

# **HEADINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM**

## **BUSINESS AND RETAIL CONSULTATION FINAL REPORT**

**DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET**

HNF Document Control Sheet	
Document Title	Headington Neighbourhood Forum - Report on Business and Retail Consultation
Draft Number	v.3
Task Group and Authors	Adam Symons (Project Manager)
Date of Version	18. March 2015
Status	Final Report
Date of Public Issue	
Visibility	Public
File Type	Word Document - exported to PDF
File Name	HNF - Report on Business and Retail Consultation

## CONTENTS

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2. Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. Results</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>4. Focus Group</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>5. Discussion</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>6. Conclusions</b>	<b>8</b>

**Annex A – Questionnaire Retail&Business**

**Annex B – Retailers Contacted**

**Annex C – B&R Focus Group Meeting Notes**

**Annex D – Business and Retail Consultation Responses**

## **Report on Business and Retail Consultation**

### **Final Report March 2015**

#### **1. Introduction**

As part of the Issues and Options Consultation process, the Business and Retail Policy Working Group (B&R PWG) identified the need to consult with the business and retail sector within the Headington area. The PWG decided to carry out a paper-based consultation process to consider the issues, challenges, benefits and future prospects of doing business in Headington. They also wanted to find out more about the types and sizes of business that operate in Headington.

#### **2. Methodology**

The Business and Retail PWG conducted a questionnaire-based survey from July to October 2014 with businesses based in Headington. The questionnaire can be found in Annex A. Questionnaires were delivered by hand or emailed to a manager in all the businesses that were identified (see Annex B), of which there were 44 in total.

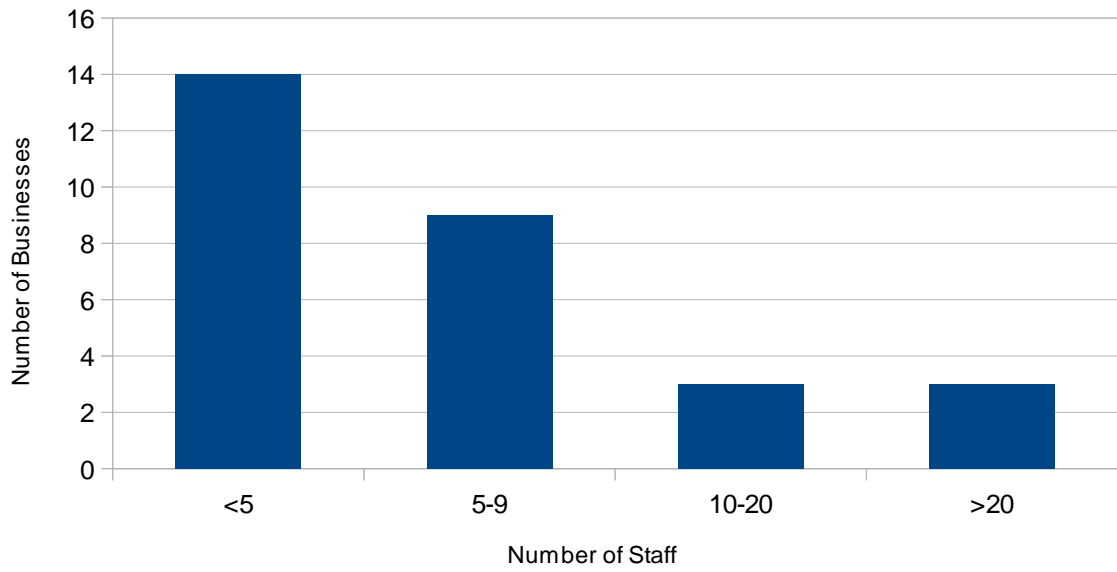
33 questionnaires were returned to the B&R PWG, and these have been analysed for this report. Businesses were also asked whether they would like to be part of a business focus group meeting to discuss some of the issues that were raised during the process.

#### **3. Results**

Business managers and retailers across Headington completed the questionnaire (Annex A). The full breakdown of responses is set out in Annex C.

##### *3.1 Business Type and Size*

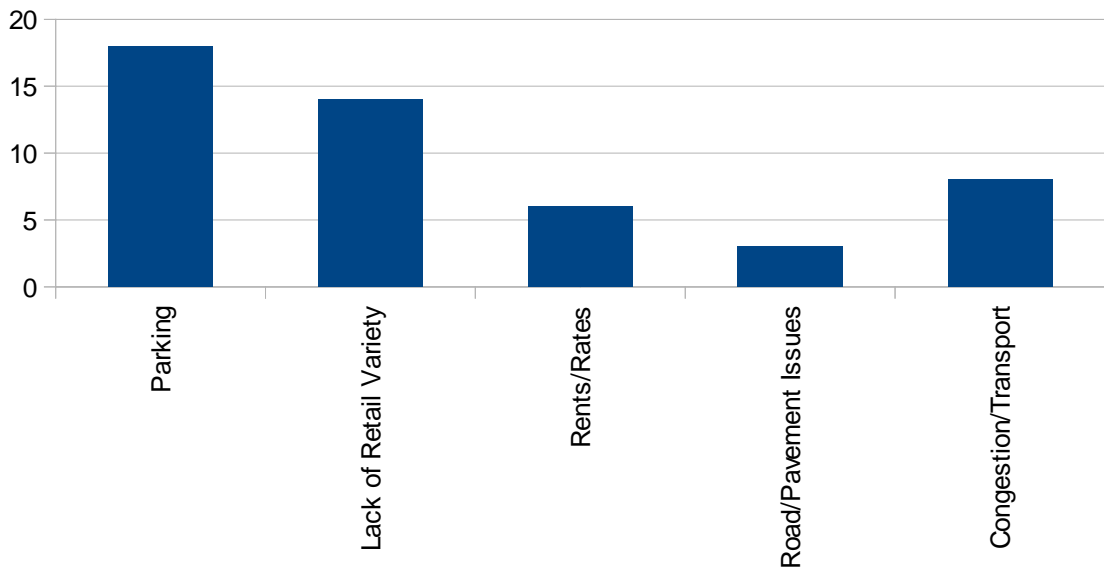
Chart 1 indicates that the majority of businesses, which were surveyed (79%), had fewer than 10 employees. These mainly comprised of small independent retail shops, charity shops, small service related businesses and guesthouses. The larger shops mainly consisted of estate agents, banks, supermarkets and builders merchants.



**Chart 1 – Size of Business that responded to Consultation Questionnaire**

### *3.2 Problems/Challenges*

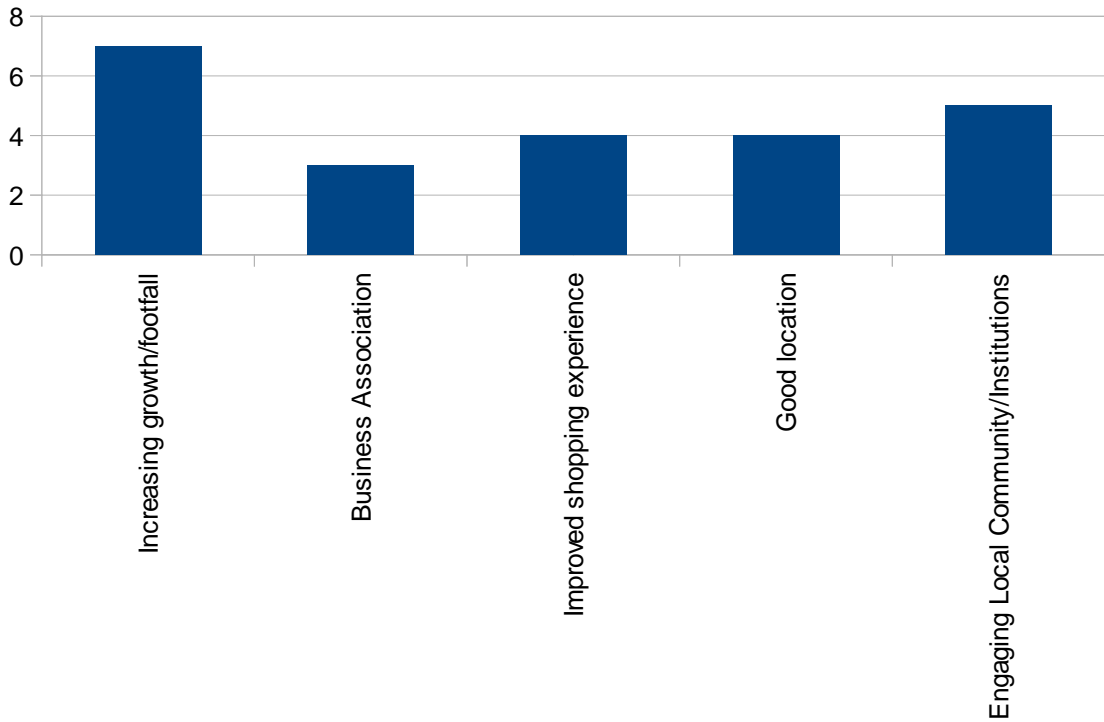
Chart 2 indicates that there are a range of concerns expressed by Headington businesses, most notably those of parking and a lack of retail variety.



**Chart 2 – Problems/Challenges expressed by Headington businesses**

*3.3 Potential*

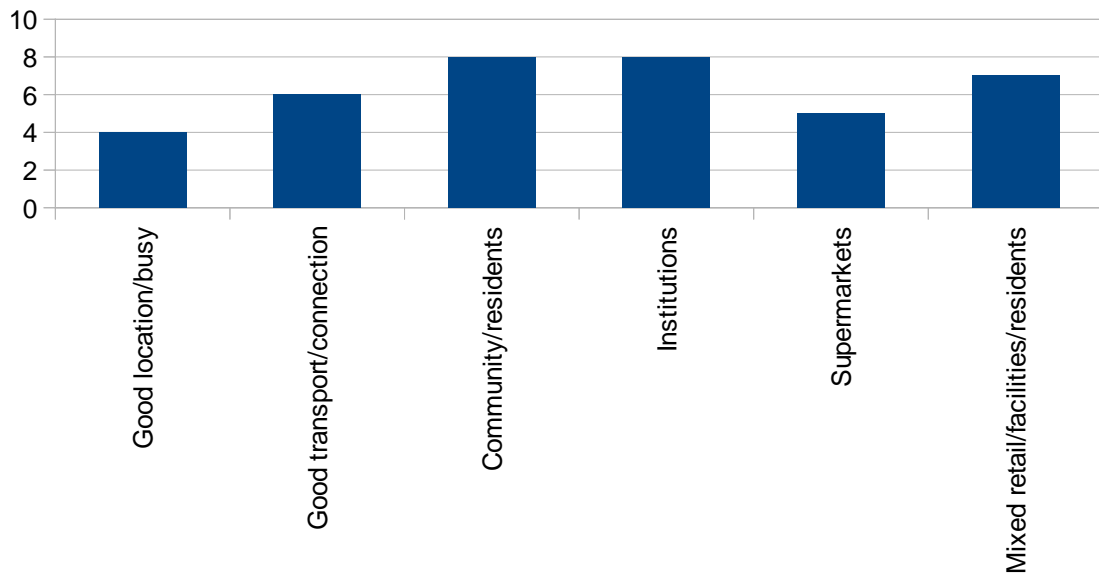
Chart 3 indicates that Headington business have identified the main potential for business improvement within Headington, with many citing increasing local growth/footfall, and the potential to engage with local communities and institutions.



**Chart 3 – Potential expressed by Headington businesses**

### 3.4 Positives

Chart 4 indicates the positives expressed by Headington businesses, many of which are focussed on the good local community, the local institutions, and the mix of retail, facilities and residents.

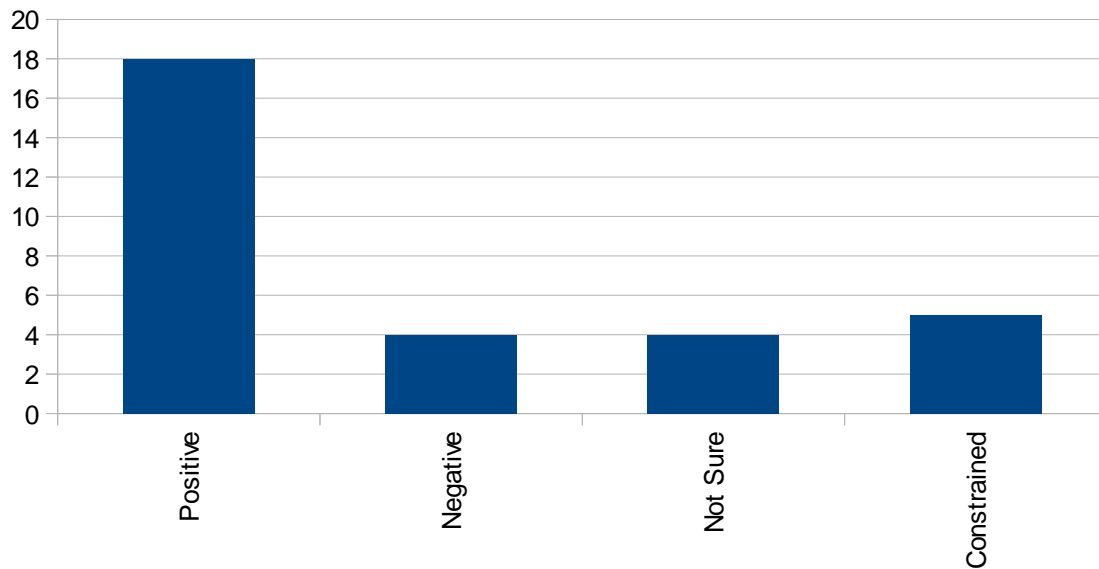


**Chart 4 – Positives expressed by Headington businesses**

### 3.5 Future

Chart 5 indicates how positive businesses feel about the future of their business in Headington. Most businesses are positive about the future, although there are many smaller businesses which are either constrained or negative about the future.





**Chart 5 – Future expressed by Headington businesses**

#### **4. Focus Group**

Businesses in Headington were also asked whether they might be interested in a follow-up meeting to discuss the issues raised. Of those who agreed to this, 9 businesses attended a follow-up focus group. The Business focus group meeting was held on 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2015. The notes from this meeting can be found in Annex C.

Parking was identified as the main issue by Headington businesses. Other issues raised were traffic, the security of businesses in relation to shop-lifting, and the need for a business association to represent businesses.

#### **5. Discussion**

In general terms, most businesses in Headington are positive about the future, see significant potential, and significant positives in the Headington area. However, many of the smaller businesses are more concerned about the future, and see significant constraints on future business growth in Headington.

The most significant problems/challenges faced by businesses were related to parking, transport and a lack of retail variety. Increasing supermarket presence in Headington was welcomed by some businesses, while for others were seen as competition likely to lead to the end for their business.

## **6. Conclusion**

The results from the business and retail consultation will be used for the development of policies in the Headington Neighbourhood Plan.

## ANNEX A

### Headington Neighbourhood Plan

The Headington Neighbourhood Plan is part of the government's localization strategy whereby communities define their neighbourhoods and project their aspirations for it into a plan. Unlike other consultations, neighbourhood plans must be taken into consideration by planners and developers once the plans have gone through the approval process specified by law. In preparation for our local plan, which will be approved by a referendum of Headington residents, we would like to have your views on the opportunities and challenges facing businesses in Headington.

**Name of business**

Email

Contact person:

Telephone

**Headington as a place to do business**

*Now*

*Potential*

*Major positives*

*Major challenges*

**Your business**

*Area of activity*

*Number of staff*

*Customer base*

*How you see the business in five years time*

Would you be willing to attend a meeting of interested parties?

Yes/No

Contact us at: [HeadingtonPlan@gmail.com](mailto:HeadingtonPlan@gmail.com) or [info@HeadingtonPlan.org.uk](mailto:info@HeadingtonPlan.org.uk)

To see the area covered by the Headington Neighbourhood Plan, type Headington Neighbourhood Plan into your search engine, or go to <http://headingtonplan.org.uk/index.php/area/>

## **ANNEX B**

43 contacts made in the Area

## ANNEX C

### **Retail and Business in Headington: consultation**

1. Stakeholders (residents, workers, students, etc) in the Headington Neighbourhood Plan area were consulted by a house-to-house leaf-letting campaign between 11 September and 24 October 2014. In addition leaflets were handed out at public meetings, schools and a supermarket. The three most frequently mentioned issues were:

- Improve provision of parking to encourage shopping.
- Strengthen the local shopping identity.
- Encourage retail variety

2. Business and retail premises were visited and questionnaires distributed by email and personally.

Reference: questionnaire\_retail&business.doc

The following businesses returned completed questionnaires: see

Reference: Traders supplying information (Excel)

3. A meeting with retailers and business people was held on 2 February 2015 to discuss issues identified by the consultation process described in 1 & 2 above.

3a The following attended the meeting.

#### **Attendees**

11 attendees

3 Apologies

3b Summary of points discussed circulated to the attendees

### **Headington Neighbourhood Plan**

#### **Meeting held at The Hub, Headington, Monday 2 February 2015**

The meeting was called to discuss issues of concern to retailers and business people with a view to informing the Retail and Business Working Group of the Headington Neighbourhood Plan.

1. Traffic and Parking: this was the most problematic issue affecting those present and almost all the respondents to the questionnaire returned by 34 Headington retailers and business people. It was agreed that the present parking arrangements are unsatisfactory in that many users of the parking facilities do not need to, nor want to pay for up to two hours' parking. The Council's suggestion that customers using the a

Council car park could have the parking fee refunded by a retailer was unpopular and it was pointed out that retailers already pay a business rate.

The Council should be urged to provide a parking fee structure, which begins with 30 minutes free parking. It was noted that this system is used at Oxford railway station and seems to work well.

This would have the additional positive effect of making it unnecessary for drivers to park on the double yellow lines around such places as banks and hope to carry out a transaction before being caught by a traffic officer.

Other measures to be considered:

The (very ugly) BT building, next to the Shell petrol station should be converted into a parking facility. This building is used to store cables.

Signage to the existing parking should be improved.

Existing pull-off bays should be better managed

2. Security (Shoplifting, passing counterfeit notes, etc). This was noted to be a major problem, for example Waitrose employs a full-time security guard. The problem is more acute in Headington than in other locations, e.g. Summertown. There is already informal cooperation amongst Headington retailers but this could be improved. It was recalled that a very effective Centre manager had been active until her funding had ceased.

3. Retail Association. It was agreed that it would be very beneficial for Headington's retailers if one could be established. It was noted that previous efforts to establish one had foundered in part because it identified problems rather than solutions. A positive plan was needed to encourage participation in such activities as the Summer Fair, Christmas lights. Headington Action may be able to help. If parking could be improved along the lines proposed this would make potential members much more interested in reviving the idea of an association.

**For information:**

Parking charges in Headington, Waitrose (128 spaces), and St Leonard's Road (48 spaces)

Monday - Sunday 8am - 8pm						After 8pm*
0 to 2 hours	2 to 3 hours	3 to 4 hours	4 to 6 hours	6 to 8 hours	8-24 hours	
£1.40	£3.20	£5.20	£13.30	£13.30	£13.30	£1.40

offers a wide range of commercial activity and an equally wide range of business confidence. Its major advantages are:

diverse and reasonably prosperous pool of local residents, including 13.5k students

many visitors to the NHS and private medical institutions in the Area

many visitors to the university, schools and other institutions in the Area

large number of workers in the universities, hospitals, and schools in the Area

good transport links to London and the rest of Oxford

Office and retail space generally enjoys a high occupancy rate. There is intense commercial competition in the Area: 4 major supermarkets are represented; four estate agents; x charity shops; x coffee shops and snack bars. However, many of these are thriving and in addition there are large and small enterprises which are thriving because of their unique offer, e.g. specialist clothing, ethnically determined food outlets, builders merchants. Those that are not thriving tend to be businesses with low margins at risk from competition from chain stores, supermarkets, chain cafés, etc. Paradoxically it is the small traders who are most often the ones who are missed by residents when they close through lack of local support, e.g. dry cleaners, shoe repairers, haberdashery, post office.

**Car Parking** Apart from a few enterprises which offer clients parking (e.g. guest houses) and a few office-based businesses, there is almost universal frustration with the car parking of offer in the HNP Area for customers.

Traders report that the existing car parking arrangements do not satisfy needs because:

- the minimum charge is too high for those wishing to make low-value purchases
- the higher charges do not cater for the length of time many customers wish to park for

There is some street parking and two car parks (Waitrose car park and St Leonard's Road car park) offering 176 spaces, It is proposed to make the first half hour free in these car parks and to limit parking to four hours maximum.

This will make it easier for customer to carry out low-cost shopping, and or simple transactions, without penalty. It would remove the motivation for drivers to stop on double yellow lines, accepting the risk of a fine, and in doing so cause jams for other road users. Long-stay drivers would be deterred from using these two car parks and thereby help rotation in the car parks.

Short-term parking in bays along London Road also need better supervision to ensure free traffic flow.

**Promotion of Headington's Commercial presence:** Retailers and business people agree that an association is needed to coordinate efforts to improve and develop the commercial potential of the area. This would focus on:

practical measures to improve the area for the commercial community, e.g. to take joint action to combat shop-lifting and fraud.

develop and expand actions and events aimed at enhancing the Headington area's profile in order to attract customers and develop their loyalty to the area, e.g. joint participation in summer fair, establish a winter fair, develop events to draw in traders whose line of activity complements those of established enterprises and thereby answer the need for more retail variety identified by traders and residents, etc.

**Employment and Enterprise:** The Plan will encourage innovation and the establishment of new businesses to satisfy the demand for more variety evidenced by the consultation and many retailers, but it recognises that economic viability has to come from the commercial support of local residents, workers and visitors to the area. The Plan does not aim to encourage the overall expansion of employment in the business and retail in the Area.

ANNEX D

Business Name	Staffing	Problems	Potential	Positives	Challenges	Future
Participant 1	7	Parking – tradesman need permits/exemption	More dwellings – more work	Great facilities on hand	Retail variety – affordable rates/rents etc.	Optimistic of continued growth
Participant 2		Lack of bicycle parking		Boost from more supermarkets/coffee shops		Hoping to open mid-price clothing shop
Participant 3	1	No customers in Headington	Development of Business Community in Headington	Transport and connection links	Parking and traffic congestion	If needed to grow, would have to move outside Headington
Participant 4	2		Headington as desirable as Summertown in 5 yrs	Good location for passing trade-good road improvements	Rent increases pushing independents out	Slowly growing based on reputation
Participant 5	1	Road surfaces, congestion and slowness in re-leasing units	Increasing foot-fall as fantastic position	Connectivity, low crime, institutions facilities	Increasing lack of retail variety and how to reverse this.	Improve reputation and capitalise on increasing visitors numbers.
Participant 6	30	Congestion and parking	Potential for improved shopping experience and parking/traffic	Thriving residential and business community	CIL stifling development, lack of business association	Investing heavily in business as trading situation very positive.
Participant 7	6	Parking	Bouyant market for rental and buying	Headington popular area, bouyant market, multicultural and good shops	Fierce competition in estate agent sector	Improving
Participant 8	10	Too little retail variety – supermarkets and charity shops	Needs more fashion shops, cinema, phone shops	Nice community	Bringing more tourists into Headington so that out of Uni term time it is busier.	Growing – needs more attractions and events to attract tourists.
Participant 9	5	Supermarket lorries filling loading bays outside, and blocking access.	Potential for growth.	Headington is cosmopolitan	Increased competition from supermarkets	Expect 10-20% growth in next 5 years
Participant 10	2	Parking	Business improves year on year	Busy area. Banks, institutions and supermarkets bring in customers.	Parking for customers and deliveries very limited. Only one 30 min slot.	Positive
Participant 11	6	Traffic and Parking	Headington to be a major hub on city outskirts	Brookes and NHS recruitment	Difficult transport infrastructure – i.e. P&R double charging	Growing – but capacity limited by infrastructure limitations
Participant 12	5	Not enough affordable office and meeting space		Good transport links and links to London and Europe.	Poor public transport to neighbouring areas.	Increasing revenue
Participant 13	3	Too many charity shops	More non-retail business required in area	Supermarket arrival is positive, close to Oxford Brookes	Brookes not as supportive as OU in terms of procurement. Shopping area still downmarket.	No real change
Participant 14		Difficult siting on Kennet Road, and Friday bad day.	Improvement through change of location, days, relax criteria, engage with local independents.	Good local customers	Maintain and increase trader support to improve sustainability.	Tentatively optimistic
Participant 15	12	Lack of retail variety	Very good for estate agents	Community has positive feel, lots going on and high turnover	More variety in retail – and stability – i.e. Londis site.	Positive
Participant 16	1	Lack of retail variety. There are too many estate agents, charities, supermarkets	30% down in last 18 months	Students returning gave the business a big boost this year.	Parking – and too expensive – rates/rents too high.	Likely to shut down
Participant 17	6	Footfall fallen in last 3 years	Not good unless 'normal' shops attracted into area.	OK for food outlets – not so good to everyone else.	Attracting people through more shopping variety.	Serious worry.



## ANNEX D

Participant 18	8		Amazingly good.	Shops, pubs, JR, Brookes etc. great source of customers.	Car parking – for customers.	Growing
Participant 19	3	Too many charity shops and pop-up shops	Needs to be a place where people and families want to come.	Very few	Lacks retail variety	Unlikely to still be here.
Participant 20	30	Travel to Oxford and other places too easy, so people do not notice us.	Considerable potential – large, mixed, wealthy population, well located on routes and to institutions.	Core population, students, visiting academics and health staff.	Parking, high overheads, retail variety. Supermarkets attracts people, but also increase rents.	
Participant 21	35				Traffic problems, delivery access, Windmill Rd bottleneck.	Expanding
Participant 22	3	Too many charity shops, and also banks/estate agents. Too few shops.	Depends on how well economy picks up.	Waitrose	Filling empty shops with business that have something to offer High Street.	Expanding
Participant 23	2	London Road poor state of repair gives bad impression.	Footfall good due to closeness of homes and institutions	Students patronage – other shops attract customers.	Large supermarkets, parking, high rates/rents, cultural differences.	If business rates remain high, and supermarkets entice landlords with long-term leases, no future for us in Headington.
Participant 24	3	Too many charity shops/food shops – small shops being drive out.	Good	Waitrose saved Headington. Good feel and varied customer base. Farmers market is strength	More and cheaper parking.	Good
Participant 25	2	Lack of parking and high cost. Lack of retail variety.	Strong sense of local community.	Close proximity to hospitals bring custom, as does London bus stops.	High business rates and poor parking	No prospects for improvement unless issues identified resolved.
Participant 26	4	Too quiet.	Could grow if more clothing shops and less supermarkets and banks.	Good support from NHS	Online retailers, city centre shops. Nothing to attract people to Headington.	Hopefully better.
Participant 27					Parking – particularly in relation to disabled clients – none on road.	
Participant 28	3		Unis, students, hospitals being people into Headington.	Good mix of population, parks, amenities.	Lack of retail variety – too many supermarkets.	Depends on politics – if favourable to visitors institutions will do well.
Participant 29	10	Lack of distinctive features	Student population, hospital and shift workers. Could develop sports facilities and bars.	Good mix of population, parks, amenities.	Parking lacking and too expensive. Overtaken by charity shops and supermarkets.	Similar but more automated.
Participant 30	150	Issue with losing identity. Security is an issue.	Opportunity to develop local trades group/business association to get us to work together.	Vibrancy and passionate traders. Local councillors supportive.	Parking and shop security.	Increasing our hospitality offer.
Participant 31	5		More could be done at a community level to promote Headington – music/fetes etc on Bury Knowle	Good mix of shops and local independents. Really good community feeling.	Parking, traffic, state of roads	Hard to say

ANNEX D

Participant 32	1			Good transport links. Good broadband. Good domestic location. Mixed neighbourhood.	Housing costs, transport congestion and parking	Winding down over next 5 years.
Participant 33	7	Too many charity shops		Good transport links, excellent bus services.	Parking (Abingdon has 2 hrs free)	Less routine transactions as more online – more complex work.
<5	5-9	10-20	>20			
14	9		3	3		

