

## **Town Centre Amenities & Perceptions Survey**

*Notes from presentation at the Wake Up Macc public meeting, St. Michaels Church, 25.1.13*

This presentation analyses data which was collected through a questionnaire survey which took place between September and November last year. The survey was designed to explore perceptions of current & future need, frequency of use, as well as opinions regarding the town centre proposals - It was designed to be very simple and easy to answer

### **Methodology**

It was distributed via online survey promoted through Facebook, twitter and by word of mouth and paper survey versions also collected at events and other outlets – e.g. Loominus Festival, local shops and pubs.

Three main questions in addition to demographic profile questions: What do you think would improve the town centre? How much would you use amenities? What do you think of the proposals?

- Snowballing sample so we asked questions to check that we had representative samples across the demographic profile - only completed surveys included (760 out of 856).
- The reasons for only using the incompletes is that it makes the data more robust – the data that are here are from those we have demographic information – i.e. we can produce a profile to see if they are representative of the wider Macclesfield population
- The sample is representative of the Macclesfield population in terms of gender
- The age of the survey respondents is under-representative of the lower age bands
- The majority of our sample population are in work, just over half full time and 14% part. 20% are students, in full time education. 5% are retired. Only 1 % define themselves as unemployed.
- We asked them this question to see what levels of disposable income the respondents felt they had to spend in the town centre – to see how their responses might indicate potential for economic development

### **Responses:**

Highlight – those assets and amenities which the most respondents felt would improve the town were: Independent shops, community halls, park and green spaces, play areas for children

Here we can see that over 80% of responses were in agreement that independent and local shops improve the town centre a lot

Other high scorers are: an arts venue and performance space, independent bars and restaurants, and park and green space

The respondents were also asked to say what else they thought would improve Macclesfield – there is a rich set of qualitative data – 8,000 words! – of other opinions and ideas for improving the town centre

Looking at these by sector, the responses can be seen in terms of those which state amenities will improve the town centre - Blue and Red – a lot and a little – and those who think that they won't - Green and Purple either not much or not at all

### **Retail**

- Large national department store: the sample are divided - 46% feel a large national department store would improve the town a lot or a little, but 54% feel it would not add very much or would not improve the town at all

- Major clothes retailers – the majority think national brand retailers would improve the town a lot or a little
- Clearest majority is 83% independent and local shops

### **Food & Drink**

- The majority are not in favour of multiple bars, restaurants and franchised cafes
- By contrast 89% feel independent bars and restaurants would improve the town centre

### **Arts & Entertainment**

- When asked about a large, multi-screen cinema a majority – 57% feel it would improve the town centre - 35% by a lot, 22% by a little
- But more – 81% thought more museums galleries and heritage would improve the town
- The highest proportion of support in this sector is for an arts venue with performance space

### **Community spaces**

- Outdoor and urban activities – such as skate parks and graffiti walls given as examples – 57% felt these could improve the town by a lot or a little – now its worth remembering these figures for when we look at how often people feel they would use such amenities – which I turn to next
- Far larger proportions felt that a space specifically for teenagers is need 74% - of course a cinema is clearly desirable to teenagers, but this is not the same thing, and there is the issue of cost
- The largest majority recognised the value of community halls and services – 84%

### **Frequency:**

We asked about how often people thought they would use these amenities. Those which showed high frequencies of visits were: parks & green spaces, independent shops – will look at these findings by sector shortly

The red blocks are where respondents have said they would ‘never’ use them – over 50% outdoor urban activities, spaces for teenagers, over 40% play areas for children – again, will return to this

### **Retail**

- Major national clothes retailers – this chart shows how often people would visit national brands – majority – the majority 62% would visit a couple of times a month or less
- Similarly a large national department store – just 18% weekly and 68% monthly or less.
- Daily and high frequency use of independent and local shops - 69% at least weekly, one in ten daily – creating churn and animation of space

### **Food & Drink**

- The same pattern appears when comparing multiple or ‘chain’ bars and restaurants...
- ...with independent food and drink outlets in the town centre – nearly 50% saying they would visit at least weekly...(compared with just 21% for national chains)

### **Arts & Entertainment**

- The survey data suggests that 74% would visit a larger multiplex cinema monthly or less – which is exactly commensurate with national statistics (Taking part statistics – 2011/12 – 57% Attended cinema in last 12 *At least once a week* 2.8; *Less often than once a week but at least once a month* 23.2; *Less often than once a month but at least 3-4 times a year* 46.3; *Twice in the last 12 months* 18.5; *Once in the last 12 months* 9.2 – when asked about frequency those who visited 74% visited monthly or less)

- Interestingly the far more respondents indicated more frequent visiting for museums, galleries & heritage
- and 41% said they would visit arts venue more than once a month

### **Community Spaces**

- The really interesting frequency data is here for community spaces - Remember the sample suggested these spaces would significantly improve the town centre?
- The same people indicate they would either rarely or never use them – this is existence value, or altruism – they want these spaces to exist for others, for the wider community not individual need or greed
- slightly more respondents suggested more frequent of use for play areas
- and significantly more for community spaces and services
- The highest frequency is for green spaces - 56% of respondents would use these spaces once a week, 1 in ten daily

### **Opinions about the town centre redevelopment proposals**

Here is how the respondents who had seen the plans responded – 69% feel they are not suitable for the town, 6% are on the fence and a quarter – 25% - feel they are suitable.

We asked people to say why they gave this response as an open-ended question – we then undertook thematic analysis to see what categories of response emerge and how frequently these statements were made

- 19% or 141 of comments stated the redevelopment would lead to the loss of a distinctive identity in Macclesfield
- 15% of them say it is ugly and poorly designed
- 13% state the plans are out of scale
- 13% suggest they have the wrong focus
- 12% concerned that they will erode the character of the town

This survey was designed to be a very simple method of gathering information – there are lots of other forms of evidence that we could draw. the 800 people who took the time to respond to this survey have made their feelings known through this process. They show imagination, vision, creativity and need – they are not destructively critical but constructive and thoughtful. Let's hope this evidence helps to support the right planning decisions.

### **Survey design and analysis:**

Vera Green, [www.vgnet.co.uk](http://www.vgnet.co.uk)

Abigail Gilmore, University of Manchester

