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MANCHESTER
CITY COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny District Centres Subgroup

Date: Tuesday, 21 January 2020
Time: 5.00 pm
Venue: Council Antechamber, Level 2, Town Hall Extension

This is a **Revised Agenda** containing an additional item of business (Item 3a) that was not listed on the original agenda.

Access to the Council Antechamber

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Membership of the Overview and Scrutiny District Centres Subgroup

Councillors - Shilton Godwin (Chair), Hughes, Kirkpatrick, Madeleine Monaghan and Stanton

Revised Agenda

Further Information

For help, advice and information about this meeting please contact the Committee Officer:

Rachel McKeon
Tel: 0161 234 4997
Email: rachel.mckeon@manchester.gov.uk

This revised agenda was issued on **Friday, 17 January 2020** by the Governance and Scrutiny Support Unit, Manchester City Council, Level 3, Town Hall Extension (Lloyd Street Elevation), Manchester M60 2LA

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Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 21 January 2020

Subject: District Centres Subgroup - Final recommendations

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

Summary

Since February 2017, the District Centre Subgroup has overseen a work programme to consider the most effective policy approach the council and its partners can take to promote successful district centres in Manchester. A core aspect of the work programme comprises the Institute of Place Management (IPM) Vital and Viable pilots in Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey, Northenden and Withington.

This report describes the process and overall findings and recommendation of the IPM pilots and the IPM report 'Vital and Viable Manchester District Centres' is attached in Appendix 1. The IPM recommendations are outlined in the report and summarised under the following three key common principles:-

- Strengthen local networks and their capacity to effect change
- Align place making interventions against 25 priority intervention factors
- Monitor and share data to make informed decisions

The Manchester Local Plan review will consider the character and individual needs of each centre and policy will be developed to support development that creates multifunctional thriving and attractive centres. Further work, however, will be needed to consider options for providing the necessary support to local communities to establish and maintain effective collaborative networks.

In addition to the IPM pilots, the Subgroup has received a report on underserved and emerging communities which considered communities served by an underperforming district centre, communities without reasonable access to a centre and the need for centres to serve emerging communities. It provided information on the current and previous uses in district centres and described the on-going centre audit evolved from the IPM district centre Vital and Viable pilots.

The Subgroup also received presentations and held discussions on:

- the role of 'Identity, Branding and Marketing' in creating successful centres;
- The role of markets; and
- Withington, a centre with a well-established local network. (The Withington community are successfully using innovative projects and events to improve the vitality of their local centre).

Finally this report also outlines the on-going work by IPM and the Council on centres as part of their roles in the Area Based Collaborative Entrepreneurship in Cities (ABCitiEs) European Partnership.

Recommendations

Members are recommended to:

- note the report and recommendations made by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) summarised in sections 6,7 and 8 of this report;

- forward this report and any further recommendations to Economy Scrutiny Committee with a recommendation that the Executive be asked to consider and where appropriate endorse the policy recommendations arising from this sub group's work;

- instruct officers to consider the IPM recommendations as part of the statutory review of the Local Plan; and

- instruct officers to develop options for providing the necessary support to local communities to establish and maintain effective collaborative networks within centres and report on this to Economy Scrutiny Committee and Executive when this report is considered.

Wards affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name:	Eddie Smith
Position:	Strategic Director (Strategic Developments)
Telephone:	0161 234 3030
Email:	e.smith@manchester.gov.uk

Name:	Richard Elliott
Position:	Head of City Policy
Telephone:	0161 219 6494
Email:	r.elliott@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background

1.1 Since February 2017, the District Centre Subgroup has overseen a work programme to consider the most effective policy approach the council and its partners can take to promote successful district centres in Manchester. The work programme has been developed alongside the Institute of Place Management (based at Manchester Metropolitan University), a body with particular interest in the study and promotion of place management techniques.

1.2 A core aspect of the work programme comprises Place Management Pilots in four of Manchester's centres (Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey and Northenden). These are exercises that bring together a centre's stakeholders; bring to their attention key evidence relating to activity and character of the centre; and focus on medium and controllable interventions that could be most beneficial for the centre's performance. There are aspects of this process that are clearly aligned with the Our Manchester approach.

1.3 As part of the work to develop a 'Future High Streets Fund' bid to Government, IPM also ran a pilot study in Withington.

1.4 In addition to the IPM pilots, the Subgroup has received a report on underserved and emerging communities and has heard presentations on 'Identity, Branding and Marketing' and the role of Markets.

2.0 Manchester Place Management Pilots

Approach to the Place Management Pilots

2.1 The aim of the IPM Management pilot work has been to:

- develop a better, evidence-based understanding of the key factors the local authority and its partners can influence to create more vital and viable local centres;
- promote the creation of active collaborative partnerships in centres that are able to bring about positive change; and
- monitor centre performance

2.2 The work is underpinned by research completed in 2016 by the IPM, which studied the impact changes to retailing in the UK were having on town and city centres. The main outcome of this project was the identification of 25 priority interventions for centre management as listed in table 1 below.

Table 1: High Street UK 2020 25 ranked priority factors impacting vitality and viability

1. ACTIVITY HOURS	Ensuring the centre is open when the catchment needs it. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?

2. APPEARANCE	Improving the quality of the visual appearance. How clean is the centre?
3. RETAILERS	Offering the right type and quantity of retailers. What retailers are represented?
4. VISION & STRATEGY	Having a common vision and some leadership. Do stakeholders collaborate? Is the vision incorporated in local plans?
5. EXPERIENCE	Considering the quality of the experience? Measuring levels of service quality and visitor satisfaction. What is the image of the centre?
6. MANAGEMENT	Building capacity to get things done. Is there effective management – of the shopping centre(s) and town centre?
7. MERCHANDISE	Meeting the needs of the catchment. What is the range and quality of goods on offer?
8. NECESSITIES	Ensuring basic facilities are present and maintained. Is there appropriate car-parking; amenities; general facilities, like places to sit down and toilets etc.?
9. ANCHORS	The presence of an anchor which drives footfall. This could be retail (like a department store) or could be a busy transport interchange or large employer.
10. NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS	Presence of strong networks and effective formal or informal partnerships. Do stakeholders communicate and trust each other? Can the council facilitate action (not just lead it?)
11. DIVERSITY	A multi-functional centre. What attractions are there, apart from retail? What is the tenant mix and tenant variety?
12. WALKABILITY	The 'walkability' of the centre. Are linked trips between areas possible – or are the distances too great? Are there other obstacles that stop people walking?
13. ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE	An entertainment and leisure offer. What is it? Is it attractive to various segments of the catchment?
14. ATTRACTIVENESS	The 'pulling power' of a centre. Can it attract people from a distance?

15. PLACE ASSURANCE	Getting the basics right. Does the centre offer a basic level of customer service, is this consistent? Or do some operators, or parts of the offer, let this down?
16. ACCESSIBLE	Each of reach. How convenient is the centre to access? Is it accessible by a number of different means, e.g. car, public transport, cycling etc.?
17. PLACE MARKETING	Communicating the offer. How does the centre market and promote itself? Do all stakeholders communicate a consistent image? How well does the centre orientate visitors and encourage flow – with signage and guides etc.
18. COMPARISON/CONVENIENCE	The amount of comparison shopping opportunities compared to convenience. Is this sustainable?
19. RECREATIONAL SPACE	The amount and quality of recreational areas and public space/open space. Are there places that are uncommodified? Where people can enjoy spending time without spending money?
20. BARRIERS TO ENTRY	Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the centre's market. What is the location doing to make it easier for new businesses to enter?
21. CHAIN VS INDEPENDENT	Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street. Is this suitably balanced?
22. SAFETY/CRIME	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting. Perceptions of crime are usually higher than actual crime rates. Does the centre monitor these and how does it communicate results to stakeholders?
23. LIVEABILITY	The resident population or potential for residential in the centre. Does the centre offer the services/environment that residents need? Doctors, schools etc.
24. ADAPTABILITY	The flexibility of the space/property in a centre. Are there inflexible and outdated units that are unlikely to be re-let or re-purposed?
25. STORE DEVELOPMENT	The willingness for retailers/property owners to develop their stores. Are they willing to coordinate/cooperate in updating activities? Or do they act independently?

2.3 Although each centre is different and warrants a different management approach, there has been a common overall format to the Place Management Pilots, reflecting the IPM's experience in other locations. The Place Management Pilots comprise an initial assessment by the IPM, a stakeholder workshop and a final report of recommendations. The initial assessment considered footfall data, collected through counters installed in each of the centres, and an audit undertaken through a site visit.

2.4 For the workshops, it was considered important that an appropriate range of stakeholders were invited. Consideration was given to representatives of local businesses (in particular, local traders and land owners), active community groups, service providers and residents. Lists of invitees were prepared through engagement with the council's Neighbourhood Teams and local members. Following an initial presentation of the IPM's academic research, including information regarding centre performance (in particular footfall), attendees were asked to work in groups to identify key characteristics and strengths of the centre. This gave a good sense of the overall range of perceptions of the centre, including the key strengths and opportunities that could provide a basis for action to improve centre performance.

2.5 The final section of each workshop urged attendees to consider their role in effecting the changes identified. There is a tendency to assume a lack of control across stakeholders, but the IPM research suggests that, particularly where stakeholders can work effectively as a collective group, considerable influence can be exercised at the local level. For example, footfall data may reveal that the centre has visitors at times when most premises are closed. Whilst single traders may feel unable to effectively influence trading hours, acting as a group the traders are the only stakeholders able to address this issue.

2.6 Following each workshop, the IPM prepared a report for the centre. This summarised the assessment undertaken by the IPM and the outcomes of the workshop. It also included a set of recommendations for further action. Using the 25 priority interventions and the conceptual framework developed through the High Street 2020 project, these were organised around the ideas of:

- Repositioning – realigning a centre's function based on an understanding of its market position;
- Reinventing – focusing on changing perceptions and image for a centre;
- Rebranding – using measures around branding and public relations to engage more effectively with a centre's catchment; and,
- Restructuring – seeking to change the physical and governance characteristics of a centre.

3.0 Identity, Branding and Marketing

3.1 In Oct 2019, the Subgroup heard a presentation from Marie Hodgson of Manchester Life (ML). ML is a partnership between the Abu Dhabi United Group and Manchester City Council and was established to respond to the need for housing and to deliver a thriving and safe neighbourhood in Ancoats and New Islington. ML is a developer and landlord making a long term investment in the area and is investing in creating cohesive communities. It has assembled local developers and building managers to collaborate on community safety and placemaking, and funded additional community policing, street lighting and neighbourhood CCTV. ML also employs ‘Manchester Life Placemakers’ to build the residents’ sense of community, helping residents to know their neighbours and foster a strong sense of community. The area has now become a popular residential location as well as a destination with acclaimed restaurants, bars, independent retailers and the Hope Mill Theatre.

3.2 The key themes from the presentation for improving and creating new district centres support the IPM findings and recommendations and include: the need for a strong well communicated vision; the strength of a Public/Private partnership; and that promotion of community cohesion (e.g. through ‘Placemakers’) and creating a safe and vibrant environment will help create a sense of identity and a stable longer term population.

4.0 Markets

4.1 The IPM research has also identified the important role of successful markets can play in supporting district centres. The IPM have incorporated the development of successful markets as a new priority intervention as a separate factor for centre success. Where there are successful markets the IPM found that centre footfall aligns closely with market opening times and days.

4.2 In November 2019 the Subgroup heard from Helen Power, one of the founders of Levenshulme Market, the Head of Wholesale and Retail Markets and Neighbourhood Officers on the roles of markets in revitalising centres. The Council was unable to make a pilot market in Levenshulme financially viable in 2011 but local residents, working together with the Neighbourhood team, were successful in establishing a community led market in 2013. The market’s aim was to address deeper economic issues in the area. It worked with community groups, including groups from black and minority ethnic (BAME) communities, to encourage people to take up the opportunities created by the market. The Levenshulme Market Fund was established which provided grants to those who wanted to make a difference to Levenshulme high street.

4.3 The Neighbourhood Manager reported that it had been challenging at the beginning to develop a sustainable market in Levenshulme. He informed Members that this had involved a lot of work from Helen Power and the other market directors and a small amount of investment from the council but that the risk had been worth it due to what had been achieved.

4.4 The Head of Wholesale and Retail Markets explained that Manchester Markets operates as a business unit within the Council and runs the retail markets at Longsight, Gorton and Wythenshawe. Business plans are being produced to develop and cosmetically improve the markets at Longsight and Gorton. Although Wythenshawe Market faces additional challenges, plans for the next five years are being developed. The Council has commissioned a consultant to investigate the social and economic impact of the three retail markets and the resulting report will underpin any requests for funding for the markets in the future. The experience of Levenshulme and other markets in the city has shown that developing and sustaining a successful market is not straight forward. The right offer in the right place can however, make an important contribution to a centre's vitality and viability.

5.0 Withington

5.1 In November 2019, the Subgroup also heard from Jennifer Smith of Love Withington Baths about the success of the community working together in Withington. Residents came together initially to resist the Council's plan to close Withington Baths. Following a petition and a march by local people, the Council agreed to keep the baths open for a further twelve months and during that time the community put a business plan together to run the baths as a charity. The Baths is now run by the charity as a community hub and swimming pool and includes co-working space. A community advisory group was also established to ensure the Withington Baths Charity Directors are acting in line with the community's wishes. The success of the baths has empowered the local community to work together with traders, land owners and the council to further improve Withington District Centre.

5.2 As footfall counters were already installed in Withington and to support the Withington Future High Street Fund bid, the IPM were commissioned to include Withington as a pilot centre. Following the IPM workshop, traders in Withington have created a traders association. Data from the footfall analysis has shown that many people visit the centre later in the day. This has resulted in traders adjusting their opening hours accordingly. The workshop considered what kind of place the stakeholders wanted Withington to be, while recognising the challenges such as the busy bus route of Wilmslow Road and the limited public realm.

5.3 The community taking an Our Manchester approach to improving their local centre has had a positive impact in the area. Innovative events have increased footfall in the centre. This has included the shutter art project, popup shops, markets and events such as "Withington By Night" and the forthcoming re-development of the former Nat West Bank. The refurbishment of Withington Library has also created a valuable community hub.

5.4 The challenge in Withington now is to sustain this work, keep people engaged and support the local networks that have been established. While the initial bid to the Future High Street Fund was unsuccessful, the Council was informed in December that funding to develop Withington as a High Streets Task Force Pilot was being made available. Through this, some further support will be made available to develop the proposals in the initial bid further.

6.0 IPM pilots - conclusions and recommendations

6.1 The place management initial pilot workshops have now all been completed and have illustrated the diversity of Manchester's centres and the roles they play for their local communities and beyond. Following publication of each report, the Scrutiny and Overview District Centre Subgroup has been given the opportunity to review the recommendations and consider whether any short term actions should be implemented.

6.2 IPM have reviewed all the pilots and have produced a summary and recommendations report, Vital and Viable Manchester District Centres attached as Appendix 1. The report highlights the following recommendations for the City to consider in the development of new policy support for local centres:

- Work should be undertaken to develop targeted and place specific interventions to build local collaboration.
- Work should be undertaken to increase local capacity to effect change in areas of the city where existing capacity is low.
- Efforts should be devoted to enhancing existing local collaborative networks.
- Monitoring data on centre performance should be collected and shared with partners so that evidence based actions to improve centres could be taken.

6.3 Although effective revitalisation of each district centre requires a bespoke response, the IPM have identified some common principles and guidance to inform a citywide approach. In summary these are:

Strengthen local networks and their capacity to effect change

- It is essential to build community ownership or collective responsibility for each centre.
  - Where effective networks of local stakeholders exist, they should be supported to raise their capacity to take further responsibility for centre management and marketing.
  - Where networks are less established but are beginning to emerge, MCC should capitalise on already engaged stakeholders to encourage momentum and build capacity.
  - Where networks do not yet exist MCC may need to take leadership responsibility, on the understanding that once new community led structures are in place, the authority will need to step back and take on a more nurturing position.
- New and established networks form subgroups to take responsibility for specific interventions (e.g. social media) and environmental improvements.
- MCC need to identify capacity to initiate greater stakeholder collaboration and facilitate regular meetings. The role will involve networking, leadership and good communication skills.

b) Align place making interventions against 25 factors

- District centre networks are recommended to refer to the IPM 25 Priority Interventions and the 4Rs Framework (Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding and Restructuring) as a mechanism for identifying priority interventions. It is important that priorities are set locally and not set from

above and that networks focus on factors they can influence at a local level.
- Each centre has individual issues but a top priority across all centres is the visual appearance including litter, graffiti and quality of storefronts and public realm. Traffic and pollution are also a concern in each centre, however, these issues are beyond the remit of local networks and require a strategic response.
- IPM recommend branding is created collectively and managed by local stakeholders utilising low cost social media.
- Future proofing centres is essential which will require many centres to reduce dependency on retail and to consider new uses to create multi-functional centres.
- Introduce more market activity or further capitalise on existing market assets as markets are particularly important drivers of diversity and vibrancy.
- Co-locate key services in central hubs in centres. Public services located together in centres have a significant impact on footfall.

c) Monitor and share data to make informed decisions

- The monitoring and analysis of footfall data has proved crucial in the pilot centres in allowing stakeholders to monitor the routine footfall patterns in each centre, and the impact of interventions to be measured.
- In addition to providing evidence on which to base decision making, the data has also provided a tangible and accessible source of information around which stakeholder groups have coalesced and utilised as a marketing/promotional tool (as exemplified by groups in Chorlton and Withington).
- Footfall provides the only source of round-the-clock insight into how these centres are being used. Therefore, data should continue to be captured and shared with local networks on a regular basis.

6.4 As a result of the Manchester pilots and other research the IPM have reviewed their 25 priority interventions which now include:

- Markets – The research has identified the central role of successful markets to Manchester's district centres and has subsequently led to development of successful markets being identified as a new key factor for centre success. IPM found that centre footfall aligns closely with market opening times and days, with less people typically using the centre when the market is closed.
- Functionality – the multi-functional nature of centres, including the key role of co – located public services, is essential as ideally they will serve a variety of purposes
- Innovation – Pop-up activity, such as that seen in Withington, led to this being included.

7.0 Underserved and emerging communities

7.1 The District Centres Subgroup received a report in November 2019 on underserved and emerging Communities. The report considered underserved communities in three categories:-

- communities that surround an existing district centre which is underperforming;
- communities without reasonable access to a district or local neighbourhood centre; and
- emerging communities without reasonable access to shops and other community facilities or to a designated district centre

7.2 It provided information on the latest trends in the District Centre Survey: Planning Use Classes and described the on-going centre audit evolved from the IPM district centre Vital and Viable pilots.

7.3 It was reported that the majority of Manchester residents live within walking distance of a centre (taken to be 1km), however residents in Higher Blackley and Charlestown on average live over 1.5km from a district centre.

7.4 New communities expected to emerge over the next 15 to 20 years are mainly concentrated in the extended city centre area. These areas are not currently underserved but it was recommended that the level of provision of shops and other services be kept under review as communities grow.

8.0 Centre Policy

8.1 The Local Plan review will consider the character and individual needs of each centre, taking into account recommendations from the pilot reports. Policy will be developed to support development that creates multifunctional thriving and attractive centres. Recommendations for planning policy to support collaborative working in centres and consideration of amendments to district centre boundaries will also be considered as part of this work.

8.2 As part of the Local Plan review analysis will continue to build a better understanding of each district centre and establish whether there is a need for new district centres or amendments to current boundaries. Data gathered on centres through the land use planning surveys and the footfall analysis will be shared with centre stakeholders

8.3 However, the need to increase local capacity and enhance local collaborative networks cannot be delivered through the planning process. It is recommended that Members instruct officers to consider options for providing the necessary support to local communities to establish and maintain effective collaborative networks.

9.0 Area Based Collaborative Entrepreneurship in Cities

9.1 The Council along with IPM are partners in the Area Based Collaborative Entrepreneurship in Cities (ABCitiEs) European partnership. As part of this project IPM and the Council have committed to completing a further six pilot projects in centres with footfall counters across the city. These are Withington (work complete), Fallowfield, Rusholme, Levenshulme and Cheetham Hill District Centres and Victoria Avenue Local Centre. Once complete an action plan to trial emerging recommendations will be produced and monitored for two years.

9.2 The ABCitiEs project will also fund a workshop for council staff working in the pilot centres. They will review the impact of the project and consider action plans for nurturing effective local networks and will receive training on analysing footfall data.

9.3 An ABCitiEs conference will be held in Manchester in 2021 for all partners, stakeholders and interested parties to share the findings of the partnership research and pilot projects to date.

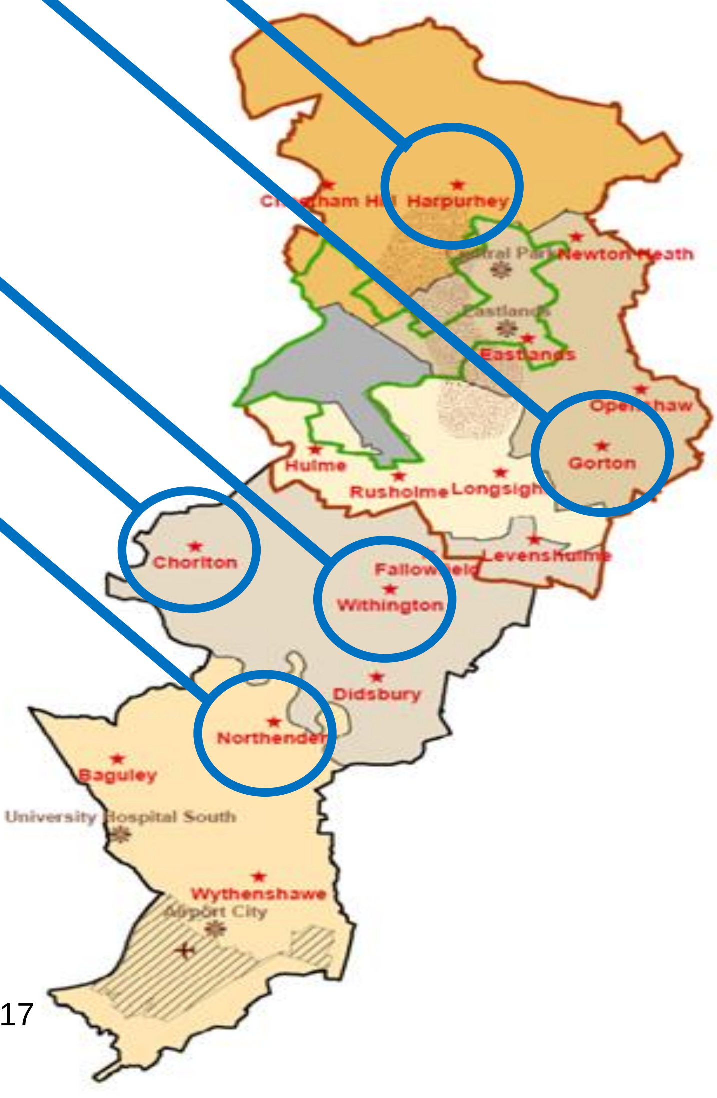
Institute of Place Management

Manchester Metropolitan University

Vital and Viable

Manchester District Centres

Draft V2 – January 2020



FOREWORD

There are a number of structural developments currently impacting traditional retail and district centres in the UK, such as the growth in out-of-town and online retailing. However, whilst much research focuses on reversing the fortunes of city and town centres, the project on which this report is based revolves around better understanding how to improve the vitality and viability of Manchester's smaller district centres.

Based on secondary data, primary audits of five district centres in Manchester (Northenden, Gorton, Harpurhey, Chorlton and Withington), meetings with Neighbourhood Managers and community groups/partnerships, workshops held in each centre with local stakeholders, and footfall data recorded 24 hours/day over a two year period, this report explores the activity patterns of Manchester's district centres, in relation to the IPM's 'footfall signature types'. It also outlines the respective centre's key strengths and weaknesses by drawing upon the IPM's 'Top 25 Factors', comparing these across the city. Opportunities and threats are then assessed. It concludes by detailing what stakeholders in these district centres can do going forwards to improve their vitality and viability, in relation to the IPM's '4Rs' framework.

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE OF PLACE MANAGEMENT

The Institute of Place Management is the professional body for people involved in making, maintaining and marketing places. As part of Manchester Metropolitan University, the Institute of Place Management is dedicated to supporting people who serve places, providing them with unbiased research, continuing professional development, qualifications, conferences, events and networking opportunities.

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AUTHORS

Dr Steve Millington – s.millington@mmu.ac.uk
Director of Place Making at the Institute of Place Management and Reader in Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. Steve is the author of many academic reports and articles investigating place making and place marketing.

Gareth Roberts – g.j.roberts@mmu.ac.uk
Projects and Operations manager at the Institute of Place Management. Gareth co-ordinates IPM projects, and is Associate Editor of the Journal of Place Management & Development. Gareth has an undergraduate degree in retail marketing management, an MSc in place branding, and is currently studying for a PhD on cultural events and places.

Dr Chloe Steadman – c.steadman@mmu.ac.uk
Chloe Steadman is a Research Associate at the Institute of Place Management (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Lecturer in Marketing and Consumer Behaviour. She completed her PhD in Consumer Research at the University of Manchester in 2017, and has an interest in the intersections between people and places.

Professor Cathy Parker – c.parker@mmu.ac.uk
Chair of Retail and Marketing Enterprise at Manchester Metropolitan University and Co-Chair of the Institute of Place Management. Cathy is also Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Place Management and Development and has published many articles and reports in the areas of retail and town and city centre change. She was also lead academic researcher for the prominent High Street Britain 2015 Inquiry.

Simon Quin – simon@placemanagement.org
Director of Place Management and Co-Chair of the Institute of Place Management. Simon has previously been CEO of the Association of Town and City Management as well as a Board Member of the International Downtown Association. Simon is Practitioner Editor of the Journal of Place Management and Development as well as co-author of the influential Vital and Viable High Streets Meeting the Challenge (HMSO, 1994).

Dr Nikos Ntounis – n.ntounis@mmu.ac.uk
Nikos Ntounis is a Senior Research Associate at the Institute of Place Management. He completed his PhD on advancing the theoretical underpinning of place management. He has worked on various projects, including High Street UK 2020 and Bringing Big Data to Small Users.

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1. Vital and viable neighbourhoods programme in Manchester: a place management approach

1.1 FROM PLANNING TO PLACE MANAGEMENT

A key challenge in the UK over recent decades is how urban regeneration has become predicated on a conventional planning mechanism to promote private sector-led housing and commercial development, sometimes underpinned by the use of public investment to lever investor interest. Whereas this model has proven effective in many towns and cities, in terms of physical development and the revalorisation of problematic brownfield sites, their remains concern to what extent this approach contributes to wider place development. With an absence of place management structures, site-specific physical regeneration projects may generate short-term commercial gain, but often fail to contribute to sustained and wider place improvement.

Nowhere is this more demonstrable than in the crisis affecting British high streets and town centres. As IPM research shows, factors such as maintaining good quality public realm, general appearance, or liveability are essential in terms of maintaining and growing the attractiveness of centres. Responsibility for these place-attributes, however, do not fall within the remit of any single organisation. Rather, they require a collective approach, involving government, business, and other place-based or anchor institutions. The development and management of successful places is also an on-going process. Having a strategy or vision is essential, but this must also connect to day-to-day place operations, such as maintenance or litter collection. With multiple stakeholders invested in town centres and high streets, creating and sustaining networks of plural ownership has proven to be a major challenge, because place development in the UK is synonymous with a silo-approach. This reflects how both national and local government is structured. Planning, housing, environment, transport, education and health, sit within separate administrative and delivery structures, with little crossover or cross-sector collaboration. Subsequently, whereas planning might be able to deliver vast new housing development, or flagship regeneration projects, it has consistently failed to integrate such interventions with places. Many of the UK's waterfront regeneration projects, for instance, standout as "islands of regeneration", largely disconnected from their immediate localities. It is not surprising to learn, therefore, such developments have largely failed to mitigate structural inequalities within UK cities. Indeed, they may have actually contributed to widening social disparity, through processes such as gentrification.

As places are multi-faceted and complex, effective place management requires multiple and holistic measures. This means engaging existing businesses, service providers, community groups, and other actors at a spatial level that is meaningful to them, and working towards the formal integration of these partnerships into strategic economic development goals.

Place management partnerships or area based collaborative enterprises (such as Business Improvement Districts) are a recognised structure to deliver valuable place-based outcomes, such as inclusive growth, but the current adoption of such structures is very low across Manchester. There are examples where collective responses to ownership has proven to be effective. Levenshulme Market is an example of a community enterprise model, which has developed and sustained and arts, craft and food market in an otherwise relatively deprived part of south Manchester. In the 1980s, the Northern Quarter Association provided an example of significant generator of change in central Manchester, linking over 300 creative businesses, which established a new cultural district in the city. Unfortunately, the network dissipated over time. Ultimately, there are limits to what individual initiatives can do for a place unless they are working collaboratively with other place based stakeholders. Currently, the pattern of local activity within Manchester District Centres remains sporadic and patchy.

2. Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods

In 2016, Manchester City Council commissioned the Institute of Place Management (IPM) to undertake a pilot study of the city's District Centres, under a programme entitled Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods[1]. To provide oversight, Manchester City Council established a new District Centres Subgroup (answering to the Economic Scrutiny Committee). The aim of this work has been to:

- Develop a better, evidence-based understanding of the key factors the local authority and its partners can influence to create more vital and viable local centres
- Promote the creation of active collaborative partnerships in centres that are able to bring about positive change
- Monitor centre performance

The work is underpinned by research completed the IPM, High Street UK 2020[2], a knowledge exchange project completed in 2016 partially funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) who were concerned about the impact changes to retailing in the UK were having on town and city centres. The main outcome of this project were the identification of 25 priority interventions for centre management. Additionally, IPM research demonstrates the value of consistently and rigorously collecting and analysing footfall. This data reveals how centres function in terms their attractiveness, activity patterns and hours, as well as providing a tool for monitoring impact of interventions, and comparing centre performance. Consequently, the Manchester project replicates this methodology, through the installation of footfall counters in ten District Centres, and more in-depth work in five places (Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey, Northenden, and Withington). In these cases, the IPM undertook place quality audits and stakeholder engagement workshops, to gather evidence to inform individual District Centre action plans. The action plans benchmark each centre against the IPM 25 priorities, and provide each centre with a framework for achieving change, based on the IPM's 4Rs Framework (Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding, and Restructuring). The work generated some tentative recommendations for the City to consider in the development of new policy support for local centres:

- Targeted and place specific interventions to build local collaboration
- Increase local capacity to effect change in areas of the city where existing capacity is low
- Enhance existing local collaborative networks
- Share and monitor data on centre performance

3. The changing high street

High streets and town centres across the UK are undergoing significant changes. Over the last 40 years, we have seen the growth of out-of-town shopping, as detailed in Schiller's (1986) so-called 'waves' of retail decentralisation. In the 1970s, 65% of new retail floorspace in England was in town centres; however, by 1994, town centres accounted for only 14% of new stock (Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG], 2007). This led to tighter planning policies requiring a 'town centres first' approach; but this did not stop out of town development. Town centres continued to see their share of retail expenditure decline and, in 2000, this was just under 50%. In 2018, the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) estimated town centre retail expenditure share as 36.6%, and projected a further fall to 34% by 2022.

[1] https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s3273/Vital%20and%20Viable%20Neighbourhoods%20Place%20Management%20Pilots.pdf

[2] https://www.emerald.com/insight/publication/issn/1753-8335/vol/10/iss/4

Although more than four million square metres of out of town retail space was built in the decade to 2011, another driver of falling spend in town centres is now online shopping. In 2018, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it accounted for 18% of UK retail spend, with this figure rising to 18.7% in November 2019 (ONS, 2019). It is further predicted that online shopping will account for more than 50% of all retail spend by 2028 (Retail Economics, 2019). This masks the fact that food retailing online is only 6.5% whilst non-food is 26.5% (CRR, 2018), which must also be considered.

The decline in town centre spend is mirrored in footfall. Over the last 10 years, total footfall in town and city centres has dropped by almost 20% (Springboard, 2019). While some town and city centres have performed very differently to this overall trend, in general fewer people are now visiting town and city centres. The loss of spend and visitors is part of the reason why we are now seeing the closure of many big name retail brands, not only on high streets, but now also in retail parks.

There are other factors to consider, including competition, lack of investment, over-expansion, and how having an online presence reduces the number of branches a store may require to achieve national coverage. Multiples once needed 250 stores to establish a national presence, but now they can trade with around 70 stores with online support (CRR, 2013). Again, there are exceptions to this, but multiple retailers going into administration or announcing store closures have seen over 26,000 units close over the last decade (CRR, 2019). Not all of these stores cease to be retail, with evidence new operators take some on, and others become sub-divided, though data from the Centre for Retail Research suggests store numbers across the UK will reduce by over 100,000 (over 25%) in the decade 2012 - 2022. This gloomy picture, however, neglects to consider the conversion of many stores to non-retail use, such as coffee shops. Nevertheless, these changes are having a significant impact on retail employment; it has been forecasted that 900,000 retail jobs will be lost by 2025, with 164,000 forecast to go in 2019 alone (British Retail Consortium [BRC], 2016).

The focus on retail, however, overlooks how many other services traditionally found in town and city centres are also contracting. Nearly 3,000 bank branches in the UK have closed in the last four years since 2015, and cash machines are also disappearing from town centres, with 3,000 going in the last six months of 2018 (Which?, 2019). Estate agents are also under threat, with over 7,000 currently at risk (Financial Times, 2018), and we are also witnessing closures in travel agencies across the UK and even insurance offices, with Swinton closing 40% of their branches.

The scale of change detailed above is also beginning to impact on retail property values. Recent advice from the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors suggests we can no longer rely on past valuations. With the sale of shopping centres significantly below previous values (some to local authorities), and some property owners taking bold steps to mark down, new opportunities are arising to rethink the function of town and city centres.

For example, we are experiencing a so-called ‘mobility revolution’ due to technological changes within the transportation industry, coupled with consumer behaviour changes such as mounting environmental concerns (Forbes, 2018). The growth in electric vehicles, for example, will do much to improve air quality in town and city centres, with forecasts that the UK stock of electric vehicles could reach between 2.7 - 10.6 million by 2030, and even as high as 36 million by 2040 (Parliament, 2018). Data also shows that young people are not driving as much as in the past. The Department of Transport (2019) demonstrates that in all age bands under 40, there are fewer people with driving licences now than in the 1990s. Indeed, car trips for young adults are down 36% compared to the 1990s (The Centre for Transport & Society, 2018). We are also seeing the development of autonomous vehicles, with forecasts that fully autonomous cars could account for up to 15% of global passenger vehicle sales in 2030 (McKinsey, 2016). Research suggests these trends could increase car-parking capacity in urban areas by 62% (Nourinejad et al., 2018). Technology is also allowing new transport options; apps such as *Whim* offer seamless travel by a range of modes within urban areas and they will become more commonplace as many cities ban cars from their centres. Forecasts also suggest that one in ten cars sold in 2030 will be a shared vehicle, perhaps across many households, as reflective of the broader growth in the sharing economy (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2012). Together, these changes suggest declining demand for road transport infrastructure and parking.

We are also seeing consumer behaviour changes in the area of growing demands for convenience, instant gratification, and time-saving technologies, with consumers feeling increasingly time-poor in an accelerating consumer society (Reimers and Clulow, 2009). Some retailers are already responding to such concerns; Amazon, for example, is set to roll out 3000+ *Amazon Go* convenience stores worldwide by 2021, where consumers can purchase items instantaneously through smart devices, rather than having to wait in line. We are also seeing a move away from traditional 9-5 working patterns, to more unbounded 24-hour lifestyles (Southerton and Tomlinson, 2005). Accordingly, Springboard (2019) has found the biggest drop in footfall across UK high streets is during traditional 9am-5pm operating hours, suggesting that later opening hours is a possibility for retailers.

As town and city centres transform, they also have to address wider demographic changes in society. The UK population is growing, with estimations that it will surpass 70 million people by 2026 (ONS, 2017). But it is also ageing. It has been forecasted that the number of people aged over 85 will double by 2045, whilst those over 65 will increase by more than a third (ONS, 2017). Town and city centres can have a vital role in providing for the needs of an ageing society, not just through residential provision, but also with activities, leisure, health, and educational facilities and opportunities, especially since this new older group of consumers is likely to continue seeking out new experiences. Some places are already responding to such demographic changes, for instance by joining the growing global network of age-friendly communities (Centre for Better Ageing, 2019).

Finally, although more functional shopping trips for the essentials remains important, especially in district centres, we are also seeing consumers increasingly desiring multi-sensory retail experiences, with trends around temporary pop-up activity (e.g. food festivals, craft beer events, and markets) ‘retail+’, and ‘retailtainment’ apparent in the wider retail environment. In a growing number of stores, for example, courses and activities are provided alongside the merchandise on offer, such as knitting, baking, fitness classes, book clubs, and cocktail mixing. In some larger cities, we are now witnessing the conversion of retail units into showrooms for particular brands; stores where customers might play around with products before buying online. Retailers will also know far more about us in the future through our data, thus enabling greater personalisation. This happens already online, but a growing number of retailers are also introducing personal customisation in-store.

4. What about district centres?

Whilst much attention has been given to improving the vitality and viability of town and city centres, less research has been done regarding district centres – those smaller homely places serving people’s everyday needs, which are at the centre of the Vital and Viable Neighbourhoods Project. However, understanding what a district centre is has long been a difficult task for both planners and academics. This is since they “generally lack the historical associations of market towns, and often have a less clearly defined and established role” (DoE, 1998: 5). Schiller and Jarrett (1985) argued district centres are less specialised than regional and town centres, as they tend to be main weekly shopping centres supplying convenience goods. Whereas, the diversity of district centres led Reynolds and Schiller (1992) to classify them into minor and major, depending on the number of variety stores found within them.

Outside of academic research, in PPG6 a district centre was defined as "groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants" (DoE, 1998: 18). In the National Planning Policy Framework, a minor adjustment was made to the existing PPG6 definition, highlighting the importance of local public facilities (such as a library) in district centres, and the social community focus that these centres provide (DCLG, 2012). And hence, although existing research into district centres often focuses on their retail aspects (e.g. Thomas and Bromley, 1993; Wrigley et al., 2010), just as any other type of centre, district centres need to steer away from mono-functional and retail-oriented provision. Instead, it is important to consider any centre, including district centres, as multi-functional places “...supporting leisure and recreation, employment, tourism, heritage, culture, housing, employment, education, health and wellbeing, as well as retail” (Millington et al., 2015: 5). As such, there is a clear need for district centres to also adapt to meet the present and future challenges detailed in the previous section above.

5. Lessons from wider experience

In 2014, as part of the ESRC-supported HSUK2020 project, the IPM undertook a comprehensive literature review to identify factors contributing to centre vitality and viability (see Parker et al., 2017). This produced some 160 factors, which formed a point of discussion with multiple stakeholders in the ten UK town centres who were partners in the project. This process identified additional factors, which we could link to published academic research, but it also revealed new factors, yet to be studied by academics. In total, the study identified 201 factors that affect town centre vitality and viability. However, as they stood, they had no sense of priority or importance. Therefore, 22 leading town centre experts drawn from practitioners and researchers were asked to rank them using two scales: how much a factor impacted on town centre vitality and viability, and how much local control could be exercised over a factor. This then led to the 'Top 25 Factors' impacting vitality and viability, detailed in Table 1 below. These factors can provide the basis of an audit tool for assessing district centres, as well a means to determining strategy.

Table 1: High Street UK 2020 25 ranked priority factors impacting vitality and viability

1. ACTIVITY HOURS	Ensuring the centre is open when the catchment needs it. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?
2. APPEARANCE	Improving the quality of the visual appearance. How clean is the centre?
3. RETAILERS	Offering the right type and quantity of retailers. What retailers are represented?
4. VISION & STRATEGY	Having a common vision and some leadership. Do stakeholders collaborate? Is the vision incorporated in local plans?
5. EXPERIENCE	Considering the quality of the experience? Measuring levels of service quality and visitor satisfaction. What is the image of the centre?
6. MANAGEMENT	Building capacity to get things done. Is there effective management – of the shopping centre(s) and town centre?
7. MERCHANDISE	Meeting the needs of the catchment. What is the range and quality of goods on offer?
8. NECESSITIES	Ensuring basic facilities are present and maintained. Is there appropriate car-parking; amenities; general facilities, like places to sit down and toilets etc.?
9. ANCHORS	The presence of an anchor which drives footfall. This could be retail (like a department store) or could be a busy transport interchange or large employer.
10. NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS	Presence of strong networks and effective formal or informal partnerships. Do stakeholders communicate and trust each other? Can the council facilitate action (not just lead it?)
11. DIVERSITY	A multi-functional centre. What attractions are there, apart from retail? What is the tenant mix and tenant variety?
12. WALKABILITY	The 'walkability' of the centre. Are linked trips between areas possible – or are the distances too great? Are there other obstacles that stop people walking?
13. ENTERTAINMENT & LEISURE	An entertainment and leisure offer. What is it? Is it attractive to various segments of the catchment?
14. ATTRACTIVENESS	The 'pulling power' of a centre. Can it attract people from a distance?
15. PLACE ASSURANCE	Getting the basics right. Does the centre offer a basic level of customer service, is this consistent? Or do some operators, or parts of the offer, let this down?
16. ACCESSIBLE	Each of reach. How convenient is the centre to access? Is it accessible by a number of different means, e.g. car, public transport, cycling etc.?
17. PLACE MARKETING	Communicating the offer. How does the centre market and promote itself? Do all stakeholders communicate a consistent image? How well does the centre orientate visitors and encourage flow – with signage and guides etc.
18. COMPARISON/CONVENIENCE	The amount of comparison shopping opportunities compared to convenience. Is this sustainable?

19. RECREATIONAL SPACE	The amount and quality of recreational areas and public space/open space. Are there places that are uncommodified? Where people can enjoy spending time without spending money?
20. BARRIERS TO ENTRY	Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the centre's market. What is the location doing to make it easier for new businesses to enter?
21. CHAIN VS INDEPENDENT	Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street. Is this suitably balanced?
22. SAFETY/CRIME	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting. Perceptions of crime are usually higher than actual crime rates. Does the centre monitor these and how does it communicate results to stakeholders?
23. LIVEABILITY	The resident population or potential for residential in the centre. Does the centre offer the services/environment that residents need? Doctors, schools etc.
24. ADAPTABILITY	The flexibility of the space/property in a centre. Are there inflexible and outdated units that are unlikely to be re-let or re-purposed?
25. STORE DEVELOPMENT	The willingness for retailers/property owners to develop their stores. Are they willing to coordinate/cooperate in updating activities? Or do they act independently?

You can read more about the IPM's HSUK2020 project on the IPM blog here, or alternatively in the Journal of Place Management and Development's open access special issue here.

6. District centre strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

6.1 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

In each of the district centres in which detailed research was carried out, their respective strengths and weaknesses were recorded using the above 25 factors as an audit framework. Each centre's individual strengths and weaknesses are set out below, highlighted factors denote a crossover with other centres who share similar characteristics.

Northenden	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Factor 8 - Necessities	Factor 11- Diversity
Factor 12 - Walkability	Factor 13 – Entertainment and leisure
Factor 19 – Recreational space	Factor 16 - Accessibility
Factor 22 – Safety/crime (perceptions)	Factor 17 – Place marketing
Factor 23 – Liveability	Factor 20 – Barriers to entry

Harpurhey	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Factor 8 - Necessities	Factor 2 - Appearance
Factor 9 - Anchors	Factor 4 – Vision and strategy
Factor 12 - Walkability	Factor 5 - Experience
Factor 16 - Accessibility	Factor 17 – Place marketing
Factor 23 – Liveability	Factor 22 – Safety/crime (perceptions)

Gorton	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Factor 8 - Necessities	Factor 2 - Appearance
Factor 11 - Diversity	Factor 4 – Vision and strategy
Factor 16 - Accessibility	Factor 5 - Experience
Factor 23 - Liveability	Factor 12 - Walkability
Factor 24 - Adaptability	Factor 17 – Place marketing

Chorlton	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Factor 1 - Activity Hours	Factor 2 - Appearance
Factor 11 - Diversity	Factor 4 – Vision and strategy
Factor 16 - Accessibility	Factor 12 - Walkability
Factor 23 - Liveability	Factor 20 – Barriers to entry

Withington	
Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Factor 1 – Activity hours	Factor 2 - Appearance
Factor 8 - Necessities	Factor 9 - Anchors
Factor 10 – Networks and partnerships	Factor 11 - Diversity
Factor 13 – Entertainment and leisure	Factor 12 - Walkability
Factor 16 - Accessibility	Factor 19 – Recreational space

From this assessment, we are able to draw inferences regarding the overarching strengths and weaknesses of the district centres, as shown in the tables below:

Overall Strengths	
Factor	**Centres**
Factor 8 - Necessities	Northenden, Harpurhey, Gorton, Withington
Factor 16 - Accessibility	Harpurhey, Gorton, Chorlton, Withington
Factor 23 - Liveability	Northenden, Harpurhey, Gorton, Chorlton

Overall Weaknesses	
Factor	**Centres**
Factor 2 - Appearance	Harpurhey, Gorton, Chorlton, Withington
Factor 4 – Vision and strategy	Harpurhey, Gorton, Chorlton
Factor 17 – Place marketing	Northenden, Harpurhey, Gorton

In terms of strengths, the centres' multifunctional/convenience town type signature is compounded by a strong performance in related factors. As such we see that necessities (providing the community with essential goods and services), accessibility (being easily reachable by the surrounding population), and liveability (again pertaining to providing goods, services, and an environment that serves the basic needs of the community), are high scoring factors across the district centres. This is unsurprising given that these centres cater for the 'everyday' needs of the local population, as opposed to (with some exceptions) providing a leisure/experiential function.

If we look at weaknesses, appearance ranks poorly across the centres. Whilst not applicable to every centre, there appears to be little joined up thinking in terms of creating a welcoming environment. As such there is a broadly inconsistent appearance, which in some centres is exacerbated by untidiness (litter, graffiti). Appearance ranks second in terms of its influence on a centre's performance, and is comparatively easy to improve, therefore in a sense this should come as a welcome observation.

The two other areas of weakness apparent across multiple centres are vision and strategy, and place marketing. Both of these factors are intrinsically linked to management, and the structures that are in place to shape and coordinate the direction these centres take. Given that in most centres there is a lack of coordinated collaboration and management evident, it is unsurprising that these factors rank poorly. Without the necessary collective capacity, which is working to some degree of synchronisation, there can be little expectation for places to possess a coherent strategy, and related to this a clear marketing proposition. Therefore, place management needs to be understood as a means of nurturing, growing, and guiding capacity to bring about change in a *collaborative* fashion. These centres need to either introduce management and governance models or, if there are already management structures in place, be willing to restructure their existing models so they are periodically reinvigorated and made fit for purpose. With a coordinated approach that harnesses local capacity effectively, these areas of weakness can be addressed and turned into areas of strength.

6.2 OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

As we identified in our *High Street UK 2030: Achieving Change* report, "You cannot plan for the centre of the future based on what is happening or known today... We have to think what we know about the changing world (Millington et al., 2018: 45). Therefore, from the project findings, we are able to look across the district centres involved, and identify a number of shared opportunities and threats that need to be taken into account to ensure their vitality and viability going forwards:

Opportunities	Threats
Greater collaboration between a range of engaged centre stakeholders	Potential lack of vision and place leadership
Further sharing of data (e.g. footfall) to enable more evidence-based decision making	Failure to track place-based interventions in light of available data (e.g. footfall impacts)
Alignment of trading hours with usage (using footfall data as guidance) e.g. re-using markets during the evening	Failing to develop and nurture local place-based partnerships
Further provision of entertainment and leisure, moving beyond mono-functional retail offer	Not capitalising on Vital and Viable project recommendations and stakeholder enthusiasm
Co-location of key services within the centre	Not adapting to - or anticipating - ongoing changes in the wider retail environment

6.2.1 OPPORTUNITIES

During the Vital and Viable workshops, it was clear each district centre has a number of passionate and invested stakeholders who care about making their place better. However, in some centres, this was the first time these people had been in a room together sharing experiences and ideas, having previously worked in isolation. We have found in our wider research with town and city centres across the UK, that many places lack strategic place leadership or have a dysfunctional model of partnership working. Those centres with more collaborative and responsive place management structures, however, are better able to respond to change and challenges in the external environment, and implement and track place interventions more effectively at a local level. Indeed, the HSUK2020 project identified networks and partnerships as a crucial factor impacting any centre's vitality and viability (Parker et al., 2017). Place leadership needs to be understood as something quite fluid, a source of energy, and the capacity to bring about change in a *collaborative* fashion. There is, therefore, a real opportunity in each district centre now to capitalise on the enthusiasm felt in the room during the workshops, and begin to foster a culture of collaborative partnership working. Withington is an especially good example of this; for example, in response to the workshop findings and footfall data, local independents have recently formed a Traders' Association. Local retailers and other businesses collaboratively extended opening hours and put on events for the successful *Withington by Night* event in October 2019, which led to a footfall uplift of 30% and record takings for a Friday evening. This kind of intervention might prove crucial in sustaining the city's independent sector. Other district centres in Manchester might take inspiration from this example of good practice around stakeholder collaboration.

Furthermore, from our work in other centres across the UK, we have found many places rely on hunches, rather than drawing on research evidence to decide upon and evaluate place management interventions. There is, therefore, a really good opportunity now for Manchester's district centres to collaboratively share research evidence and data (e.g. footfall data) to monitor the impact of any place interventions on centre vitality and viability. The footfall data collected and analysed during the project has been able to demonstrate, for example, the positive impact of community Christmas events on centre vitality in Northenden, Gorton, and Withington, with the potential for this evidence to be drawn upon to support similar future events. District centres should thus ensure to regularly share and discuss data to collaboratively decide upon strategies going forwards.

Another key finding cutting across the district centres in the project, is the importance of providing more than just retail, with issues around experience and diversity emerging as a commonplace area for addressing (Section 6.1). Although providing everyday essentials remains important, there is an opportunity to further enhance multi-functionality (Millington et al., 2015) in these places, especially since diversity, experience, and entertainment and leisure are featured within the 25 priority interventions (Parker et al., 2017). Whilst some centres provide well in the area of entertainment and leisure (e.g. Chorlton and Withington), others are lacking in this area, thus demonstrating an opportunity to further expand or diversify the offer beyond retail in the future.

As well as offering things like community events, restaurants, and leisure activities, markets are particularly important drivers of experience, diversity, and vibrancy, by providing an important place for people to socialise and experience entertainment, as well as buy things. In research undertaken for NABMA, we found an effective market has the potential to increase footfall in a place by up to 27% (Hallsworth et al., 2015). Through workshop discussions and footfall data analysis, we identified the central role of markets to Manchester's district centres, with markets especially important anchors in Gorton and Harpurhey. We found that centre footfall aligns closely with market opening times and days, with less people typically using the centre when the market is closed. There is, therefore, an opportunity for district centres to either introduce more market activity, or further capitalise on these existing assets, potentially expanding market provision and/or extending opening hours to attend to previously discussed trends around consumers increasingly moving beyond traditional 9am - 5pm lifestyles (Section 3). We have also demonstrated in our research, the value of markets, even if temporary, not only re-activate centres, but also lower barriers to entry for new and emerging businesses. In Withington, for example, a temporary Makers Market, has since taken residence of a vacant unit in the centre. Finally, the IPM has recently reanalysed its top 25 priorities, and markets are now identified as a category in their own, signalling their centrality in centre revitalisation. Revisiting how Manchester manages its own markets, and supports other types of markets, is now both timely and crucial.

Finally, we have identified that liveability – another important factor for vitality and viability (Parker et al., 2017) – is a common strength observed across the district centres (Section 6.1), with essential services typically provided well for the local community (e.g. healthcare and professional services). However, we found that Harpurhey is functioning particularly well in this respect, by co-locating key services together in one central hub. This 'community hub model' can create synergies, enable linked trips, and enhance footfall; indeed, Harpurhey enjoys the highest footfall volumes across Manchester's district centres. There is thus an opportunity for other district centres to learn from this approach to service provision in the future, with Gorton already notably following suit. This may mean greater leadership from the Manchester City Council in steering the direction of change in our more challenging centres.

6.2.2 THREATS

However, Manchester's district centres also face a number of potential common threats, which should be considered and mitigated against in order to ensure future vitality and viability. As well as the requirement to attend to – and anticipate - transformations within the broader retail environment, such as online shopping, the mobility revolution, and present and future consumer behaviour trends (Section 3), district centres also need to be mindful of potential challenges around vision, place leadership, and stakeholder networks. As argued above, collaborative partnership working should lead to more effective, sustained, and better-value place-interventions. However, the failure to develop and nurture local partnerships - as facilitated by the stakeholder workshops - or to identify invested and strategic place leaders, will likely result in incoherent visions, strategies, and no collaboratively agreed way forward to enhance vitality and viability. Moreover, by neglecting to track place-based interventions in light of available data (e.g. footfall), centres will be operating on hunches and assumptions, rather than engaging in evidence-based decision making, which would lead to more successful place management plans and strategies. Hence, as already discussed above, centres should regularly share data and insights within collaborative networks to mitigate against these possible challenges. Finally, the district centres also need to avoid the threat of not capitalising on the Vital and Viable project recommendations and stakeholder appetite for change. The suggested 'quick wins' would provide a good starting point for fostering wider engagement, enthusiasm, and galvanising on the energy witnessed during the project; before beginning to think more strategically and collaboratively about long-term visions and strategies within each centre.

7. Footfall

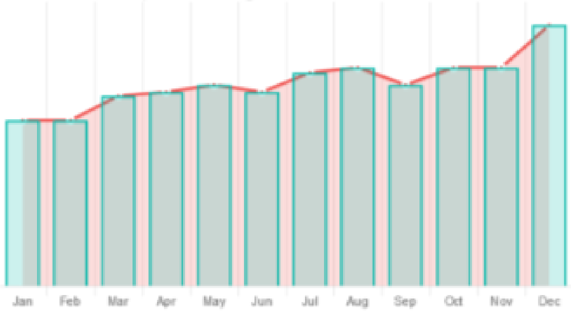
A key study underpinning the Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres project is Bringing Big Data to Small Users (BDSU). It is a collaborative research and development project funded by Innovate UK, led by retail intelligence specialists, Springboard, and involving the IPM, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cardiff University, MyKnowledgeMap, and other key partners. Springboard have provided footfall data for more than 100 town and city centres, dating back as far as ten years, that looks at footfall changes on an hourly basis. Footfall measures the number of people passing a particular point or points in a centre. It has been recognised in national planning policy statements as the prime indicator of town centre vitality since 1994.

Analysis of this data has identified four basic patterns that have profound significance in thinking about the future of traditional retail centres. The patterns show usage of a centre by month over a twelve-month period. Whilst it had traditionally been assumed that most centres show an increase in footfall in the pre-Christmas period and that this is the busiest time of year, the patterns show that this is not true of all centres. And, even where it is the case, the significance of the upturn in activity has in many cases been over-estimated. It is important to stress that the patterns reflect actual usage of a centre, and that footfall is not the same as retail sales, as people may be in a centre for many other reasons than to shop.

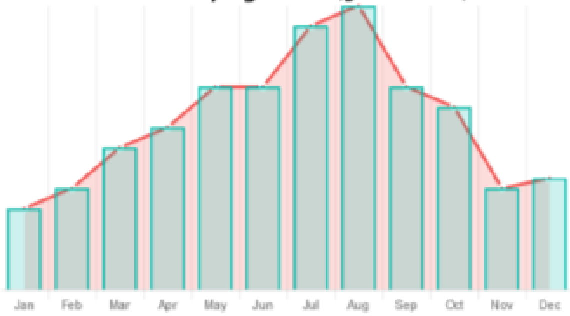
The project has identified that all centres fit within these four pattern types, though some do so more closely than others. It is evident that some towns are changing and are transitioning from one town type to another. The significance of the town types is that data analysis shows that the more closely a town is used in line with one of the patterns, the more resilient its footfall is. Footfall in centres has been reducing as a whole, and the research suggests that will continue as we look to 2020. But towns that have footfall patterns more closely related to the four patterns are seeing footfall decline less rapidly than centres with more hybrid patterns, as they have a clearer offer and image.

The four key footfall signature types identified in the project are detailed below:

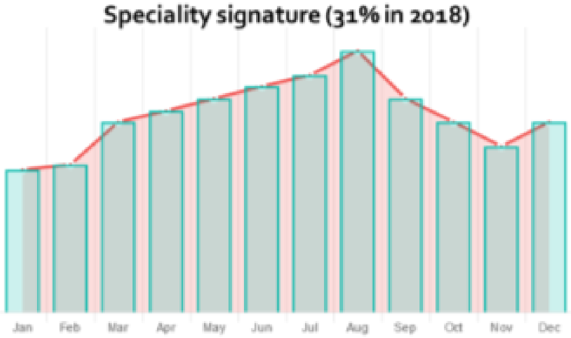
Comparison signature (20% in 2018)



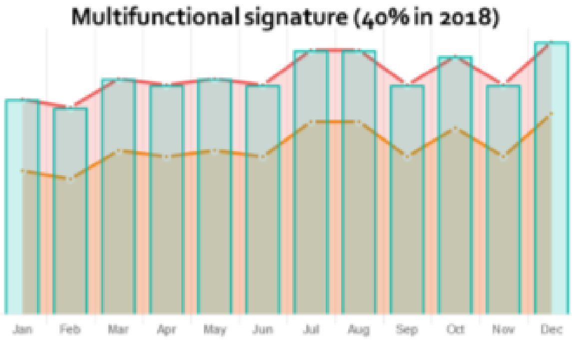
Holiday signature (9% in 2018)



Speciality signature (31% in 2018)



Multifunctional signature (40% in 2018)



Convenience/community towns and multifunctional centres

The largest group of centres identified by usage (some 40% of all centres considered), termed convenience/community towns and multifunctional centres, have a fairly steady footfall profile throughout the year. Centres of this kind are focused on their local community, their anchor might be food retailing, employment, access to public transport, or a strong resident base. They are places that offer a convenient mix of goods and services.

Understanding what type of centre you are is a basic first step in determining how best to go forward. It also ensures that decisions you make are rational, and hence have a better chance of success. The 25 priority factors for vitality and viability (as discussed in the previous section) will apply to all centres; but the interpretation and implementation of these factors depends to a large extent on knowing what kind of centre you are.

8. Recording footfall in the district centres

A footfall counter has been capturing around the clock footfall data in each of the district centres covered since November 2017.

Automated footfall monitoring provides data on the volume of customers in a centre, and is critical for practitioners in the evaluation of whether strategies and initiatives to drive increases in footfall are effective. The dynamic nature of footfall means that this data delivers the most immediate response to any initiative, and so enables practitioners to be able to readily identify the impact of initiatives on the success of the centre. In addition, recording footfall in this way removes the reliance on secondary or associated indicators such as public transport or car parking usage, which often are limited in their effectiveness due to paucity of data or a less than direct correlation to customer activity.

Unlike a planning classification, activity data demonstrates exactly how people are using a centre, and what its main function is (i.e. convenience/community). It also enables the development trajectory and management plan for a centre to be responsive to changes in consumer behaviour and other developments.

Footfall monitoring has a number of key applications and supports a centre by:

- **Demonstrating its success in attracting customers** into the centre
- **Providing an objective measure of performance**, lessening reliance on anecdotal evidence as a measure of success
- **Detecting early warning signs of change**, so that relevant strategies can be implemented
- **Evaluating the success of marketing and promotion** by identifying the additional footfall generated during an event or as a result of a promotion
- **Attracting event sponsorship** by having clear evidence of the success in attracting more visitors to the centre
- **Establishing the contribution of development and public realm improvements** in increasing visitor numbers, both in the short and longer term
- **Providing data required to attract new occupiers and investors** into the centre
- **Providing data to existing businesses** in order to support business retention in the centre
- **Providing data to deliver efficiencies in resource allocation**, eg. cleaning, policing, ambassadors
- **Identifying over or under-performance** by benchmarking against national and regional averages and peer groups to establish whether increases or decreases in footfall are in-line with general trends.

As a result of the counters placed in each district centre, we currently have approximately two years of data that we can use to decipher how these centres are being used. Furthermore, as the data set grows, the longitudinal nature of the information collected will allow us to develop an enhanced picture of how these centres are performing throughout the year, and against previous years. As such, the location of the counter (and the count itself) is of less importance than the usage trends and patterns it allows us to draw out.

In addition to allowing us to ascertain a centre’s functionality and overall profile, this insight is invaluable for tracking the success of any interventions which are put into place. A summary of the data collected to date in the five centres is set out below.

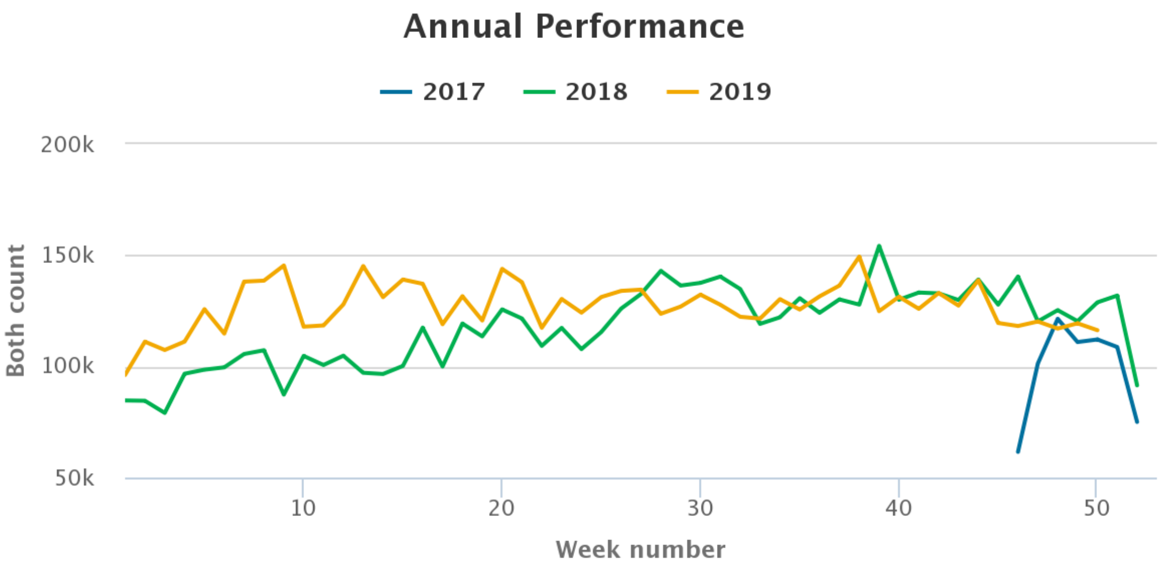


FIGURE 1 – ANNUAL PERFORMANCE OF ALL FIVE PILOT CENTRES

As we can see from the above graph, which displays the combined performance of each of the five centre by week, the profile matches with that of the convenience/multifunctional town type. Not shown in this graph, but clearly contributing to this aggregration, is that all five centres possess a similar broadly flat/consistent weekly footfall pattern. However, despite these centres possessing a similar profile, their volume of use varies significantly:

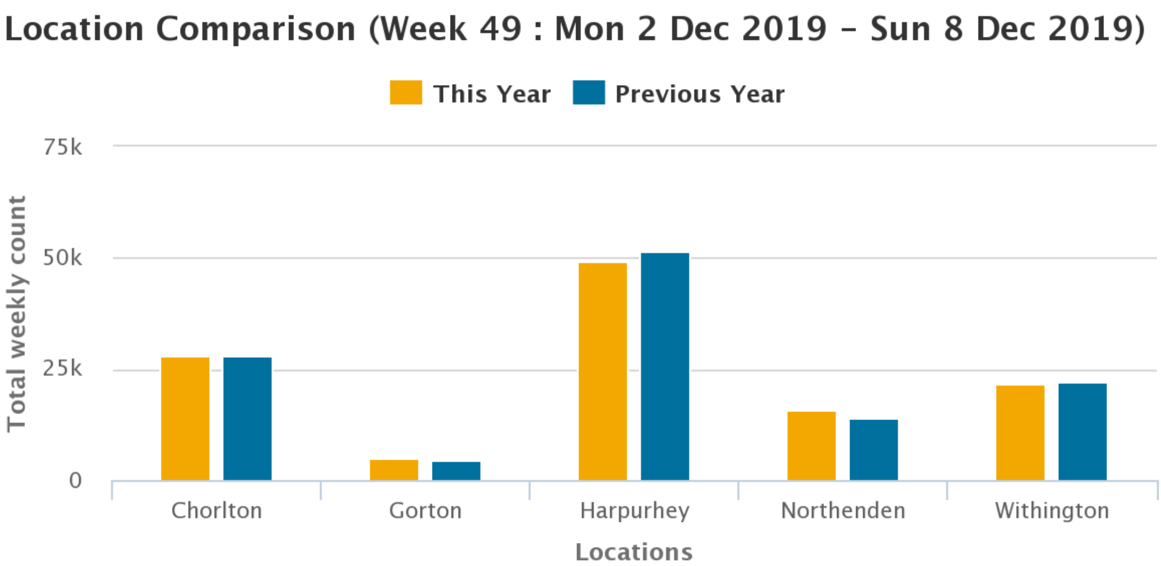


FIGURE 2 – CENTRE COMPARISON FOR WEEK COMMENCING 2ND DECEMBER 2019

The graph above, which shows footfall for the week commencing December 2nd 2019, shows that Harpurhey's footfall surpasses all other centres by a significant margin. This is not an anomaly, indeed the respective volumes for this given week are indicative of the general performance of each centre. Whilst the profile of towns and the longitudinal performance is our primary concern, considerations relating to volume can also be made. Centres with a relatively low volume of footfall through the year need to think about how they are locally connected and focus efforts on improving convenience for people in the immediate area. This may be through ensuring trading hours meet local needs, through introducing new offers such as parcel collection from retail units or lockers, pop-up retailers and restaurants or regular markets which bring in new product lines and services on an occasional basis, home-working and small business facilities, a very strong customer service approach focused on maintaining customer loyalty, or other things that enhance convenience and respond to community need. Centres with a higher annual footfall may be larger and have a stronger retail offer than the average centre, but they have steady footfall flows because they possess multifunctional characteristics. Often, their employment base, hospitality offer, culture and entertainment, strong service offer, and central housing all ensure that footfall remains steady through the year. They also need to think about connectivity, but perhaps at a wider level to lower volume centres, with consideration given to ensuring they can support the range of activities that take place in the centre.

By way of confirming this consistency of footfall, we can look at the centres' daily volume. The graph below shows the combined total volumes for each centre for the week commencing December 2nd 2019, with a comparison against the previous week, and against that same week in 2017 and 2018. As we can see, there is a consistent pattern of centres achieving broadly consistent footfall Monday-Thursday, with an increased volume on Fridays and Saturdays, and a drop off on Sundays (when many retailers/service providers are closed).

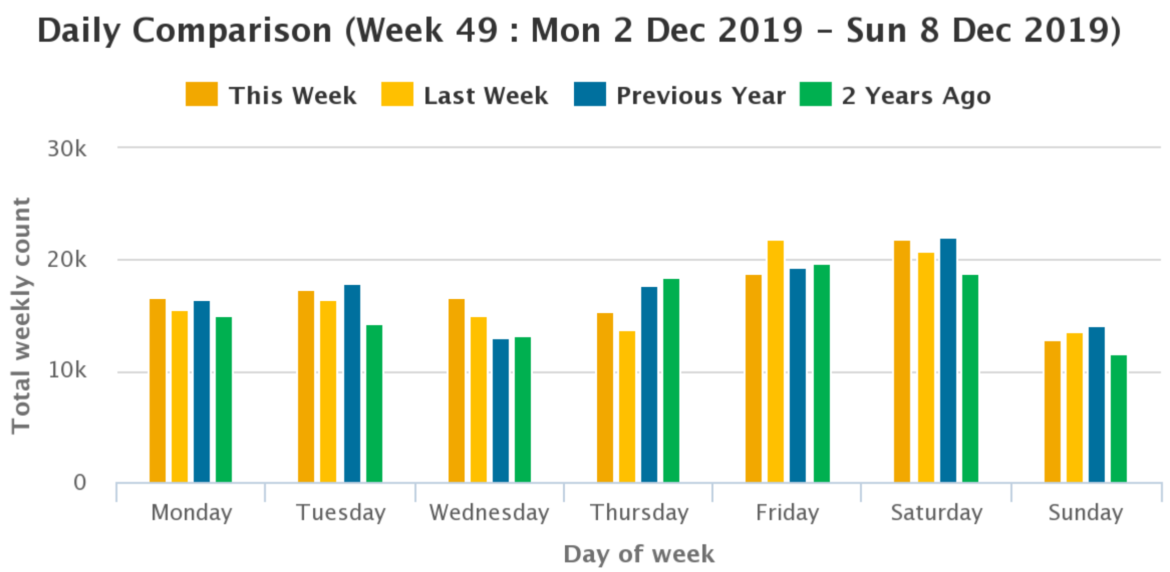


FIGURE 3 – COMBINED DAILY TOTALS FOR CENTRES WEEK COMMENCING 2ND DECEMBER 2019

If we look at the centres' hourly footfall average for that week (W/C December 2nd 2019), again there is consistent pattern that emerges. We can see that these centres – and again this is in alignment with their convenience/multifunctional signature type – are most heavily used during typical business hours (between 9am-5pm). From a volume perspective Saturday is again an outlier in this respect, unsurprisingly, as people are generally not at work and able to utilize the centre. The usage pattern, however is consistent throughout the week, with the peak volume occurring around midday and tailing off towards late afternoon. Similarly, whilst Sunday is again an outlier in terms of volume, being as it is lower, the usage pattern is comparable to all other days of the week.

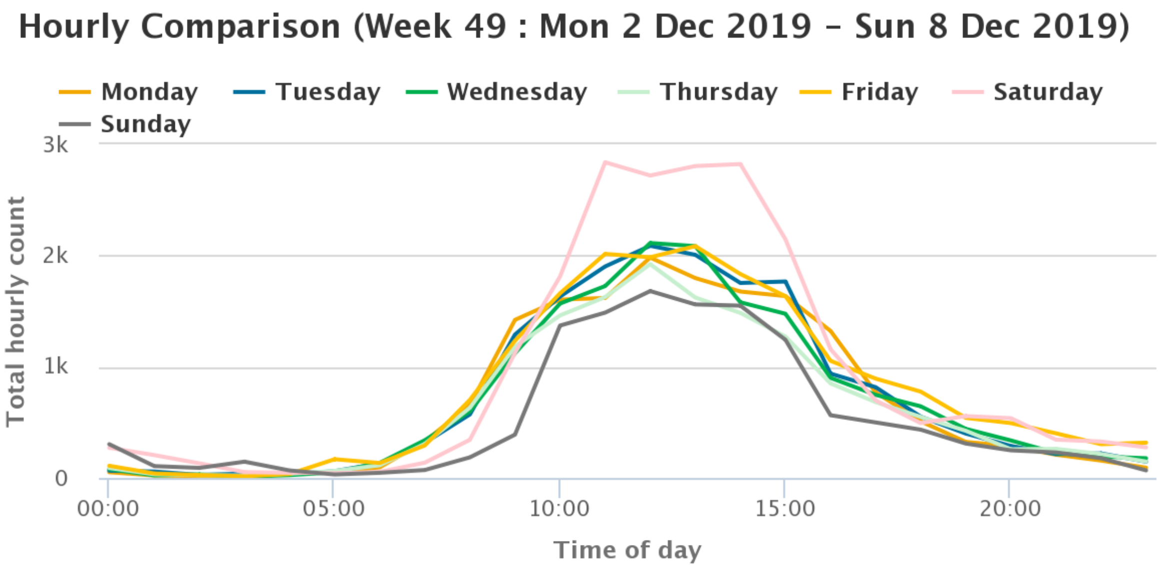


FIGURE 4 – HOURLY TOTALS FOR FIVE CENTRES WEEK COMMENCING 2ND DECEMBER 2019

As mentioned above, in addition to assessing the usage patterns of centres, the footfall is also invaluable for tracking the impact of interventions that are put in place in the centres. By way of illustration, the graph below displays the footfall in Withington for the week commencing December 2nd 2019. On Friday 6th December, Withington held a 'Withington by Night' event which involved entertainment, a pop-up pub, and retailers extending their opening hours. As we can see, the impact of this event is clearly evident, with footfall for that Friday eschewing the usual tail off in late afternoon and sustaining late into the evening. This evidence is very important, as it proves that this intervention was successful, and as such will inform the planning of future events, which can now be orchestrated with the added confidence afforded by this success.

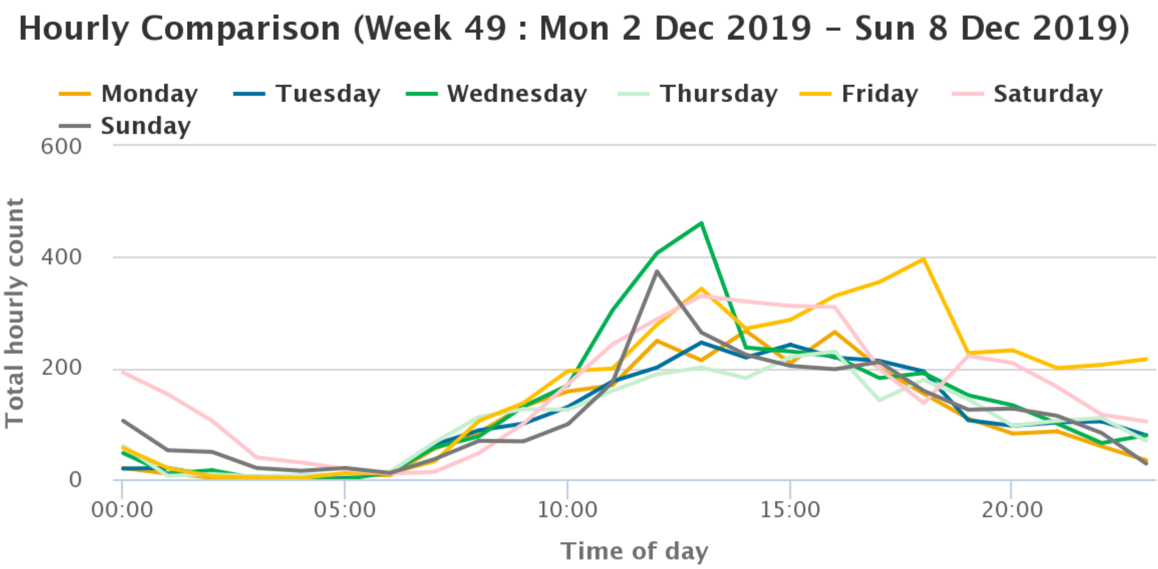


FIGURE 5 – HOURLY TOTALS FOR WITHINGTON WEEK COMMENCING 2ND DECEMBER 2019

9. Going Forward

The five workshops identified a number of shared concerns and issues about future of each of Manchester's District Centres in the pilot study. For the reasons given above, it was clear that change is needed and action needs to be taken. The precise direction of change, together with the appropriate collaborative partnerships to deliver action, however, will require bespoke measures in each centre. The priorities for Gorton, for example, are not the same as say Withington, and neither is the mix of place based stakeholders and anchor institutions. Each centre, therefore, will need to identify unique groups of willing participants to come together to take responsibility for their place. There are no easily replicable solutions; this has to be worked out locally.

The IPM recommends key local stakeholders in each centre should review in more detail the 25 factors listed above and compare how their place is performing in respect of each. We would also advise also these reviews account for the new and updated 25 factors.

It is important to recognise, that some of the interventions identified for each centre may take years to achieve. This is the case in all locations, and so it is important 'early wins' are also recorded to counter any inertia, poor perception, or to maintain momentum where existing collaborative arrangements are in place.

To assist places to identify priority interventions, the IPM has developed a four-element framework, the 4Rs, for regeneration. The four areas where a difference can be made are repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring (see Table 2 below). As part of the pilot research, the IPM has identified a framework for action, based on the 4Rs, for each district centre in the study. These are summarised for each centre below.

TABLE 2 - Summary of 4Rs Framework

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING	Repositioning is a strategy that relates to clearly identifying and communicating a place's market position (Millington and Ntounis, 2017). It can be used to counteract decline, and enables centres to identify potential competitive advantages. The starting point is understanding forces of change, and the value of unique responses that reposition centres. Such responses should build on a place's distinct capabilities, whilst also being accommodative of future trends in order for a centre to be resilient. Knowledge exchange between stakeholders is also crucial in such strategies to generate a shared understanding of a centre's identity and function.
PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING	Reinventing strategies relate to the activities undertaken to revitalise a place's identity and offer (Theodoridis, Ntounis, and Pal, 2017). Any place, however, should understand and seek to meet the needs of its catchment, and be sensitive to these insights when making any changes within a centre.
PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING	Strategies of rebranding focus upon the application of branding, marketing communications, and public relations techniques in order to deliver a consistent place identity, which relates to the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions in the minds of potential consumers of a place (Ntounis, and Kavaratzis, 2017). Successful place brand management can lead to positive word-of-mouth, and assist in the transformation of previously negative, or just as problematic, non-existent images.
PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING	Restructuring strategies relate to both governance structures and forms of management, and the physical structuring of a place (Peel and Parker, 2017). The first requires the cooperation of all place stakeholders and creation of strategic networks and public-private relationships that will nurture conditions for the sustainable development of a place, rather than taking top-down approaches. The second requires the proper use of current infrastructure, in addition to the development of new retail spaces to enhance place attractiveness and place development.

CHORLTON 4RS FRAMEWORK

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING

- Consolidate centre's strength as a functioning place meeting both the basic needs of the community, and leisure destination for a wider catchment
- Strengthen stakeholder capacity to act in a co-ordinated fashion
- Identify a clearer and coherent message about Chorlton's offer

QUICK WINS

- Neighbourhood team should lead on establishing a stakeholder group
- Use low-cost marketing to reposition the centre (see Rebranding below)
- Protect the centre's diverse and distinct identity by nurturing independent traders
- Review and interpret footfall data, and share analysis

PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING

- Consolidate reputation as a popular liveable place and leisure destination
- Improve visual appearance of centre
- Widen Chorlton's appeal by marketing the four distinct clusters under one umbrella brand
- Improve connectivity/signage between each cluster to generate synergy, linked trips, dwell and linger times

QUICK WINS

- Focus on improvements to basic appearance
- Invest in signage, route-making interventions to improve connectivity and legibility
- Measure impact of interventions using footfall data and track longitudinal trends, and consider installation of additional counters
- Encourage new regeneration projects to enhance appeal of the centre e.g. contributions to public realm improvement

PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING

- Consolidate Chorlton's strong and positive image as a popular residential and leisure destination
- Communicate a clear coherent offer to existing and new audiences
- Develop collaborative approach to low cost digital marketing and new promotional materials
- Bring existing digital branding under one umbrella

QUICK WINS

- Establish a sub-group to take responsibility for branding
- Ensure branding is co-created locally
- Build on existing strengths to create authentic messages about place
- Engage local independent traders in branding
- Promote existing events, activities and festivals under one brand
- Consider new materials e.g. local traders map

PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING

- Consolidate Chorlton key strengths as an accessible district centre
- Develop a locally produced vision and strategy for the centre
- Create a joined-up and collective approach to centre management

QUICK WINS

- Consolidate existing interested local stakeholders by establishing a district-centre stakeholder group, initiated by the Neighbourhood Team
- Form sub-groups to take responsibilities for specific interventions.
- Use meetings to share and review footfall data

KEY PRIORITIES

- Establish a place management structure to protect the sustainability of the centre
- Consolidate Chorlton's appeal as a desirable district centres and a liveable place, with strong leisure and evening offer by strengthening the clarity and coherence of Chorlton's brand
- Manage the spread of football across the four distinct clusters by improving internal connectivity

GORTON 4RS FRAMEWORK

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING	QUICK WINS
• Review and interpret footfall data • Share data with wider audience • Initiate encouraging ongoing stakeholder collaboration • Build on local diversity attractions, such as Gorton Monastery, as means of differentiation	• Neighbourhood team should lead on establishing a stakeholder group • Once stakeholder capacity in place, share knowledge and generate ideas for interventions to improve appearance • Use low-cost marketing to reposition the centre (see Rebranding below) • Review, interpret and share footfall data
PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING	**QUICK WINS**
• Improve general appearance of Gorton • Create a more recognisable focal point for Gorton e.g. public space, community hub, market reinvention • Extend opening hours of local amenities • Diversify the offer by creating opportunities for new business by lowering barriers to entry to local enterprise and young entrepreneurs	• Focus first on low cost and quick to enact improvements to basic appearance. • Consider hanging baskets, flower beds, In Bloom event • Measure impact of interventions using footfall data and track longitudinal trends
PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING	**QUICK WINS**
• Build on proximity to nearby attractions e.g. Gorton Monastery, the Belle-Vue Stadium to create a more positive image • Install signage to direct people to attractions and strengthen internal connectivity • Introduce public art emphasise these links and reanimate areas in need	• Develop branding/marketing efforts to emphasize proximity to nearby attractions • Utilise incremental/low-cost rollout of predominantly online branding • Engage local stakeholders in the development of branding and place-making interventions
PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING	**QUICK WINS**
• Capitalise on engaged stakeholders by establishing a stakeholder group • Establish sub-groups for specific projects/aspects of place improvement • Create a joined up collective approach to centre improvement • Physical restructuring of the market as a focal point for the centre	• Create a stakeholder group through a new partnership/forum/group • Form sub-groups to take responsibilities for specific interventions. • Use meetings to share and review footfall data • Organise regular meetings facilitated by the Neighbourhood Team • Use meetings to review footfall data

KEY PRIORITY
• Build on the positives, a functioning well-used community centre. • Develop engagement with stakeholders in a coordinated fashion, before tackling key issues such as poor appearance and reputation. • Strengthen links to local attractions and other community assets • Focus on reinventing the market e.g. night market, opportunities for young creatives

HARPURHEY 4RS FRAMEWORK

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING	QUICK WINS
• Maintain centre's high performance in terms of meeting basic needs of the community • Reposition Harpurhey as the "centre of the community" or "community hub" • Strengthen stakeholder capacity (see Restructuring) to act in a co-ordinated fashion	• Neighbourhood team should lead on establishing a stakeholder group • Once stakeholder capacity in place, share knowledge and generate ideas for interventions to improve appearance • Use low-cost marketing to reposition the centre (see Rebranding below) • Review and interpret footfall data, and share analysis

PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING	QUICK WINS
• Address negative perceptions of safety to start removing barriers to use of the centre after dark • Increase prominence and celebrate the market's importance • Consider extended activity hours at the market to build an evening offer • Improve appearance to create a more welcoming experience, encourage dwell time, and improve perceptions	• Focus first on low cost and quick to enact improvements to basic appearance. • Consider hanging baskets, flower beds, In Bloom event • Prioritise issues around safety and crime • Measure impact of interventions using footfall data and track longitudinal trends

PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING	QUICK WINS
• Increase the visibility of Harpurhey outside the immediate catchment area • Engage stakeholders to co-create brand • Engage wider public through a brand design competition/vote • Focus on improving the centre's physical environment and negative perceptions of safety before increasing promotion	• Build on Harpurhey's image as a functional centre serving the local community • Shift ownership to community via messages e.g. 'your community centre' • Engender sense of community using the market as a focus for rebranding • Utilise incremental/low-cost rollout of predominantly online branding

PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING	QUICK WINS
• Capitalise on engaged stakeholders by establishing a stakeholder group • Establish sub-groups for specific projects/aspects of place improvement • Create a joined up collective approach to centre improvement • Physical restructuring of the market	• Organise regular meetings through a partnership/forum/group facilitated by the Neighbourhood Team • Use meetings to review footfall data

KEY PRIORITIES
• Build on the positives, a functioning well-used community centre. • Develop engagement with stakeholders in a coordinated fashion, before tackling key issues such as poor appearance and negative perceptions of safety. • The market provides an opportunity to both reposition and restructure Harpurhey through extended activity hours to generate both an evening offer and greater diversity of uses.

NORTHENDEN 4RS FRAMEWORK

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING	QUICK WINS
• Build on existing convenience offer by improving leisure/evening economy offer • Take advantage of green space provision/riverside location as means of differentiation • Review and interpret footfall data, and share analysis	• Analyse and understand footfall data as an opportunity to engage a wider group of stakeholders • Upskill local stakeholders to analyse footfall data • Share footfall data to make informed collaborative decisions • Neighbourhood team to lead on sharing data
PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING	**QUICK WINS**
• Analyse the extent the district centre meets the needs of the local catchment • Revitalise offer by emphasizing green space provision • Improve appearance of centre • Encourage dwell time and improve perceptions of Northenden • Raise profile of riverside location as key local asset and visitor attraction	• Increase awareness of riverside/Trans-Pennine Trail location • Create more visible and frequent signage to the greenspace and riverside areas. • Organise community events/festivals to attract more people to riverside green space • Introduce planters/hanging baskets • Organise an In Bloom style event • Measure impact of interventions using footfall data
PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING	**QUICK WINS**
• Encourage stakeholder engagement in co-creating a positive, consistent and coherent brand image • Engage wider public through a brand design competition/vote • Promote Northenden to immediate catchment	• Incorporate 'the riverside village' message, and heron imagery, into promotional activity to strengthen place identity • Draw on Northenden's history • Incremental/low-cost rollout of predominantly online branding
PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING	**QUICK WINS**
• Capitalise on engaged stakeholders by establishing a community/stakeholder group, • Establish sub-groups for specific projects/aspects of place improvement • Create a joined up collective approach to centre improvement	• Organise regular meetings through the establishment of a partnership/forum/group, facilitated by the Neighbourhood Team • Use meetings to review footfall data • Measure impact of interventions using footfall data and track longitudinal trends

KEY PRIORITY

- Build on Northenden's relatively strong position
- Improve reputation and image
- Invest in place marketing and community-led social media campaigns to communicate existing offer to local catchment
- Encourage people to use the centre and visit the riverside (linked to local festivals or events)

WITHINGTON 4RS FRAMEWORK

PRIORITY 1: REPOSITIONING	QUICK WINS
• Build on reputation as a liveable place with a credible evening economy • Widen appeal to local catchment • Focus on connectivity and linkages to nearby attractors • Review and interpret footfall data, and share analysis	• Extend activity hours to create better alignment with usage patterns • Continue temporary events, pop-ups • Continue support of existing local networks and share footfall data • Guide the re-use of vacant units to align with perceived needs of existing local catchment
PRIORITY 2: REINVENTING	**QUICK WINS**
• Consolidate reputation as a liveable place and leisure destination, which has everyday necessities and convenience, augmented by an established evening economy • Establish additional local anchors • Improve the visual appearance • Create plans for new public space to encourage dwell and linger times	• Focus on low cost and quick to enact improvements to basic appearance. • Consolidate digital branding to communicate strong and positive messages the centre offer • Develop plans to improve connectivity and legibility through placemaking interventions to improve navigability and route making • Develop plans to improve public realm, including new civic space
PRIORITY 3: REBRANDING	**QUICK WINS**
• Build on Withington's identity and capitalise on temporary interventions • Encourage stakeholder engagement in co-creating a positive, consistent and coherent brand image • Communicate offer to both existing and new audiences	• Form a sub-group of independent traders to take responsibilities for branding • Develop a collaborative approach to low cost digital marketing, to consolidate and promote Withington's unique offer • Focus first on improving on improving appearance and quality of public realm
PRIORITY 4: RESTRUCTURING	**QUICK WINS**
• Strengthen existing collaborative network of local stakeholders, with a proven record of achievement • Develop and build a shared vision or consensus about a future of the Village • Improve general appearance and provide new quality pedestrian realm and civic space • Improve walkable routes to key local attractors and local catchment	• Nurture existing local networks and raise capacity of local network to address strategic goals • Future decision making needs to consider the linkages and connectivity between the district centre and important attractors and catchment areas • Measure impact of interventions using footfall data and track longitudinal trends

KEY PRIORITIES

- Consolidate Withington image as a desirable location, and conserve its unique identity and heritage and active evening economy, and protect and nurture independent traders
- Diversify the offer to widen appeal to a wider audience
- Improve centre appearance and create stronger linkages to local attractors and catchment
- Build the capacity of existing local networks to take on more strategic development goals

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

Although effective revitalisation of town and district centres requires unique and local responses, we have been able to distil some areas of commonality, principles or guidance perhaps, that might inform a citywide approach to the future development Manchester's District Centres. This section, therefore, provides a summary of our wider conclusions and recommendations for future action.

10.1. STRENGTHEN LOCAL NETWORKS AND THEIR CAPACITY TO EFFECT CHANGE

We have found local capacity and willingness to work collaboratively to be extremely variable across the 5 District Centres in this Pilot Study. Most effective is the emergent network in Withington, which provides a model place management structure for a district centre. Involving local traders, key local anchors, and place based anchors, this network has already acted on some of the recommendations to initiate small scale but impactful interventions. Our recommendation would be to support such networks, to raise their capacity to take on further responsibility of centre management and marketing. It must be recognised that where such networks achieve success, it may be the case that the nature and composition might need to change if the community are to tackle more strategic ambitions, with new more appropriate structures becoming necessary. Embracing change and understanding that all places are on trajectories, and that place management and leadership are necessarily fluid, is essential.

However, the other centres are at much earlier stages of advancement in this respect. Some have emergent structures, and the city should capitalise on already engaged stakeholders, to encourage momentum and build capacity. Elsewhere, networks are virtually absent, and so it may be the case the City takes on place leadership responsibility, on the understanding that once new community led structures are in place, the authority will need to step back and take on a more nurturing position. It is essential therefore to build community ownership or collective responsibility for each centre, where the local authority works in partnership with local networks. In essence, the local authority's involvement in local collaboration should vary on a need basis.

Once established, it must be recognised that effective place management networks are fluid and adaptable, with shifting membership, as new opportunities or challenges arise. Formal partnerships are perhaps only necessary for more strategic development. We would recommend, therefore, that new and established networks form sub-groups to take responsibility for specific interventions e.g. social media and environmental improvements, to ensure sufficient flexibility and the alignment of appropriate skills and knowledge to tackle the issue being addressed. Widening the range of stakeholders involved only adds further capacity to affect change, and provides an opportunity to develop more inclusive structures. It might become necessary, as well, to draw in landowners and possible national corporate stakeholders into such networks, where appropriate.

However, there is no prescribed model. A governance structure that might work in one place, may be entirely inappropriate elsewhere. We would recommend therefore, a diversity of local governance arrangements, which include the right mix of willing stakeholders able to enact change in their centres.

10.2 ALIGN PLACE MAKING INTERVENTIONS AGAINST 25 FACTORS

Again, there is no prescribed model here. Places are complex, unique and dynamic, and the challenges they face will require tailored responses, specific to that place. However, going forward we would recommend District Centres refer to the latest version of IPM's 25 Priority Interventions and refer to our 4Rs Framework (Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding and Restructuring) as a mechanism for identifying priority interventions. As we have outlined above, places need to think about both short term and long term objectives. As Withington demonstrates, some quick wins can help galvanise communities and secure the necessary buy-in and support of other stakeholders.

That said, there appears to be a number of common issues cutting across Manchester's District Centres, which we recommend require urgent action in order to sustain footfall and restore vitality and viability. The top priority is the visual appearance of each centre, including matters such as litter, graffiti, quality of storefronts, and overall quality of public realm and civic space. As we know from our own and wider research, intervention is needed here, not only to address poor and negative perceptions, but also to encourage users of each centre to visit, enjoy a quality experience where they might dwell and linger, and ultimately support local business through increased spend. It is also important priorities are agreed locally and not imposed from above.

A recent study suggests 84% of professional place branding campaigns fail. Too often, place branding interventions are not sensitive to the specific needs of places, and impose generic solutions which ultimately fail to meet the needs of user groups. It is essential, therefore, that priorities are determined locally and through consensus. Activities such as place branding need to build on existing strengths and place attributes to construct authentic messages about each place. We would recommend branding is the result of co-creation between local stakeholders, and managed locally by stakeholders utilising low-cost social media.

The research has also identified the central role of markets to Manchester's district centres (and has subsequently led to us incorporating markets as a new key factor for centre success). We found that centre footfall aligns closely with market opening times and days, with less people typically using the centre when the market is closed. We would therefore encourage district centres to consider markets as an important source of vitality, and would recommend existing assets are utilised fully, and where there is currently a lack of provision, to introduce more market activity.

There are wider problems. Traffic levels and pollution are a concern in each centre, however, mitigating against the negative impact of wider structural issues will require strategic responses at a city-wide level, as they are beyond the remit or control of individual centres. Again, it is important that local networks and partnership refer back to the 25 factors, understand what they can or can't influence, otherwise there is potential for local stakeholders to become involved in paralysing debates about factors they can do little to affect.

It is important, however, to consider trends and potential future developments. The retail sector, for example, has experienced an intense period of change, and this will continue. Future proofing centres is essential to maintain centre resilience. As IPM research demonstrates, this will require many centres to reduce their dependence on retail, and to consider new functions (commercial, residential, leisure), to create multi-functionality. Harpurhey is a prime example of how a strong convenience retail offer has been supplemented with a consolidation of public sector services (healthcare, education, and a youth/community centre), rendering the centre eminently more liveable. Co-locating key services together in one central in a 'community hub model' can create synergies, enable linked trips, and enhance footfall; as is exemplified by Harpurhey's strong performance in this regard.

10.3. MONITOR AND SHARE DATA TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

The monitoring, analysis and sharing of footfall data has proved crucial in this Pilot Research. It has helped galvanise local traders in Withington for instance, to respond collaboratively to adjust activity hours in alignment with usage patterns. It has revealed the significance of markets as a driver of footfall. And the data has also allowed us to track and monitor centre performance and the impact of interventions. An example of how this data has been invaluable is in Harpurhey, where despite certain negative perceptions, the data revealed the centre to be the most active in terms of footfall of all ten centres where we installed counters. Such information provides vital intelligence, not just for local businesses and the city, but also for developers and landowners, who might now be willing to invest more in their assets. Capturing data on regular basis, and importantly sharing the data within local networks, therefore, is absolutely vital. However, not all centres are doing this consistently and visibly, and it may be the case that additional training and support is needed to embolden local stakeholders or Neighbourhood Teams in data analysis and communication skills.

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Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution

Report to: District Centres Subgroup – 21 January 2020

Subject: Climate Change and District Centres

Report of: Strategic Director (Growth and Development)

Summary

The report considers the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038. It covers key issues that will need to be considered in future policy development, particularly with respect to the new Local Plan. It also considers the role of the revised Climate Change Action Plan and the work of the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group in determining how district centres may contribute towards a zero carbon city by 2038.

Recommendations

To note the report and to agree that:-
- officers carry out further analysis into the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038 to inform the development of policies in the new Local Plan; and
- future reports are brought back to the Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group for their consideration on emerging policies in the new Local Plan.

Wards affected: All

Contact Officers:

Name: Eddie Smith
Position: Strategic Director (Strategic Developments)
Telephone: 0161 234 3030
Email: e.smith@manchester.gov.uk

Name: Richard Elliott
Position: Head of City Policy
Telephone: 0161 219 6494
Email: r.elliott@manchester.gov.uk

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background

1.1 In November 2018, the City Council agreed to the establishment of science-based carbon reduction targets for Manchester. This requires the city to become zero carbon by 2038 at the latest. The targets are based on work undertaken by the Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research which established a carbon budget of 15 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) for the city up to 2100. A draft Zero Carbon Framework was published in February 2019 and will be followed by a more detailed plan in March 2020. In July 2019, Manchester City Council declared a climate emergency. This declaration recognises the need for the Council and the city as a whole to do more to reduce its carbon emissions and mitigate the negative impacts of climate change and demonstrated the Council's commitment to be at the forefront of the global response to climate change and to lead by example.

1.2 This report considers in brief how district centres might contribute to zero carbon targets for Manchester. The main areas covered are as follows:

- The key issues to consider in how district centres link to the climate change agenda;
- Future opportunities for climate change adaptation and mitigation in district centres;
- What can the new Local Plan bring forward in terms of new policies; and
- How can the revised Climate Change Action Plan for the Council influence policy approaches in district centres.

2.0 District Centres – Key Issues

2.1 Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has recently published a report for the Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTC) that sets out the challenge ahead for the transport sector to contribute towards meeting zero carbon targets by 2038. The report states at the UK level, "*In 2017, transport emissions had reduced by just 3% on 1990 levels (road transport emissions have in fact increased 6%). In 2017, transport overtook energy as the sector emitting the largest amount of CO2e.*" The report includes analysis of road transport patterns in Greater Manchester since 1996 highlighting that GM Motorway traffic has continued to increase over the past two decades, whilst traffic on roads within the M60 and within Manchester city centre has fallen significantly over the same time period. The report attributes this pattern to the following reasons:

- The change toward a "digital economy" in which some shopping trips and commuting trips may have been replaced by e-commerce (i.e. online shopping) and an increase in home working respectively.
- A strong increase in rail-based public transport, which can partly be explained by improved services and extensions to the Metrolink network.
- A cultural shift towards urban living means population densities in the urban centre have increased, which has changed travel preferences and in turn travel demand for some, e.g. ability to walk to desired destination.
- Transport and land use policy, with minimal new road construction and a gradual shift towards pedestrian and cycling infrastructure improvements and prioritisation on local roads.

2.2 The above factors, whilst focusing in part on the land use and travel issues within the City Centre, can be considered within the context of the district centres in Manchester.

Digital Economy

2.3 The report from the Institute of Place Management (IPM) on district centres that is discussed on the other item for this sub-group agenda[1], provides some information and discussion on the impacts resulting from the increasing use of the digital economy on retail spending patterns. The IPM report highlights that, "*In 2018, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), it accounted for 18% of UK retail spend, with this figure rising to 18.7% in November 2019 (ONS, 2019). It is further predicted that online shopping will account for more than 50% of all retail spend by 2028 (Retail Economics, 2019). This masks the fact that food retailing online is only 6.5% whilst non-food is 26.5% (CRR, 2018), which must also be considered.*"

2.4 There is potentially a challenge and opportunity for district centres with respect to the digital economy. The challenge largely revolves around the increasing market share of goods sold online and how this impacts on high street stores. This in turn has potential impacts for climate change in terms of how deliveries are undertaken for example. An alternative issue to consider is the potential opportunities for local businesses to undertake aspects of their trade online, and the potential climate change impacts of doing so. This clearly will depend on the nature of businesses within district centres, and what goods and services could be offered in this manner.

Public Transport and Accessibility

2.5 All of the district centres in Manchester have bus route connections. Some also have the benefit of nearby Metrolink stops or rail stations. These provide a link into the district centres for the surrounding communities that they serve whilst also connecting the district centres to the city centre. Increasing the usage of public transport links into the district centres can contribute to potential positive impacts for climate change through a reduction in the use of the car.

2.6 Beyond the provision of public transport, the district centres can be accessed by walking and cycling. The Council is investing in a number of cycle route improvements through the Beelines network including routes that pass through district centres. This will provide additional improved opportunities for people to access district centres either by walking or cycling.

Urban Living

2.7 Clearly the city centre has been the focus of much of the increase in population with respect to urban living in recent years. Notwithstanding that point, there are potential opportunities for considering how district centres

[1] Institute of Place Management (December 2019), Vital and Viable Manchester District Centres

might diversify to include additional residential and other uses beyond the traditional retail offer. The IPM report includes a reference to this point within its recommendations stating, "*Future proofing centres is essential to maintain centre resilience. As IPM research demonstrates, this will require many centres to reduce their dependence on retail, and to consider new functions (commercial, residential, leisure), to create multi-functionality.*" The diversification of uses in district centres can potentially bring in beneficial impacts with respect to climate change in encouraging a locally based mix of uses that mutually strengthen the resilience of a centre. Current planning policy, set out in the Core Strategy, recognises the need for a diverse mix of uses in Policy C2:

"*Development will support thriving district centres, with distinct local character, providing a good range of accessible key services, including retail, health facilities, public services, leisure activities and financial and legal services. Housing will also be considered an appropriate use within District Centres, providing it supports the vitality and viability of the centre…*"

Transport and land use policy

2.8 The current Core Strategy already includes a number of policies that specifically deal with climate change (SP1, EN4 to EN8). Moreover, there are policies (C2 to C7) that cover the 17 identified district centres within the city. There is therefore a significant planning policy framework in place that seeks to direct development in a manner that responds to the climate change agenda. The Council is at the early stages of preparing a new Local Plan that will, where appropriate, refine existing planning policies and develop new planning policies that address climate change as a key strategic issue. The Council will be commencing its consultation on the Issues Stage of the new Local Plan in February for a period of eight weeks. This will provide an initial opportunity to consider what should feature in the new Local Plan.

Climate Change Adaptation/ Mitigation

2.9 The physical character of each district centre can be considered in terms of how each centre might be capable to adapt to or mitigate the impacts of climate change. This may involve innovative design solutions to ensure each district centre is resilient to changes in climate and the resultant weather patterns that may occur (greater variation of temperatures/ dealing with potentially weather events including more rain or dryer periods etc). The current Core Strategy states in Policy EN4 what is expected from new developments and retrofits of existing development in reducing carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, design considerations for residential development are already incorporated into current guidance produced by the Council[2]. The Residential Quality Guidance incorporates a section on how residential development can respond to considerations of zero carbon developments.

[2] Manchester City Council (2016), Manchester Residential Quality Guidance

2.10 Other adaptation and mitigation measures include the need to deal with potential flood risk that might be exacerbated by climate change; the use of green infrastructure to assist in cooling areas; and the provision of green spaces to enhance natural habitats. These points are already covered in existing Core Strategy policy EN8.

2.11 The current planning policies noted above will be reviewed as part of the new Local Plan process. This will enable any additional policy guidance to be developed in the light of new evidence.

3.0 Policy Options

Local Plan

3.1 Examples of existing planning policy noted above that are set out in the current Core Strategy demonstrate that the Council already has a framework to build from in terms of any future planning policies to address climate change. Moreover, the Core Strategy has policies focussing specifically on district centres.

3.2 Future planning policy for the new Local Plan will need to consider how district centres can further play their part in adapting and mitigating against the effects of climate change. This can be split into two main areas covering specific district centre policies in the first instance; and thematic policies relating to climate change that will also pertain to district centres. To assist in the development of these policies, an appropriate evidence base will need to be assembled. Evidence can be drawn on from the existing work developed by the Tyndall Centre that is informing the revisions to the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.

Other Policy Areas

3.3 The Council is updating the Climate Change Action Plan with the intention that a new plan will be brought to Executive this March. The current Action Plan which covers the period 2016 to 2020 includes various actions that relate to district centres including, for example, embedding carbon reduction objectives in policy-making. The Council has set up an Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group which will scrutinise forthcoming work by the Council on climate change. There will be an opportunity therefore to consider how any future climate change related work on district centres, including work undertaken for the new Local Plan, can be considered by the Climate Change Sub-group for comment and debate.

4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The report has considered some of the key issues with respect to the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038. It is clear that the new Local Plan will have an important part to play in setting out land use policies that further develop the approach to climate change already established in the current Core Strategy. Further analysis will be required to assess the role of district centres in contributing to the zero carbon targets by 2038 to inform the development of policies in the new Local Plan. The evidence base already developed by the Tyndall Centre will be invaluable in this work; alongside the analysis recommended by the IPM in their work. Alongside this will be the continuing work for the Climate Change Action Plan driven by the climate emergency declaration. The Overview and Scrutiny Climate Change Sub-group will scrutinise forthcoming work by the Council on climate change. There will be an opportunity therefore to consider how any future climate change related work on district centres, including work undertaken for the new Local Plan can be considered by the Climate Change Sub-group for comment and debate.