Aylesbury Fieldwork

Introduction - Main Changes In Aylesbury

In the last 20 years Aylesbury has undergone many changes, in aid to compete with other larger shopping areas, such as Milton Keynes and Watford. The main changes, which have occurred include:

- The Odeon Cinema was built in year 2000, possibly because the sphere of influence was too big for the smaller Odeon cinema. Therefore a larger one was built. In addition this may attract an increased amount of people to the CDB.
- Bars were built in conjunction with the cinema, increasing the diversity in Aylesbury CBD, and therefore appealing to a larger age group.
- Hales Leys was opened in the 1980's, which added more shops to the area, and added to the variety. Hale Leyes, is an indoor shopping centre, thus allowing more pleasant shopping, and possibly making it more appealing.
- Friars Square was completely refurbished, and re-opened in 1996. This improved the overall environment in the shopping centre, attracting more customers and making shopping, again, more pleasant.
- The pedestrianisation of the High Street, allowed the area to become safer for the public, therefore people possibly used the shops more.

<u>Primary Data</u>

1. Land Use Mapping

This will help to identify the different types of building in the CBD. In addition land use mapping will help to identify how diverse the CBD of Aylesbury is.

2. Questionnaires

This involves asking a certain number of males and females a series of questions. Allowing us to find out Aylesbury's sphere of influence, why and how often they visit. After they have been taken, I can analyse the results, and see whether the changes made to Aylesbury have had any impact on people's thoughts of the area, and how diverse it is.

3. Pedestrian Counts

These are taken in the eleven different areas in Aylesbury, and will be taken for 5 minutes. Therefore, this enables me to identify the busiest, most popular areas. In addition, areas with low counts are possible problem areas.

4. Environmental Quality Index

This illustrates what the overall environment is like in each area. I would expect the environment to be generally better in the CBD, and this also will help identify areas which need improvements.

<u>Secondary Data</u>

1. Leaflets/Books about Aylesbury

These will help me to gain a brief history of Aylesbury, and give me a further insight into the area.

Conclusion

The results of my primary data, especially the pedestrian counts, indicate that the CBD is clearly located around Friars Square and Market Square. Friars Square was recently refurbished, into a completely undercover shopping complex, a clear example of beautification, as decorative plants and fountains were added. This may have been an influential factor into why many popular chain stores have now located there, such as HMV. Therefore more people are attracted to the shopping area, due to the diversity of shops. In addition, the environmental quality index is high, thus appealing to more people and shops. However, 65% of people answered on the questionnaire that refurbishing Friars Square was not the greatest improvement. This could possibly be due to people comparing it to larger, competing shopping centres such as Milton Keynes and Watford. This demonstrates that people are more concerned with the shopping environment. Market Square has the highest average pedestrians, however this is most probably due to people walking between Friars Square and Hale Leys.

Hale Leys was built in the 1980's as another indoor shopping centre. This attracted a number of well known shops such as River Island and Dixons. Hale Leys is clearly less popular than Friars Square, indicated by the pedestrian count (116) and it contains fewer high order shops. This is possibly due to the area being relatively small and the overall environment being not being as good as Friars Square. Therefore this may attract fewer customers and more well known chain stores.

Part of the High Street was pedestrianised, providing a safer environment for shoppers. In addition to this the overall appearance has improved, such as the brick paths, however, there is still a substantial amount of litter, probably due to the fast food shops located along the street. The safety of the street may draw in more chain stores, i.e. Marks and Spencers and WH Smith. The high pedestrian count here (264) is possibly due to people using the High Street as a through route to get into the centre. The non pedestrianised section of the High Street contains mainly independent low/medium order shops and the environmental quality was very low here. Therefore fewer chain stores locate here, which is clearly shown on the high street.

Other areas of Aylesbury, such as Kingsbury Square, Buckingham Street, Cambridge Street and Temple Street, are just on the edge of the CBD. These are clearly areas of decline, with many "unpopular" and low order shops, which is shown by the low pedestrian counts, especially at Cambridge Street. However, a vacant shop in Kingsbury Square was recently converted in a restaurant/bar, which appears to be occurring across the CBD. These particular areas scored relatively low on the environmental quality index, therefore working as less as an incentive for shops to locate there and for people to visit. It is possibly Aylesbury's next step to regenerate these areas, in an attempt to make the more popular.

There are regions which are beyond the CBD, for example the Vale Retail Park, which was possibly a zone of discard before, as now large superstores, such as JJB Sports and PC World have located there. Therefore, the Retail Park is now a zone of assimilation, and this is a clear example of Aylesbury diversifying.

Evaluation

The pedestrian counts were taking on a weekday, at lunch time; therefore more people would be around, including people from work. The pedestrian counts could have been more accurate if we did them over three separate days. However, this would have required more time, which we were limited to.