

Bradford Property Forum – Young People’s Survey: the City Centre

**Report written September 2011
Fieldwork undertaken summer 2011**

Introduction

In spring 2011 Bradford Property Forum (BPF) decided it would be worthwhile asking young people in Bradford what they felt about the city centre – how often they visited, how they’d like to see it change, what they liked/disliked and other related questions.

The subject is connected to other topics raised frequently by BPF members (i.e. businesses involved in the property/construction sector) and other businesses across Bradford: how to increase footfall into the city centre, how to improve Bradford’s image and change external perceptions and the wider importance to Bradford’s future prosperity of its growing young population.

For the purposes of the survey, young people are identified as 15-25 year olds.

It was agreed to conduct an on-line poll, permeated through intermediary groups, before presenting findings to key individuals and organisations. This is a written report of those findings.

Summary

- People want to see better shops, and more of them, in Bradford city centre
- There are negative perceptions on safety and cleanliness
- More music events/concerts are needed
- These three issues above are needed in order to get young people to visit the centre more
- A new shopping centre and ‘safer environment’ were the single biggest things needed to attract more
- The range of shops, restaurants and bars which respondents suggested should be here was varied
- Four-fifths of respondents would spend more time in the centre if there was ‘more to do’

Section 1: On visiting the centre

Overall views were negative. The overwhelming opinion of respondents was that there is too little to attract or entertain young people in the city centre of Bradford, and that it needs to be ‘cleaner’ and ‘safer’.

A comment that might typify the feelings expressed is that the centre is “just not nice to look at.”

In terms of where young people do go, another comment that exemplifies views is “Why should I go into Bradford when Leeds is just a stone’s throw away and offers so much more?” People’s proximity to Leeds, its better offer and perceived safer environment is mentioned by several respondents.

Others say that they would visit more if there was, for example, a skate park, 'big name' shops and even a "contemporary art museum...library...art gallery." (Another respondent said the city was "currently good for museums but very bad for shopping and leisure.)

Section 2: On shops and restaurants people would like to see here

Nearly 70 shops and more than 30 restaurants/coffee shops/cafes were cited in the demand for a more active and commercial centre. Many, of course, came up several times, with those mentioned most listed below.

While a majority of respondents requested clothes shops, shoes, IT/'gadgets' and book shops are prominent. Conversely, several entries stated that the quality and quantity of shopping in the centre was sufficient.

- Fashion clothing store H&M was by far the top answer – 41
- Republic featured strongly – 18
- Zara, BHS and Debenhams were all prominent – 11 each
- Lippy, Apple and Monsoon were next – 9, 7 and 7

Other retailers/brands with multiple selections included:

- Lush
- All Saints
- Jack Wills
- Superdry
- Gap

Food & Drink

- A local branch of Burger King was the top brand called for in 'eating out' stakes – 19
- TGI Fridays – 14
- Pizza Express – 10
- Many others were suggested a handful of times – Yo! Sushi, Chiquito's, Italian, shake bars and coffee shops among them

Section 3: City Park events

- Concerts/live music were cited as the biggest single feature that people want to see in the new park – 53 comments
- Market stalls was the next top answer (specific views included German, farmers', multicultural, international, Asian, Polish and local traders') – 23
- Funfair/playground/children's events - 21
- Sports events (e.g. basketball, bike trick/BMX shows, snowboarding, skate jams, tennis courts) – 18
- Theatre productions – 13
- Street theatre – 10
- Carnivals, e.g. Pride – 9
- Water fountains – 9

Other 'honourable mentions' include: fashion fair/catwalk, art/photography exhibitions and skate park, while some of the more stand-out suggestions were cage-fighting, food cooking and health workouts

Section 4: Goods not stocked in Bradford but available elsewhere

Only one-third of respondents ask staff in Bradford shops to stock products they know are available elsewhere.

Comments included:

- The local store is not big enough to stock all items
- Choice of stock is poor due to a lack of local consumers
- I'll just visit the other store (e.g. Leeds and Halifax) or buy on-line
- M&S is a shadow of its former self
- People in Bradford have less money/Bradford shops are for poor people or teenagers, who don't have much money

Section 5: One single thing to attract you into the centre – what would it be?

- New shopping centre – 38%
- Less hostile people/safer environment – 30%
- Other – 10%
- New concert venue – 8%
- Regular street shows – 7%

As well as the specifics of mentioning Westfield, but also requesting that Darley Street and the Kirkgate Centre are not forgotten, there are several references to intimidating and hostile locals, and a paucity of safety and friendliness.

There is clear demand among young people for “something like White Rose or Meadowhall where I can get everything in one trip.”

The former Odeon building holds no sway for many, with several calls for it to be pulled down. Others, though, said it should be retained and restored (see ‘other changes needed on page 4).

Different ideas?

More maverick suggestions include a zoo and a theme park (same entry), an o2 arena, and creating a nature reserve-cum-Eden Project, complete with boating lake, ducks and wildlife – “shops are not the be all and end all”, said this young person. A skate park “to attract people from all around the country” was one suggestion, while something “like Alton Towers” was another.

Night-time

The night-time economy is also referenced by several – “the evening scene just isn't up to scratch like other nearby cities”, said one. Another added that, if we can't have a new arena to compete with Leeds, perhaps the Alhambra could stage more music and comedy gigs. An “upmarket bar for professionals would be a welcome addition”, said a third.

The size of the city centre

One person commented that “there is nowhere to shop without walking all over Bradford.” Previous discussions with groups such as Bradford Chamber of

Commerce and Bradford Property Forum have suggested that the centre needs to be more compact.

Section 6: How often do people visit the centre?

Once or twice a week – 34%
Once or twice a month – 25%
Daily – 20%
A couple of times a year – 13%
Never – 6%
No response – 1%

Again, there were a combination of answers covering leisure, daily shopping, using the library, 'signing on', going to work, catching bus for school, going to university and generally browsing and meeting friends.

Section 7: Places visited for shopping – in order of popularity

1. Leeds
2. Halifax
3. White Rose Centre
4. Other shopping centres, specifically Trafford Centre and Meadowhall
5. Bradford

Section 8: What other changes needed

There were many suggestions made on how and why the centre should be improved. These ranged from the simple yet clear – “more shopping centres, better shops e.g. clothes” – to the more erudite and thought-provoking. Some examples are included below.

1. I support the conclusions of the Civic Society's thoughtful 'Common Sense Regeneration' publication. Linking the rail stations would also be very worthwhile”
2. Urban design is very important. The city centre needs a brand, both economic and physical. Streetscape is poor but Ivegate is an example of how to improve
3. Get rid of the riff raff
4. Cleaner streets, less beggars, more events, less psychos, more street cafes and eating places
5. Protect and promote our built heritage and build the future upon it in the other places have
6. Turn the old cinema into another Alhambra
7. A better social centre – like Xscape. We've got a run-down ice-rink
8. More things that don't cost a lot of money; cinema too expensive; the slot machine (places) make older people waste their money; too many bars just for alcohol – milkshake and juice bars are healthier and don't cause trouble
9. I never realised how bad Bradford was until I travelled further. When I come back I realised what people meant when they said Bradford was so bad. I wish I could be proud of living in Bradford
10. I think this survey is a fantastic idea. I just hope that people's comments will be heard and acted upon

Section 9: Spending more time in centre (& Report Conclusion)

It is clear from the findings of this survey that there is a desire for many young people to spend more time (and money) in the city centre – but only on their own terms.

Many appear to have already ‘given up’ on the centre, while others are doubtful and cautious about the prospects for change. To those now reticent to come, decision-makers need to heed the warnings of chasing the success of nearby neighbours, as this may not guarantee dividends:

- “Leeds is so accessible to me with most things that I need. Bradford isn’t that much closer so it doesn’t make things easier if you replicate it”, said one person (from Eccleshill).
- However, others replied positively, saying they would “definitely” spend more time there “without a doubt”, if there were “more” and “better” things to do.

The questions we asked

1. I’d visit Bradford city centre more if there were...
 - More/better shops
 - More/better bars and pubs
 - More/better nightclubs
 - Regular music events/concerts
 - Regular street shows, e.g. fashion, sports
 - A sports centre
 - Swimming pool
 - Gym/health club
 - If it was safer
 - If it was cleaner
 - Other
2. Which shops and restaurants not currently here would you like to see?
3. What would you like to see happen in City Park? (a large public space with water fountains that can host concerts, sports events, markets and theatre)
4. If you shop in Bradford, do you ask staff to stock goods not currently in that store? (i.e. goods on sale in same store, different town)
5. If you could request one thing to attract you into the centre, what would it be?
6. I visit the centre – daily, once or twice a week, once or twice a month, a couple of times a year, never
7. Which town/village do you live in? Where do you shop now?
8. What other changes would bring you into Bradford more?
9. If there was more to do in the city, I’d spend more time there – yes/no
10. Contact details

There were 231 responses to the survey.

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Bradford Property Forum is a business network of property-related professionals dedicated to improving the quality of developments in the District and supporting its members with relevant information and news.