

In my geography fieldwork enquiry, I will be testing four hypotheses to investigate the form and retail pattern of High Wycombe. I will be investigating shopping patterns and types of land use etc to prove four hypotheses. The hypotheses that I will be testing are:

- **1.** High Wycombe will fit Hoyt's urban model.
- **2.** Comparison shops will cluster together, convenience shops will disperse within High Wycombe.
- **3.** Pedestrian density will be greatest in the town centre.
- **4.** Environmental quality will be highest in the town centre.

I have chosen to do the study in High Wycombe because it has a wide range of different shops, resulting in a good variety of fairly accurate results.

#### Local information and geographical background on High Wycombe



High Wycombe lies along the River Wye, at the edge of the Chiltern Hills and on the fringe of the London metropolitan area. High Wycombe is the largest town in Buckinghamshire and was once the home to Europe's largest manufacturers and distributors of furniture. The town is noted for furniture, especially Windsor chairs, made from local beech wood. High Wycombe is situated in the centre of the Thames Valley and it is surrounded by many areas of outstanding natural beauty. It is ideally situated for enjoying a complete mix of

different activities and interests including social and commercial opportunity. High Wycombe has been transformed in recent years from a small market town with little social appeal, to a large University town which is hectic and lively with life and purpose. The shopping in High Wycombe has also grown. There are over 250 different shops to choose from, spread out between the Octagon and Chilterns Shopping Centres, the High Street, Frogmoor and the connecting streets of White Hart Street, Church Street and Castle Street. High Wycombe Market, located in the High Street, now plays a prominent part in the community, providing excellent quality clothes, food, music and general items at a very reasonable price.

### **These maps show High Wycombe at different scales:**

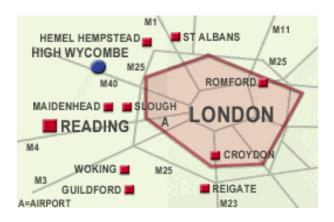
This map shows where High Wycombe is within Europe:

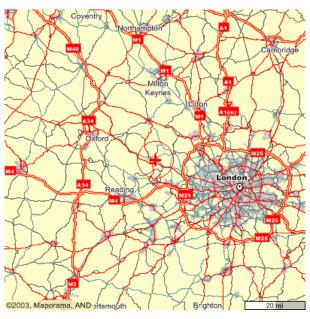
This map shows High Wycombe within the UK:



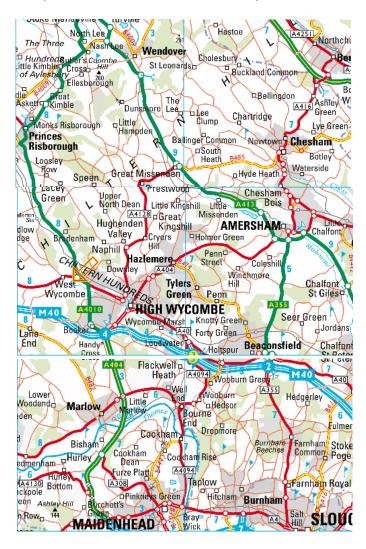


# These maps show High Wycombe Within London:





# This is a map showing where High Wycombe is within Bucks County:



## **Method of data collection**

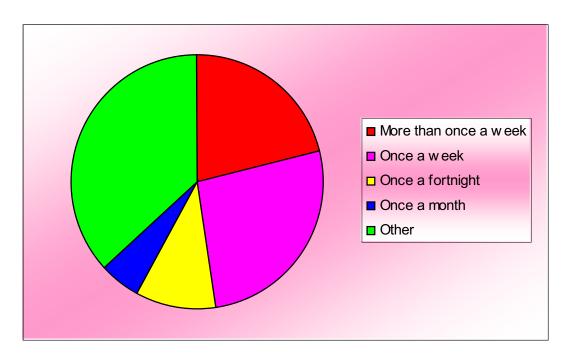
What needs collecting?	How is it collected?	Why do I need to collect it?	When is it collected?
Shopping quality index	Studying the types of shops, other land use groups, Retail organisation and the quality of goods in the area and giving them a score between 1 and 5.	To prove whether Hypothesis 2 is correct or incorrect (comparison shops will cluster together, convenience shops will disperse within High Wycombe)	Thursday afternoon- Between 1 and 2 pm.
Street Appearance index	Studying the street furniture, shopping crowds, Street cleanliness, exterior appearance and vacant premises in the area and giving each of these a score in between 1 and 5 which will be added to the final shopping quality total at the end.	To prove whether Hypothesis 4 is correct or incorrect.	Thursday afternoon- Between 1 and 2 pm.
Environmental quality index	Looking at the amount of litter, traffic flow etc. We then also gave these scores from 1 and 5 then adding these up for the final score for environmental quality.	Also to prove whether Hypothesis 4 is correct or incorrect.	Thursday afternoon- Between 1 and 2 pm.

Pedestrian total	Two people standing back to back at one site, count the number of people walking past on each side of the street for 2 minutes.	To see whether the area gets busier as you move further from the CBD.	Thursday afternoon- Between 2 and 2:30 pm.
Types of Urban Land use	Each group was given a square of area from a map to explore the types of land use in that area. We filled in a sheet to state what kind of houses there were in that area and the types of retail, industry, transport etc.	To prove whether hypothesis 1 is correct or incorrect.	Thursday morning- Between 11 and 11:30 am.
Questionnaire	We were given a sheet which had four questions on it. We went round and asked the people we saw and filled in the answers if they were prepared to answer them.	To collect information about the shopping habits of people who visit High Wycombe, to help me to investigate my hypotheses.	Thursday afternoon- At about 1pm.

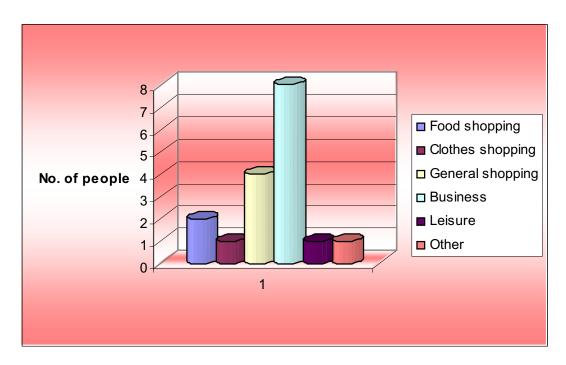
## **Presentation of Results**

### **High Wycombe Questionnaire**

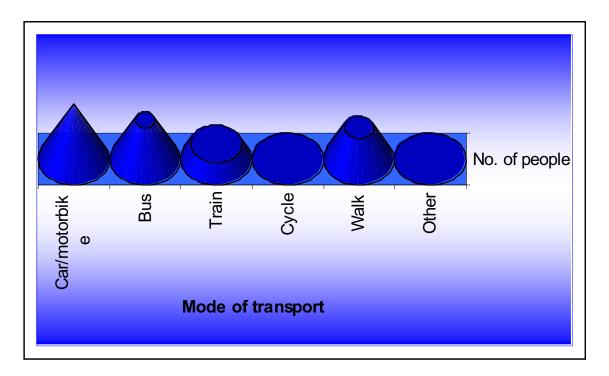
1. How often do you come to High Wycombe?



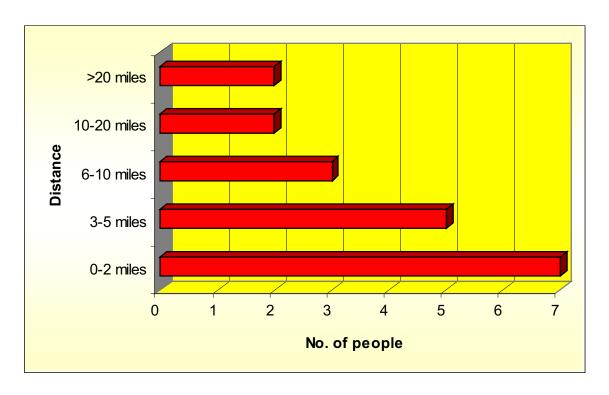
2. For what reason did you come to High Wycombe today?



### 3. How did you get here today?



### 4. How far have you travelled?

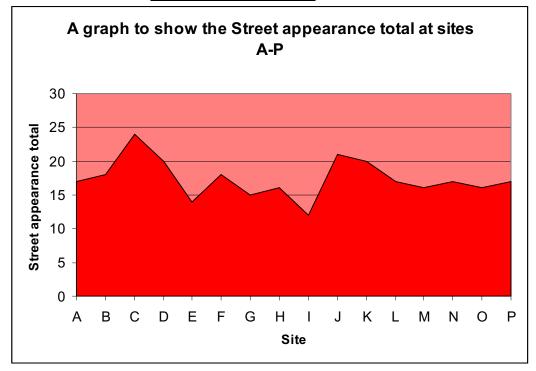


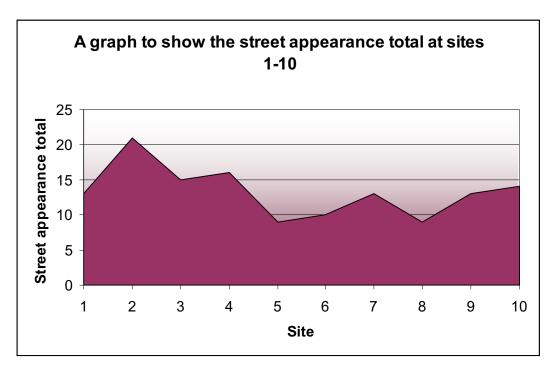
## **Shopping Quality**



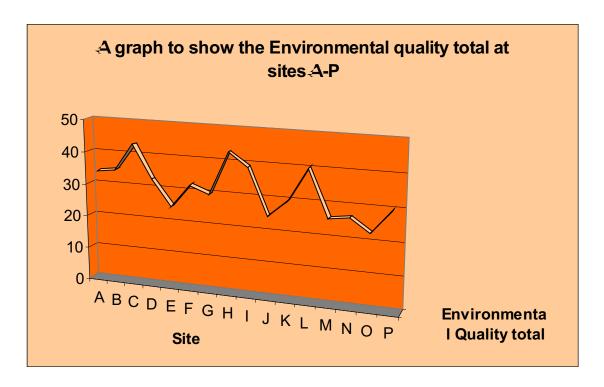


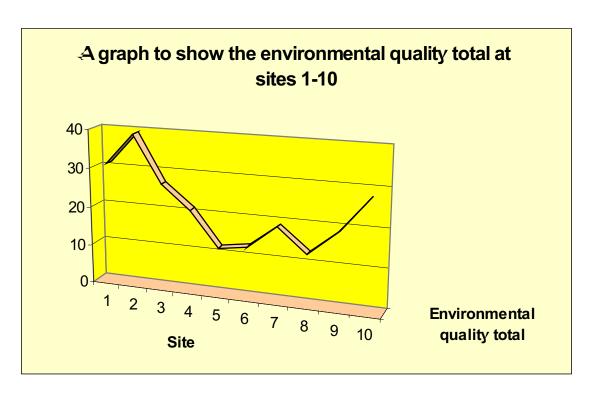
## **Street Appearance**



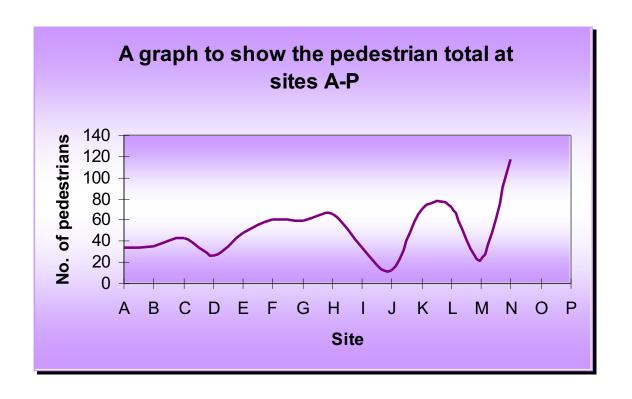


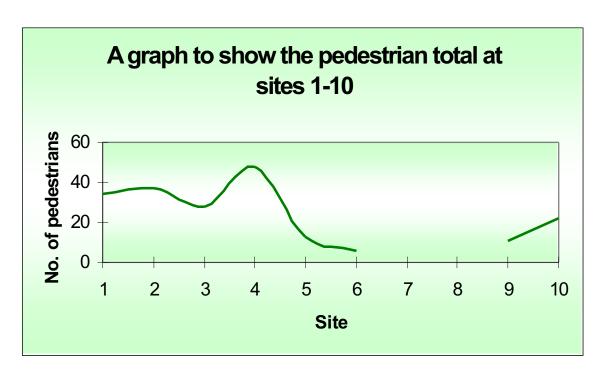
## **Environmental quality**





## **Pedestrian Total**





### **Data Interpretation**

#### Results of questionnaire

My results show that most of the people we asked visit High Wycombe once a week or more. A majority of them had come for business purposes and quite a few for general shopping. Many had travelled by car/motorbike, bus, or walked and most had travelled a distance of 0-2 miles. This indicates that many people live locally and only travel to the area to buy low order, convenience goods. I think that this maybe because we did the survey on a Thursday when many of the school children would have been at school which is probably why there weren't many people who were there for shopping. During the day on a working day it is likely that most of the people there are businessman and workers which explains why the majority of them were visiting High Wycombe for business purposes.

Also, they hadn't travelled very far and most of them had travelled by car/bus. This would be the businessman again. The pie charts display how people have travelled to the shopping area. The different transports used often indicate how far they have travelled. If they have walked they usually live locally, if they have travelled by train they live a reasonable distance away, etc. The greater the range of transports used shows that the sphere of influence is large and the shopping centre attracts people from far away and therefore they use a wide variety of different transports to get to the shopping area. As my results show that most people travel by car/bus/foot, I don't think that the sphere of influence great because not a wide variety of different transports were used, so the shopping centre does not generally attract people from far away.

The "Sphere of influence" means the area that people are willing to travel to in a certain area. Although the shops that are in that shopping area affect the sphere of influence, the transport and ease to get there along with the rivalry from other shopping districts. Here are some examples of shops with an area of influence: Boots Chemist prefers to have an area of influence of 10,000 people, Marks and Spencer prefer to have an area of influence of 50,000 people and Sainsbury's prefer 60,000 people.

There weren't many people who had travelled over 0-2 miles because most of them were elderly people who cannot travel very far and businessman who generally live quite near to where they work. Also, the majority of the people who we asked visited High Wycombe quite frequently- once a week or more. I used a pie chart to show how often people visited the shopping area. The larger the shopping centre is, the more high order goods and services there are likely to be. As people travel less often for higher order goods, there is more of a chance that they live further away, therefore don't make the trip that often. Again, this was because many people who visit once a fortnight or once a month come for clothes shopping etc, and as we did the survey on Thursday, the young people

who do the clothes shopping will have been at school or college. There weren't many people who were there for food shopping either because it is generally done by working middle-aged men and women who were at work. There weren't many people there for leisure purposes either because this is again for younger people. The people whom we interviewed were mainly elderly which explains why there were so many who travelled by bus and were there for general shopping. This isn't only done by the elderly but as there were more of them I think this is generally true.

#### Conclusion

I can conclude from the interpretation and analysis of the data I have collected that people visit High Wycombe for several different reasons and it has different spheres of influence. This is largely because of the position of the shopping area in the shopping hierarchy and the order of the goods that they sell. Taking into account the principle of least effort and the range of a good and how this affects the distance people travel to purchase a good I have obtained reasons for why the spheres of influences change. The higher up in the shopping hierarchy the shopping centre is the larger the sphere of influence will be. This is because people are willing to travel further to purchase high order goods which most buy very infrequently. The lower down the shopping centre is the smaller the sphere of influence is. This is because consumers choose the shortest journey to buy goods and services if they are relatively low order.



#### Evaluation

There were limitations when carrying out the questionnaire that could have led to biased results. There was a limit to the amount of questions we asked in our questionnaire as the teachers had been very selective when choosing which ones we should ask.. Perhaps if we had used more in depth questions we would have got clearer results.

There are also limitations on my results due to the restricted amount of time we had to collect our data. As our questionnaire was carried out in one day at one time, the main limitations were the amount of data we could collect and the time of day we collected our data. As we were collecting our data in the middle of the day and in the middle of the week we were obviously going to get a very biased result. Most people we interviewed were elderly men and women and some businessman/women, and some were reluctant to answer our questions so we could not get overall accurate results. If we had done it at a different time of day and week we would have got a much wider range of results giving us a more accurate view of the spheres of influences of the areas. Also, if we had collected more data by spending more time in the shopping areas we would have obtained more extensive results and we would be able to plot more accurate graphs and obtain more in depth conclusions.

Also, the conclusions that consumers choose the shortest distance to buy goods and services whatever the cost can also have limitations. Consumers may be more attracted by lower prices than by short journeys and many consumers are motivated by quality, service and ease of parking. The principle of "a range of a good or service" also has limitations. Some trips are made by the need to purchase more than one commodity so consumers travel further to get to their nearest hypermarket rather than make several different journeys locally to get the same products.

#### **Shopping quality**

Sites A-P were closer to the core and 1-10 were around the edge so I would expect these to have a lower Shopping quality total compared to sites A-P. This has been proven correct because the graph for sites 1-10 is clearly sloping downwards whereas the graph for sites A-P is higher although it slopes down at some points.

This proves my second hypothesis correct:

'Comparison shops will cluster together, convenience shops will disperse within High Wycombe'

I think that this is because when people go to buy comparison goods, they would prefer that they are all clustered together so they do not have to travel far to get to the different shops. It is likely that they will have travelled quite far to buy the comparison goods so they should be next to each other but do not need to be dispersed as people are prepared to travel far to buy them.

Different retail centres have different spheres of influences depending on whether the goods or services they sell or provide are high order or low order. This concept can be explained much more clearly in a shopping hierarchy. This ranges from large regional shopping centres down to the local village or corner shop. At the bottom of the hierarchy are small shops selling low order convenience goods which are needed daily, such as food and newspapers. These shopping areas have a smaller sphere of influence compared to larger shopping centres, as people aren't prepared to travel far for their daily requirements, such as a newspaper. At the top of the hierarchy are shops selling high order, specialist goods, which are bought less frequently, such as furniture and video recorders. These larger shopping centres have a much larger sphere of influence compared to that of smaller shopping centres as people are more prepared to travel further for goods that they buy, perhaps, once every year or even less.

Convenience shops however, need to be dispersed within the town because they are smaller, sell lower order goods and there are less of them. As they sell low order goods people are not prepared to travel a very long distance for them so they need to be spread out so they can be accessed easily from all areas. I think that the shopping quality total was higher at sites A-P because these were nearer the core. In the centre I would expect there to be a higher quality of shopping because this is where all of the shops are and where most people go. If the quality here was not very high, the area would not attract very many people which is why it is so important. Also, comparison shops tend to cluster together because land value and price is highest in the town centre but so is the pedestrian flow.

The chain stores are usually very big companies; these companies can afford high rents and going to want to locate in the busiest area where the pedestrian flow is high because they usually run a big business that requires a lot of customers.

#### Street appearance

Sites A-P were closer to the core and 1-10 were around the edge so I would also expect these to have a lower Street appearance total compared to sites A-P. This is because as you move further away from the Core, the street cleanliness etc reduces because not many people visit the edges of towns, they focus on the centre which has to be kept perfect to continue to attract visitors. But contrary to this point, the pedestrian flow is highest in the town centre which would result in a larger amount of litter and pollution.

My graphs show that the street appearance total is about the same in the town centre as the edge of town, but slightly higher in the town centre. My results show that hypothesis 4 is correct:

'Environmental quality will be highest in the town centre'

This could be because there were no children on the day we visited, resulting in less litter, as I would assume that the street appearance total would be higher further away from the town centre, where there are people. This links in with environmental quality because they both need to prove the same hypothesis.

#### **Environmental quality**

I would expect the environmental quality to be generally lower in the town centre because pedestrian flow is highest there which would result in higher levels of litter, traffic and noise. My prediction for the environmental survey is that the centre of High Wycombe will be the lowest scoring place, and as you get further away the score gets higher.

My results show that as you move out from the town centre, the environmental quality gets higher. This is because sites A-P had a higher over-all environmental quality total than sites 1-10. This proves my 4<sup>th</sup> Hypothesis correct: 'Environmental quality will be highest in the town centre'

This contradicts with my prediction. This could be because the centre is where the main concentration of people will be; therefore the centre will have to look clean and tidy because the people's impression of High Wycombe will be the centre.

However the centre of town could be under pressure from all of the people that it has to cope with each day. With a high concentration of people comes high litter. I would expect there to be hardly any derelict land, this is because High Wycombe is in a good position and land could go for all sorts of development. Traffic flow may pose some problems for me because there is a considerable amount of pedestrian streets were no cars are allowed. This will bring down the score for theses places but this may not be fair. I think that there will be good access to shops from most parts of the town this is down to the fact there a good street system that is signposted well.

#### Pedestrian flow

My prediction for the pedestrian flow is that as you get further away from the centre of town the number of pedestrians will decrease. This means that if my prediction is correct, the busiest place will be the centre of High Wycombe. There is a major clue which tells me that the centre is where the most pedestrians will be and that is, large parts of it are pedestrianised.

My prediction and third hypothesis are proven correct: 'Pedestrian density will be greatest in the town centre'

There are several reasons for this. One reason for why the centre of town is busier is because the centre of the C.B.D. is more popular with the customers; it provides a much safer environment, whereas in the outskirts of the C.B.D. the area can be sometimes a little isolating. There can be possible factors such as the shopping or environment quality that attracts fewer pedestrians to that area making it less pedestrianised. The majority of clothes/shoe shops are in the C.B.D. These areas will be pedestrianised as clothes and shoe shops and other major stores will be here and are very popular places to go. Also, the majority of the electrical and specialist shops are in this area of the town. Since these are very useful shops that specialise in specific products and services, pedestrians are more likely to go to these places, knowing that they will receive products or services at the highest of standards.

The edge of town is not so popular with pedestrians because there are not many shops there and the quality of shopping and environment are not very high. Also, the major stores are not found in these areas, therefore not as appealing, and these areas are not as accessible. Shops are spread out a lot more so there is a larger distance to cover, whereas in the centre of the C.B.D. the shops are closer together so it is easier to get from one place to another.

#### **Evaluation**

I think that over-all, our investigation went according to plan although we did encounter some problems. The main thing was that the fieldwork was limited to just one day. This meant that there was a bit of a rush to do the complete fieldwork. This could have led to some mistakes being made. When we were exploring areas for the types of urban land use, the map was hard to figure out at times. A revisit around the block of buildings was sometimes needed, to clear the confusion, which was time consuming, making it more frustrating as the investigation was already limited to one days work.

Pedestrian counts needed to be taken at the same time, which was impossible to do individually. Although group data saved a lot of time, it was easy to make mistakes that other people were unaware of, such as pedestrians being missed out in busy areas or the same person being counted twice, although we stood back to back to minimise this mistake. Also, different people visit centers at different times for different purposes. The survey was only carried out once during the day, so there may be other shopping patterns not revealed (and may have explained the current patterns better).

For environment quality and shopping quality, it relied on heavy judging. Because these had to be done all in the same day, again, the sites were shared within the group. The issue of 'opinion' came to play. An area could have been given a 2 by one person and another person, changing the results and final conclusion drastically, could have judged the same area as a 4.

The day of the investigation could have been an example of a 'snapshot'. Factors such as the weather may have affected the number of pedestrians on that day only. This could then affect other factors such as environment quality. Also, we did the investigation on a Thursday. Perhaps if it was on a Saturday, we would have found more pedestrians visiting fore different purposes, so results may not be of High Wycombe on an average basis.

#### **Extensions**

- A more extensive pedestrian count survey should be done. More sites around the C.B.D. not too many but a few more to make sure vital information has not been missed out.
- Possibly instead of choosing sites systematically, having a more stratified way of choosing the sites. Having the sites at a fixed distance from the centre of the C.B.D. may increase the reliability of results, since distance is a very important factor in pedestrianisation. This way a more in depth analysis can be made, focusing on a certain distance from the centre and working outwards.
- If a questionnaire was done, then questions could be answered from the pedestrians themselves.
- Other surveys such as traffic flow surveys could be done and then it can
  be observed whether traffic flow and other factors surrounding traffic are
  linked to pedestrianisation or not. This may suggest why pedestrians are
  attracted or not attracted to that area and that it could be due to traffic
  factors rather than environment or shopping factors.

Overall, the main patterns and trends have been found with some fairly good, evident reasons in to the nature of pedestrian activity, but with these extensions, the results could be enhanced, with more in depth conclusions.

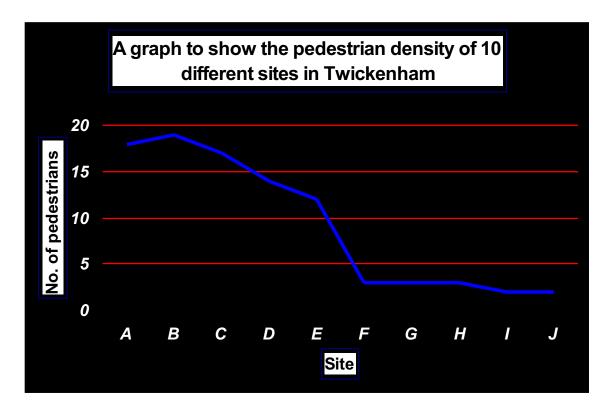
#### Comparison study of Twickenham

I will now do a comparison study of Twickenham by investigating this hypothesis:

'Pedestrian density will be greatest in the town centre'

For my comparison study I will count the number of pedestrians walking past for 2 minutes at 10 sites in Twickenham, each a little further away from the town centre than the last. The closest will be outside McDonalds then I will work outwards towards Orleans at one side and the other side of Heath road and King street.

#### **Presentation of results**



This graph shows that as you move out from the town centre, the pedestrian density increases. This proves that my hypothesis is correct: 'Pedestrian density will be greatest in the town centre'

These are the results I expected because the centre of Twickenham has the most shops and it is also cleaner and safer than the edges of the town. The centre is actually the only area which has comparison shops so it is very likely that the pedestrians will cluster around there.

The edges of town do not really have a very high environmental quality and there aren't many shops so there is nothing attracting the pedestrians to those areas. Also, the shops which do exist in outer Twickenham do not rely on people to walk past because they mainly consist of shops which sell low order goods. They are shops like newsagents which sell the same things each day and people only go in if they are sure of what they want from there.

#### **Evaluation**

I think that the results for my comparison study are fairly accurate but I could have counted the pedestrians for a longer period of time to get more accurate results. Also I did the study on a Saturday morning when the pedestrian flow may have been higher than it usually is resulting in biased results. To fix this problem I could have done the pedestrian count for several days and then found the average for those days to get more accurate results.

I did the count on my own so I could easily have counted people twice or made silly mistakes. I could have avoided this by going with a group of friends to make sure I got more accurate results.

But over-all I think that I did the pedestrian count fairly well and received reasonable results considering the fact that I did it all myself.

## **Bibliography**

### I used these websites to help me find information for my project:

http://www.geoexplorer.co.uk/sections/dictionary/h.htm

http://www.internetgeographer.com/tig/messages/readmsg.asp?thread=104

http://www.kesgrave.suffolk.sch.uk/Curric/geog/shophier.html