

APPENDIX 1: HEALTH CHECKS OF CENTRES

England & Lyle carried out health checks of Penrith, Alston, Appleby and Kirkby Stephen town centres in October and November 2013 to assess their vitality and viability. Our approach to undertaking health checks is based on a systematic appraisal based on the indicators listed in the former PPS4. These indicators are the same as those listed in the new National Planning Practice Guidance, as follows:

- Diversity of Uses;
- Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property;
- Commercial Yields on Non-Domestic Property;
- Retailer Representation & Intention to Change Representation;
- Commercial Rents;
- Pedestrian Flows;
- Accessibility;
- Perception of Safety & Occurrence of Crime;
- State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

These indicators are sub-divided into a total of 36 individual factors which are scored and an overall vitality and viability index is calculated which can be compared with other centres and used to monitor changes in a centre over time. This approach has been developed by England & Lyle over a period of years and has been used in numerous retail studies and assessments for local authorities and developers. The approach enables us to make an independent appraisal of the health of centres and their overall vitality and viability. We used the same approach in the March 2008 Retail Study and we compare the current health of the centres with the findings in 2008.

In preparing the health checks we have used the results of the detailed surveys of centres, national comparisons from the Goad Centre Report for Penrith, general observation of each centre and local information from the District Council and other sources. We have also made use of the Benchmarking reports prepared for each centre in November 2012 by Action for Market Towns.

Each factor on the Health Check Appraisal Sheet is scored on a 5-point scale of 1=very poor, 2=poor, 3=fair, 4=good and 5=very good. Not all factors can be scored for all centres. In the smaller centres some of the factors do not apply (eg. on commercial performance and retailer demand). The average vitality and viability index is calculated just for the factors that are present.

Experience of health checks in a wide variety of centres over recent years shows that the vitality and viability index will tend to range from about 2.5 for a centre that is performing poorly with a low level of vitality and viability to 4.0 or more for a centre which is performing well with a high level of vitality and viability. In Eden District the current vitality and viability index for the main centres is as follows, compared with the scores in 2008.

Penrith

Overall Provision

The main foodstores in Penrith are the Morrisons store and the new Sainsbury's in the New Squares scheme. Morrisons is on the edge of the town centre but it forms part of the town centre shopping provision and is well related to the town centre. There is also a Booths supermarket on Brunswick Road and an Aldi store and retail warehouses on Ullswater Road. The existence of retail and other floorspace outside the centre reflects the difficulty of accommodating some retail uses within the town centre. It is not necessarily a negative factor, and we rate it as fair. There is significant capacity for growth or change in the centre through the development of the New Squares scheme which has several units that are not yet occupied. This factor is rated as good.

Diversity of Main Town Centre Uses

Penrith has a total of 157 shops. This is a good representation of shops for a town of its size. Shops represent 58% of all retail and service uses in the town, higher than the national average of 50%. The proportion of convenience goods shops (10%) is about the same as the national average. The proportion of comparison goods shops (48%) is well above the national average of 41%. We rate the number and type of shops and the amount of shopping floorspace as good. The representation of offices such as banks, building societies and estate agents is also good, reflecting Penrith's role as a service centre. Leisure, cultural and entertainment facilities are rated as fair. Penrith has a number of historic and visitor attractions, notably the Parish Church, Castle ruins, Penrith Museum and Tourist Information Centre, but lacks arts and cultural facilities. Sports and leisure facilities are generally good. The leisure centre and swimming pool are located just outside the centre on Victoria Road. The range and quality of pubs, cafes and restaurants is fair. The provision of hotels is also fair. The only quality hotels are The George Hotel in Devonshire Street and the North Lakes Hotel on the edge of the town.

Retailer Representation

The town centre has a reasonable range of non-food multiples including Argos, Boots B&M Bargains, Burton, Carphone Warehouse, Clarks, Clinton Cards, Dorothy Perkins, Edinburgh Woollen Mill, Holland & Barrett, M&Co., O2, Superdrug, Timpson, WH Smith and Yorkshire Trading Company. Multiples represent only 11% of all comparison goods shops which is below the national average. We rate the presence of multiples as fair. The representation of specialist and independent shops is very good and is probably the main strength of the town's retail offer. The vast majority of the shops in the town are local independents selling a wide range of products. Independents include butchers, fishmonger, bakers, cakes, confectioner, delis, ladies clothes, country clothing, florists, jewellers and cycles. The town markets its "specialist shops". Devonshire Arcade, Little Dockray, King Street and Brunswick Road are particularly good for specialist shops. There is a street market, held on Tuesdays and Saturdays in Great Dockray and a smaller market in the Corn Market. The market is small and not of particularly good quality, so this factor is rated as fair.

The availability of food shopping is very good with the Morrisons and Sainsbury's superstores and other supermarkets (Booths, Co-op and Spar) and several other specialist food shops – bakers, butchers, greengrocers, etc. The New Squares scheme represents major new investment in the town centre. There is also evidence of recent investment by retailers such as re-fitting of shops and refurbishments and this factor is rated as good. Up-to-date information on retailer demand in Penrith is lacking but the latest FOCUS Town Report indicates a decline in the number of retailer requirements from a peak in 2006. Retailer demand is rated as fair. The representation of charity shops is rated as fair.

Vacant Properties

Penrith has 24 vacant shops, with a vacancy rate of 9% of all retail and service units, below the national average of 13%. The proportion of vacant floorspace is 6% compared to the national average of 11%. Both of these factors are rated as good. The vacant units are generally in more secondary locations so vacant premises do not have a negative impact on the town centre.

Commercial Performance

There is no current information on shopping centre yield or changes in land values in Penrith. There is no up-to-date information on shop rental values. The FOCUS Town Report indicates that rents are relatively low but there has been some increase in recent years. This factor is rated as fair.

Pedestrian Flows

At the time of our visits to Penrith the volume of pedestrian flow has been generally good. Some parts of the centre are busy. Pedestrian movement is particularly good in Middlegate, Devonshire Street/Market Square and Angel Square. Other streets such as King Street, Burrowgate, Great Dockray and Castlegate are relatively quiet.

Accessibility

The Action for Market Towns Benchmarking survey indicates that overall Penrith has a good provision of short stay car parking. Morrisons and Sainsbury's offer free car parking for 2 hours. On our visits the town centre car parks were well used. Morrisons' car park appears to be very busy. In the Benchmarking survey the vast majority of businesses stated that car parking was a negative aspect of the town centre. Most people interviewed in the town centre users survey also said that car Parking was a negative aspect of the town centre. Overall, car parking is considered to be insufficient to meet the needs of the town and is rated as fair.

The frequency and quality of public transport and range of places served by public transport are rated as good. There is a regular local town bus service and longer distance bus services operate from the bus station to Carlisle, Kendal, Shap, Keswick, Appleby, Kirkby Stephen and Patterdale. The bus station and rail station are within walking distance of the main shopping area. Ease of movement for pedestrians, cyclists and the disabled in the centre is good. The centre is reasonably flat, and there are paved areas that help pedestrian circulation. Ease of

access to the main attractions in the centre is generally good. There is good signage for pedestrians to the main destinations in the town centre, eg. at Sandgate, Two Lions Square, Cornmarket and at Booths.

Customer Views and Behaviour

The household survey undertaken for the 2008 Retail Study shows that satisfaction with Penrith town centre for shopping and the need for improvements in the centre are rated as fair. The extent of linked trips by shoppers doing main food shopping in Penrith is good. Shoppers using Morrisons and Sainsbury's have the opportunity to make linked trips to visit other shops and services in the town centre.

Safety and Security

Penrith has a good CCTV system with cameras in Angel Square, King Street, Sandgate, Devonshire Street and Middlegate. The feeling of security in the centre is considered to be good. The town feels generally safe, secure and pleasant.

Environmental Quality

Our rating of the physical appearance of properties in Penrith is fair. We also rate the overall cleanliness of the streets, problems such as air pollution, noise and litter, and the quality of open spaces/landscaping as fair. The availability and condition of toilets in Little Dockray, the bus station and Southend Road is rated as poor.

Alston

Composition of Alston Town Centre

Alston lies in the heart of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is reputed to be Britain's highest market town at over 1,000ft above sea level. It has a linear centre extending along Front Street west and south of the Market Place and is a fairly remote centre, with the nearest town approximately 15 miles away. Alston is the smallest of the centres within this study in terms of number of shops and service provision.

The steep cobbled main street forms the core of the centre which lies within a Conservation Area and comprises of predominantly small, constrained retail units contained within historic buildings, as well as a distinctive market cross. Whilst the majority of units have a traditional shop fronts, modern additions such as the Co-op, HSBC and Barclays are also present in the town centre.

Convenience floorspace represents 12% of the units in Alston. The main foodstore within Alston is the Co-Operative supermarket located to the north east of Front Street within the town centre. The foodstore acts as an anchor store for the town and serves the day-to-day needs of the local residents of the town. The remaining convenience floorspace within the town centre comprises of three small independent retailers; TG Blackstock, The Moody Baker and Cheers.

There is a relatively high representation of comparison goods retailers within Alston. The town centre's comparison retail offer is comprised entirely of independent retailers and there are no national multiple comparison retailers, which is a weakness. The centre has one charity shop. There is no retail floorspace in Alston outside the town centre that competes with the centre.

The town centre is focussed around the Market Square, although the majority of it is used for car parking. Although the town no longer holds a regular market in the Market Square, there is a market on the first Saturday of every month in the Town Hall. The market is very small and has a variety of table top products including handmade jewellery, gifts, knitting, bric-a-brac and local food produce.

The representation of financial and professional services, business and office premises and cafes and restaurants is poor. However, there are two pubs in the centre and one just outside the centre so this provision is considered fair. Alston has a number of historic attractions including the Parish Church and Market Cross, as well as the Town Hall which houses the Tourist Information Centre. However, overall cultural and entertainment and sports facilities are lacking.

Alston is a small centre catering for visitors and the everyday needs of the local residents. Alston has a limited range of comparison stores in the town centre, although the number of units is relatively high. There are few convenience stores; however the presence of the Co-op ensures the needs of the residents are served on a day-to-day basis. Despite a relatively high number of vacant units for a centre of this size, there is very little in the way of retail provision outside the town centre.

Retailer Representation

Alston has no multiple retailers, but a good representation of specialist and independent shops for a small town including stores selling food, antiques, books/crafts, gifts etc. There is also a large number of art galleries in the centre. The availability of food shopping is limited to the Co-op, a butcher and a baker. There is also an off-licence. This is rated as fair.

There is little evidence of recent investment by retailers and this rated as poor. There is no outdoor market, but a monthly market in the Town Hall. No information is available on retail demand.

Vacancies

Alston has 4 vacant shops and a vacancy rate of 10% of all retail and service properties. The amount of vacant floorspace is relatively high and the existence of vacant units has a negative effect on the character of the centre.

Pedestrian Flows

The volume of pedestrian flow during our visit to Alston was moderate for a weekday lunchtime outside the main season for visitors. This is rated as fair.

Accessibility

Car parking is lacking in the town, for both shoppers and visitors. There is free on-street parking in Front Street. There is off-street parking outside the town centre that can be used by visitors (eg. at the railway station) but it is not conveniently located for town centre shoppers. On the day of the site visit, car parking in the centre was very busy. Car parking is generally not well signed. Bus services run through the Front Street as well as Station Road, and there are reasonably frequent bus services to Carlisle, Hexham and other towns.

Safety and Security

Alston appears to be relatively safe and secure during the day. The feeling of security is rated as good.

Environmental Quality

The average rating on physical appearance of properties in Alston is 2.9, which is 'fair'. The other factors on environmental quality are rated as good.

Appleby

Composition of Appleby Town Centre

Appleby is an ancient market town located at the heart of the Eden District and was formerly the County Town of Westmorland. The town is the main service centre for the surrounding rural hinterland. Appleby also performs a tourism role being located at the heart of the Eden Valley in close proximity to the Lake District, North Pennines AONB, Yorkshire Dales, Hadrian's Wall and the Scottish Borders. The core of the town centre is centred around Boroughgate which accommodates a large number of attractive largely Georgian and Victorian properties many of which are listed, as well as the centrally located Grade II* Listed Moot Hall, which dates from 1596. The entire town centre boundary is located within the Appleby Conservation Area.

There is a relatively low proportion of convenience goods shops in Appleby. There are two relatively small convenience foodstores located within Appleby, comprising of the Spar on Boroughgate and the Co-Operative on The Sands. The remaining convenience floorspace within the town comprises of independent retailers, including a butchers, newsagents, greengrocers and a bakery.

The proportion of comparison retailers in Appleby is below the national average. There is one national multiple retailer in the town (Boots Pharmacy) and, therefore, the overriding

majority of the comparison offer comprises of independent retailers. The centre also accommodates a low proportion of charity shops.

There is a weekly market held on Boroughgate on Saturdays between 09.30 and 16.00. There is also a '*mini-market*' held in the Market Hall on Fridays.

There is a strong representation of pubs, cafés and restaurants within Appleby accounting for 20% of the total units within the centre, which reflects the tourism role that the centre plays. There is also a Tourist Information Centre within the Moot Hall and Appleby Castle lies to the south of the town centre. St Lawrence's Church to the northern edge of the town centre is also a historic attraction and there is also a public swimming pool located in close proximity to the centre. The renowned Appleby Horse Fair attracts a significant number of visitors to the town during June and the town also holds an annual jazz festival.

There are a number of hairdressers / beauty salons within the centre and financial and professional services are represented by independent estate agents, solicitors and an insurance broker. There is a branch of the Cumberland Building Society on Bridge Street and the main high street banks are represented by the presence of Barclays on Boroughgate. It is however noted that the HSBC Bank at 21 Boroughgate has now closed and this building stands vacant.

There is also a range of civic and community facilities located to the edge of the centre including St Lawrence's Church, Appleby Library, Appleby Medical Centre and the aforementioned swimming pool.

Retailer Representation

There are currently a limited proportion of national retailers within Appleby, restricted to Boots Pharmacy, Spar and the Co-Operative. The overwhelming majority of the existing retail offer therefore comprises of small, independent retailers selling a range of products.

The majority of units within the town centre are small, traditional shop units, as opposed to modern larger format retail premises, given the historic layout of the centre. The lack of larger retail units is a potential constraint to improving the comparison offer in Appleby in terms of attracting multiple retailers, however, in view of the role and function of the centre, it is not considered that there would be much demand from national multiple retailers to move into Appleby. It is therefore considered that the retail offer in Appleby will continue to comprise of independent convenience and comparison retailers over the plan period.

Vacancies

There are 7 vacant units within the town centre, equating to an overall vacancy rate of 9%, which is below the national average of 13%. The vacant units tend to be spread across the centre, although there are limited vacant units within the core area of the centre on Boroughgate. The former HSBC branch is however a large, prominent vacant unit which detracts from the vitality and viability of this part of the town centre. However, overall, it is

not considered that the existing level of vacancy within Appleby Town Centre harms the overall vitality and viability of the centre.

Pedestrian Flows

The volume of pedestrian flow during our visit to Appleby was relatively low, which is reflective of the findings of the AMT Benchmarking Report, which showed low levels of footfall from surveys undertaken in October 2012.

There are no pedestrianised zones within Appleby, however, the road network through the centre is lightly trafficked and there is a quality pedestrian environment, particularly in Boroughgate which has been subject to public realm improvements in recent years. Pedestrians are therefore able to move freely around the town centre.

Accessibility

The Broad Close Pay & Display Car Park is located to the west of the town centre on Chapel Street, which was not particularly well-used at the time of our visit. There are also disc zone parking areas of Boroughgate, which offer free, time limited on-street car parking and there was a higher degree of usage of the disc zone spaces during our visit in comparison to the pay and display car park.

There are existing northbound and southbound bus stops located on The Sands, which are served by the following service:

Service	Destinations	Frequency
563	Kirkby Stephen - Brough - Appleby - Penrith	8 services per day (Mon-Sat)

Appleby Train Station lies approximately 400m from the town centre and lies on the Settle – Carlisle line. There is a service around every two hours northbound to Carlisle and southbound to Leeds.

Safety and Security

There is no CCTV in Appleby, however, centre has a pleasant character and generally feels safe.

Environmental Quality

The entirety of the town centre is contained within the designated boundary of the Appleby Conservation Area. The majority of commercial units within the town centre are well-maintained with attractive shop fronts, which further enhances the environmental quality of the town, although some of the units in the more peripheral parts of the town, notably on Cherry Row and High Wiend are not as well-maintained or attractive as in the core area. The centre also enjoys an attractive pedestrian environment, particularly around Boroughgate which has benefited from public realm improvements in recent years. There are also pleasant

open spaces alongside the river which runs through the town and the cricket ground. Overall, it is considered that Appleby provides a high quality and attractive shopping environment.

Kirkby Stephen

Composition of Kirkby Stephen Town Centre

Kirkby Stephen is a small market town located towards the south eastern edge of the Craven District and is a small market town with a population of 2,580. The town is the main service centre for the Upper Eden Valley and performs an important role for the farming community, accommodating a long-established auction mart located on Faraday Road. The town also performs a tourism role and is a popular destination for outdoor recreation in view of its proximity to the Yorkshire Dales National Park and North Pennines AONB, as well as being situated near to the mid-point of the Coast to Coast route. The linear core of the centre lies within a Conservation Area and comprises of predominantly small, constrained retail units contained within historic buildings.

The main foodstore within Kirkby Stephen is the Co-Operative supermarket located to the north of the town centre on Redmayne Road. The foodstore lies outside the town centre, however, it is well-related to the centre and acts as an anchor store for the town. In addition, there is a smaller Co-Operative store located within the defined town centre boundary towards the southern end of Market Street. The remaining convenience floorspace within the town centre comprises of a range of independent retailers, including greengrocers, newsagents, sweet shops, butchers and a bakery. There is also a small Spar convenience store located beyond the defined town centre boundary on High Street, which serves the day-to-day needs of residents to the south of the town.

There is a relatively limited representation of comparison goods retailers within Kirkby Stephen compared with the national average. The town centre's comparison retail offer is comprised entirely of independent retailers and there are no national multiple comparison retailers, which is a particular weakness for a centre of this size. However, the centre has a low proportion of charity shops.

There is a weekly on-street market held in the town, which is managed by Kirkby Stephen Town Council. The market takes place every Monday (including Bank Holiday Mondays) in the Market Square, with additional pitches available in Market Street. The market is, however, very small and not of particularly good quality.

There is a strong representation of pubs, cafés and restaurants within Kirkby Stephen, which is reflective of the tourism role that the centre plays, although it is noted that the Pennine Hotel within the Market Square has recently closed and was undergoing refurbishment / redevelopment at the time of our visit. The Upper Eden Visitor Centre is located within the Market Square and St Stephen's Church and Cloisters are an historic attraction to the northern edge of the town centre boundary. There are also two bed and breakfasts and a Youth Hostel within the town centre boundary and it is noted that the Kings Arms Hotel and Black Bull Hotel also provide guest accommodation.

There are a number of financial and professional services uses within Kirkby Stephen, including independent financial advisors, estate agents and solicitors and the major high street banks are represented in the form of the Barclays and HSBC branches on Market Street. There is however a lack of general office floorspace within the centre.

There are a range of community and civic facilities located to the edge of the town centre, including the Police Station, Fire Station and Kirkby Stephen Grammar School on Christian Head and the Kirkby Stephen Local Link on Vicarage Lane.

Retailer Representation

There are currently no national retailers represented within Kirkby Stephen Town Centre, with the exception of the Co-Operative foodstore on Market Street. The overwhelming majority of the existing retail offer within Kirkby Stephen therefore comprises of small, independent retailers selling a range of products.

The majority of units within the town centre are small, traditional shop units, as opposed to modern larger format retail premises, given the historic layout of the centre. The lack of larger retail units is a potential constraint to improving the comparison offer in Kirkby Stephen. It is therefore considered that the retail offer in Kirkby Stephen will continue to comprise of independent convenience and comparison retailers over the plan period.

Vacancies

There are 4 vacant units in the town centre, equating to an overall vacancy rate of 7%. This is well below the national average of 13%. Furthermore, the vacant units are spread across the centre and it is inevitable that there will always be a certain level of vacancy within the centre to account for the natural turnover of retailers over time. It is not therefore considered that the existing level of vacancy within Kirkby Stephen Town Centre harms the overall vitality and viability of the centre.

Pedestrian Flows

The volume of pedestrian flow during our visit to Kirkby Stephen was relatively low, despite the fact that there was a livestock sale taking place at the auction mart on Faraday Road. The level of pedestrian flow experienced during our visit to the centre is reflective of the findings of the AMT Benchmarking Report, which showed low levels of footfall from surveys undertaken in October 2012 both during market and non-market days.

There are no pedestrianised zones within Kirkby Stephen and the centre is also bisected by the A685. The A685 links the M6 at Tebay with the A66 at Brough and, although restrictions are in place on the use of the A685 by HGVs which provide clear highway safety and congestion benefits, the route remains heavily trafficked and there are issues with congestion through the town, particularly at peak periods. However, there is a pedestrian crossing located in close proximity to the Market Square and, despite the A685 being heavily trafficked, pedestrians are able to move relatively freely around the centre.

Accessibility

There is an existing free 77-space car park off Christian Head to the west of the town centre boundary, as well as a smaller surface level car park to the rear of the Market Square on Stoneshot. These car parks were extremely well-used at the time of our visit in October 2013, although this may have been as a result of it being auction day as, on other visits to the centre, the Christian Head car park has been less well-used. There is also a small amount of off-street parking within Market Square, as well as on-street parking on Market Street.

There are northbound and southbound bus stops located within the town centre at Market Square and outside the HSBC on Market Street respectively. The bus stops are served by two main services, which are detailed in the table contained below:

Service	Destinations	Frequency
563	Kirkby Stephen - Brough - Appleby - Penrith	8 services per day (Mon-Sat)
564	Brough - Kirkby Stephen - Ravenstonedale - Oxenholme - Kendal	4 services per day (Mon-Sat)

A further service (no. 572) operates on Wednesdays between November and Easter and provides a single morning service between Ravenstonedale, Kirkby Stephen, Brough and Barnard Castle returning in the afternoon.

Kirkby Stephen is also served by a train station on the Settle - Carlisle, although this lies some 2.4km from the town centre and is not particularly accessible from the centre due to the distances involved and the steep climb out of Kirkby Stephen towards the train station. There is existing cycle parking provision within the town centre outside the Black Bull Public House and pedestrian access to the town centre from the surrounding residential areas is also relatively straightforward.

Safety and Security

There is no CCTV within Kirkby Stephen, however, the centre has a pleasant character and generally feels safe.

Environmental Quality

All of Kirkby Stephen Town Centre is contained within the designated Kirkby Stephen Conservation Area. The majority of the commercial units within the town centre are well-maintained with attractive shop frontages, which helps contribute to the quality of the shopping environment. The small number of vacant units within the centre do not detract from the overall environment quality of the centre. The A685 which runs through the centre accommodates high volumes of traffic and the presence of on-street parking on Market Street can lead to the streetscape becoming car-dominated at times, which can detract from the overall environment quality of the centre. However, overall it is considered that Kirkby Stephen provides a high quality and attractive shopping environment.