Huntingdonshire
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Market Town Benchmarking

Measuring the performance of town centres

St Ives

ANNUAL REPORT - 2010

Introduction

This report provides details of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across 12 themed areas. Taken together, these indicators create a comprehensive portrait of the commercial life of the town, and are a valuable resource for economic development.

Using the data from the Market Town Benchmarking system, the report allows Town Managers to bring together statistical analysis with their own local knowledge of factors affecting or underlying the data, which can be added in the Local Commentary section for each KPI.

The KPI focus areas are:

KPI 1	**Total number of commercial units**
KPI 2	**Retail by Comparison/Convenience**
KPI 3	**Key attractors / multiple trader representation**
KPI 4	**Number of vacant units**
KPI 5	**Number of markets / traders**
KPI 6	**Prime retail property yields**
KPI 7	**Zone A Retail Rents**
KPI 8	**Footfall counts**
KPI 9	**Car Parking Availability and Usage**
KPI 10	**Business Confidence Survey**
KPI 11	**Visitor Satisfaction Survey**
KPI 12	**Shoppers Origin Survey**

Each graph and table shows the KPI breakdown for the town, as well as a regional comparator and the national average.

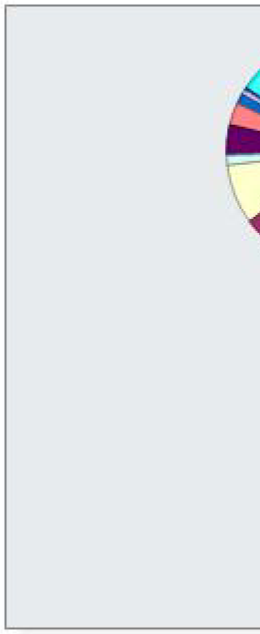
The East of England comparator group consists of the following 5 towns, Ramsey, Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots and Thetford. All 5 towns in the East of England comparator group had less than 150 A1 retailers in the town centre.
The national group is taken from 73 towns across england and the average is calculated regardless of town size.
The regional comparator represents an average of all similar sized towns in the region. The two size bands are 1) Less than 150 A1 Businesses and 2) 150 or more A1 Businesses.
St Ives is classified as a small town as it has fewer than 150 A1 businesses located within the defined town centre boundary.

The national average is calculated regardless of town size.

KPI 1: Total Number of Commercial Units

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the “commercial offer” throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

Use Classification	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National total
A1 (Shops)	39.72%	49.60%	53.93%
A2 (Financial & Professional Services)	25.09%	19.38%	13.51%
A3 (Food & Drink)	8.36%	9.46%	9.82%
A4 (Drinking Establishments)	1.39%	2.39%	2.57%
A5 (Hot food Takeaways)	4.18%	4.90%	3.77%
B1 (Business)	3.14%	1.82%	2.95%
B2 (General Industry)	1.39%	0.46%	0.92%
B8 (Storage and Distribution)	0.70%	0.23%	0.16%
C1 (Hotels and Hostels)	0.35%	0.68%	1.64%
C2 (Residential Institutions)	0.00%	0.11%	0.23%
C3 (Dwelling Houses)	0.00%	0.00%	1.38%
D1 (Non residential institutions)	7.32%	5.93%	4.71%
D2 (Assembly and Leisure)	2.09%	1.25%	1.10%
SG (Unique Establishments)	6.27%	3.76%	3.31%
St Ives total :	287 units		



Local Commentary on this year’s figures:

Of the 287 active commercial units in St Ives town centre 114 (39.72%) are used for ‘A1’ (shops – retail) activities. This is considerably lower than both comparator groups (East of England 49.60% and national 53.93%).

72 of units (25.09%) are currently used for financial and professional services, the result significantly higher than both the national and east of England comparator groups (13.51% and 19.38% respectively).

In percentage terms, St Ives (13.93%) has slightly fewer food and drink businesses (A3-5) in the town centre than both the East of England (16.75%) and the national average (16.16%). This is suprising given that St Ives is well known locally for its range of high quality pubs, wine bars, cafes and restaurants, such as the Tap Room and Surf and Turf.

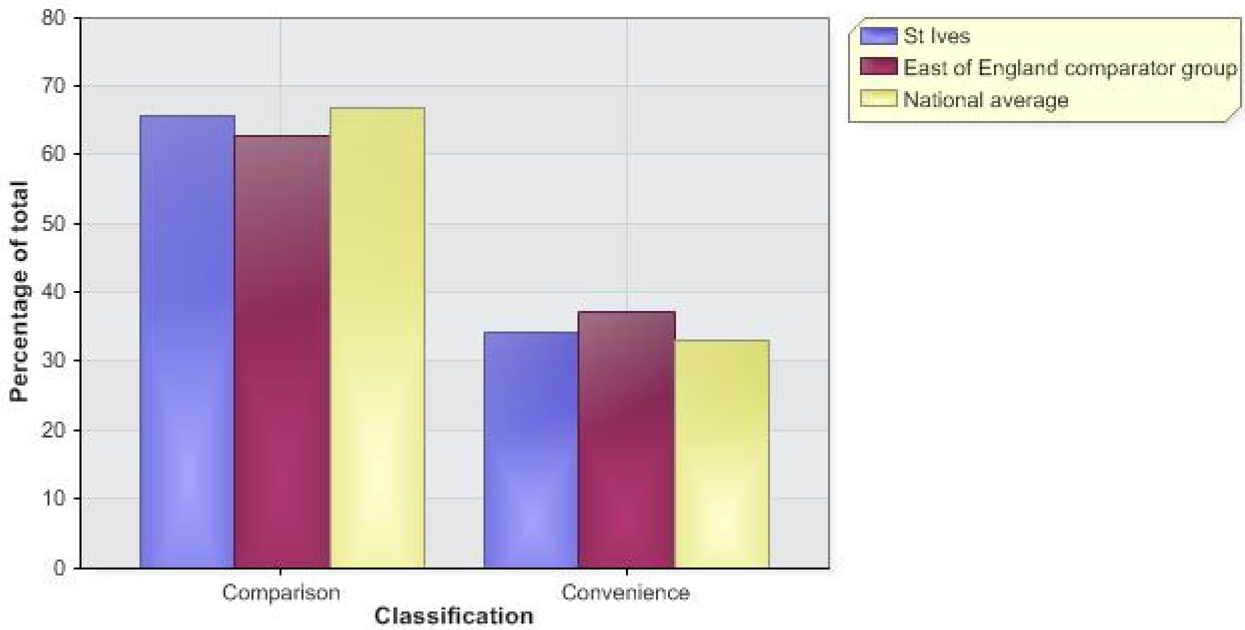
The night time economy also plays an important role in the town's economy. St Ives has 2 night clubs, 'The Box' and 'Ice Bar', but they are classified within the 'SG' category.

18 units (6.27%) are occupied by 'unique establishments', which includes a taxi firms and night clubs. A much higher proportion of units compared to the East of England comparator group (3.76%) and the national average (3.31%).

KPI 2: Retail by Comparison / Convenience

Retail units selling goods can be split into two different types Comparison and Convenience. presence of a variety of shops in a shopping centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers. The split has only been applied to units which are A1 retail use.

	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National average
Comparison	66%	63%	67%
Convenience	34%	37%	33%



Of the 114 A1 active commercial retail units in St Ives, 75 (66%) are used for comparison shopping, stores including 'New Look', 'West End DIY' and 'Piggotts the Jeweller'.

Convenience stores including ‘Pound Land’ and ‘Mr Pick n Mix’ take up the remaining 34% of A1 units.

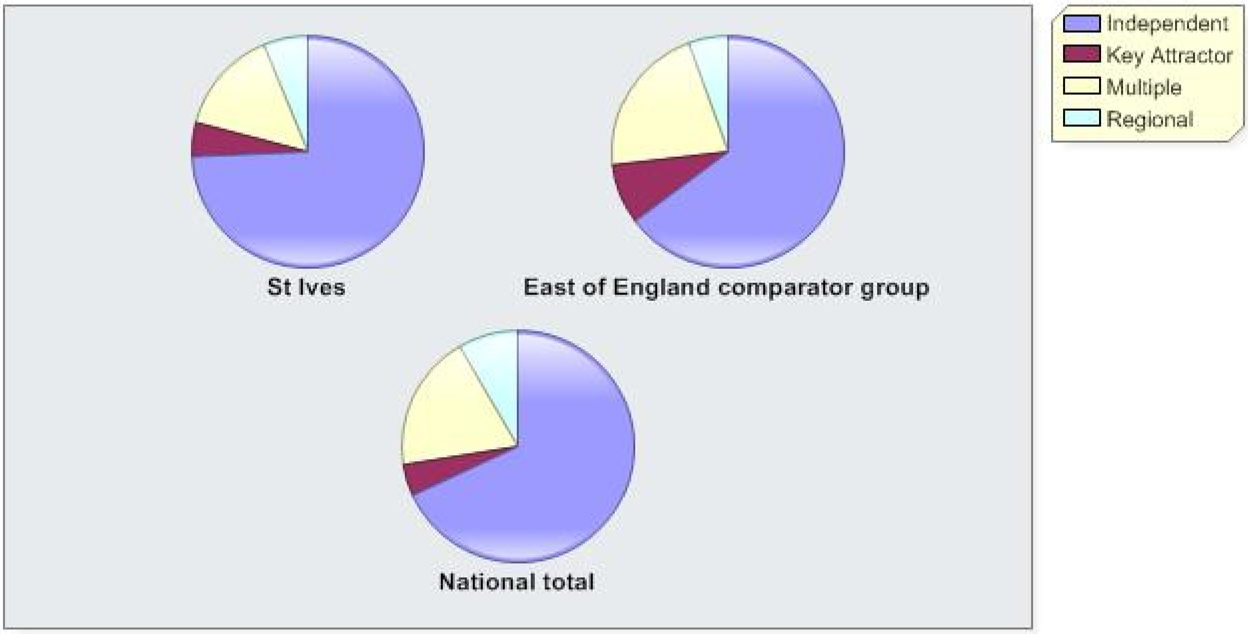
Despite having fewer convenience retail units in St Ives, the floor space attributed to them is likely to be proportionately higher. Waitrose and Budgens who have been classified as convenience occupy two of St Ives’ largest retail units.

The percentage of A1 stores being used for comparison shopping has increased slightly from 64% in 2009.

KPI 3: Key attractors / multiple trader representation

The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. National retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. However, the character and profile of a town often also depends on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a "unique selling point" and help distinguish it from other competing centres. A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town

	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National total
Independent	74%	64%	68%
Key Attractor	5%	9%	4%
Multiple	15%	22%	19%
Regional	6%	5%	8%



The mix of retail in St Ives is similar to both comparator groups, but with a slightly higher independent representation. Of the active commercial units in St Ives town centre, the majority (74% - 142 units) are used by independent retailers.

St Ives has 9 'key attractors, taking up 5% of all active commercial units in the town centre. The key attractors in St Ives include 'WH Smith', 'Waitrose' and 'New Look'.

A high proportion of the 'multiple' stores are high street banks, including 'National Westminster Bank Plc', 'Lloyds Bank Plc' and 'Barclays Bank PLC'

KPI 4: Number of vacant units

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. Whilst low vacancy rates do not necessarily indicate a healthy economy, the presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres. Understanding the reasons behind closures can therefore also provide some very valuable pointers.

Take up of empty units over time is a vital function of the town centre management process. Signs of or external improvements such as a refits or a new shopfront send strong signals that fortunes are on the way up. Across the region, prospering and growing businesses can sometimes be translocated or encouraged to branch out into new premises. Certainly news of substantial investment or taking on additional staff makes excellent headlines for media releases.

	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National total
Occupied	91%	91%	92%
Vacant	9%	9%	8%

When the survey was undertaken 9% (27) of all commercial units in St Ives town centre were vacant, the same as the East of England comparator group (9%) but slightly above the national average (8%).

The vacancy rate has increased 1 percentage point since the 2009 survey - the same increase as the national average.

The following table shows the number of vacant units per street:

Bridge Street x 3	Manor Mews x 2
Cromwell Mews x 3	Merryland x 1
Crown Street x 2	New Road x 3
Foundary Walk x1	Ramsey Road x 1
Free Church Passage x 1	Station Road x 1
The Broadway x 6	West Street x 3
Total vacant units - 27	

KPI 5: Number of markets / traders

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g. a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

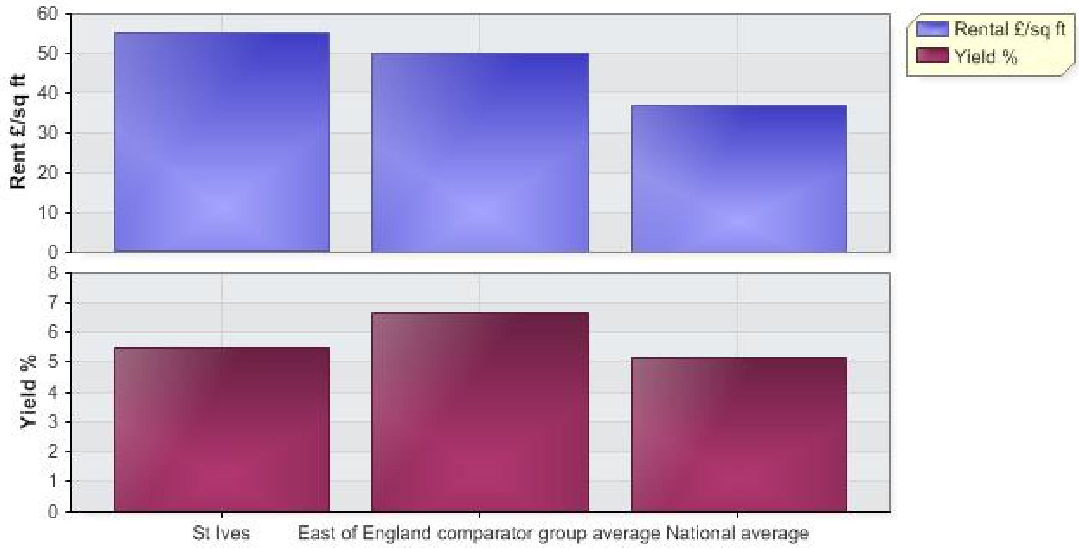
	East of England comparator group	National
Markets	2	2
Traders	18	27

No data collected.

St Ives is host to two weekly charter markets (Monday and Friday) and a farmers market twice a month (1st and 3rd week of the month). These markets are a predominant feature of the town and play an important role in attracting visitors from outside the town.

KPI 6: Prime retail property yields & KPI 7: Zone A Retail Rents

The values for prime retail property yield and Zone A rentals are the “industry” benchmarks for the relative appeal of a location with its users and with the owners or investors in property. All real estate has a value and this value is based on the return on investment that can be levered out of the site. As these indicators rise and fall, they provide a barometer of success or failure and, because the same property dimensions are assessed to determine them, they can be used as an indicator of improving or declining fortunes for
towns. In particular retail rents can provide a useful indication of a town’s performance and highlight how attractive it is to businesses. Conversely, where rents are falling it can be an indicator of decline.



	St Ives	East of England comparator group average	National average
Rental £/sq ft	55	50	37
Yield %	6	7	5

The results show zone A rental costs (£55/sq ft) are significantly higher than both comparator groups (East of England - £50sq/ft and national average £37/sqft).

Despite the relatively high rent costs, the yield on the properties (6%) lays within the two comparator groups.

Both the rent costs and yield for zone A commercial units have remained the same since 2009. The results correlate with other research which shows footfall in the town has also remaining buoyant during the economic downturn.

KPI 8: Footfall Counts

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or shoppers is vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it, provided there is ample available disposable income in that population. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

The quiet and peak times are an attempt to track the base, background footfall that keeps the centre ticking over and yet profitable, compared with more hectic occasions such as market day when there is a buzz to the place and customers are encouraged to linger longer and spend more. The intention is to record these numbers over a period of time to gain an insight into the success of local initiatives to build numbers and grow the appeal and sustainability of the town against its competitors

	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National
busy	154	232	143
quiet	77	160	99

Results show that footfall is around 50% higher during a busy day compared to a quiet day. The St Ives market day was the ‘busy’ period for St Ives. The appeal of the market boosts numbers in the town, and this was reflected with a higher than the national average footfall count during the time period.

KPI 9: Car Parking Availability and Usage

These days a large proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers is the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

	St Ives	East of England comparator group	National
Short Stay	263 (37%)	471 (39%)	344 (38%)
Long Stay	433 (61%) (11 of which are for disabled use)	632 (53%)	331 (37%)
On Street	17 (2%) (4 of which are for disabled use)	94 (8%)	226 (25%)
Total	713	1197	901
Avg Occupancy - busiest time	79%	68%	83%
Avg Occupancy -	77%	73%	74%

quietest time			
Illegal Parking - Quiet time	0	23	8
Illegal Parking - Busy time	0	17	10

St Ives town centre is served by 713 car parking spaces, 433 of which (61%) are classified as ‘Long Stay’ spaces. Just 17 spaces are available ‘on street’.

The results show that St Ives town centre has fewer parking spaces compared to both the national average and the East of England comparator group.

Car parking occupancy rates were high during the quiet period in St Ives when compared to both comparator groups. 79% of car parking spaces are occupied during busy times, and 77% occupied during quiet times.

KPI 10: Business Confidence Survey

By engaging the businesses directly a clear picture of what their needs are can be established. Town centre initiatives can then be put in place to have a positive impact. Here is an extract from this information.

No data was collected.

KPI 11: Visitor Satisfaction Survey

By engaging the visitors directly a clear picture of what their needs are can be established. Town centre initiatives can then be put in place to have a positive impact. Here is an extract from this information.

1. Personal Information	St Ives	National
Male	20%	37%
Female	80%	63%

	St Ives	National
16 - 25	6%	11%
26 - 35	8%	11%
36 - 45	6%	15%
46 - 55	30%	17%
56 - 65	26%	20%
Over 65	24%	26%

The majority (80%) of respondents surveyed were aged 46 years or older, this compared to the national average of 63%. Just 6% were aged between 16 and 25.

2. What is the main purpose of your visit to the town centre today?

	St Ives	National
Work	24%	17%
Convenience Shopping - e.g. food	30%	35%
Comparison Shopping - e.g. clothes	10%	10%
Access services - e.g. Bank, Library	8%	16%
Leisure - e.g. eat, drink, go to the gym	8%	11%
Other	20%	12%

Table 1: Appendix A - Pg 15

40% of respondents stated that their main purpose for visiting the town centre was to shop (30% convenience, 10% comparison). 24% were in the town to work.

The results would suggest that the town centre has a diverse range of activities and services on offer, which help to attract visitors into the town.

3. How often do you visit the town centre?

	St Ives	National
Daily	36%	32%
More than once a week	36%	36%
Weekly	12%	16%
Fortnightly	8%	7%
More than once a Month	0%	2%
Once a month or less	4%	3%
First Visit	4%	2%

The majority of respondents visit the town on a regular basis. 84% of respondents stated that they visit the town centre at least once a week. The results closely match the national average.
The number of new visitors is proportionately higher (4%) than the national average (2%). Those visiting for the first time are likely to be tourists who are attracted to the picturesque historic market town.

4. How did you travel into the town centre today?

	St Ives	National
On Foot	22%	38%
Car	62%	47%
Bus	6%	11%
Bicycle	8%	2%
Motorbike	2%	1%
Train	0%	0%
Other	0%	1%

Table 2: Appendix B - Pg 16

Over half of visitors (62%) to the St Ives town centre arrive by car, which is significantly higher than the national average (47%).

This is likely to have been higher than the national average as St Ives' catchment area includes a number of rural villages including, Needingworth, the Hemingfords, and Woodhurst. The residents of the villages tend to be more reliant on personal transport to get into the town. St Ives is also relatively affluent and most families and have access to private transport.

Just 22% travelled into the town by foot; lower than the national average (38%).

Just 6% of respondents stated that they travelled into town by bus. The percentage is low considering St Ives bus station is centrally located and acts as a hub for travel between Cambridge, Huntingdon and the surrounding towns and villages. The introduction of the guided bus should help boost the numbers using public transport when travelling into the town.

5. How do you rate the physical appearance of the town centre?

	St Ives	National
Very Good	24%	9%
Good	62%	59%
Poor	14%	26%
Very Poor	0%	6%

86% of respondents rated the physical appearance of St Ives town centre as either 'Very good' or 'Good'. The town outperformed the national average (68%) by 18 percentage points.

6. How do you rate the cleanliness of the town centre?

	St Ives	National
Very Good	10%	10%

Good	82%	67%
Poor	6%	20%
Very Poor	2%	3%

Visitors also rated the cleanliness of the town centre highly. 92% of respondents gave a rating of either ‘very good’ or ‘good’, compared to the national average of 77%.
The results reflect the resources dedicated to street cleansing in the town.

7. How do you rate the variety of shops in the town centre?

	St Ives	National
Very Good	0%	6%
Good	66%	41%
Poor	34%	44%
Very Poor	0%	10%

66% of respondents rated the variety of shops in the town centre as either ‘very good’ or ‘good’. The results fair well against the national average of just 47%, this would suggest St Ives has a strong retail mix.
No respondents rated the variety of shops in the town centre as ‘very poor’.

8. How do you rate the leisure and cultural activities in the town centre?

	St Ives	National
Very Good	15%	8%
Good	78%	49%
Poor	7%	35%
Very Poor	0%	8%

93% of visitors rated the leisure and cultural activities in the town centre as either ‘very good’ or ‘good’. No respondents gave a rating of ‘very poor’. St Ives scored well against the national average of 57%.

Despite this just 8% of respondents stated that their purpose of the visit was to undertake leisure/cultural activities (Q2).

9. What are the best aspects of the town?
No data collected
Table 3: Appendix C - Pg 16

10. How long do you intend to stay on your visit?

	St Ives	National

Less than an hour	6%	28%
1 - 2 hours	39%	40%
2 - 4 hours	20%	15%
4 - 6 hours	16%	11%
All day	18%	5%

Visitors to St Ives intended to stay for longer compared to the national average. This includes 18% of respondents who planned to stay the entire day, significantly higher than the 5% national average.

The findings would suggest that St Ives has the ability to attract customers, both tourists and visitors to the town for a sustained period of time with its mix of retail, cultural activities, food and drink out lets and services.

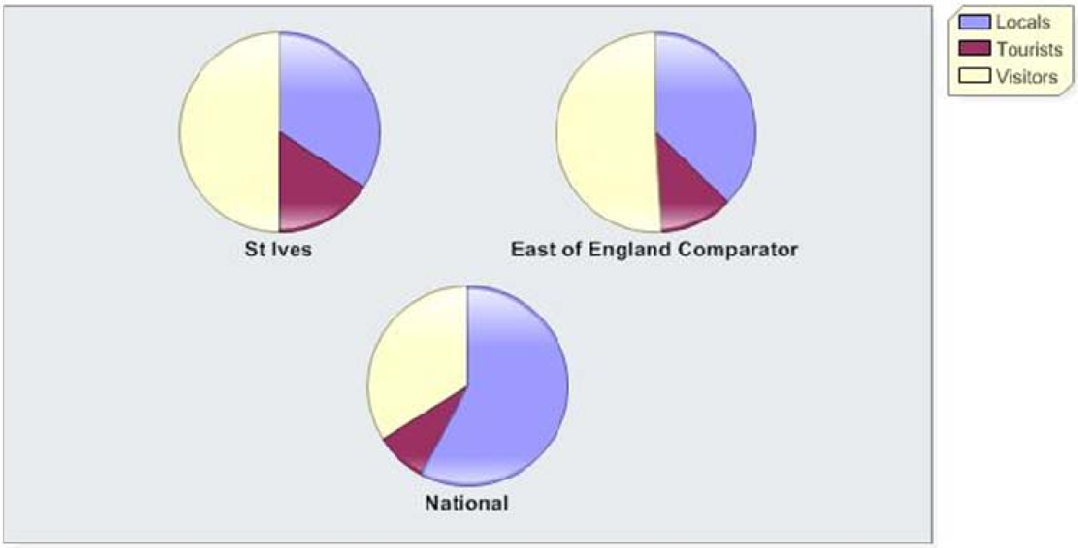
11. What TWO suggestions would you make to improve the town centre?

Please see appendix D – Pg 16

KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Survey

This KPI tracks the general area that your visitors originate from. This data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature at specific parts of the wider catchment for your town to encourage others to make the journey. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns or other elements of your action plan by gauging the penetration into the population of their understanding of the benefits your town offers. Finally, it will be useful to track the changes over time and the impact of projects that are designed to enhance the appeal of your town to a wider market, such as events.

	St Ives	East of England Comparator	National
Locals	34%	37%	58%
Tourists	16%	12%	8%
Visitors	50%	51%	34%



Results suggest that St Ives attracts tourist visitors (16% of respondents) almost double the percentage compared to the national average (8%).

Comments & suggestions

Displayed below are the comments that have been left for the KPI10 and KPI11 surveys.

KPI10 Q1 - No Response

KPI10 Q8 – No Response

C KPI10 Q9 – No Response

KPI10 Q10b – No Response

KPI10 Q11 Suggestions

Appendix A - KPI11 Q2

volunteer at the Corn Exchange
help at Country Market
Book launch
Poundland
Church bazaar
popped over to see what is here
All Saints Bazaar
Church fete
Christmas Fayre
volunteering

Appendix B - KPI11 Q4 – No Response

Appendix C - KPI11 Q9

market
river
Free Church
seeing friends without expecting to

Appendix D - KPI11 Q11 Suggestions

Need better pavements pedestrianise centre please
less charity shops
get rid of vagrants
keep up the good work
I like it just as it is
Improve pavements, free car parking, remove unwanted street furniture
Guided bus to be functioning
Independent book shop something like Woolies
more individual shops and make more use of Corn Exchange during the week
fewer estate agents
more marked cycleways
a shop that sells jeans, trainers, toys
focus on promoting the shops and less on the markets
better Post Office and get the guided bus running
less parking
need more variety of shops
less parking
more variety of shops including music shop
enforce parking restrictions and more variety of shops
It's OK as it is
bring a Primark here