Hartlepool Town Investment Plan
Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

Introduction

The ***Hartlepool Town Investment Plan*** is our 'Charter for Change'. It says that we are prepared to lead the evolution of Hartlepool to secure the rewards of a modern town. The Town Investment Plan sets out investment priorities that can drive economic growth, supported by a clear understanding of Hartlepool focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges. Through a robust assessment and detailed understanding of what needs to change in Hartlepool (the jobs value gap, social mobility and skills constraints, and a dysfunctional and disconnected central area), a series of priority actions and projects have been identified which will have the most direct and catalytic impact on change in our town.

The development of the Town Investment Plan has been informed by extensive stakeholder and community engagement. This has included review and analysis of engagement which has taken place over the last two years by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) as well as specific activities to identify and evidence priority projects for the Town Investment Plan which have taken place during 2020.

The purpose of this stakeholder engagement strategy is to guide continued interactions with stakeholders and communities as the Town Investment Plan progresses and priority projects are further developed. Town Deal Board members, as representatives from across Hartlepool's public, private and voluntary sectors, have a pivotal role to play in this process.

Consultation and engagement has needed to respond flexibly to the changing Covid-19 situation and restrictions which have been in place. Engagement by virtual / digital means is likely to continue to be important, as will the identification of innovative and creative methods to engage with those who are digitally excluded.

Engagement Objectives

The Terms of Reference agreed by the Town Deal Board state that Board Members will be committed to working with all local stakeholders in a consistent, collaborative, inclusive and open manner. This will be achieved through:

- listening to stakeholders
- ensuring partnership working where this adds value to the engagement process, and
- working with local people, businesses and organisations to understand the range and type of information that they are interested in.

Engagement objectives for the ongoing development of the Town Investment Plan are as follows:

- continue to develop a detailed understanding of key issues, challenges and opportunities
- obtain qualitative and quantitative data that can be used to inform the development of specific projects / priorities
- understand market expectations
- understand consumer expectations on a local level
- identify co-funding opportunities from the public and private sectors
- evidence the need for Government funding
- galvanise support for, and inspire ownership of, the town centre
- develop and validate ideas
- provide additional (supplementary) metrics from engagement intelligence

The Town Deal Board

The Board incorporates representation from the public, private and voluntary sectors within Hartlepool and will continue to have an instrumental role to play in terms of stakeholder engagement as the Town Investment Plan progresses. A critical role of the Board is for individual members to continue to use their own networks to disseminate information about TIP projects, the ongoing TIP process and to publicise relevant engagement activities.

Town Deal Board members are as follows:

- Mike Hill, Hartlepool MP
- Shane Moore, Leader of Hartlepool Borough Council
- Mike Young, Deputy Leader of Hartlepool Borough Council
- Christopher Akers-Belcher, Chair of Regeneration Services Committee, Hartlepool Borough Council
- Leisa Smith, Vice Chair of Regeneration Services Committee, Hartlepool Borough Council
- Alby Pattison, AP Services (North East) Limited
- Denise McGuckin, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods, Hartlepool Borough Council
- Dr Gill Danby, NECC (Hartlepool)
- Mark Hughes, Hartlepool 6th Form College
- Martin Raby, Northern School of Art
- Simon Hanson, Federation of Small Businesses
- Alison Fellows, Tees Valley Combined Authority
- Martin Jesper, Hartlepool United Football Club
- Ross Burns, Middleton Grange Shopping Centre
- Ros Adamson, National Museum of the Royal Navy
- Craig Dohring, EDF
- Darron Hankey, Hartlepool College of Further Education
- Maxine Craig, Love Hartlepool
- Catherine Conroy, One Public Estate
- Stephen Hind, Network Rail
- Marie Kiddell, Homes England

Overview of Engagement to Date

Wider Engagement

Evidence from a range of engagement streams and activities has been brought together to illustrate the need for the priority projects being taken forward in the Town Investment Plan. These include wider engagement activities than simply those undertaken in relation to either the Town Investment Plan or the Town Centre Masterplan (which has been running concurrently with preparation of the Town Investment Plan and has helped to inform the identification of priority actions for Hartlepool town centre), including:

- Surveys undertaken to inform the Council Plan 2020-2023 (over 250 responses received in 2019)
- Engagement undertaken to inform HBC's Covid-19 Recovery Plan – this comprised a range of engagement activities including members seminar, online employee survey and virtual workshops held with primary and secondary school headteachers, public sector partner organisations, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and representatives of business and faith communities
- Findings from the Tees Valley Covid-19 Business Survey undertaken in 2020.

Project-specific consultation that has been undertaken over the course of the last year, and which may have relevance to Town Investment Plan projects, includes consultation for heritage projects such as The Shades Hotel and surveys undertaken by HBC on behalf of the proposed relocation of leisure services to the Waterfront in Hartlepool.

A summary of the outcomes of this wider engagement activity is provided at Appendix A.

Town Investment Plan Engagement to Date

Engagement activities which have been specific to the development of the Town Investment Plan are summarised in Table 1. The table shows the breadth of activities that have taken place across a variety of stakeholder groups; outcomes from this engagement have been used to inform both the Town Centre Masterplan and the Town Investment Plan. The restrictions on face to face meetings and larger gatherings as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in a greater focus on online activities and information gathering than would otherwise have been the case; however this is not considered to have compromised the engagement work and efforts have been made to reach out to groups who may be digitally excluded.

Table 1 Summary of Engagement Activities

Activity
• Town Deal Board meetings
• One to one interviews with stakeholders (business interests, local colleges, key landowners)
• #My Town online engagement portal – 90 suggestions were received
• Online Local Residents Survey (publicised through an extensive network of communication channels) – a total of 469 responses were received
• Online Local Business Survey – a total of 71 responses were received
• Members Seminar
• Young People’s Group
• Online discussion with the Economic Regeneration and Tourism Forum
• ‘Sector Connector’ call (online discussion with the Voluntary and Community Sector via Hartlepower)
• Public exhibition presenting Town Centre Masterplan and TIP interventions

Key findings from a number of these activities are provided below.

#My Town

The #My Town online engagement portal generated some 90 responses in relation to Hartlepool. Analysis of these responses highlighted the following themes:

- concerns around anti-social behaviour within and around the town centre (18%)
- various comments around the need for more training and employment opportunities focusing on various industries / sectors of the population (for example young people) (13%)
- issues associated with the quality of the town centre environment, for example empty properties (12%)
- a desire to see improved healthcare facilities (either in connection with the hospital or specific services such as mental health care) (12%)
- rail connectivity (11%)
- the importance of youth services as a means of providing young people with ‘something to do’ and thereby addressing anti-social behaviour (9%)
- improvements to parking (various aspects relating for example to cost of parking as well as provision of sufficient parking spaces) (7%)

Hartlepool Online Surveys

Two online surveys were developed as part of the community engagement for the Town Centre Masterplan and Town Investment Plan; one survey was directed at local residents and the second at local businesses. Both surveys were publicised in a number of ways, including:

- through the networks of Town Deal Board members
- via the Hartlepool Borough Council website and associated social media links

- information about the Towns Fund and the survey link were included in a letter distributed to all households in Hartlepool as part of the Covid-19 Recovery Programme
- through other HBC networks including the Citizen's Panel, links to Parish Councils and organisations such as Hartlepool Civic Society, to residents' associations, and in the Allotments Newsletter
- The Salaam Centre
- media campaign manged by HBC including links with Radio Hartlepool and the Love Hartlepool magazine
- through the Hartlepower network of voluntary and community sector organisations
- hard copies of the survey were completed during a session with young people

Both surveys were open for a six week period during August and September 2020. A total of 469 responses were received to the local residents' survey and a further 71 responses were received to the local businesses survey. A comprehensive overview of the findings of the online surveys is provided at Appendix B.

Young people

Young people were engaged both through the online survey and through a 'young people's group' facilitated by HBC. The online survey was completed by 26 young people aged between 16-25. This age group were specifically concerned with issues relating to the availability of job and training opportunities, regeneration of the town centre, notably the attractiveness of the environment and various comments relating to shops (availability, range).

Younger children (aged under 16) felt typically that there was a lack of facilities for their age group; other concerns related to youth services, a lack of information about mental health, and concerns about the environment (pollution, climate change). Words used by young people to describe Hartlepool in the future included 'happy', 'prosperous', 'beautiful', 'healthy' and 'attractive'. Priorities for the future included more things to do, more shops and a better environment.

Children and young people remain an important group to engage with as priority projects for the Town Investment Plan are developed.

Voluntary and Community Sector

An online discussion with representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector was held in August 2020, facilitated by Hartlepower. The session was attended by representatives of ten organisations and was used as a forum to discuss issues and opportunities facing Hartlepool of relevance to the development of priority projects for both the Town Investment Plan and Town Centre Masterplan. Key issues raised during the session included:

- the importance of economic regeneration. Opportunities include the value of small, very cheap 'starter units' for new businesses; creation of the space, conditions and support for a cluster of digital businesses.
- that poverty and entrenched disadvantage are evident within Hartlepool, including digital exclusion.
- it is important for Church Street to serve a purpose, be better used, be made more attractive and become the kind of place that people want to visit and in which to spend time (and money). An attractive, vibrant Church Street is the missing pedestrian/cycle link between the town centre and waterfront area.
- emphasis should be placed on cycling and walking.
- emphasis should be placed on greening the town centre – much research indicates the emotional and physical health benefits of contact with nature. Alongside this is the importance of beauty – in just the same way as nature is a balm for the soul, so are beautiful objects, buildings and spaces.

Mechanisms by which ongoing engagement with hard to reach groups – particularly those who are digitally excluded – could be achieved were discussed, and various networks and opportunities identified, including working through the network of Community Organisers that exists within Hartlepool.

Public Exhibition

[placeholder – to be completed following exhibition]

Approach to Ongoing Engagement

There will be several purposes to ongoing engagement activities undertaken as part of the Town Investment Plan. As priority projects are developed, there will be a need to keep communities and stakeholders informed of progress; equally there is likely to be a need to use stakeholder input to further develop projects and understand various nuances; finally, there will be a requirement to develop collaborative working practices with partner organisations as part of project delivery.

Responsibility / ownership

Xxx

Engagement Activities

Table 1 provides a summary of proposed engagement activities by stakeholder group; it is noted that these may change over time.

Table 1 Engagement by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	Engagement Activities
Town Deal Board	Provide updates on engagement activities at Town Deal Board meetings. Information sharing regarding progress of the Town Investment Plan via networks of Town Deal Board networks. Meetings with individual Board Members to discuss collaborative working practices as they may relate to specific projects.
Local residents	HBC to promote a continued engagement campaign (social media, website, mainstream media) to raise awareness of the process, next stages and opportunities for continued involvement. Discussions via the Citizen's Panel and Youth Council. Non-digital information provision (e.g. utilise wall space / empty retail units within Middleton Grange Shopping centre to present updates about proposals at key stages / present information at locations including libraries). Include information about Towns Fund projects within Covid-19 Recovery information publicised to local residents (e.g. household letters).
Local businesses	Regular discussions with the Economic Regeneration and Tourism Forum Regular discussions with business forums and networks to update on next stages and opportunities for continued involvement.
Voluntary and community sector	Hold regular catch-up sessions via Hartlepower's Sector Connector call.
Hard to reach groups	Utilise trained Community Organisers within Hartlepool as a network through which people who may be digitally excluded can be informed of projects and feedback obtained. Promote information via The Salaam centre.
Young people	Formalise a Young People's Group via which ongoing engagement can take place. Information sharing with students via Town Deal Board networks (Northern College of Art / Hartlepool College of Further Education. Identify project-specific opportunities for input with students.

In addition to these over-arching engagement activities that are proposed, there will be additional activities planned as part of the progression of individual projects. An indicative list of engagement by each of the priority projects included within the Town Investment Plan is given in Table 2.

Table 2 Project-specific Engagement

Priority Project	Engagement Activities
E.g. Waterfront Connectivity	E.g. Survey of visitors to the NMRN (subject to restrictions being lifted) to obtain feedback about benefits of potential connectivity improvements.
E.g. Training and skills centre	E.g. Survey or workshop discussions with potential students to confirm training needs.

Potential Barriers to Engagement

Potential barriers to ongoing engagement, together with possible solutions, are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3 Potential Barriers to Engagement

Barriers to Engagement	Potential Solutions
Implications of Covid:19 – ongoing / new local lockdown restrictions to engagement with local residents, businesses and stakeholders as a result of travel restrictions and social distancing requirements.	Engagement techniques will continue to be adapted to specific situations – for example there will be ongoing emphasis on virtual engagement techniques (online surveys, use of websites to display consultation material).
Implications of Covid:19 – businesses may be less engaged in future thinking. Although the investment plans and needs of individual businesses will have changed, businesses themselves may not yet have a clear understanding of how and what assistance may be needed.	Importance of sowing the seeds of economic recovery during ongoing engagement forums.
Digital exclusion – a heightened possibility due to increased reliance on virtual methods of consultation (websites, online surveys) as a result of Covid:19.	Use of a combination of engagement techniques to incorporate non-digital opportunities (for example use of local press to publicise information).
Limited reach of Council communications – likely to be hard to reach groups and pockets of the community that will not be reached by Council publicity and communications.	Consider a range of opportunities to publicise consultation activities, for example networks of Town Deal Board organisations and local newsletters; utilise Hartlepool's VCS to ensure digitally excluded groups can also be reached.
Apathy from local residents – people having a low expectation that anything can be improved / not seeing the purpose of engaging.	Use of persuasive engagement techniques, interesting and interactive visual information, to try and create interest and encourage involvement. Identification and use of local 'influencers' (respected community members with extensive networks) to encourage involvement.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is essential to understand whether engagement is achieving its purpose and to demonstrate what the impact of engagement activities has been.

Monitoring activities include:

- Obtaining feedback from participants after each engagement activity where possible, to seek information regarding continuous improvement (quality of the event, opportunities for improvement).
- Recording counts of participants – where counts are low, seek information about reasons for this and ways to adapt for future events.
- Recording the types of people who have been engaged (i.e. local residents, local businesses, any demographic breakdown of engagement by age, gender, ethnicity, categorisation as 'hard to reach').
- Recording social media counts and interactions.

Evaluation is a process of collecting evidence and reflection in order to understand the effect of the engagement that has been undertaken. It is anticipated that the Towns Fund programme will, in time, be the focus of a national evaluation, in order to identify outputs and outcomes across the 101 towns which will have been in receipt of funding. Monitoring information collated as part of the preparation of the Hartlepool Town Investment Plan will be able to feed into this wider evaluation; outcomes are likely to relate to engagement as well as economic metrics.

APPENDIX A

Summary of Wider Engagement Activities

Evidence from wider engagement activities has been brought together to provide the context and illustrate the need for the priority projects identified in the Town Investment Plan. Relevant aspects of this wider engagement is summarised here.

The Council Plan

The Council Plan covers the period 2020/21 to 2022/23 and sets out strategic priorities for Hartlepool over this period. The Plan has been informed by an extensive period of consultation held during autumn 2019, where residents, employees and partners and partner organisations told HBC what they thought was going well in the town, what needed to improve and how organisations could work together to make a difference. The consultation comprised a four week online survey (responded to by more than 250 people), supplemented by three public drop-in events and targeted discussions with partner organisations, employers and HBC's Youth Council. The consultation identified that the majority of priorities identified in the previous Council Plan 2017-2020 were still important; these include:

- Increasing business and jobs and encouraging young people to come back to Hartlepool
- Developing recreational and leisure activities and facilities, particularly those that build on history / heritage
- Having a clean and attractive environment
- Access to the best education and learning opportunities.

Areas and issues that people felt needed to improve in Hartlepool included the empty and poor shop offer in the town centre, better employment and business opportunities, street cleaning / litter problems, crime and anti-social behaviour, public transport issues across town and parking issues.

The Council Plan has developed strategic priorities by which these issues can be addressed, shown in the box below.

Strategic Priorities – Hartlepool Council Plan 2020/21 to 2022/23
Growing a diverse economy by supporting businesses, increasing jobs, attracting inward investment and improving skills and aspirations
Creating a clean, green, and safe Hartlepool by protecting our environment and improving our neighbourhoods
Create an attractive and connected Hartlepool by attracting investment to improve key buildings, derelict land and our transport network
Developing a healthy Hartlepool by working with our communities to improve the health and wellbeing of our people
Building better beginnings and better futures for our children and young people
Building and improving homes that people want to live in
Shaping a well-led, safe, high performing and efficient council that is fit for the 21st Century

Engagement as part of HBC's Covid-19 Recovery Strategy

Extensive engagement has been undertaken during 2020 in order to inform HBC's Covid-19 Recovery Plan. This has included workshops and discussion sessions with elected members, primary and secondary school headteachers, public sector partner organisations, voluntary and community sector (VCS) organisations and representatives of business and faith communities. An online survey of HBC employees was also undertaken. Whilst much of the engagement has, by necessity, focused on technical aspects of HBC's and partners organisation's response to the Covid-19 pandemic and an assessment of how successful various mechanisms to deal with aspects of the pandemic have been, the engagement has also identified wider concerns, needs and priorities which are of relevance to the ongoing development of priority projects included in the Town Investment Plan.

General themes from the engagement have acknowledged the particular characteristics of Hartlepool's population and the impact that the pandemic has had – for example on people in poverty, which is a much wider group than simply people claiming Universal Credit, but noting there is considerable in-work poverty too. Engagement highlighted the need to focus on the *causes* of poverty not just the symptoms and to get the 'voice of lived experience' as part of policy development. Other general themes included the fact that health inequalities which already existed in Hartlepool have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 situation.

Discussions with HBC employees identified a variety of areas of interest for both the provision of Council services and for local communities, including ways to improve physical activity, meeting mental health needs, providing ongoing support for vulnerable people (including people who have been made vulnerable as part of the Covid-19 pandemic, for example through job losses or eviction which will become apparent as various support schemes come to an end), and encouraging people to use the town centre in order to support local businesses.

The economic impact of the pandemic was a particular area for discussion with representatives from the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The VCS has a continued role to play in supporting people into work, self-employment and training.

Above all, the engagement has highlighted a need to harness the community activism that has developed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and continue to build on it. Discussions with partner organisations (including public and voluntary sector representatives) have showcased the benefits of working collaboratively, across agency boundaries.

Tees Valley Covid-19 Business Survey

The Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) undertook a survey of businesses across the region in 2020 to identify early impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Findings from the survey were able to give an indication of sectors disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, as well as impacts as they affected the workforce and opportunities for ongoing training and recruitment. Concerns identified by businesses during the short term (next six months) related to loss of income, reduced business volume and revenue and challenges in adapting businesses to a new operating environment. In the longer term, challenges relate to encouraging re-uptake of services, reshaping businesses, uncertainties around the duration of restrictions and dealing with ongoing cashflow and revenue issues.

Project-specific engagement

Wider engagement activities have taken place in relation to individual projects and proposals and is of relevance to Town Investment Plan projects. Examples include surveys undertaken by HBC on behalf of the proposed relocation of leisure services to the Waterfront in Hartlepool, and consultation for heritage projects within Hartlepool such as The Shades Hotel. A summary of key findings from each of these is provided below.

Leisure Services Survey

During summer 2019, HBC carried out an exercise to engage with local residents about the future of leisure facilities in Hartlepool. The purpose of the exercise was to understand how people currently use leisure facilities and why; what people would like to see provided in any new facilities; and where any new facilities should be located. The engagement process involved an online survey (to which there were just over 1,000 responses) as well as surveys conducted by staff at venues including the Headland, Mill House Leisure Centre and within the Middleton Grange Shopping Centre (160 responses) and a series of roundtable and seminar events for members of the public and elected members.

Around 85% of responses to the online survey rated improving the sport and leisure facilities offer within Hartlepool as being 'very important', with a further 10% rating it as 'slightly important'. Factors deemed to be important in encouraging the use of leisure facilities within Hartlepool include opening times, cost and parking provision. Locating the leisure facility in a central, accessible place was responded to positively by 78.5% of people. Comments and suggestions made in relation to leisure services provision included around the location – sites need to be accessible with good transport links including sustainable transport (walking and cycling links).

Engagement Activities Supporting the Church Street Revival Townscape Heritage Initiative

Funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has enabled improvements to public realm and properties within Church Street. A key part of the THI programme has been to raise awareness of the heritage and history of the Church Street Conservation Area, through a range of inclusive activities. These have included volunteers recording the physical characteristics of buildings in Church Street and Whitby Street; engagement with 300 students from across schools and colleges in Hartlepool to design a logo for the scheme; and working with the Youth Council, Children in Care Council and LGBT Youth Group to develop ideas with a local artist.

Community Consultation relating to the Shades Hotel

A press campaign promoted a survey with the general public to capture people's memories of Shades and what they value about the building. The findings from the survey confirmed that the building has been a cornerstone of Hartlepool's social history, and a landmark heritage building for generations within the town. Now derelict, the Shades appears to be an emblem of changed fortunes and regret for a town and community that once was. Comments made as part of the survey reflect not only the possibilities for the Shades, but also the importance of other at risk heritage buildings within Hartlepool:

'too many old Hartlepool buildings have been pulled down'

'the Shades re-furbished with a strong nautical flavour….would be a very popular venue, a tribute to the hundreds of past seamen from the town'

'superb exterior'

'it reflects when Hartlepool had pride and money'

'too many classic buildings in Hartlepool have gone'

APPENDIX B

Summary of Findings from Online Surveys

Introduction

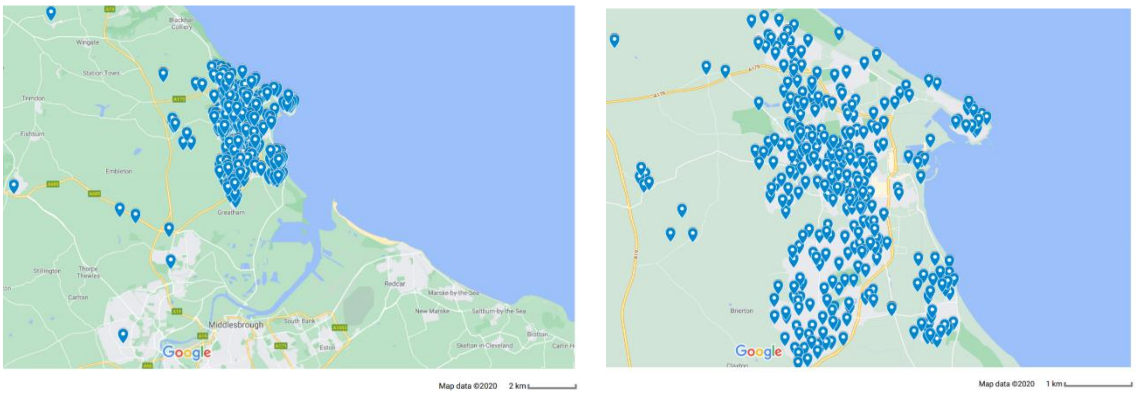
1. Two online surveys were developed as part of the community engagement for the Town Centre Masterplan and Town Investment Plan; one survey was directed at local residents and the second at local businesses. Both surveys were publicised in a number of ways, including:
   - through the networks of Town Deal Board members
   - via the Hartlepool Borough Council website and associated social media links
   - through the Hartlepower network of voluntary and community sector organisations
   - hard copies of the survey were completed during a session with young people
2. The surveys were open for a six week period during August and September 2020. A total of 469 responses were received to the local residents' survey and a further 71 responses were received to the local businesses survey.

Local Residents Survey

Overview of Respondents

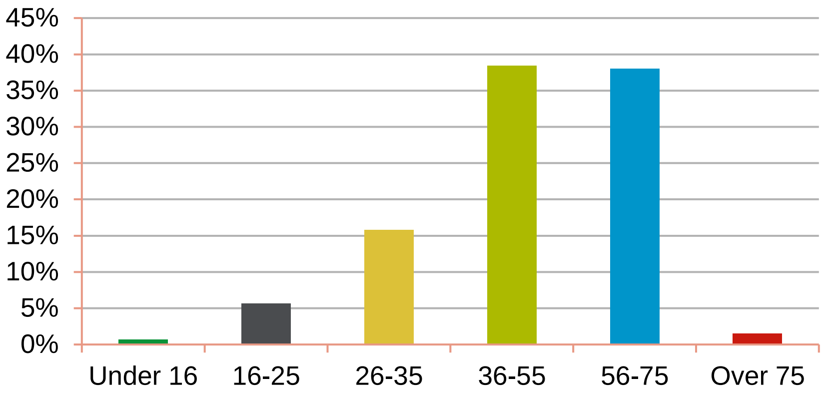
3. Respondents were asked to give their home postcode. The geographic spread of responses, across the region and across the town, is shown in the figures below. As would be expected, a large majority of respondents live in Hartlepool, and are distributed relatively evenly across the town including in Seaton Carew and the Headland.

Figures 1 and 2 – Geographic Distribution of Respondents (Region and Local Area)



4. The age of respondents to the survey is presented in Figure 3. The average age of respondents is estimated as being 50.

Figure 3 - Age of Respondents



What do People Like Most about Hartlepool?

5. The features most frequently cited by respondents are outlined in Table 1. Similar terms have been combined (for example ‘coast’, ‘beach’, ‘seaside’). Key points from the table relate to:
   - Respondents clearly value Hartlepool’s coastal location and the access to and quality of its beaches and countryside connections (31%).
   - The character of local people was commonly raised in positive terms such as ‘friendly’, ‘supportive’ and ‘community spirit’ (19%).

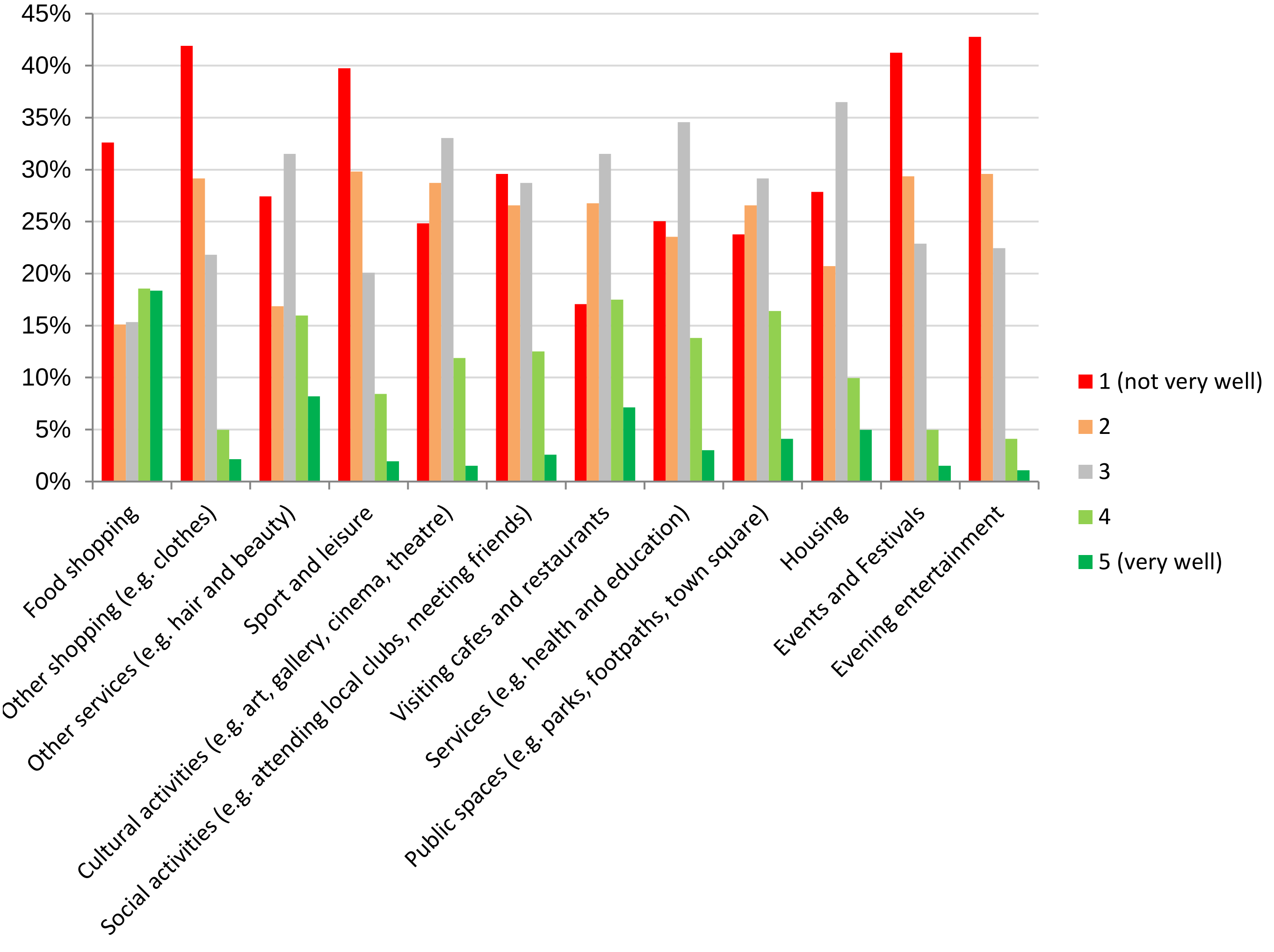
Table 1 – Most Frequently Used Word and Phrases

Common word	Number of Responses	Related issues
Coastline, beaches and countryside	60 (beach) 47 (coast) 38 (countryside)	Beautiful beaches Seaton Carew and Headland Coastal walks Historic coastline Proximity to coast and countryside
People	87	Friendly people Community spirit Honest / passionate about the town
Town	61	Hometown for many respondents Friendly and supportive town Coastal town History of the town
Marina / Waterfront	51	Attractive seafront / waterfront area Tourism potential
Green spaces e.g. parks	31	Green spaces in and around town Ward Jackson Park / Rossmere Park
Heritage	26	Local history

How well does Hartlepool Town Centre Currently Meet People's Needs?

6. Respondents were asked to rate how well Hartlepool town centre meets a variety of needs, from food shopping through to cultural events. Respondents were requested to think about a time prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, acknowledging that during lockdown people may have been using town centre services and facilities in a much more restricted way. Figure 4 illustrates the findings from this question. It is quite apparent from the graph that, for nearly every town centre service or experience described, respondents felt that Hartlepool does not meet needs. This is particularly the case for non-food shopping (for example clothes), sports and leisure services, events and festivals, and evening entertainment. Areas where the town centre performed slightly better relate to as a destination for food shopping, visiting cafes and restaurants and use of public spaces.

Figure 4 - How Well Does Hartlepool Town Centre Meet Needs Across a Range of Purposes



7. For each of the purposes listed in Figure 4 above, an average rating has been attributed. The rating is given out of five, with a higher figure corresponding to a more positive outcome. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Average Rating by Town Centre Purpose

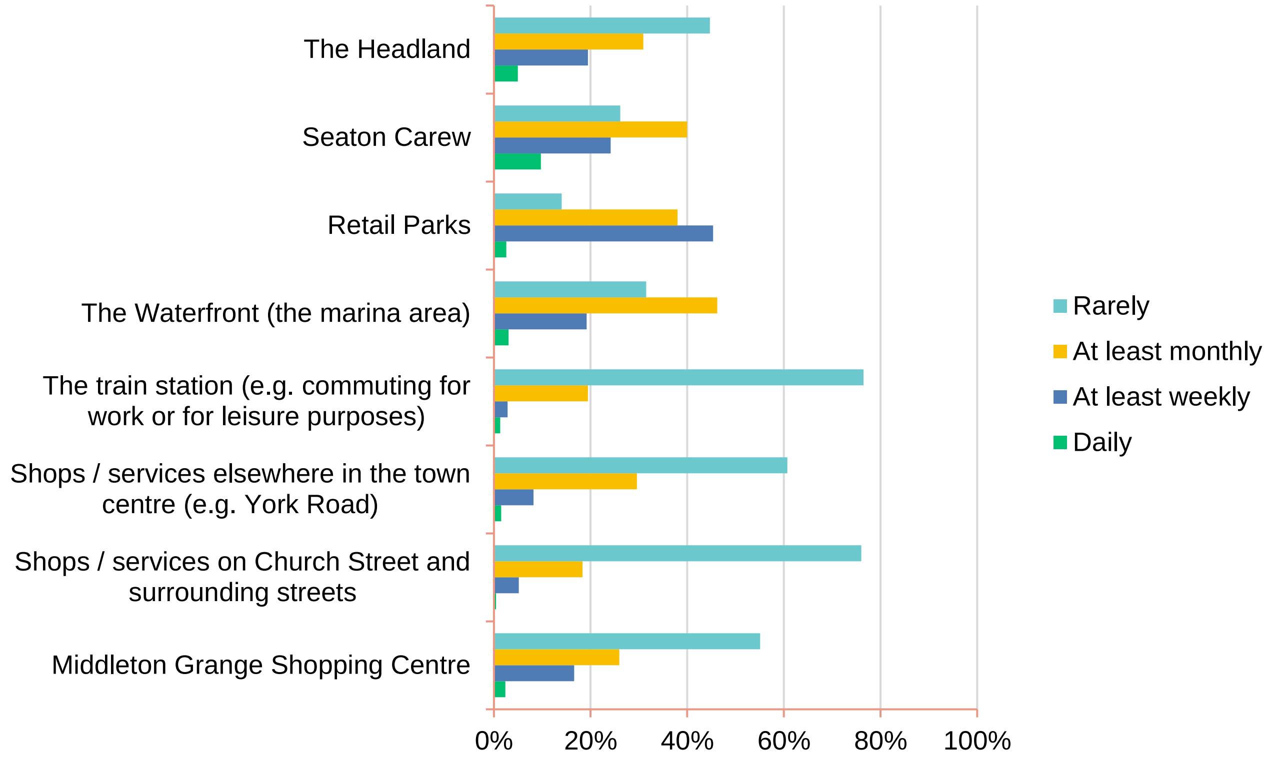
Rank	Purpose	Average Rating (/5)

1	Food shopping	2.75
2	Visiting cafés and restaurants	2.71
3	Other services (e.g. hair and beauty)	2.61
4	Public spaces (e.g. parks, footpaths, town squares)	2.51
5	Services (e.g. health and education)	2.46
6	Housing	2.43
7	Cultural activities (e.g. art gallery, cinema, theatre)	2.37
8	Social activities (e.g. attending local clubs, meeting friends)	2.32
9	Sport and leisure	2.01
10	Other shopping (e.g. clothes)	1.96
11	Events and festivals	1.96
12	Evening entertainment	1.91

Frequency of Visits to Specific Areas within Hartlepool

8. Respondents were asked to specify the frequency of visits undertaken to certain locations and areas within Hartlepool. The results are shown in Figure 5. Key findings include:
    - Retail parks are the most commonly visited places among respondents, with 48% visiting one at least once a week.
    - Shopping areas around the town centre (including Middleton Grange and the areas around Church Street and York Road) are visited relatively rarely by most respondents, particularly in comparison with retail parks.
    - Most respondents also rarely visit the train station for either commuting or leisure purposes.
    - After retail parks, the areas of Seaton Carew and the Headland are the most frequently visited with 34% and 24% of respondents stating that they visit at least once a week respectively. These figures may be inflated by respondents who live in these areas.

Figure 5 - Frequency of Visits to Locations Within Hartlepool



Ideas for making Hartlepool a Better Place to Live, Work and Visit

9. This was a free text question asking residents to state their ideas for making Hartlepool a better place to live, work and visit. A summary of responses is provided in Table 3. As with the previous question, similar terms have been combined. The most frequent responses related to:
    - Improving the town centre in terms of environment, refurbishing empty buildings, public realm (39%)
    - Improving the retail offer within the town centre, particularly at Middleton Grange (25%)
    - Create more and better employment opportunities (23%)
    - Many respondents want to see free or cheaper parking in areas such as the town centre, the marina and Seaton Carew (20%)
    - Respondents want to see better links and connectivity between areas such as the town centre and the marina / waterfront area (12%)

Table 3 – Most Frequent Cited Priorities and Ideas

Main Category	Number and % of Responses	Sub-categories
Town centre	183 (39%)	Making Church Street a focus for the town centre More attractive town centre Refurbishment of empty buildings such as Wesley Chapel and Odeon cinema
Shops	118 (25%)	Improve Middleton Grange Shopping Centre More independent retail within the town centre Greater variety of shops
Jobs	110 (23%)	More employment opportunities

		Apprenticeships and training Retain jobs
Parking	94 (20%)	Free / cheaper parking in town centre Free / cheaper parking at the marina Free / cheaper parking in Seaton Carew
Marina	88 (19%)	Better bus routes to the marina
Connectivity	56 (12%)	Linking the town centre with the coast Active travel Improved walking and cycling routes

Hartlepool in the Future

10.Words used to best describe Hartlepool in the future are summarised in Figure 6 below.

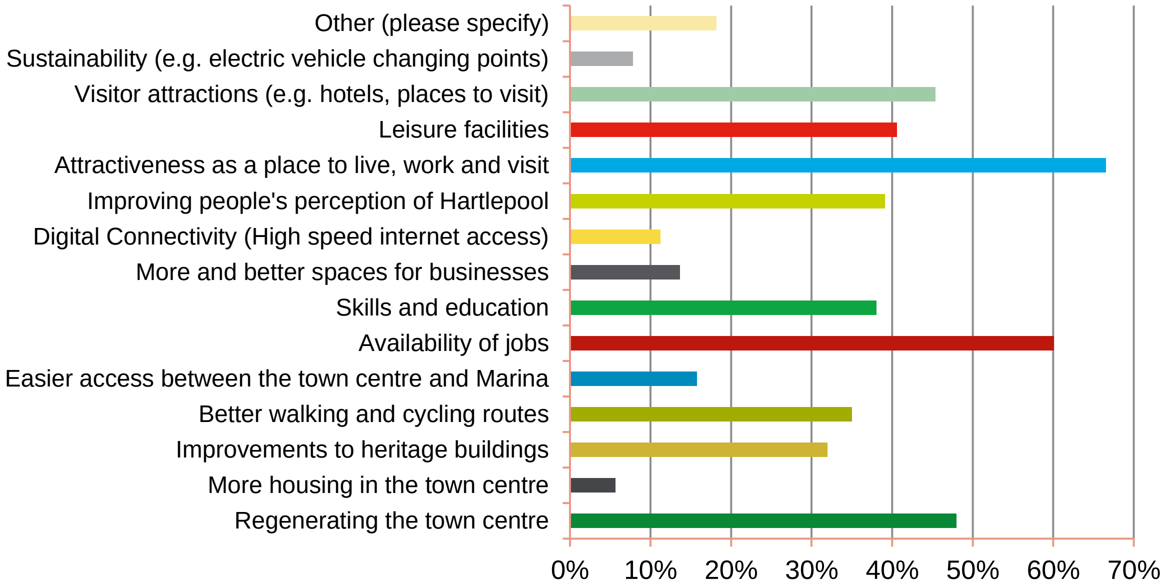
Figure 6 – Words Used to Describe Hartlepool in the Future

Priorities for Improving Hartlepool

11.This question required respondents to select up to five priorities for improving Hartlepool. The results are shown in Figure 7. The most common priorities were cited as:

- Attractiveness as a place to live, work and visit (67%)
- Availability of jobs (60%)
- Regenerating the town centre (48%)
- Visitor attractions (e.g. hotels, places to visit) (45%)
- Leisure facilities (41%)

Figure 7 - Top Five Priorities for Improving Hartlepool



Encouraging Visits to the Town Centre

12. Respondents were asked to identify their top three priorities which would encourage them to visit the town centre more often. Priorities predominantly fell into one of the following categories:

- **Shops** (72% of respondents) – better quality, more variety, greater number, more specialist and independent shops
- **Parking** (43%) – introduction of free or cheaper parking, more parking, reduction in parking fees at specified times of the day
- **Environment** (17%) – a clean and safe town centre environment; many respondents referred to anti-social behaviour within the town centre which acts as a disincentive to visit during both day and night
- **Transport** (6%) – improvements to public transport connectivity, train links, walking and cycling routes

Other Comments

13. The final question in the survey asked respondents for any further comments. A total of 290 people responded to this question (62%). Analysis of responses received shows that comments relate primarily to the following concerns and issues:

- Anti-social behaviour in and around the town centre (drug habits, crime, personal safety) (15% of responses to this question)
- Comments relating to improvements to the waterfront and marina areas in terms of improvements, connectivity, events and festivals (10%)
- Responses relating to aspects of Church Street and York Road – for example encouraging more shops, pedestrianisation (8%)
- Creation of more jobs and employment (8%)
- Introduction of free parking / more parking in the town centre as a way of encouraging people to visit (8%)
- Creating walking and cycling links and infrastructure (7%)

Comments include:

'We have no identity and cultural vision'

'Encourage quality start-up businesses and big employers to the town, create quality jobs with a future'

'encourage corporate investment into the town, which would increase job opportunities and improve the local economy.'

'Give people (young and middle-aged adults the opportunities to advance their careers without having to live or work outside of Hartlepool.'

'it is perceived to be too difficult/expensive to start up a business (especially by young people) and therefore we are not utilising all of the great initiative and talent within the town'

'We either need to get rid of Middleton Grange or brighten it up'

'Be bold. The town is on its knees, tinkering and tidying around the edges won't have an impact.'

'You need a radical rethink of the of the entire town centre offer.'

'continue to improve the town with reinvestment and renewal'

'Define the town centre'

'lack of free parking impacts on use of Middleton Grange, there is a poor choice of shops'

'take out excess capacity of buildings and put businesses more together rather than all over the place'

Local Businesses Survey

14. Local businesses were invited to complete an online survey of their experiences of Hartlepool from a business perspective. 71 responses were received.

15. The survey included a total of nine questions, with a mixture of open-ended and closed responses required. Four questions were designed to provide detail about business type / size / location and length of time in operation. A further four questions enabled respondents to provide information about their current perceptions of Hartlepool as a place, to identify priorities for the town as somewhere for businesses to locate and thrive, and to contribute towards the development of a vision of what Hartlepool might look like in ten years' time. A final question enabled any additional comments to be made by respondents.

Overview of Respondents

16. Figures 8 to 10 give an overview of businesses who have responded to the survey in terms of the length of time they have been in business, number of employees, and sector in which they consider themselves to work. The figures show that:

- Over half of businesses responding have been operating in Hartlepool for over 10 years (53% of respondents)
- A large majority of the businesses responding employ fewer than 10 people (67%).
- The most common sectors from which respondents were based were retail (21%) and tourism and hospitality (15.7%). No industries covered by 'other' were represented by more than one or two employers. The 'other' category included, for example, sports and leisure businesses, social housing enterprises and businesses such as funeral homes.

Figure 8 - Length of Time Business Has Been in Operation

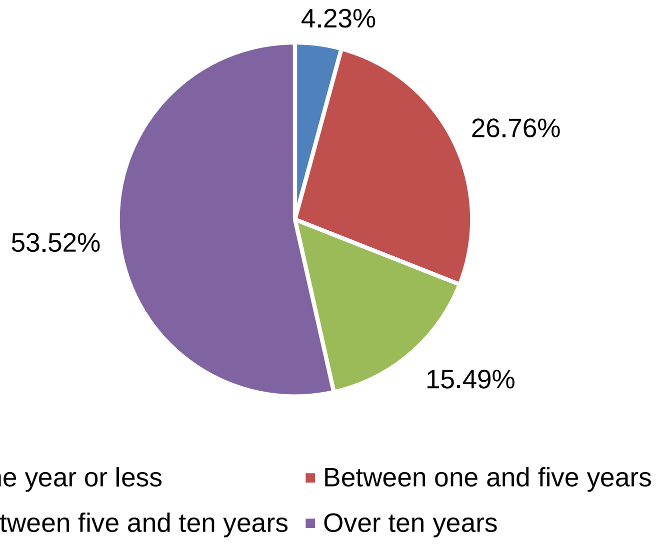


Figure 9 - Number of Employees

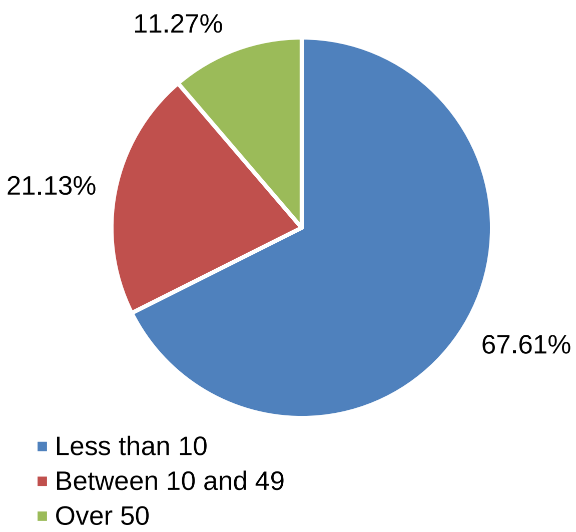
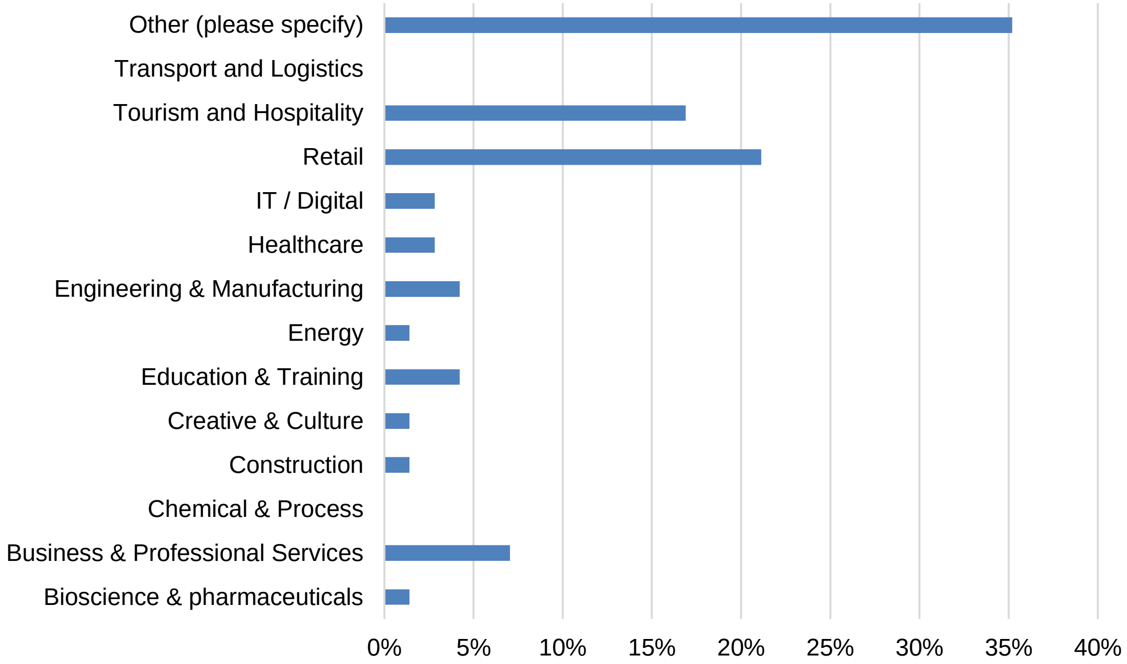
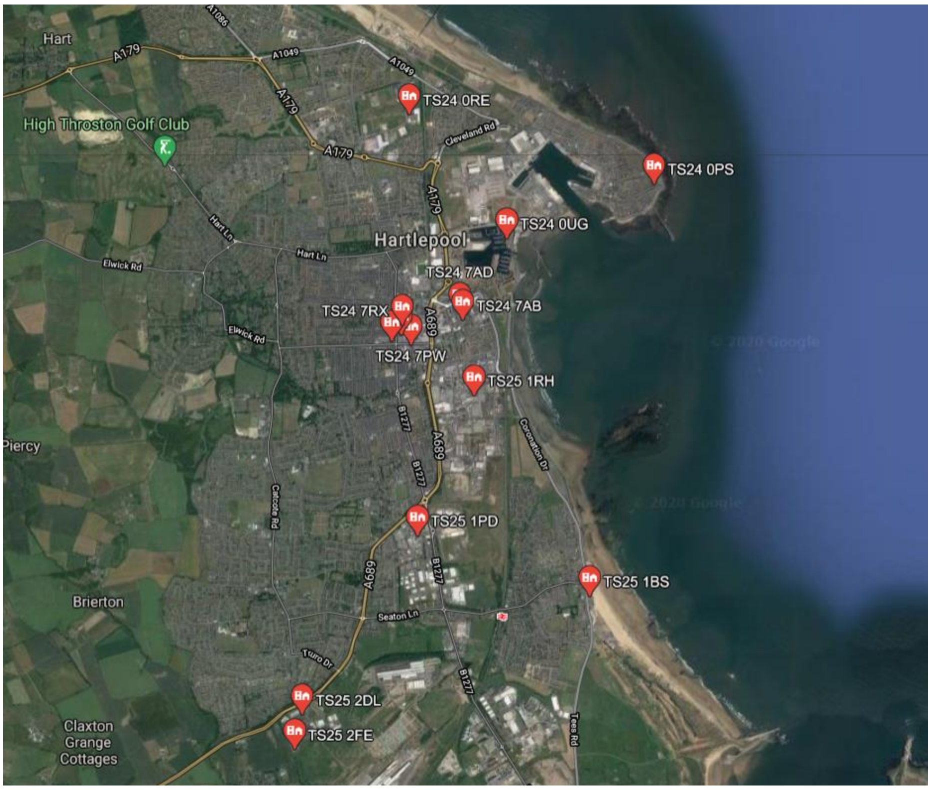


Figure 10 - Respondent by Industry Sector



17. Nearly 90% of respondents stated that their business had a physical premises. Responses have been received from businesses across the wider Hartlepool area as shown in Figure 11.

Figure 11 – Geographical Distribution of Respondents



What makes Hartlepool a good place to be in business?

18.This question was open for respondents to give any text answer. A word cloud of responses is shown in Figure 12.

Figure 12 – Words Used to Describe Hartlepool as a Good Place to be In Business

19.Responses to this question have been coded into a number of categories, as shown in Table 4 (noting that there are linkages between categories and sub-categories). The number of responses within each category and sub-category are shown in brackets. A number of respondents (approximately 15%) responded simply with phrases such as ‘not much’ and ‘it isn’t’.

Table 4 What Makes Hartlepool a Good Place to be in Business

Response Category	Sub-Category (number of responses)
Negatives (23%)	Parking costs (1) Demand for services (1) Poor retail diversity (1) Rates and rents too high (1) Social issues (1) General negative (11)
People and community (20%)	Character of people (7) Community links (6) Community support for local business (1)
Business and Support (17%)	Council support (4) Support for business (3) Low business rates (2) Quality of businesses (1) Third sector support (1) Availability of premises (1)
Location and Access (13%)	Road links (4) Regional Connectivity (2)

	National connectivity (2) Coastal location (1)
Services and Amenities (13%)	Good local services (1) Leisure opportunities (1) High demand for services (2) Marina potential (3) Good tourist information (1) Seaton Carew (1)
General potential (7%)	General potential (3) Support for businesses (1) Marina potential (1)
Living Conditions (6%)	Low cost of living (3) Cleanliness (1)
Skills and Training (3%)	Educational facilities (1) Creative industries (1)

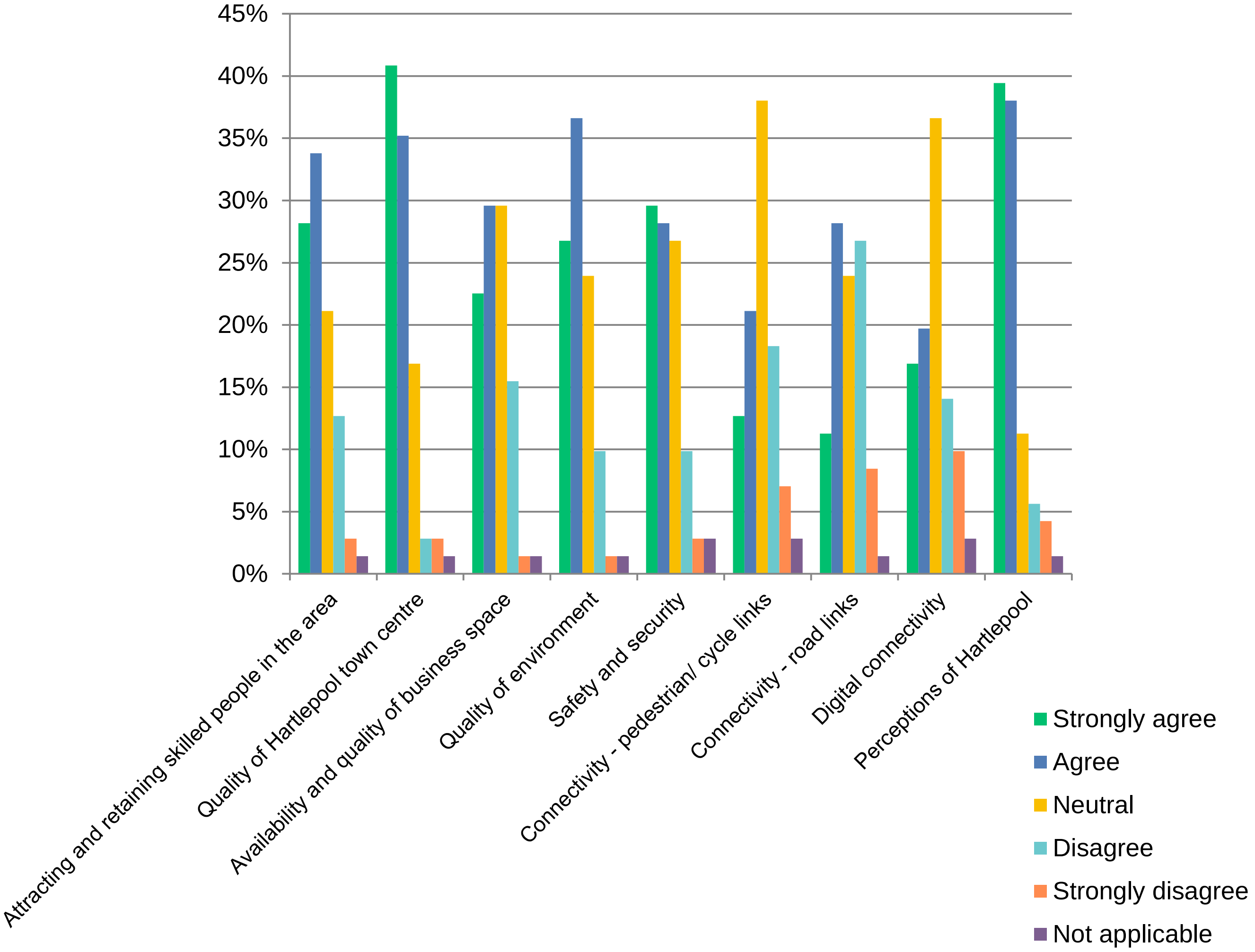
Factors Holding Back Business Growth in Hartlepool

20.Figure 13 summarises the responses to this question. The chart shows that the key factors considered to be holding back business growth in Hartlepool relate to:

- The quality of Hartlepool town centre (76% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this point)
- Perceptions of Hartlepool (77% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed)
- Quality of the environment (63% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed)
- Attracting and retaining skilled people in the area (62% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed)

21.Areas where there was less agreement related to connectivity by road (35% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed that this was an issue compared with 40% of residents who considered it to be a factor holding back growth). Respondents were more inclined to feel neutral over pedestrian and cycle connectivity and digital connectivity as potential factors holding back business growth in Hartlepool.

Figure 13 - What is holding back business growth in Hartlepool?



22. A total of 27 respondents (38%) responded to the free-text 'other' box within the survey. Responses provided here in relation to what is holding back business growth in Hartlepool include:

- Cost of business units / rates / rents (5 responses)
- Lack for support for businesses (4 responses)
- Lack of an identity and direction for Hartlepool (4 responses)
- Affordable rail links / rail connectivity (2 responses)
- The need to address inequality
- Electric vehicle infrastructure

23. Quotes from local businesses in relation to barriers to business growth are given below.

'there needs to be an innovative approach to education, gearing schools from primary onwards to equip young people with the knowledge, skills and, above all, entrepreneurial attitudes they need for a complex and challenging future'

'Hartlepool needs to carve out a distinctive profile which differentiates it from other places'

'The vision and initiative for Hartlepool has to come from the council'

'It does not take a genius to figure out that people like free parking'

'Are we a tourist area, an area of culture, or is it about digital and technology?'

'Aspirations are very low in the town and need to be lifted'

'In my honest opinion Hartlepool doesn't feel like it looks forward enough. Almost like it doesn't believe in itself to be great'

Priorities / Ideas for Transforming Hartlepool as a Place for Businesses to Locate and Thrive

24. This was a free text question enabling respondents to state up to three priorities or ideas. Responses were coded into fourteen categories (again, noting that a number of these are interlinked). The categories are identified in Table 5, sorted by the number of responses given. The mostly frequently raised issues related to the need for support to be provided for businesses, with lower business rates and commercial rents commonly cited. Employers also frequently raised improving the image of the town as a key priority. Other priorities included cheaper parking, improving the town centre and high street, and finding ways to upskill the local population.

Table 5 - Priorities and Ideas for Transforming Hartlepool as a Place for Businesses to Locate and Thrive

Category	Sub-Categories	Number of Responses	% of Responses
Support for businesses	Lower business rates Lower rents Better access to funding	51	71%
Town centre / retail	More high-end retail Introducing more pedestrianised areas New draws for people, for example an indoor market	26	37%
Image of Hartlepool	Improving the first impressions of town Dealing with boarded-up shop units	25	35%
Parking	Cheaper parking Introducing free parking 'windows'	19	27%
Employment and skills	Skills-linked progression from primary to FE and business Linking up with universities	14	20%
Tourism, leisure and culture	Tourist information More major events	12	17%
Transport improvements	Better rail links and frequency Different and more frequent bus routes Better roadworks planning	10	14%
Crime and safety	Reduce drug issues / anti-social behaviour in town centre Reduce petty crime	10	14%

Institutional support	Improved communication / proactive actions by e.g. HBC	9	13%
Place-based priorities	Developing the marina area further Improving Seaton Carew and links to the town centre	7	10%
Social issues and equality	Address race and disability inequality Town affordability	6	8%
Digital	High-speed internet Social media campaigns	5	7%
Housing	Lower rent Independent and supported housing	2	3%

25. A brief analysis by business size highlights some variation in what issues employers considered most important (summarised in Table 6). Small, medium and large employers all considered support for businesses to be the most important issue. Small businesses (less than 10 employees) were more likely to consider the image of the town important, while medium-sized businesses (10-49 employees) considered reducing parking costs important as well as other transport issues such as road and rail improvements. Large businesses (over 50 employees) were more likely to consider the role of the town centre to be important, however it should be noted that this is from a smaller sample size of eight businesses (compared to 47 small businesses and 15 medium-sized).

Table 6 - Priorities by Business Size

Business size	Most frequent issue	Second most frequent issue	Third most frequent issue
Less than employees	Support for business	Town image	Town centre and retail
10-49 employees	Support for business Parking (= first)	-	Transport
Over 50 employees	Support for business	Town centre and retail	Town image Tourism, leisure, and culture Employment and skills Parking
All businesses	***Support for business***	***Town image***	***Parking***

Words to Describe Hartlepool in the Future

26. Figure 14 provides a summary of the most frequently used words and phrases which respondents felt best describe Hartlepool in the future from the perspective of local businesses.

Figure 14 – Words to Describe Hartlepool in the Future

Other Comments

27. The final question in the survey asked respondents whether there was anything else they wanted to express about experiences of Hartlepool from a business perspective? A total of 42 businesses responded to this question (60%). Analysis of responses received shows that they relate primarily to concerns about more support for businesses (whether this be financial, advisory or the provision of start-up and incubator units) as well as the importance of parking within the town centre and overcoming issues of perception.

Comments include:

'a network of local people (business and consumer) should be actively encouraged to participate in changing and growing Hartlepool into a place where business want to come'

'the town centre is dying ... access from York Road and Park Road is poor'

'there are a lot of negative perceptions from people outside of the town, whose views are tainted by very negative media representations'

'Hartlepool can support businesses well but must also be shown to be able to extend its influence throughout the area'

'There are lots of networks, but they seem to be in competition rather than joined up. This is a small town, and it should be easier to be more connected'