

# Retail expert praises town

## ► Barnard Castle's range of shops and services commended

BY ADRIAN BRADDY  
Editor

A TOP retail analyst has heaped praise on Barnard Castle, saying the town is well placed to beat the recession.

Graham Soult, a market researcher from Gateshead, monitors the retail industry through his website, Soult's Retail View.

Mr Soult recently visited Barnard Castle and published a detailed and glowing analysis of what the town has to offer.

He said: A visit to the delightful County Durham market town of Barnard Castle always lifts the spirits.

"For a town with a population of

just over 5,000, Barnard Castle has a surprisingly strong retail offer – the consequence, no doubt, of it being the main settlement in Teesdale, and of the next nearest towns all being about 15 miles away.

"When I visited, the town as a whole seemed to have a relatively small proportion of empty shops, though there was evidence of some longstanding independents having recently closed, as well as two prominent gaps – The Local in Galgate, and Victoria Wine in Horsemarket – as a result of the demise of off licence retailer First Quench.

"Promisingly, however, the local regeneration group, Barnard Castle Vision, appears to have been very successful recently in encouraging new shops to open up in the town's empty units."

The retail expert added: "One of the best things about Barnard Castle is the good balance between national names and an excellent range of in-

teresting independent stores, including many antiques shops.

"Lots of the independents are clustered around The Bank, down the hill from the Market Cross, and these help to ensure that Barnard Castle retains a distinctive character.

**“A visit to the market town of Barnard Castle always lifts the spirits**

**Graham Soult**  
Retail analyst

"Perhaps Barnard Castle's greatest strength, however, is the way that it manages to combine its good quality retail offer with a very good range of other local services, including banks, pubs, cafes, and reasonably priced car parking.

"At a time of economic difficulties, and where many other small towns are struggling, it is Barnard Castle's holistic offer – together with its sheer appeal as a place – that gives the town the best possible chance of attracting and retaining visitors."

Mr Soult pinpointed Boyes as a big positive for the town, saying: "Northern variety store chain Boyes has a three-storey shop in Horsemarket that is truly an Aladdin's cave.

"With a wide and eclectic product range – toys, clothes and gardening sit alongside fishing, bedding and kitchenwares – Boyes in Barnard Castle manages to perform the role that many small town Woolworths used to, providing an outlet for items that cannot be found anywhere else locally. Little wonder that the shop always seems busy."

You can read the full report at [www.soultsretailview.co.uk/](http://www.soultsretailview.co.uk/)

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