 interviews distributed pro-rata on the basis of population size. 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).

In total, 127 interviews were conducted in Blaby.

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 2008, following a pilot in Loughborough and Shepshed which indicated no problems in delivering the questionnaire.

It should be noted that the survey data is subject to a degree of statistical standard error. A sample base of 127 (i.e. the number of respondents interviewed in Ashby) is subject to a maximum standard error of +/-8.7% at the 95% confidence level. This means that, based on a response rate of 50%, a percentage reported could vary between 41.3% and 58.7% if the question had been asked of the whole population. This variation is reduced the closer the percentage reported is to 100% or 0%.

For differences between samples (i.e. 2006 and 2008 survey data, or 2008 local and 2008 total sample data) to be statistically significant the sample sizes and percentages reported for both samples have to be taken into account.

Throughout this report statistically significant differences between samples are explicitly noted. If they are not, they can be considered ‘interesting’ and indicative differences but not of statistically significance.

1.3 Respondent Profile

The table below summarises the profile of interviews achieved within Blaby. A comparison with the sample achieved in 2006 is provided so that differences between the two survey years can be discussed in context.

Table 1: Sample profile (percentages) – all respondents

	2008	2006
Gender		
Male	43	43
Female	57	57
Age		
16-24	15	11
25-44	23	32
45-64	33	44
65+	26	13
Ethnicity		
White	99	99
Non-white	1	1
Economic status		
In work	60	61
Not in work, seeking work	3	7
Not in work, not seeking work	1	8
Not in work due to illness/disability	0	2
In education/training	6	1
Retired	31	21
Sample bases	*127*	*131*

Compared with 2006, the sample profile within Blaby is older, with around a quarter aged 65 and over. However, the proportion of respondents that are aged 16 to 24 is also slightly higher than in 2006.

Reflecting the older age profile, a third of respondents in 2008 is retired, which is a higher proportion than in 2006. However, compared with 2006, fewer respondents are otherwise economically inactive. Overall, 32% of respondents in 2008 are economically inactive, compared with 29% in 2006.

One in ten respondents in Blaby has a long term illness, health problem or disability (10%).

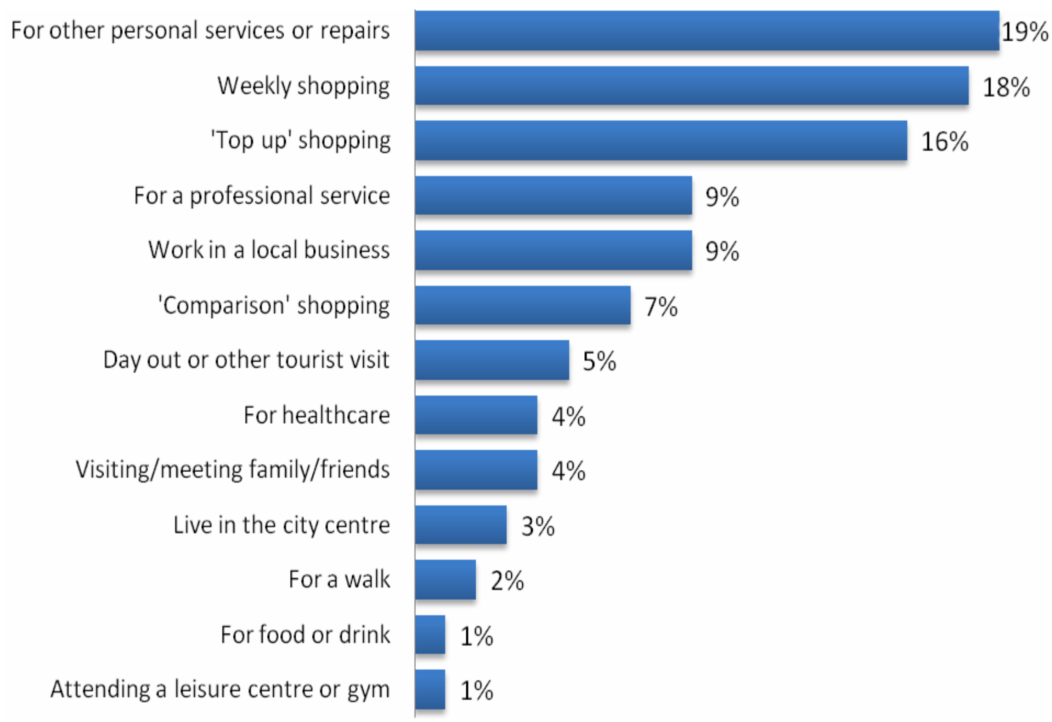
In terms of the household profile within Blaby, more than half are couples with or without children (57%). More than a quarter of all respondents (26%) are couples with children. A further 7% of all respondents are single parents. Single person households account for more than a quarter of all respondents (29%).

2 Visiting the Centre

2.1 Reasons for visiting the centre

The main reasons why respondents visit the centre are summarised in the figure below.

Figure 1: Main reasons for visiting the centre (percentages) - all respondents – unprompted
Sample base = 127



Respondents interviewed in Blaby are significantly more likely to have visited the centre for other personal services or repairs and/or for a professional service than those interviewed in several other market towns.

Compared with the 2006 survey, respondents interviewed in Blaby in 2008 are slightly (but not significantly) less likely to have been visiting the centre to do their weekly shopping (22% in 2006).

2.2 Travel into the centre

2.2.1 Mode of travel into centre

Respondents were asked how they had travelled into Blaby. They were most likely to have driven into Blaby (57%) and this is a significantly higher proportion than the area wide sample average (44%). A further 3% travelled into Blaby by car, but as a passenger.

They are slightly less likely than average to have walked into the centre (27%, compared with 31%) and just 7% of respondents travelled into Blaby by bus (or coach), which is a significantly lower proportion than the area-wide average (14%).

However, a significantly higher proportion than average (6%, compared with an area wide average of 2%) cycled into the centre and 1% took a taxi.

Compared with the 2006 survey, modes of travel into the centre are statistically similar.

2.2.2 Accessibility by public transport

Nearly three-quarters of respondents (72%) consider it easy to get into Blaby centre from where they live by public transport. This compares with a similar area-wide sample average (73%).

Just one in eight respondents (12%) considers it difficult, which is a similar proportion to the area-wide sample average (13%).

2.3 Frequency and time of visits to the centre

2.3.1 Frequency of visits

More than two-thirds of respondents (70%) visit Blaby centre at least twice a week and this includes 39% that visit the centre daily. This suggests a slightly higher than average level of use of Blaby centre by those visiting it (65% of respondents area-wide visit the centre at which they were interviewed at least twice a week).

In 2006, the proportion that visited the centre at least twice a week was slightly higher (74%).

Of the remaining respondents, most (20% of all) visit Blaby centre about once a week and just 6% of all respondents do so fortnightly.

2.3.2 Timing of visits

Nearly three-quarters of respondents interviewed in Blaby centre (72%) visit the centre on both weekdays and weekends. This is a higher proportion than in 2006 (61%), although it is not statistically significant.

Just one in six respondents (17%) mainly visit Blaby centre on weekdays and fewer mainly just at weekends (12%). These figures compare with 33% (significantly higher) and 6% respectively in 2006.

Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) visit Blaby centre during the day and in the evening. However, most (67%) mainly visit only during the day (before 5.30pm) and those that mainly visit only in the evening are very much in the minority (9%).

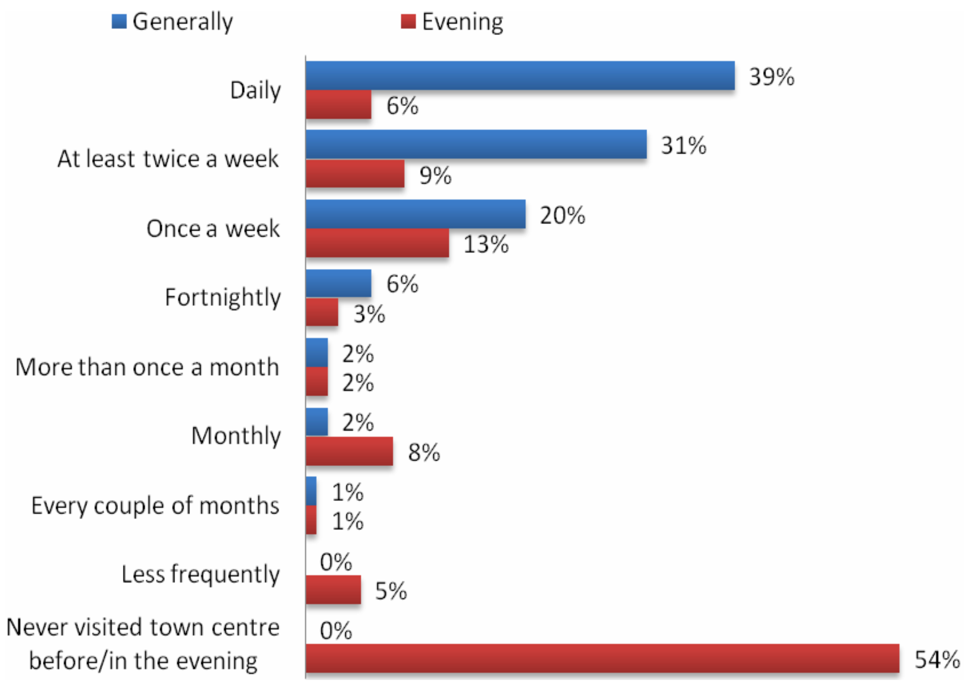
In 2006 day and evening visits were cited by a significantly higher proportion of respondents (37%) and the proportion that visited the centre only in the day time was lower (but not significantly) (56%).

2.3.3 Frequency of visits to the centre in the evening

Less than half the respondents interviewed in Blaby centre (46%) have visited the centre in the evening. For just one in seven respondents (15%) their evening visits are at least twice a week and a small minority (6% of all) visit the centre in the evening on a daily basis.

The following figure compares the frequency of general and evening visits.

Figure 2: Frequency with which respondents visit the centre generally and in the evening (all respondents)
Sample base = 127



In terms of when evening visits to the centre take place, around three-quarters of respondents interviewed in Blaby that have visited the centre in the evening (74%) have done so both at weekends and during the week (compared with a significantly lower 58% in 2006). A quarter (26%) have visited in the evening mainly at the weekend (Friday, Saturday or Sunday). None have done so mainly on other weekday evenings.

2.4 Reasons for choosing to visit the centre in the evening

Respondents were asked what particularly attracts them to Blaby centre in the evening (rather than going somewhere else).

The top three 'attractions' were:

Pubs/restaurants/bars/eating/drinking (takeaways)	22%;
Shopping/shopping centre	21%;
Food shops	19%.

Other significant 'attractions' cited included: socialising/meeting people/out with friends/visiting friends/family (9%), local shops (7%), availability of parking (7% - significantly higher than within other towns), and quiet/peaceful (5%).

3 Events in the Centre

3.1 Sources of awareness of events/attractions

Respondents were asked to specify where they would look for information about events and attractions in the centre. Their responses were spontaneous.

By far the most frequently cited source of information on events and attractions is the local newspaper (53%). This compares with a similar proportion in 2006 (52%).

The local newspaper is slightly less likely to be cited as a source of information amongst those visiting Blaby than average (59% area-wide).

Other significant sources of information about local events and attractions include: local billboards (26%), Council newspaper (25%), radio/television (9%), word of mouth (7%), internet (not including Council or 'What's on Guide' websites) (6%), and library (3%). Around a quarter of respondents (26%) said they are not interested in events.

Just 1% of all respondents spontaneously cite the County Council 'Events Guide' and/or the County Council website or online 'What's on Guide'.

3.2 Attending events

One in nine respondents interviewed in Blaby that have visited the centre before (11%) have attended events in the centre in the past. This compares with an area-wide sample average of 12%. (Across the area, the proportion ranges from as low as 3% in Oadby to as high as 32% in Lutterworth.)

By far the most popular event in Blaby has been the Egyptian Festival (attended by 50% of those that have attended any events in the centre). No other event was cited by more than one respondent.

4 Attitudes Towards the Centre

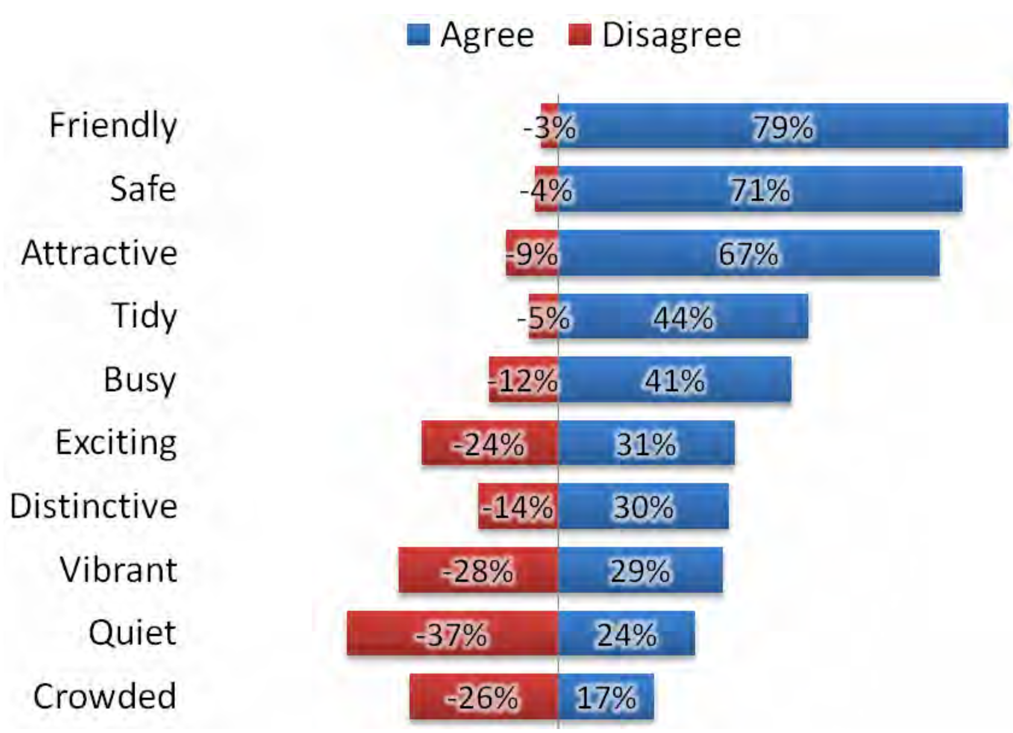
Respondents were asked a series of questions to determine their views about Blaby as a centre, in terms of its' character and the services and facilities it offers. This section summarises respondents' views about Blaby, comparing responses to those of the area-wide sample average in order to put them into context.

4.1 Descriptions of centre

Respondents were first asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with one word descriptions of Blaby.

Their views are summarised in the figure below:

Figure 3: Extent to which respondents agree or disagree that Blaby could be described as….(all respondents)
Sample base = 127



It shows that respondents are most likely to describe Blaby as 'friendly', 'safe' and/or 'attractive' and most likely to *disagree* that it as 'quiet', although also very few describe it as 'crowded'.

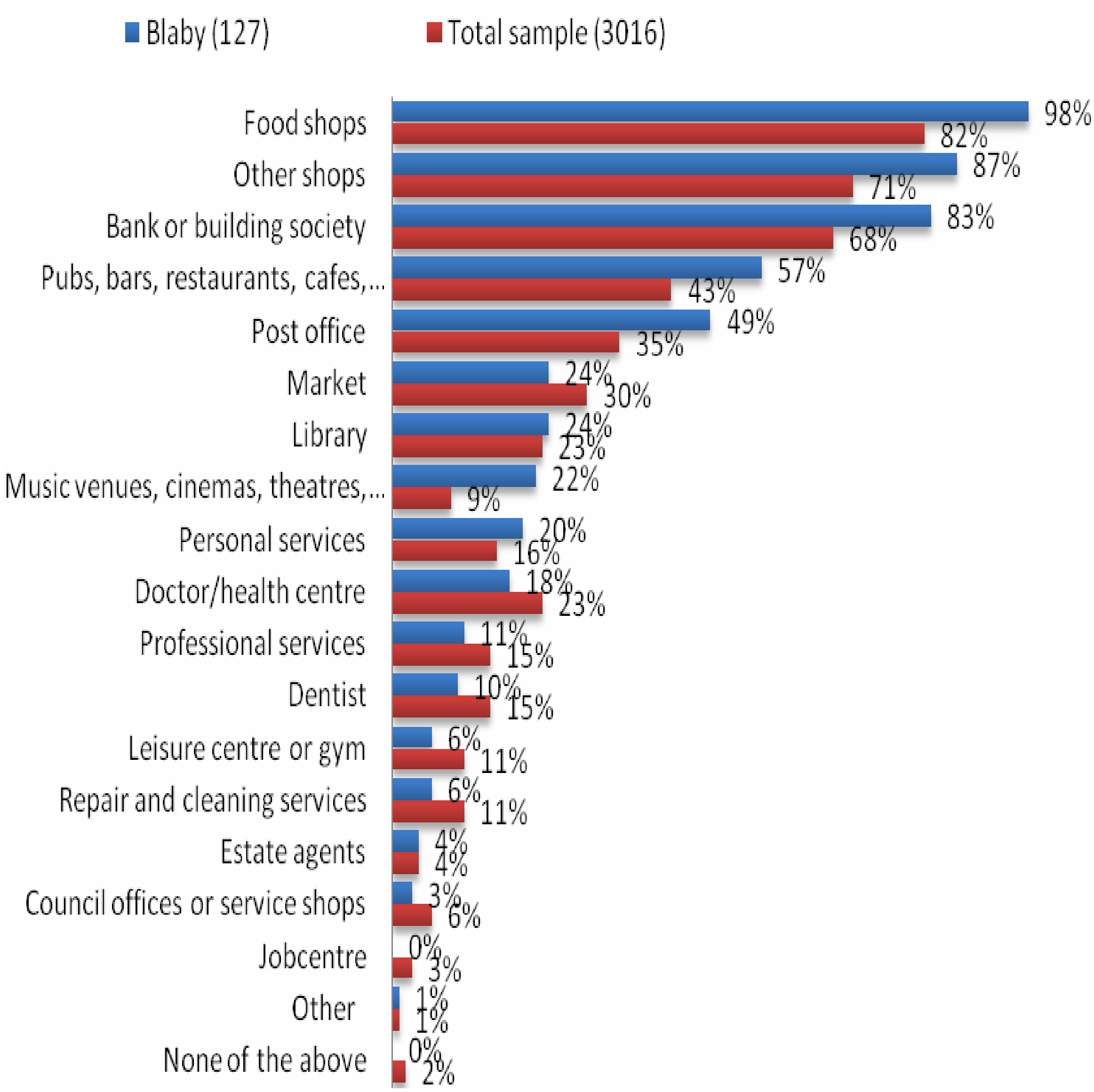
Few respondents consider it a 'vibrant', 'exciting' or 'distinctive' centre but few disagree with these descriptions too.

Compared with the area-wide average, respondents interviewed in Blaby are significantly more likely to feel it is an attractive centre, but significantly less likely to feel it is tidy.

4.2 Services and facilities used

Respondents were asked which of a list of services and facilities they use in the centre. These are summarised in the figure below, which compares the responses of people interviewed in Blaby centre with the total area-wide sample to see if Blaby varies from the average.

Figure 4: Services and facilities used in Blaby centre/centres area-wide – prompted, multiple response (all respondents) Sample bases in parentheses



It can be seen that respondents are more likely than average to use food shops, other shops and a bank or building society, pubs, bars, restaurants, cafes etc, a post office and music venues, cinemas, theatres etc in Blaby. They are less likely than average to use professional and health services in the centre.

5 The Markets

This section focuses on respondents' views of the Farmers' market that is held regularly in Blaby.

5.1 Use of the farmers' market

Just over two-fifths of all respondents (42%) have visited the farmers' market held in Blaby in the last 12 months. Thus, more than half have not done so (53%) and just 2% do not appear to be aware of a farmers' market in the centre.

5.2 Views on the farmers' market

When asked whether they agree that the farmers' market makes a positive contribution to Blaby, a significant minority of respondents (39%) do not feel able to offer an opinion. Of the remainder, the majority (41% of all respondents) agree that it does. Just 1% disagree.

When just those having an opinion are considered the proportion that agree that the farmers' market makes a positive contribution to the centre is slightly lower than average (67%, compared with 73% across the total sample). However, it should be borne in mind that the sample base with regard to those interviewed in Blaby is relatively low when just those providing a valid response are considered (just 78).

6 Ratings of the Town

This section focuses on respondents' general assessments of Blaby as a place to live, work and shop.

6.1 Perceived changes in the last 12 months

When asked if they feel Blaby has got better or worse in the last 12 months, respondents are most likely to feel there has been no change (48%). A fifth (20%) feel that it has improved but none feel it is much better now than 12 months ago.

Overall, fewer than one in ten respondents (9%) feel that the centre has deteriorated in the last 12 months, including 1% that feel it has got much worse.

On the whole, respondents in Blaby hold a slightly more positive view of the centre than average. The proportion of all respondents area-wide that feel their centre has improved is similar (19%) and the proportion that feels their centre has deteriorated is significantly higher than within Blaby (18%).

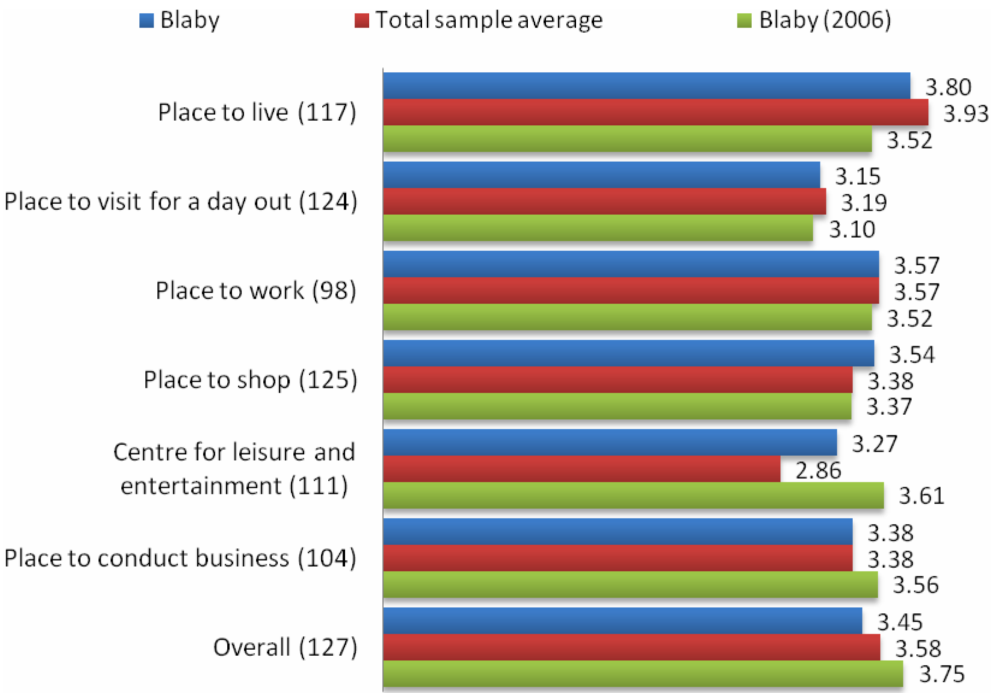
Reasons given by Blaby respondents for feeling that the centre has deteriorated include: shops closing down/lack of shops (2 respondents), parking (2 respondents), centre looks shabby/needs attention/looks unattractive (again, 2 respondents), needs refurbishment/replenishment (just 1 respondent).

The most frequently cited reasons given by Blaby respondents for feeling that the centre has improved in the last 12 months is that Aldi has opened (44% of those feeling it has improved). Contradicting what one or two respondents have said about shops closing down, five respondents (20% of those feeling the centre has improved) feel that the shops have improved/better shops/wider variety. A further three respondents say that more/new shops have opened and two feel that the centre is cleaner/tidier Other reasons given by one respondent each include: friendly/vibrant/good atmosphere, better parking facilities, less crime/more police presence/much safer and more variety/selection of things to do.

6.2 Ratings of Blaby

Respondents were asked to rate Blaby as a place to live, visit, work, shop, as a centre for leisure and entertainment, as a place to conduct business and overall. The figure below summarises ratings of each aspect, comparing the mean scores (out of 5) with those of the total sample averages in order to put Blaby's scores into context.

Figure 5: Respondents' ratings of Blaby (where provided a response)
Sample bases in parentheses (2008 Blaby respondents only)



It can be seen that Blaby compares well to the average, scoring slightly, but not significantly better than the average as a centre for leisure and entertainment.

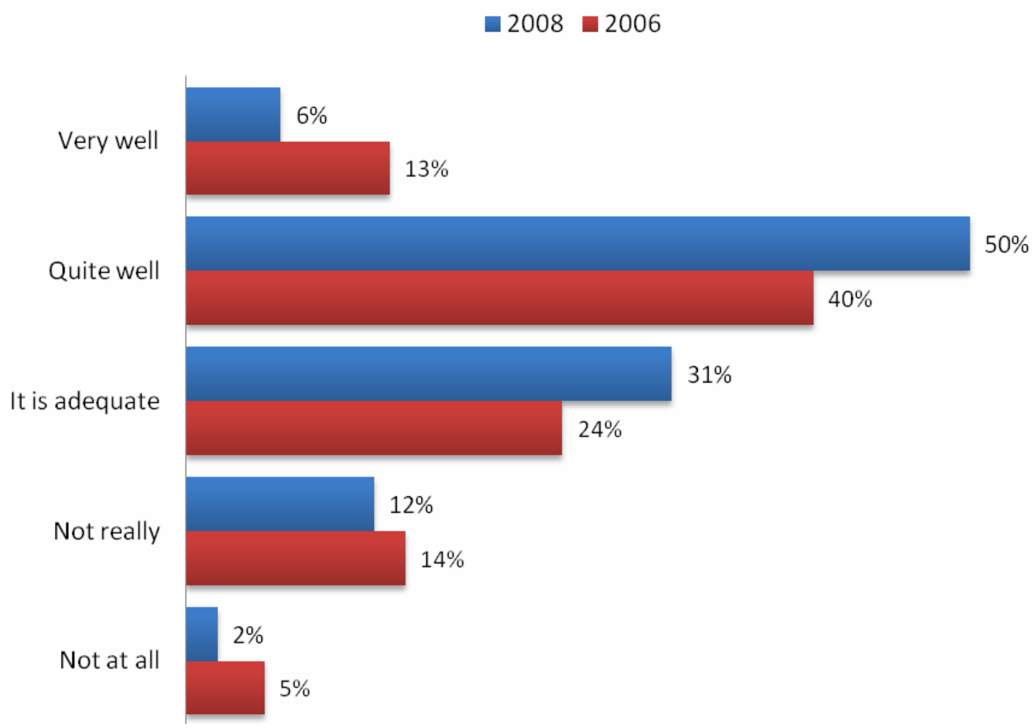
Respondents in Blaby are particularly positive about Blaby as a place to live but rate it lowest as a place to visit for a day out.

Compared with 2006, respondents rate Blaby as a place to live and shop more highly. However, they tend to be less positive about Blaby overall, specifically as a place to conduct business as well as a centre for leisure and entertainment.

6.3 Retail issues

When asked if the variety of retail outlets or shops in Blaby centre meets their shopping needs, more than half (56%) say it does, while one in eight (13%) do not feel this is the case. These proportions compare favourably with the total sample averages of 41% and 28% respectively. When expressed as a mean score (out of 5) it is 3.46, which is significantly higher than the total sample average (3.16).

Figure 6: Extent to which respondents feel that the variety of retail outlets or shops in Blaby meets their shopping needs (all respondents) Sample base 2008 = 127; 2006 = 131



Most of those that do not feel that Blaby meets their shopping needs (35%) feel it is because there are not enough clothes shops. Slightly fewer (29%) feel there are too many estate agents. Two respondents each cite the lack of high street stores, the need for more shops and lack of variety in the centre.

The survey findings suggest that there has been little change in the assessment of Blaby in terms of the variety of retail outlets or shops available as in the 2006 survey the proportion that felt their shopping needs were met quite or very well was statistically similar (53%). However, at this time a higher proportion of respondents were negative in their views of the variety of retail outlets or shops in Blaby (19%, compared with 14% in 2008).

6.4 Rating of aspects of Blaby

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree (or disagree) with statements about the centre of Blaby. Their responses are summarised in the table below, which compares the resulting mean scores (which are based only on those giving a valid response) with those of the total sample in order to put Blaby's scores in context. Only statistically significant differences are commented on.

Table 2: Ratings of aspects of Blaby (percentages/mean scores) – all respondents/where provided a response
* slight wording change '-' no comparison available

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know/no opinion	Mean score (2008)	Mean score (2006)	Mean score (total sample)
There is plenty of seating in and around the centre	1	8	4	**82**	**0**	6	**3.77***	3.25	3.52
Seating in and around shopping areas is well maintained	0	9	11	**69**	**5**	6	**3.73**	3.05	3.65
Pavements and walkways are clean and tidy	0	7	14	**79**	**0**	0	**3.72**	3.60	3.63
Pavements and walkways are safe and well maintained	0	3	24	**72**	**0**	1	**3.69**	3.60	3.64
Street lighting is good	0	3	33	**58**	**2**	4	**3.61**	3.34	3.81
Shop fronts are well maintained	0	8	24	**65**	**1**	2	**3.60**	3.50	3.76
Pedestrian signage is relevant, clear and easy to understand	0	3	35	**57**	**2**	2	**3.59**	3.40	3.79
The parks are well maintained	0	3	39	**54**	**1**	4	**3.54**	3.47	3.71
The centre is well planted in summertime	0	6	45	**45**	**1**	3	**3.41**	3.22	3.59
The design and layout of the centre is attractive	1	6	46	**40**	**1**	6	**3.36**	3.40	3.33
There are sufficient green spaces in the centre	1	9	43	**40**	**1**	6	**3.33**	-	3.33

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Don't know/no opinion	Mean score (2008)	Mean score (2006)	Mean score (total sample)
The baby changing facilities provided are clean and tidy	7	13	21	**12**	**3**	44	**2.85**	3.31	3.11
There are enough baby changing facilities	8	13	20	**12**	**1**	46	**2.71**	3.41	2.99
The public toilets provided are clean and tidy	9	28	20	**17**	**2**	25	**2.66**	3.33	3.05
There are enough public toilets	8	31	25	**15**	**2**	19	**2.64**	3.50	2.77

It can be seen that many aspects of Blaby centre are rated higher than average and compared with two years ago. These include, in particular, aspects involving seating in and around the centre and shopping areas, street lighting and signage. However, since 2006 there has been some deterioration in ratings of public toilets and baby changing facilities (the latter is only based on the views of a small number of respondents). Respondents in Blaby are most likely to agree that there is plenty of seating and least likely to feel there are sufficient public toilets and baby changing facilities in the centre.

Blaby is below average in terms of most aspects, the exceptions being to do with seating and pavements in the centre. Blaby respondents are as likely as average to agree that there are sufficient green spaces and to agree that the design and layout of the centre is attractive.

Respondents were then presented with another set of aspects, most of which concern access, i.e. parking, the road network, individuals with special needs but some concerning environmental noise and others concerning the range of shops and service levels within shops in the centre.

Responses are summarised in the table below, which, once again, compares the resulting mean scores (which are based only on those giving a valid response) with those of the total sample in order to put Blaby's scores in context. Only statistically significant differences are commented on.

Blaby respondents are more likely than average to agree that there is enough car parking, that it is affordable and that roads are not congested. They are also less likely than average to agree with any other aspect, including that the car parks are easy to find, although this itself is one of the highest rated aspects.

The centre receives its lowest levels of agreement with regard to statements about there being many high street or local, independent shops.

Table 3: Ratings of aspects of Blaby (percentages/mean scores) – all respondents/where provided a response
* slight wording change ‘-‘ no comparison available

	Disagree strongly	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Agree strongly	Don’t know/no opinion	Mean score (2008)	Mean score (2006)	Mean score (total sample)
Enough car parking available	2	10	13	**52**	**9**	13	**3.65**	3.38	3.39
Car parking costs are affordable*	2	6	24	**43**	**9**	16	**3.61**	2.39	3.52
It is easy for drivers to find the car parks around the centre	0	5	29	**53**	**2**	12	**3.58**	3.57	3.62
Road signs make it easy for cars to access the centre	0	5	31	**50**	**2**	12	**3.57**	3.47	3.71
Roads in and around the centre are well maintained	0	3	38	**43**	**3**	13	**3.53**	3.65	3.67
The road network provides easy access into the centre	0	5	36	**48**	**1**	10	**3.50**	3.60	3.65
Roads in the centre are not congested	1	7	35	**42**	**4**	11	**3.46**	3.20	3.39
Pedestrians can walk around the centre without feeling threatened by traffic	0	8	38	**46**	**2**	6	**3.45**	3.67	3.64
There is little other noise (music, pubs and clubs etc) in the centre	0	7	40	**43**	**3**	6	**3.45**	-	3.54
There is little traffic noise in the centre	0	10	43	**39**	**3**	5	**3.37**	-	3.39
The centre is accessible for disabled people and older people	0	9	53	**31**	**2**	6	**3.27**	3.60	3.61
The level of service in shops is of a high standard	1	17	41	**39**	**1**	2	**3.23**	3.44	3.58
The centre has many local, independent shops	2	21	47	**27**	**2**	2	**3.06**	-	3.29
The centre has many high street chain stores	9	28	38	**24**	**0**	2	**2.79**	-	2.76

Compared with 2006, there would appear to have been improvements to the centre with regard to car parking, road congestion and signage. However, the variety of shops and access issues both for motorists and for the disabled and elderly are areas in which some decline is evidenced by lower mean scores.

6.5 Eating out

Respondents were asked to rate both the range and quality of places to eat out in Blaby.

Around half (49%) rated the range of places to eat out in the centre as good and this compares with a slightly (but not significantly) higher total sample average of 56%.

It is similarly rated in terms of the quality of places to eat out at. Again, nearly half (48%) rate it as good in this respect, compared with a total sample average of 59%.

Blaby has improved in this respect since 2006 (see figures below).

Figure 7: Respondents' ratings of the range of places to eat out at (all respondents)
Sample bases: 2008 = 127 2006 = 131

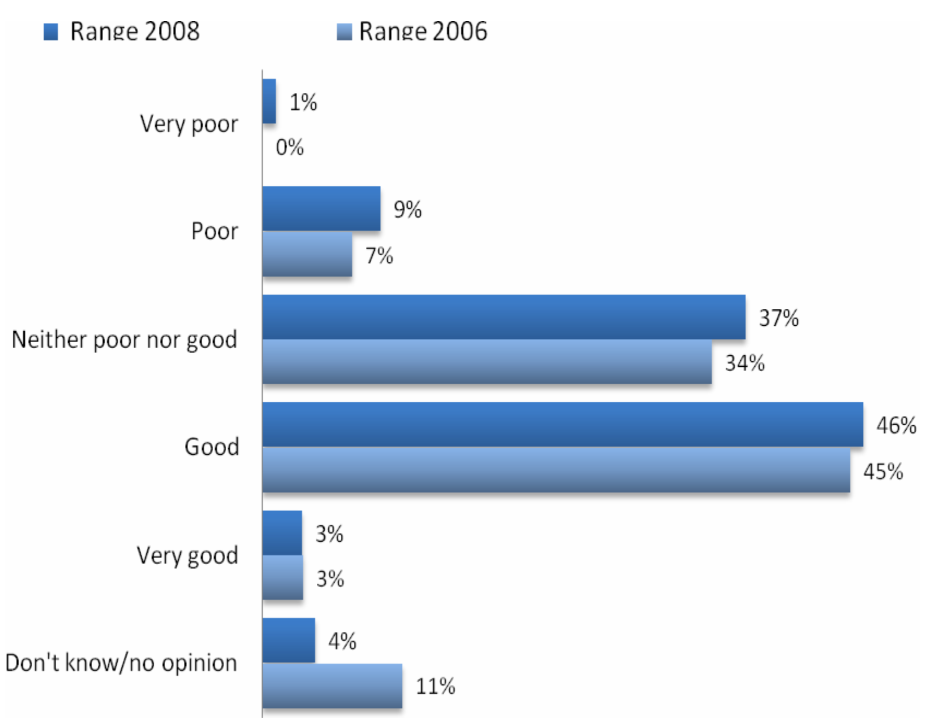
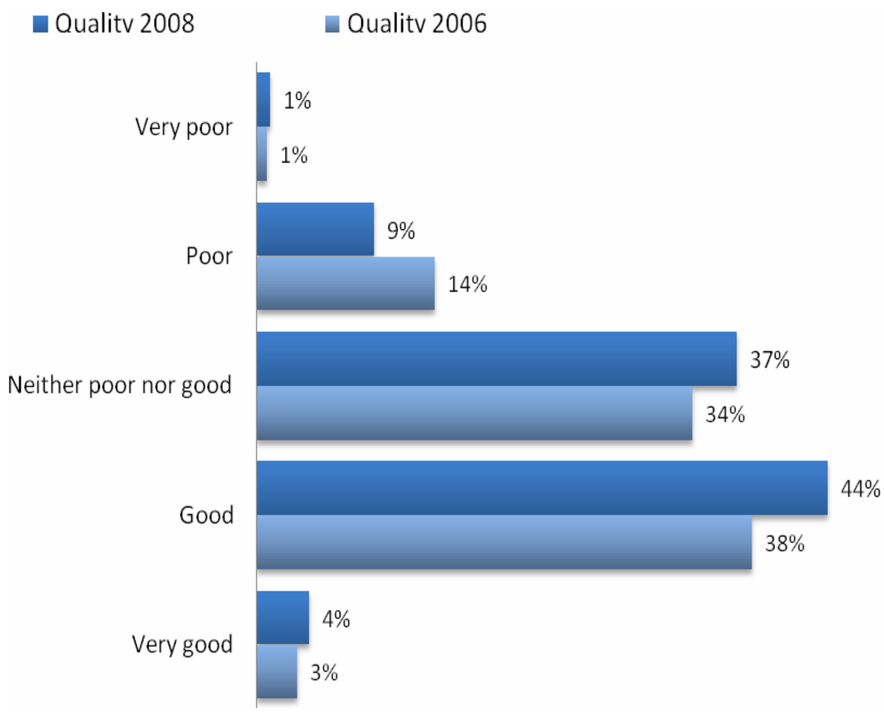


Figure 8: Respondents' ratings of the quality of places to eat out at (all respondents)
Sample bases: 2008 = 127 2006 = 131



6.6 Pubs, bars and clubs

Respondents were also asked to rate the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in Blaby.

Just under two-fifths of respondents in Blaby (39%) rate the range of pubs, bars and clubs in the centre as good. This compares with a total sample average of 46%.

The centre receives a similar rating with regard to the quality of its pubs, bars and clubs (39% rating it as good). This compares with a total sample average of 43%.

Compared with 2006, the proportions rating either the range or quality of pubs, bars and clubs in the centre are statistically similar (see figures below). In both years, none of the respondents interviewed in Blaby rated the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in the centre as *very* poor.

Figure 9: Respondents' ratings of the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in the centre (all respondents)
Sample bases: 2008 = 127 2006 = 131

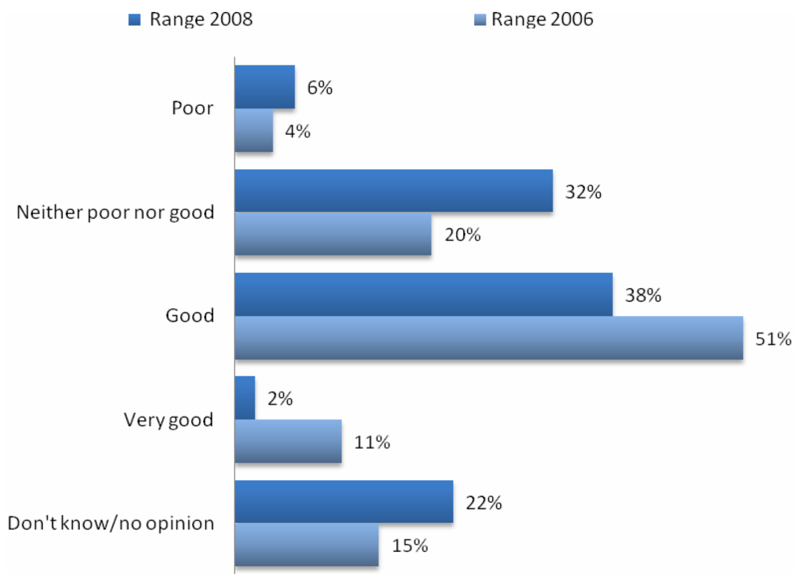


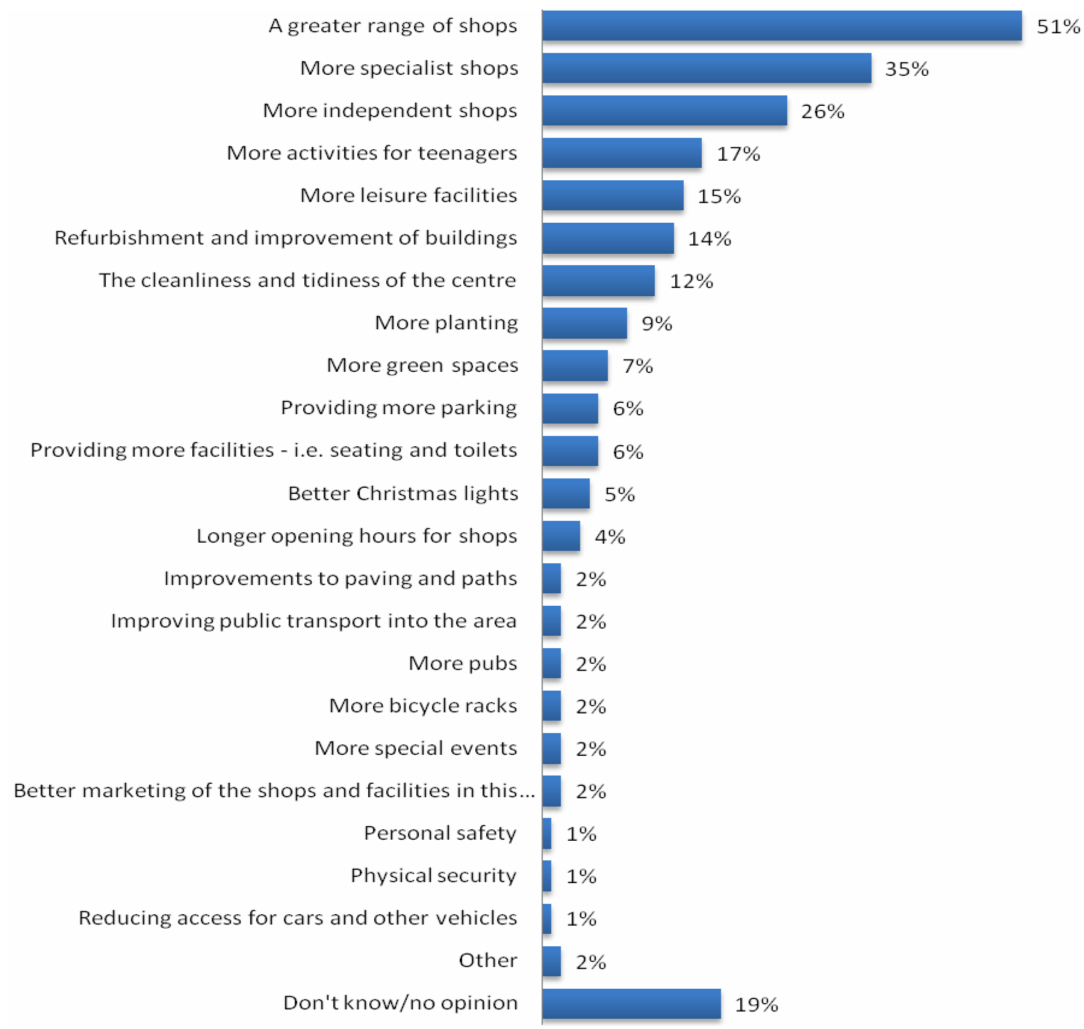
Figure 10: Respondents' ratings of the range and quality of pubs, bars and clubs in the centre (all respondents)
Sample bases: 2008 = 127 2006 = 131

6.7 Suggested improvements

When respondents were asked, unprompted, to think of *one* thing that, in their opinion, particularly needs improving over the next few years in Blaby they were most likely to spontaneously mention a wider variety of shops (20% of all respondents in Blaby). Next most frequently mentioned was facilities/activities for young people (9%). Other suggested areas for improvements included: flowers/scenery/greenery (5%), regeneration/modernisation (5%), leisure/entertainment facilities/activities (4%), more shops in general (4%), image/appearance (3%), restaurants/food outlets/bars/clubs (3%), street cleaning/litter (3%), free parking (3%), markets (2%), more car parks (2%), better quality shops/branded shops (2%), public toilets (2%), parking facilities (2%), clothes shops (2%) and retail outlets (shops/high street stores) (2%).

Respondents were then presented with a list of issues, services and facilities (i.e. prompted with a list of possibilities) and asked to select all those that they feel need improving in the centre over the next year. A greater range of shops was most frequently selected.

Figure 11: Aspects of the centre that need improving in the next year – prompted, multiple response (all respondents) Sample base = 127



6.8 Ways respondents could be encouraged to visit the centre

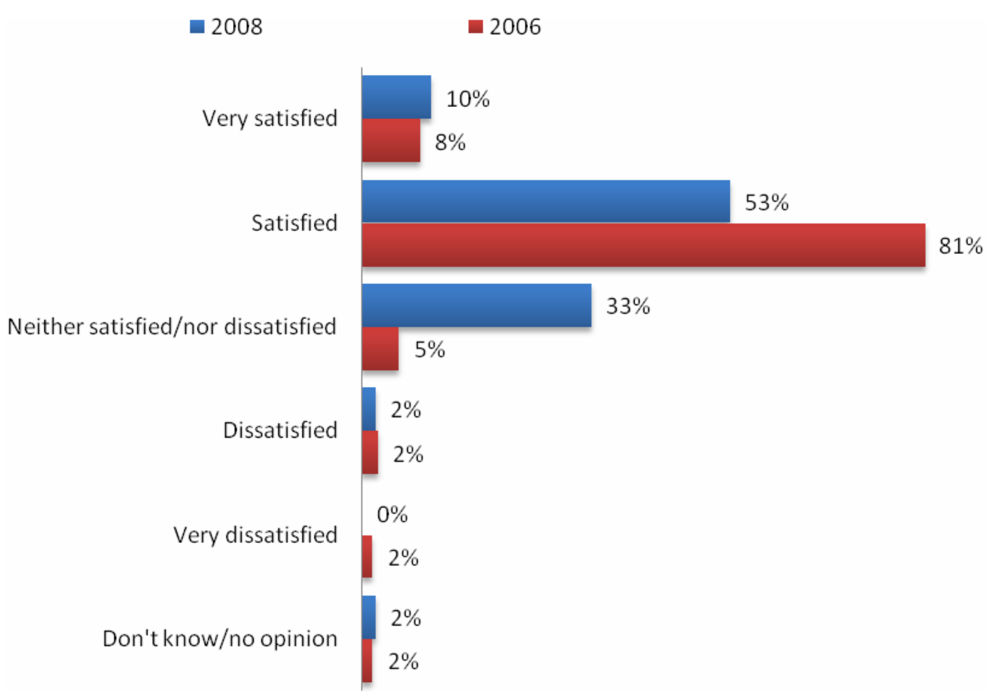
When asked which of a list of improvements would encourage them to visit Blaby centre, respondents were most likely to select a wider range of shops and retail facilities (62%). This is slightly higher than the total sample average (59%). Far fewer respondents selected any other improvement, the next most frequently cited being opening hours extending into the evening (21%), more cultural or entertainment facilities (17%), more, better or different places to eat and drink (11%), better parking facilities (8%), free parking (7%), better access for cars (6%), cycle lanes or better facilities for cycling (4%), more festivals, events or street entertainment (3%), better public transport links (2%) and/or better rail networks (1%).

6.9 Overall satisfaction with the centre

When asked if they are satisfied that Blaby is a good place to shop, visit and do business, nearly two-thirds of respondents (63%) said they are satisfied. This includes 10% that are very satisfied. The level of satisfaction with Blaby as a place to shop, visit and do business is slightly greater than the total sample average (60%).

The level of satisfaction is significantly lower than in 2006 (89%). It is not the case that respondents are more likely to be dissatisfied, just that they are more likely to be indifferent this year.

Figure 12: Satisfaction with Blaby as a good place to shop, visit and do business (all respondents) Sample bases: 2008 = 127 2006 = 131



7 Perceived Problems in the Town

This section focuses on potential problems in the centre of Blaby. It seeks to highlight areas of perceived problems and any concerns that people may feel about their personal safety while in the town.

7.1 Potential problem areas

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they feel that a number of issues are a problem in the centre.

The table below summarises responses, comparing Blaby with the area-wide average and highlighting any changes since 2006.

Table 4: Extent to respondents consider issues a problem – all respondents Sample bases: 2008 = 127, 2006 = 131

	1 -Very big problem	2	3	4	5 – Not a problem at all	Don't know/no opinion	A problem (2008)	A problem (2006)	A problem (total sample)
Groups of people hanging round on the streets	1	10	18	28	42	2	**11**	23	19
Rubbish and litter lying around	1	10	22	26	39	2	**11**	28	13
Vandalism, graffiti and other deliberate damage to property or vehicles	0	9	14	30	43	4	**9**	15	14
Dirty pavements and chewing gum	1	6	18	31	42	2	**7**	11	13
People being drunk or rowdy in public spaces	0	5	6	39	46	4	**5**	8	10
Fly tipping	0	2	5	39	50	5	**2**	9	4
People not treating each other with respect and consideration	0	1	9	42	47	2	**1**	8	9
Road safety or speeding	0	1	4	31	55	9	**1**	11	6
Vehicles being stolen	0	1	2	28	60	9	**1**	17	3
Assaults and other violent crime (personal robbery, mugging)	0	1	5	25	61	9	**1**	8	6

Verbal abuse or other aggressive behaviour	0	1	6	27	57	9	**1**	12	7
People using or dealing drugs	0	0	6	35	50	12	**0**	15	8
Street canvassers	0	0	6	34	53	8	**0**	18	3
Aggressive begging	0	0	2	33	55	9	**0**	8	3
Property being stolen from a vehicle	0	0	4	27	61	9	**0**	12	4
Personal theft (pickpocketing)	0	0	3	26	62	9	**0**	16	4
Racial harassment	0	0	3	28	57	12	**0**	7	2

It can be seen that Blaby respondents are significantly less likely to feel that any issue is a problem in the centre than they were two years ago. They are also less likely to identify any of the behaviours and incidents as a problem than average across the area.

7.2 Concerns about personal safety

Just 6% of respondents interviewed in Blaby have felt worried about being assaulted or harassed while in the centre in the last 12 months. This is the same as the area-wide sample average.

Four of the seven respondents in Blaby that have been worried about being assaulted or harassed have felt like this no more than 5 times in the last 12 months. One has felt like this between 6 and 9 times and the seventh respondent has felt like this 10 or more times.

Only two of the seven respondents have felt quite worried about the possibility of being assaulted or harassed. The remaining respondents have either been no more than a little worried about it or could not remember how worried they were.

7.3 Financial issues

Respondents were asked two questions about their financial circumstances in the near future. Firstly they were asked to indicate whether or not they anticipate being financially better or worse off in the next year.

Just 14% of respondents interviewed in Blaby feel they are likely to be worse off in the next year, although this includes just 5% that anticipate being *much* worse off financially. This is a significantly lower proportion than the total sample average (39%), which includes 11% that expect to be much worse off.

Just 6% of Blaby respondents expect to be better off, including just 1% that expects to be *much* better off. This compares with an area-wide sample average of 8%.

When asked how the slowdown in the national economy has affected their spending, respondents in Blaby are more likely to say they are spending less than more (26%, compared with 5%). However, more than half (52%) say there has been no change. These proportions compare with 40%, 10% and 38% of all respondents area-wide respectively and suggest that Blaby respondents are significantly different from the average in this respect.

In respect of both these questions, Blaby respondents are less likely to provide a response than average. Across the area-wide sample 12% of respondents did *not* provide a response. This compares with 17-18% of Blaby respondents.

When based just on those providing a response, 17% of Blaby respondents expect to be worse off in the next year, compared with 44% of respondents area-wide (a statistically significant difference); 6% of Blaby respondents say the slowdown in the national economy has led to them spending more and 31% say it has led them to spending less, compared with 11% and 45% respectively of respondents area-wide. The difference between the Blaby and area-wide samples in terms of whether it will lead them to spend less is statistically significant.

8 Conclusions and recommendations

8.1 Introduction

This section outlines the key conclusions and recommendations for Blaby.

8.2 Town centre access and usage

Blaby town centre is mostly visited for personal services or for repairs, weekly shopping and for ‘top up’ shopping. The preferred method of transport into the town is by car, although access by public transport is considered to be easy. As just over half of respondents perceive that there is enough car parking available and the car parks are easy to find, this may help explain why many of those who do consider Blaby to be easily accessible by public transport, travel to it by car.

8.3 Encouraging footfall and usage

The town is visited frequently both on weekdays and weekends but this is primarily during the day; there remains scope to encourage people into Blaby in the evenings, particularly during weekdays.

Blaby is not seen as a quiet town centre. It is viewed as friendly, safe and attractive. The fact that the town is not quiet but is also not seen to be particularly exciting or vibrant would imply that there is scope to improve these elements through an extended programme of events and by improving the quality of provision during the evenings on weekdays. These events should be advertised via local newspapers. However, community newsletters and the Council newspaper would also be good avenues to use.

8.4 The markets

Whilst awareness of the farmer’s market is almost universal, the proportion of respondents who have frequented it in the past 12 months is only two in five. Respondents may therefore be unaware of when the market is held and what it has to offer.

8.5 Blaby

Blaby is perceived positively with many feeling that it has remained the same or improved over the last year. It is viewed most favourably as a place to live as opposed to somewhere to conduct business or shop. The results indicate that this may be due to the lack of variety of shops available in the town. Encouraging a variety of retail and other outlets to the centre would help improve the ‘exciting’ aspect of the town also.

The town is generally well regarded in terms of the range and quality of places to eat out and in terms of pubs, clubs and bars.

Because people matter, we listen.

With some 20 years' experience, BMG Research has established a strong reputation for delivering high quality research and consultancy.

Our business is about understanding people; because they matter. Finding out what they really need; from the type of information they use to the type of services they require. In short, finding out about the kind of world people want to live in tomorrow.

BMG serves both the social public sector and the commercial private sector, providing market and customer insight which is vital in the development of plans, the support of campaigns and the evaluation of performance.

Innovation and development is very much at the heart of our business, and considerable attention is paid to the utilisation of technologies such as portals and information systems to ensure that market and customer intelligence is widely shared.