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Planning. Design. Economics.

CROSS HILLS TOWN CENTRE HEALTH CHECK

FEBRUARY 2016

Cross Hills Town Centre Health Check

This town centre health check provides a snapshot of the current health of Cross Hills town centre. The assessment of town centre health is based on the indicators set out in National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) (Paragraph: 005 Reference ID: 2b-005-20140306) and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requirement for local planning authorities to assess and plan to meet the needs of main town centre uses in full. It is supported by primary research comprising:

- Site visit to the retail centre;
- Business owner surveys; and
- In-street customer surveys.

The primary information collected has been summarised in this document and full raw data sets are included as technical appendices to the 2015 Retail and Leisure Study (the 2015 Study). The findings are presented in an Infographic (first page), with further analysis, commentary, photographs and an updated land use plan given in the pages that follow.

The purpose of the health check is to form part of a robust retail evidence base to aid Local Plan preparation.

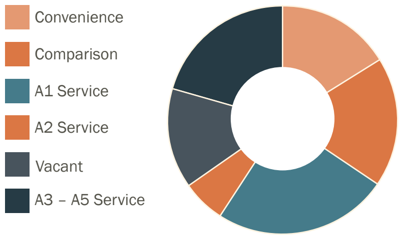
The Cross Hills Town Centre Health Check is focussed on the Retail Centre as defined by the Craven Local Plan (1999). NLP completed its health check on Monday 15 June 2015 between 4:00pm and 5:00pm.

Town Centre HEALTH CHECK

Cross Hills Town Centre Health Check

Key Indicators

01 DIVERSITY OF USES



A1: Shops - A2: Financial & Professional Services - A3: Food & Drink - A4: Drinking Establishments - A5: Hot Food Takeaway

- Proportion of convenience units is double the national average
- Proportion of comparison units is approximately 15% below the national average
- There are a number of dwellings and medical services within the Core Retail Area

02 PROPORTION OF VACANT STREET LEVEL PROPERTY

11.36% Cross Hills

11.84% National Average

03 CUSTOMERS' VIEWS AND BEHAVIOUR

- Main reason for visiting Cross Hills amongst those surveyed was for shopping for food goods only
- Majority of customers never visit Cross Hills for entertainment/leisure facilities
- On average, visits to Cross Hills were found to last less than 30 minutes

04 RETAILER REPRESENTATION AND INTENTIONS TO CHANGE REPRESENTATION

- Cross Hills contains one of the 31 'major retailers' identified by GOAD (Boots the Chemist), as well as national multiples Spar and Co-operative Food
- Majority of respondents to the business survey stated that they currently had no plans to change or diversify their businesses, or relocate to new premises

05 COMMERCIAL RENTS

[No reliable data available]

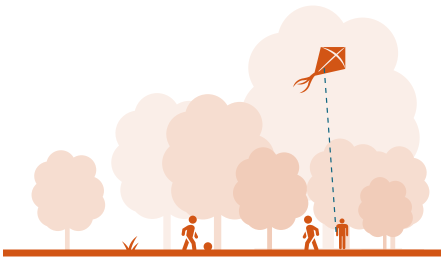
06 ACCESSIBILITY

- There are three car parks in the centre. Each offers free parking although the Co-op car park is limited to one hour and parking is restricted to 23 out of 24 hours at Milligans Field
- Traffic congestion is high, especially at the junction of the A6068 and the B6172
- The average journey time to the centre was less than five minutes

07 PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND OCCURRENCE OF CRIME

- No signs of graffiti, vandalism or antisocial behaviour observed, although the neglected nature of many of the buildings could add to the fear of crime
- 56% of customers surveyed felt safe on an evening, however 36% answered that they did not know, reflecting the lack of an evening economy in Cross Hills

08 STATE OF TOWN CENTRE ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



- Cross Hills has a more run-down feel compared to other centres within Craven
- Much of the street furniture is neglected and in need of repair/replacement
- 42% of people surveyed felt that the planting and landscaping was either quite poor or very poor.

CROSS HILLS OVERVIEW

Cross Hills (population 3,980 including Glusburn[1]) is located in the southernmost part of the District and is almost equidistant between Skipton to the north and Keighley to the south. The retail centre is located along Main Street which is surrounded by residential development which amalgamates within the settlements of Glusburn, Sutton-in-Craven and Eastburn and Steeton to the south-east.

This pattern of suburban development is unusual in Craven and is more akin to the settlement character of Keighley, Bradford and the surrounding areas. A large industrial area adjoins the north-east of Cross Hills.

DIVERSITY OF USES AND PROPORTION OF VACANT STREET LEVEL PROPERTY

Diversity of Uses

The diversity of main town centre uses in Cross Hills is shown in the below chart and table.

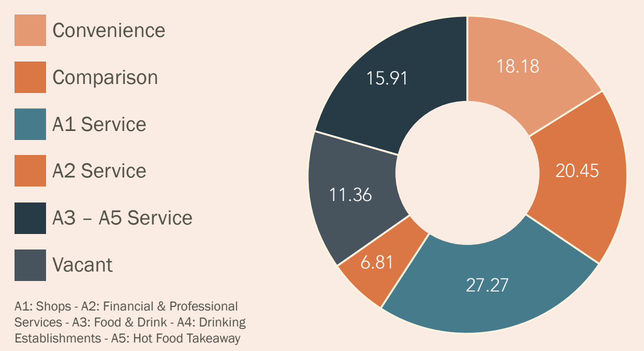


Figure 1: Diversity of uses in Cross Hills Town Centre

Use Category	Number of units	Percentage of units in Town Centre	National Average*
Convenience	8	18.18	8.40
Comparison	9	20.45	35.77
A1 Service	12	27.27	12.33
A2 Service	3	6.81	10.75
A3 – A5 Service	7	15.91	19.38
Vacant	5	11.36	11.84

Table 1: Diversity of uses in Cross Hills Town Centre

Source: NLP / Experian GOAD (2015)

*National Average as provided by GOAD (June 2015).

The diversity of uses in Cross Hills is markedly different to the national averages across all use categories. The proportion of convenience units is double the national average, whilst the proportion of comparison units is approximately 15% below the national average. The number of convenience outlets is increased by a high concentration of bakeries and sandwich shops.

The proportion of A1 service uses is also double the national average, due in part to a relatively large number of hair dressers and beauty salons. As in a number of other smaller centres across Craven District, the proportion of Class A2 service uses is below the national average.

In addition to the above uses, there is also a number of dwellings and medical services within the Core Retail Area, especially towards the western end of Main Street.

Proportion of Vacant Street Level Property

The proportion of vacant units within Cross Hills is just below the national average. The five vacant units represent an increase of two vacant units from the three vacant units recorded by surveys that informed the 2004 study.

The majority of the vacant units are located on the south-western side of Main Street. Whilst the number of and proportion of vacant units within the centre is not excessively high, the size of the units (in particular Dixon Target) creates relatively long inactive frontages in the vicinity of Hall Street and Prospect Street.

Figure 2 & 3: Vacant Units on Main Street

RETAILER REPRESENTATION AND COMMERCIAL RENTS

Retailer Representation and Intentions to Change Representation

Cross Hills contains one of the 31 'major retailers' identified by GOAD[2] (Boots the Chemist). In addition, the national multiples Spar and Co-operative have convenience outlets in the centre. The remainder of the units comprise independent businesses.

Cross Hills has the highest proportion of business operators who rely most on the local resident population (86%) based on the results of NLP's business survey, with the remainder of operators indicating a reliance on people from nearby towns, cities and rural areas.

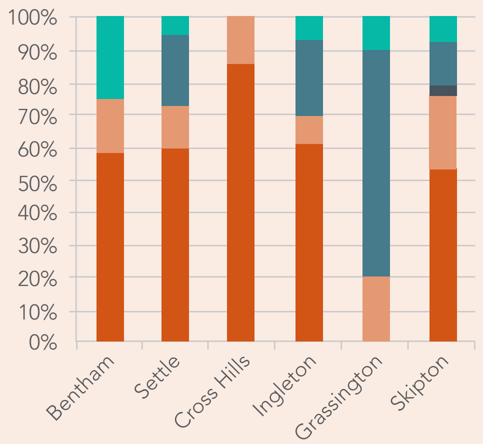


Figure 4: Customer base on which business operators most rely on

The majority of respondents to the business survey undertaken in Cross Hills stated that they currently had no plans to change or diversify their businesses, or relocate to new premises.

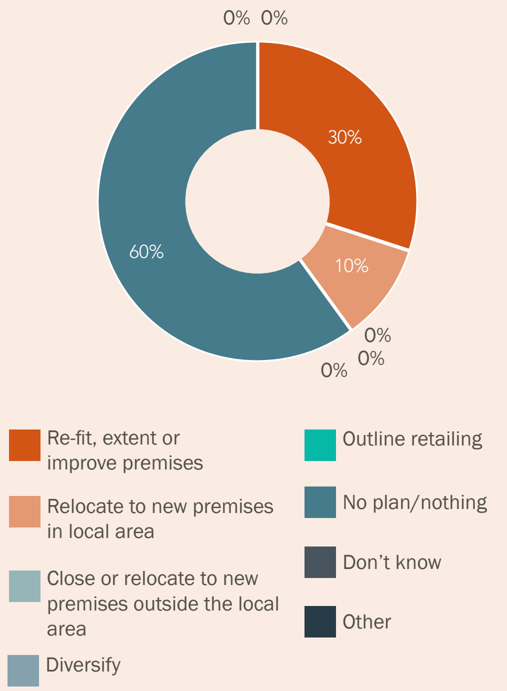


Figure 5: Business operator plans to change business in Cross Hills

However, 30% of respondents did state that they intend to re-fit, extend or improve their current premises. This is the highest proportion amongst the six centres surveyed in Craven, suggesting that retailers are optimistic about the future performance of their businesses. This view is supported by the results of the business survey (see Figure 7) with Cross Hills being the only centre in which no business operators expect the performance of their business to decline over the next 12 months.

Commercial Rents

No reliable data readily available.

Business Operator's Perceptions of Centre

As part of the town centre business surveys, business operators were asked to provide their opinions on the state of the retail centre in which they operate, as well as the performance of their own business.

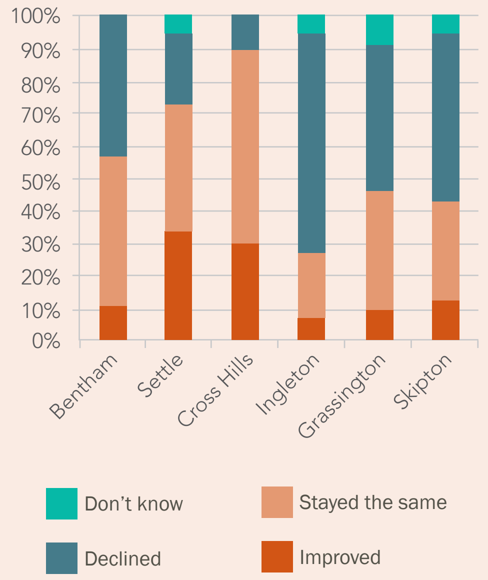


Figure 6: Business operators' opinions of performance of centres over last 12 months

As shown in Figure 6, Cross Hills has the lowest proportion of business operators who believe that the centre in which they are located has declined in the last 12 months, and only Settle has a higher proportion of business owners who believe that their centre has improved over the same period. Greater promotion and marketing of the town was clearly the most popular measure for improving the town in NLP's business survey.

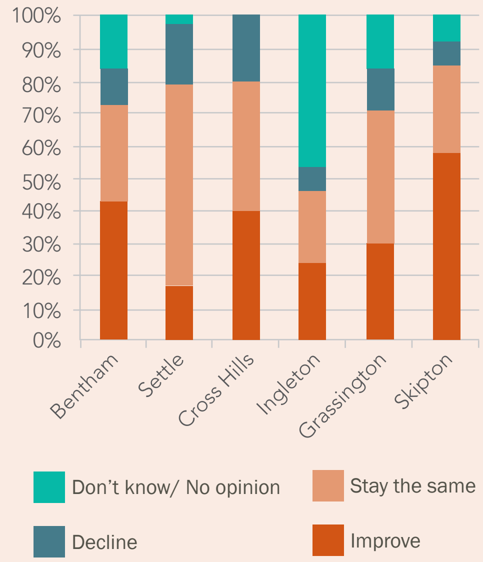


Figure 7: Business operators' expectations for the performance of their business over the next 12 months

The results of the business survey also show that business operators in Cross Hills are relatively optimistic about their future performance, with 80% stating that they expect their performance to stay the same, decline and improve.

The centres which are considered to be the biggest competition to business operators in Cross Hills are (the centre which is considered to be the biggest competition is listed first):

1. Skipton
2. Keighley
3. Silsden

The results of the household survey (see main report and accompanying appendices) show that, in terms of comparison shopping, the majority of comparison expenditure drawn away from Cross Hills is spent in Keighley, Skipton and Leeds.

ACCESSIBILITY

Formal car parks within Cross Hills comprise Hall Street car park and 'Milligan's Field' adjacent to the Co-operative food store (Milligan's Field includes two adjoining car parks - the area fronting the main road is owned by the Co-operative and the area to the rear is a Craven District Council owned asset). Each of the car parks offers free parking, although parking is limited to one hour maximum stay at the Co-operative and parking is restricted to 23 out of 24 hours in the Council owned section of Milligan's Field. Free on street parking is available in many of the residential side streets which adjoin Main Street.

Figure 8: Busy traffic on Main Street

During the undertaking of the NLP Health Check it was observed that traffic congestion is high, especially at the junction of the A6068 and the B6172.

Bus services operate along Main Street and routes link Cross Hills with Skipton, Keighley and Burnley. Although the Skipton to Leeds railway line passes to the north of Cross Hills there is no station in the town. The nearest station is Steeton and Silsden which is 2.4 miles from Cross Hills.

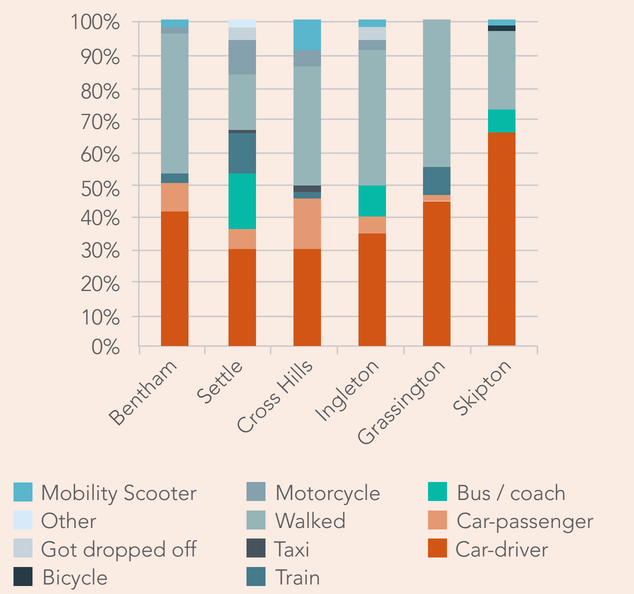


Figure 9: Visitors' mode of transport to centre

The results of the in-street survey show that the most commonly used mode of travel for visiting the centre was by car (44%), closely followed by walking (38%). Of those who had driven, 75% parked in the Milligan's Field car park. The average journey time to the centre was less than five minutes.

Opinions on the accessibility of Cross Hills by car, and the availability of car parking spaces were mixed. Approximately 36% of people surveyed felt that Cross Hills fared favourably in terms of accessibility by car when compared with other centres visited, whilst 20% felt that it compared poorly. 24% of participants also felt that the availability of car parking spaces was poor. A significant majority (69%) stated that levels of traffic congestion are poor compared to other centres. Measures to remove or reduce traffic congestion were the most popular suggestion amongst shoppers to improve the centre of Cross Hills in the in-street survey. The accessibility of Cross Hills by public transport is deemed to be good.

CUSTOMERS' VIEWS AND BEHAVIOUR, AND PERCEPTION OF SAFETY AND OCCURRENCE OF CRIME

Customers' Views and Behaviour

The main reason for visiting Cross Hills amongst those surveyed is for shopping for food goods. The majority of customers never visit Cross Hills for entertainment/leisure facilities and the main reason for visiting the centre, from the results of the in-street survey, is proximity to home (69% of participants).

Approximately 67% of people surveyed visit Skipton at least once a month for shopping/leisure and 49% use Keighley. Typically, visits to Cross Hills are for fewer than 30 minutes. As shown in Figure 10 customers spend less time in Cross Hills than in any other centre covered by this Study.

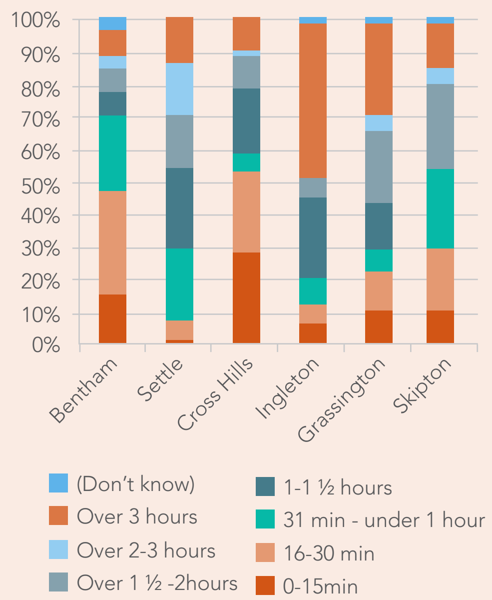


Figure 10: Customers' time spent in shopping area

Although customers acknowledged the quality of non-food shops within Cross Hills, many people surveyed felt that there was a poor range of comparison goods stores compared to other centres they visit, and this opinion is substantiated by the findings of the Health Check which shows the proportion of comparison goods stores is 15% below the national average. Opinions on the range and quality of food shops on the other hand were largely positive.

Generally, respondents to the in-street survey felt that both daytime and evening leisure facilities in Cross Hills are poor.

Perception of Safety and Occurrence of Crime

During the undertaking of the NLP Health Check no signs of graffiti, vandalism or anti-social behaviour were observed, although the neglected nature of many of the buildings could add to the fear of crime.

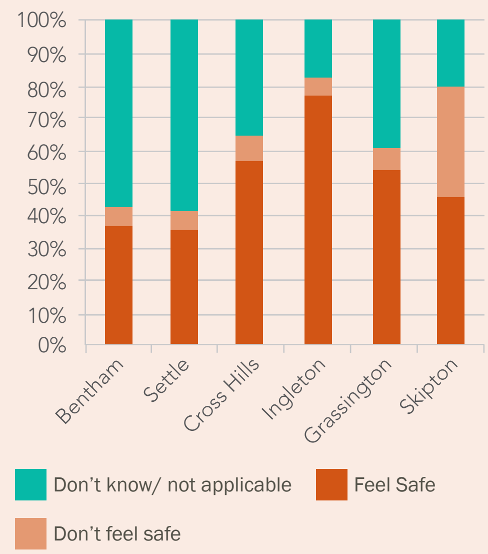


Figure 11: Proportion of visitors who said they feel safe / un-safe in town centre during evening hours

98% of people taking part in the in-street survey felt safe walking around the centre during the day. This fell to 56% when considering being in the centre during the evening, however 36% answered that they did not know, again reflecting the lack of an evening economy in Cross Hills.

The majority of people felt that increased security measures such as increased policing/CCTV use would not make them said they feel any safer when walking around the retail centre.

State of Town Centre Environmental Quality

Whilst Cross Hills has a different landscape character to other centres within the district, the centre is attractive. However, the high number of vacant units within the town centre detracts from the centre's environmental quality.

There is a lack of vegetation/landscaping within the Core Retail Area and much of the street furniture is neglected and in need of repair/replacement. A relatively high amount of banner style advertising potentially detracts from the environmental quality of the area.

Customer opinions on the environmental quality of the centre are varied when considering the response to the in-street survey. 42% of participants consider that the general shopping environment was either quite good or very good compared to other centres visited. However, views on the attractiveness of the built environment were mixed and 42% of people surveyed felt that the planting and landscaping was either quite poor or very poor.

Figure 12 : Neglected street furniture, Main Street

Figure 13 : Vinyl banner advertising

DIGITAL HEALTH

Data provided by Ofcom shows that there is good 4G mobile data coverage in Cross Hills. Wi-Fi hotspots are available at Cross Hills and District WMC and the Conservative Club, but it is not likely that these could be used freely by shoppers on Main Street.

There is a Post Office on Main Street which could be used for click and collect deliveries, however there are no CollectPlus services in or near to the retail centre. Opportunities to introduce these facilities should therefore be sought to improve accessibility for those wishing to purchase goods online.

Land use Plan

FOOTNOTES

1
Population estimate for 2013 as at 30th June 2012, Office for National Statistics

2
It should be noted that whilst the GOAD list of 31 major retailers is a helpful indicator of the presence of established high street multiples in a centre, the list has not been updated for a number of years. The list still includes Phones 4 U, which ceased operations in September 2014, and HMV which only has a handful of stores in its new guise. The full list can be viewed within the appendices of the 2015 Study.

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