Stakeholder Consultation
Northampton Town Centre
Masterplan
Summary of Survey Findings
1. Introduction and objectives

1.1 Objective
The overall aim of the research is to consult with a range of key stakeholders in order to inform the development of the Northampton Town Centre Masterplan.

1.2 Methodology
In May 2019 consultation on a new masterplan for Northampton town centre began. This consultation involved workshops were held at the University of Northampton, Grosvenor Centre and Guildhall to promote interest and help inform the development of a new Town Centre masterplan for Northampton. At these workshops, Northampton Borough Council (NBC) provided information boards, leaflets, brochures and signposted visitors to online information relating to the Masterplan. People were encouraged to fill in a survey questionnaire to outline their thoughts and ideas on the initial proposals.

The survey was also available online, in paper format in the One Stop Shop and printed in the local press to ensure accessibility to as many people as possible. As well as this, 10,000 leaflets advertising the consultation were produced and delivered to public buildings around the borough to promote the consultation. The consultation closed on 30 June 2019 and, in total, 656 stakeholders, comprising mainly residents, local businesses, students and landlords responded to the survey.

Analysis and reporting have been carried out by independent consultancy Prevision Research.

previsionresearch.co.uk
2. Research Headlines

2.1 Agreement with proposed changes and priority areas
Among stakeholders there is general agreement with the proposed changes for all areas. Around 50%-60% agree with the proposed changes in each area.

The only two areas in which consultees were unsupportive are the Market Square (26% disagreeing with the proposed changes) and Greyfriars (20% disagreeing), although these are still outnumbered by those supporting the plans.

The three areas that stakeholders would most like to see prioritised for development are the Market Square, Abington Street and Greyfriars.

2.2 Features requiring improvement
Northampton has many features that stakeholders are proud of, notably the Guildhall, St. Giles Street and the cultural quarter, historical buildings generally and (to a certain extent) retail outlets.

The spontaneous suggestions most frequently given to improve the town centre relate to cleanliness, the quality & nature of shops, support of homeless people and an increase in places to eat.

The main aspects of the town centre that stakeholders would like to see improved below and on the following pages:

Heritage
The restoration and upkeep of historical buildings and shops (particularly in the Market Square)

Feedback
- Greater promotion of the town’s historical assets
- Upkeep of historic buildings
- More attractive and welcoming spaces
- Improve the quality and appearance of the market

Our Response
- Heritage gateway along Marefair
- Imaginative reuse of historic buildings
- Higher quality shopfronts
- Rejuvenation of key town centre spaces

Retail
Improved quality of shops (both big brands and independents)

Feedback
- Improve the retail experience
- Reduce vacancy rates
- Speciality markets
- Improve the quality and appearance of retailers
- Independent, bespoke shops as found on St. Giles’ Street

Our Response
- Consolidating retail around the retail heart
- Embracing the quality of St. Giles’ Street to encourage more independent and experience led retail
- Transformation of market stalls to provide a more attractive and future-proofed platform for independent traders
### Food & Beverage
The availability and quality of food and drink

**Feedback**
- Improve availability and quality
- More restaurants around Market Square

**Our Response**
- Interest, excitement and variation in the town centre
- Create street-food offering
- Repositioning Market Square as a focus for F&B quality

### Appearance
Cleanliness / litter

**Feedback**
- Address the general cleanliness of the town centre
- Improve shop frontages and signage

**Our Response**
- High quality public realm and landscape proposals
- Regeneration of vacant sites, including Greyfriars and Castle House
- Renewed shop front and signage design guidance

### Community Events
Community uses / event space

**Feedback**
- Increased security
- Prevent antisocial behaviour
- More community and seasonal use in Market Square

**Our Response**
- Cohesive movement networks connecting all parts of the town centre
- Promotion of ground floor active frontages
- Increase footfall across the town centre

### Green Space
Green space (particularly in Abington Street & Greyfriars)

**Feedback**
- Abington Street green space
- Greyfriars green space
- Town centre parks

**Our Response**
- Connected neighbourhoods with access to open spaces that promotes active lifestyles and social interaction
- Greyfriars linear park
- Greening of Abington Street

**Feedback**
- Address the general cleanliness of the town centre
- Improve shop frontages and signage

**Our Response**
- High quality public realm and landscape proposals
- Regeneration of vacant sites, including Greyfriars and Castle House
- Renewed shop front and signage design guidance
Just over half of the stakeholders believe that more residential provision in the town centre will help support the existing retail. However, this signifies that that almost half of the stakeholders either do not agree that this will assist the retail or are unsure whether it will have a positive impact.

Improving the retail experience is a key theme in the masterplan across the town centre. There is a requirement for a reduction in empty units and an improvement in the appearance and quality of retailers represented in the town centre. The majority of stakeholders believe that some of the retail businesses on the outskirts of the retail area in the town centre, should be encouraged to become part of a smaller retail core in the town centre.

The need for greater provision of the food and drink offer is another theme running through the consultation responses. More than four out of five stakeholders think that food and leisure uses should be encouraged within the town centre. Other requirements outlined within the responses are the cleanliness and tidiness of the town centre.

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In the rest of this document the research findings are discussed in greater detail.
3. General views on improving the Town Centre

3.1 What makes stakeholders proud about the Town Centre?
There are many parts of Northampton Town Centre that make stakeholders proud.

The spontaneous examples most frequently given include: the Guildhall, St. Giles Street, historical buildings generally and the cultural quarter and shops. However, there are many other examples opposite.

Specific sites mentioned include All Saints’ Church, the Market Square and the Royal & Derngate Theatre.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What makes stakeholders proud? (main mentions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What parts of the Town Centre make you proud? (unprompted) – all spontaneous comments mentioned by 5% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guildhall/St. Giles Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historic buildings (churches, historical architecture, heritage buildings etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture/cultural centre/quarter/theatre district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shops/independent shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Saints’ Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal &amp; Derngate Theatre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness of the area/district/vol-kept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restaurant/bar scenes/lots of places to eat and drink</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The atmosphere (sense of community, freedom etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks (all mentions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Museums &amp; galleries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=632)

3.2 How could the Town Centre be improved?
Many suggestions are spontaneously given for improving the Town Centre. Those most frequently given relate to, overall cleanliness and the cleanliness, appearance and nature of shops.

Stakeholders would like to see empty shop units filled, greater support for homeless people and lower business rates or rents.

The main suggestions given are shown in the following chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What would improve the town centre? (main mentions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think could improve the town centre? (unprompted) – all spontaneous comments mentioned by 15% or more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More independent businesses/bespoke shops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner spaces/tidy streets/better-free more bins to help keep it clean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher quality shops/establishments fewer pound shops/discount stores</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fill empty shop units/cheaper/cheap property/have more shops that are open</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support homeless people rough sleepers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower business rates/rents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific location mentioned for improvements/suggested use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More places to eat food market/food stalls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More green space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on historic/cultural aspects</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=646)
There are many other suggestions for improving the town centre. Secondary spontaneous suggestions for improving the town centre include: more leisure facilities, improved appearance of shops, improvement of the bus station, increased footfall, and stopping anti-social behaviour.

More than four out of five stakeholders think that more food and leisure offers should be encouraged within the town centre – a clear endorsement of the proposition within the Masterplan to achieve this.

Encouragement of food and leisure uses in the town centre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=645)

Whether more residential provision will help support retail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=645)

Just over half, 54% of the stakeholders believe that more residential provision in the town centre will help support retail. Almost half, 46%, either do not believe that this is the case or are unsure, so there is some uncertainty over this proposition:
4. Prioritising Areas

4.1 Overview of prioritisation of areas
Overall, between 50% and 60% of stakeholders agreed with the proposed changes to each area as shown below:

Inevitably, all of the areas received a level of disagreement and, typically, around a third of stakeholders are neutral about the proposed changes.

The highest level of disagreement received was related to the changes to Market Square (with 24% disagreeing with the proposed changes) and Greyfriars (23% disagreeing with the proposed changes). Although these are still outnumbered by those supporting the plans.

As part of the consultation, the stakeholders were asked to prioritise the areas requiring improvement. The three areas that stakeholders would most like to see prioritised are Abington Street, the Market Square and Greyfriars, as indicated by the following chart.

Each of these prioritised areas is discussed in greater detail in the following sections of this report.
4.2 Abington Street
There is broad support for the proposed changes on Abington Street, with over half of stakeholders agreeing with the proposed changes and only 10% explicitly disagreeing.

Regarding the future of the former BHS and M&S units, the improvements most frequently mentioned are: conversion to smaller shops, indoor or covered market, the introduction of a well-known high street shop and leisure facilities. A range of other options are also suggested as outlined below:

66% of the stakeholders support the introduction of leisure, residential and community uses into Abington Street, although these were not the spontaneous suggestions most frequently given.
The most popular responses for uses for public spaces in this area are as green space with 69% of consultees supporting this, seating for restaurants or cafes at 63%, sculpture / art at 52% and pedestrianised space at 50% of consultees.

### How should the public spaces in this area be used?

*How would you like to see the public spaces in this area used? (prompted)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Support Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green space</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating for restaurants/cafes</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sculptures and art</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedestrianised space</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s play</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should it be left as it is</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=545)

### 4.3 Market Square

Half of stakeholders broadly agree with the proposed changes on Market Square. Almost one in four stakeholders disagree with the proposed changes.

#### Agreement with proposed Market Square changes

*To what extent do you agree with the changes proposed on the Market Square?*

- Strongly agree: 10%
- Agree: 34%
- Neutral: 27%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly disagree: 11%

Base: all answering question (n=527)

Suggestions most frequently mentioned for improving the Market Square area tend to relate to the appearance (for example, restoring traditional buildings), cleanliness, places to eat and having a central attraction.

### How should the physical appearance of the Market Square be improved?

*How would you like to see the physical appearance of the Market Square improved? (unprompted) – all spontaneous comments mentioned by more than 5%*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Improvement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Renovate/restore historic buildings/restore facades</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve appearance of stalls</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaner streets/floors/table-free</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More places to eat/food market/stalls</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central attraction/feature (statue, bandstand, etc.)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community events/attractions/seasonal events</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redesign/revamp/have a better design</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More seating</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More green space</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better lighting/wall fit areas/improve lighting</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality / high end retail</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase safety / security</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Covered market area</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=488)
The most popular proposed uses for the buildings in the Market Square to improve the square's appearance include a majority of restaurants at 75%, retail at 56%, community uses at 43% and pubs and bars also at 43%.

Stakeholders would like to see a speciality market/s, seating for restaurants and cafes, and event space on the Market Square.

Currently the market is perceived negatively, with only 2% rating the products and services available as very good (with a further 12% rating them as “good”, 40% considering them average and 44% believing that they are poor.

**How can buildings improve the Market Square?**

There are many attractive buildings surrounding the Market Square - how should they be used to improve the square? (prompted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restaurants</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community uses</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pubs / bars</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should it be left as it is</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=536)

**What would stakeholders like to see on the Market Square?**

What would you like to see on the Market Square? (prompted)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speciality market</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seating for restaurants and cafes</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More restaurants around the edges of the market</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event space</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved connections to Greyfriars</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food hall</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children's play</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keep it as it is</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: all answering question (n=547)

**Views on the current products and services available on the market**

What do you think of the current products and services available on the market?

- Very good: 2%
- Good: 12%
- Average: 40%
- Poor: 44%
- Do not know: 2%

Base: all answering question (n=548)
4.4 Greyfriars
Almost half of stakeholders agree/strongly agree with the proposed changes to Greyfriars, although 23% disagree/strongly agree.

Suggestions most frequently mentioned of what should happen to Greyfriars relate to outdoor spaces, transport, housing and leisure/entertainment.

Just over half of stakeholders support the permanent closure of roads in the Greyfriars area, however around one in five are explicitly against the proposition.

Support for permanent closure of roads in the Greyfriars area
Would you support a permanent closure of roads in the Greyfriars area in order to link the area to the town centre and enable development on this site?

Base: all answering question (n=597)
4.5 The Drapery
Just under half of stakeholders, 48%, agree with the proposed changes to the Drapery, with only 11% disagreeing.

Agreement with proposed Drapery changes

To what extent do you agree with the changes proposed at the Drapery?

- Agree: 36%
- Strongly agree: 12%
- Neutral: 41%
- Strongly disagree: 4%
- Disagree: 7%

Base: all answering question (n=497)

Key suggestions for improving the Drapery include removing or relocating bus stops and the pedestrianisation of the area.

How should the Drapery be improved?

Do you have any thoughts on what would improve the Drapery? (unprompted) – all spontaneous comments mentioned by over 5%

- Remove bus stops/relocate bus stops/shelters/address issues with bus stops: 22%
- Pedestrianise the area/make it easier for pedestrians/better pedestrian routes: 18%
- Fewer buses on the route/get rid of buses: 13%
- Cleaner spaces: tidy streets/litter-free/give it a good clean: 12%
- Improve shop fronts: facias/more visually appealing: 11%
- Sunday specific location mentioned for improvement: 9%
- A bus/coach station: transport hub improvement (Greyfriars): 8%
- Traffic calming: reduce traffic/better traffic management/enforcement: 7%
- Higher end shops: 7%
- More green space: 7%
- Keep Debenhams: 6%

Base: all answering question (n=110)

4.6 Marefair and Gold Street
53% of stakeholders agree with the proposed Marefair and Gold Street changes, with only 6% disagreeing.

Agreement with proposed Marefair and Gold Street changes

To what extent do you agree with the changes proposed at Marefair and Gold Street?

- Agree: 38%
- Strongly agree: 15%
- Neutral: 40%
- Strongly disagree: 2%
- Disagree: 4%

Base: all answering question (n=493)
Just over half of stakeholders support the idea of more residential development on Mayfair. However, one in five does not agree with this proposal.

Stakeholders would like to see the area’s heritage assets enhanced through: preservation of buildings, an increased focus on the town’s history and greater promotion of the town’s historical assets.

### Is more residential development on Marefair a good idea?

*Do you think more residential development on Marefair is a good idea?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not sure</th>
<th>27%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Base: all answering question (n=499)*

### How could heritage assets in this area be enhanced?

*How would you like to see the heritage assets in this area enhanced? Heritage assets are the former Castle site, St Peter’s Church, Black Lion Pub, old building frontages (unprompted) – all spontaneous comments mentioned by over 5%.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heritage</th>
<th>32%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preserve/restore/protect buildings</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the history/highlight historical features</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More promotion/publicity as a tourist destination</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better/more signage/informative signage</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closer spaces/streets/better maintained</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regenerate the castle site</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise guided tours/walks/historic walks</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better accessibility between areas/link them</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community initiatives</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve/restore Black Lion pub</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preserve/restore churches</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Base: all answering question (n=493)*

### 4.7 Fish Street and St. Giles Street

Almost two-thirds of stakeholders agree with the proposed Fish Street and St. Giles Street changes, with only 6% disagreeing.

### Agreement with proposed Fish Street and St. Giles Street changes

*To what extent do you agree with the changes proposed in the Fish Street and St. Giles Street area?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>20%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Base: all answering question (n=499)*
Overwhelmingly, stakeholders believe that businesses, such as those in St. Giles Street and the surrounding streets, should be encouraged to set up in the town centre. Nine out of ten stakeholders support this proposal.

**Should independent shops and businesses be encouraged to set up in the town centre?**

_Do you think that more independent shops and businesses such as those in St Giles Street and the surrounding streets, should be encouraged to set up in the town centre?_

![Pie chart showing the responses to the question.](chart.png)

*Base: all answering question (n=488)*
## 5. Conclusions

Stakeholders are broadly supportive of the proposed changes to Northampton Town Centre.

The areas that stakeholders would most like to see prioritised are Market Square, Abington Street and Greyfriars.

Generally, the improvement areas that stakeholders focus on are:

- Restoration and maintenance of historical buildings
- Cleanliness / tidiness
- Quality of retailers
- More independent businesses
- Less vacant units
- Places to eat
- Green space / pedestrian areas / event space
- More seating in the town centre
- Residential provision to support retailers
- Leisure facilities

Key themes running through the Masterplan area are:

- A need for more residential provision in the town centre to support retail
- Cleanliness / tidiness
- Improving the retail experience (a reduction in empty sites and an improvement in the appearance and quality of retailers represented in the town centre)
- Cleanliness and tidiness
- Greater provision of food and drink

Overwhelmingly stakeholders believe that businesses should be encouraged to set up in the town centre and reduce the size of the retail core.
Northampton
Forward