Overview & Scrutiny Committee

SCRUTINY PANEL

Retail Experience

May 2013

NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Index

APPENDICES

Foreword

The objective of this Scrutiny Panel was to:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc.)
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

The Scrutiny Panel was made up of Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: myself (Chair of the Scrutiny Panel); Councillor Suresh Patel (Vice Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Elizabeth Gowen and Danielle Stone, together with other non-Executives Councillors Sally Beardsworth and Dennis Meredith and Sheridan New, former Grosvenor Centre Manager, co optee.

It was a very in-depth Review that took place between April 2012 and May 2013.

The Councillor role is an important one and the Council's Scrutiny process is a good place for Councillors to make a real difference. I consider that in carrying out this Review and producing a comprehensive report, the Scrutiny Panel has done that. I would like to convey my sincere thanks to members of the Scrutiny Panel for their work on this Scrutiny Review.

The Panel received both written and spoken evidence from a wide variety of expert advisors including Cabinet Members for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning and Environment, Northampton Borough Council, an independent business owner, University of Northampton and the Northampton Community Forums.

The Panel made a series of site visits to a selection of towns and cities, the findings of which informed the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

Desk-top research was carried out by the Scrutiny Officer regarding the offer, profile, image and catchment of Stoke and Walsall and Metropolitan Borough of Walsall.

Recommendations are contained within the report.

I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this Review.

Councillor Matt Lynch

Chair, Scrutiny Panel 2 (Retail Experience)

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors Tony Ansell, Sally Beardsworth, Elizabeth Gowen, Dennis Meredith, Suresh Patel, Danielle Stone and Sheridan New (co-optee) who sat with me on this Review
- Marion Goodman, Head of Customer and Cultural, for her support to this Review
- Councillor Tim Hadland, Cabinet Member (Planning, Regeneration and Enterprise), Northampton Borough Council (NBC) and Councillor John Caswell, Cabinet Member (Environment), NBC, Gil Johns-Ogilvie, University of Northampton, Raymond Everall, Independent Business Owner, Stephen Chown, Chair, Northampton BID, Debbie Ferguson, Community Safety Manager, NBC, David Farquhar, Assistant Director, Highways, Northamptonshire County Council, Tony Mallard, Chair, Northampton Federation of Residents' Associations, Laura Jones, Deputy Head of Community Safety, Northamptonshire Police, various Northampton Community Forums and ward Councillors for providing expert advice to inform this Review

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the Review was to:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc.)
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012 to include a review of the retail experience at Northampton. This was an issue that had been identified by a number of members of the public as a key suggestion for a future Scrutiny review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 2 to undertake the review. An in-depth review commenced in May 2012 and concluded in May 2013.

A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Matt Lynch (Chair); Councillor Suresh Patel (Vice Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Sally Beardsworth, Elizabeth Gowen, Dennis Meredith and Danielle Stone and Sheridan New, former Grosvenor Centre Manager, (Co-optee.)

This review links to the Council's corporate priorities - Priority 1 – Northampton on track – a vibrant town.

The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Context:
    - Local statistics
    - Demographics – local and national
- Baseline data:
    - National statistics
    - Definition of the Town Centre
    - Vision for the Town Centre
- Synopses of various research documents and other published documents
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from residents
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from the Town Centre Challenge Event

- Best practice data
- Site visits
- Desktop research

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Scrutiny Panel established that: -

5.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

5.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that evidence from both the Policy Briefing produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) that as the recession continues, the health and vitality of local high streets is likely to be an issue which scrutiny will wish to investigate. One of the approaches suggested by the Policy Briefing that Scrutiny may wish to look at

5.1.2 is local issues. This was the approach that this Scrutiny Review concentrated on – looking at Northampton town centre and focusing on a range of key issues.

5.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the Central Area Action regarding town centre regeneration, in particular the section "Delivering a Vibrant Retail Centre:

Defining and strengthening Northampton's Primary Shopping Area (as shown on the 'Proposals Map') is vital if the Central Area is to fulfil its role as a town centre (as defined by PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth) and the principal shopping centre for Northamptonshire. To show the distinction between the types of use classes within Northampton Central Area, the Primary Shopping Area has been broken down into Primary and Secondary Frontages :

- Primary Frontages are the focus for retail uses
- Secondary Frontages will have a retail focus but provide opportunities for a greater diversity of uses away from retailing, such as financial services, restaurants and drinking establishments "

5.1.4 It was realised that creating better shop fronts may be an expense that cannot be afforded for some small retailers, it might therefore be necessary to decide which should be given priority getting a shop back into use or having an improved shop front.

5.1.5 Evidence collated indicated the need for more to be done to make the town centre a more visually attractive place. The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that de-cluttering of street furniture/signage was very important and gave a much better perception if the street scene was cleared. The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the announcement that was made during the evidence gathering of this Review that the Council was making £50,000 available for a town centre face lift. This funding will be spent on a general upgrade of street furniture.

5.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it was very important to encourage a much wider town centre experience, rather than just concentrate on the retail offer. It is important to promote a sense of place and having specific events helped to do this. There could also be a wider tie in to National and International events or "days".

5.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it was very important to raise the profile of retailing as a career and that it should not be seen as a job of last resort. They referred to the presentation that they had received from Skillsmart who provide retail training opportunities. Since this presentation, Skillsmart confirmed that it would liaise with Northampton BID to see how retail training could be promoted within Northampton.

5.1.8 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the introduction of "pop up shops", acknowledging that "pop up shops" are relatively low cost short term leases to get a retail property back into use. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be beneficial for services, such as the voluntary sector, to be signposted to the opportunity for pop-up campaigns.

5.1.9 During one of its meetings, the Scrutiny Panel heard of the town rangers that Rugby Town Centre BID had introduced. The Town Rangers were felt to be a very positive feature.

5.1.10 The Council's good communication methods were acknowledged. It was felt that there was a dynamic relationship with the media, with the Council being proactive in media on Northampton Alive.

5.1.11 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that free parking is having an impact on the numbers of people using the town. Every survey that has been conducted by the town centre management has referred to the perception that parking is expensive. Often this is not the case and parking in several other towns is more expensive than Northampton.

5.1.12 It was emphasised that more needs to be done with partnerships. The Police is a key partner in controlling anti-social behaviour in the town centre. The Scrutiny Panel noted the responses from Northants Police that a cared for town centre can alleviate misuse of the environment and anti-social behaviour.

5.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that it is important that any negative perceptions of the town centre are dealt with, but at the same time everyone should be made to feel welcome in the town centre area, it was particularly encouraging to see activities such as the Northampton by the Sea event which had been held in summer 2011 as it encouraged families into the town centre. Northampton had used an approach to attract consumers to the town during the Christmas shopping period 2012 by providing Christmas entertainment, such as the ice rink. The benefit of this initiative was welcomed by the Scrutiny Panel.

5.1.14 Town Centre events have an impact of increased footfall.

5.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the enthusiasm of students of the recent student lock in at the Grosvenor Centre and noted from the evidence received that should future events be held that the overall success of such events be promoted.

5.1.16 The evidence collated alluded that people would like a vibrant town centre comprising both chain stores and independent traders, with a variety of good eating and drinking venues and is family orientated at the weekends. A number of respondents made reference to the town becoming a centre for culture.

5.1.17 Northampton has some attractive architecture and should be promoted to its full advantage.

5.1.18 Like a number of towns and cities, Northampton has a number of vacant shops. Evidence received suggested the erection of artwork, created by local artists, on display boards, would enhance the aesthetics of the town centre.

5.1.19 From the evidence collated, the Scrutiny Panel is aware of the threats to traditional retailing that has already come from the expansion of the Internet for shopping. It was realised that there could be further threats due to forthcoming changes in technology.

5.1.20 It is highlighted that street entertainers in Norwich gave a nice atmosphere to the shopping experience and the Scrutiny Panel felt that this could be investigated for Northampton.

5.1.21 The Scrutiny Panel supported the provision of Litter Wardens that were employed in Norwich.

5.1.22 During the visit to the car park area at the Grosvenor Centre, it was noted that some lights were not working. A boarded up window was observed, as was an out of date maintenance sign. The advertising boards inside the lifts were empty. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the area around the lifts could benefit from a deep clean.

5.1.23 The evidence obtained from the site visits that the Scrutiny Panel undertook determined that a number of town centres visited had good signage in situ. The signage in the Grosvenor Centre, Northampton, was felt to be very good. Initiatives to enhance the retail experience that take place in the Grosvenor Centre were supported.

5.1.24 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the public is encouraged to report incidents in relation to street cleansing.

5.1.25 The Scrutiny Panel noted that reduction of signage work is on-going and is a key initiative not only within Northampton but across the county.

5.1.26 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the experience gained from the witnesses and the co-optee to this Review, particularly the wealth of knowledge and experience of the retail sector. It was recognised that it would be useful to continue this invaluable relationship to assist with the implementation of the recommendations of this Review.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations: -

6.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community

- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc.)
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

Scrutiny Panel 2 recommends to Cabinet that:

Retail Experience

6.1.1 The wider town centre experience is promoted and includes retail, leisure, culture, events and eating out.

6.1.2 Improved promotion of National and International events/activities.

6.1.3 Improved marketing of Northampton in relation to events held in the town centre.

6.1.4 Review the possibility of street entertainment (buskers) in the town centre.

6.1.5 Ensure town centre retailers and residents are informed on any proposed major developments/building projects in the town centre

6.1.6 Actively promote the hour's free parking and free parking on Sundays to Community Groups and Residents' Associations.

6.1.7 Investigate the opportunity to display local artists' artwork in vacant shop front windows in the town centre.

6.1.8 Promote Enterprise funding to the retail sector, Northampton BID and the University of Northampton.

6.1.9 Review Planning Policies with a particular focus on restricting changes of use from retail to other use particularly where there is saturation.

6.1.10 The success of the current Pop-up Shops is widely advertised and further promoted. It is also promoted to the Voluntary Sector so that it can run short-term campaigns using the Pop-up model.

6.1.11 A Town Centre Czar is appointed, in an advisory capacity.

Cleansing

6.1.12 The standard of street cleansing is maintained at a consistent level across the town centre.

6.1.13 Appropriate systems are in place to monitor the street cleansing contract.

6.1.14 Enterprise Management Services (EMS) works closely with partners (i.e. Town Centre BID) to improve engagement and understanding of partners' needs.

6.1.15 NBC works with town centre businesses around trade waste and where necessary takes the appropriate enforcement action.

6.1.16 Any cleaning matters be reported immediately to EMS to ensure a swift response is delivered.

6.1.17 An additional Town Centre Ranger is employed with a particular focus on litter. The Town Ranger is issued with a smart, clearly identifiable uniform and where possible existing Rangers are also issued with smart, clearly identifiable uniforms.

6.1.18 The “Report It” App is promoted to the wider community.

6.1.19 Northampton Borough Council has dialogue with retailers regarding the cleanliness of their forecourts.

6.1.20 The current status of Byelaws in relation to cleansing is investigated and enforced as appropriate or where Byelaws do not exist, consideration is given to the implementation of suitable Byelaws.

Partnership Working

6.1.21 NBC works closely with the Town Centre BID regarding any new business initiatives/opportunities.

6.1.22 NBC continues to work closely with all partners.

6.1.23 NBC develops an education package for primary schools around the importance of recycling and the prevention of littering.

6.1.24 Councillors and Officers from Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and NBC work closely with town centre businesses around traffic and pedestrian movement throughout the redevelopment building projects in the town centre.

Recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6.1.25 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months’ time.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Oveview and Scrutiny

Report of Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

Purpose

1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community
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1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed at its work programming event in March 2012 to include a review of the retail experience at Northampton. This was an issue that had been identified by a number of members of the public as a key suggestion for a future Scrutiny review. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 2 to undertake the review. An in-depth review commenced in May 2012 and concluded in May 2013.

2.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Matt Lynch (Chair); Councillor Suresh Patel (Vice Chair); Councillors Tony Ansell, Sally Beardsworth, Elizabeth Gowen, Dennis Meredith and Danielle Stone and Sheridan New, former Grosvenor Centre Manager, (Co-optee.)

2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities - Priority 1 – Northampton on track – a vibrant town.

2.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

- Context:
    - Local statistics
    - Demographics – local and national
- Baseline data:
    - National statistics
    - Definition of the Town Centre

- Vision for the Town Centre

- Synopses of various research documents and other published documents
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from residents
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from the Town Centre Challenge Event
- Best practice data
- Site visits
- Desktop research

3 Evidence Collection

3.1 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data

3.2 Executive Summaries of various key documents

3.2.1 Précises of:

- The Portas Review
- The Right to Retail: Can Localism save Britain's small retailers
- Understanding High Street Performance
- Core Strategy – Northampton's Strategic Planning Policies
- Sustainable Community Strategy
- Central Area Action Plan
- Northampton Town Centre Health Check 2009
- Northampton Town Centre Shopping Survey

3.2.2 Comprehensive details at Appendix B.

3.2.3 A policy briefing on high street and town centre regeneration, published by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), copy at Appendix C.

Definition of the town centre of Northampton

3.3 The definition of the town centre of Northampton is the boundary which includes the commercial hub of the town centre inside the inner ring road comprising of Lower & Upper Mounts, York Road, Cheyne Walk, Victoria Promenade, St. Peter's way, Gas Street, Horsemarket Street, Broad Street and Campbell Street.

Vision for the town centre

3.4 At the time of this Review, the vision for town centre was in draft format: Northampton town centre to be recognised as the economic and cultural hub for Northamptonshire and the destination of choice for people within the county and beyond.

Population

3.5 In 2009 the town's population was c210, 000; by 2026 it is expected to grow to nearer 240,000.

Town Centre - General

3.6 The town centre encompasses a wide range of businesses. Alongside shops there are cafes, restaurants, leisure providers, and service industries. All of these make up the attractions to draw people into the town centre.

3.7 Specific events can bring a lot of people into the town centre. The safari event in 2010 attracted over 500,000 people in a very short period of time. There were visitors from overseas. The event was featured on news programmes, including Japanese television. Many people were made aware of the event through Facebook. There had been a lot of positive feedback.

3.8 Data for footfall indicates that there has been an on-going decline since 2008. Market Square numbers have also been declining, but to a lesser extent.

3.9 Over the past five years there has been a change in the demographics of the town. Some major employers have left the town centre, for example Barclaycard moved 3,000 office workers from the town centre.

3.10 Core Questions

3.10.1 The Scrutiny Panel devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a series of meetings (Copy at Appendix B).

3.10.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Scrutiny Panel held on 8 August 2012, 29 October, 5 December and 14 February 2013.

3.10.3 Salient points of evidence:

Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Enterprise and Planning and Cabinet Member for Environment

- Northampton Borough Council (NBC) can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building project, in and close by to the town centre, by ensuring information is available to any affected businesses as soon as possible. This was done in relation to the fire damage to Bridge Street. Residents affected by the building of student accommodation at St John's will receive information.

- Retail outlets, such as "pound shops", fulfil a need in times of recession. In accordance with planning legislation there is no distinction between retail offers of stores.
- The Central Area Action Plan contains a shop front policy. Changes can only be implemented when properties become vacant, with the involvement of the shop owner.
- Very few retail properties are directly owned or controlled by NBC. There are none within the primary retail area.
- Work can be undertaken with developers regarding shop fronts. Possible monies may be available from Section 106 Agreements, but is dependent upon the timing of developments.
- NBC can make direct impact by improving the Public Realm.
- The purpose of the BID is to encourage the retail sector to access advice. The BID is still in its infancy but is developing connections with more retailers.
- Any traffic changes will be considered as part of the redevelopment of the town centre, beginning with the new bus interchange and associated works to the Grosvenor Centre.
- In excess of £100 million is being invested in Northampton through the delivery of Northampton Alive projects; funding attracted by other partners/developers.
- Elements that can be directly influenced by NBC include car parking, fees and usage. These are continually monitored. Other elements that can be offered are being investigated. Public Realm improvements are very important.
- Special events, such as Lady Godiva and the Olympic torch, brought many people into the town. Efforts will be made to attract and promote similar one off events.
- Independent retailers' strength can be in their ability to deliver tailor made customer service.
- It should not be assumed that property that is currently retail will remain as this, some could return to residential use.
- There has been a change to the planning process. It is anticipated that there will be some large planning applications submitted in the near future.
- The Cabinet Members confirmed that they had used the Internet to buy items from sites such as E-Bay. Generally, they use the Internet as a source of information, such as price comparisons. If items cannot be found locally, they would be more inclined to purchase them on the Internet.
- The Enterprise Loans Panel offers small loans to businesses. Work is on-going with the market to assist traders to improve customer service.

- There are difficulties in receiving sufficient information to obtain evidence regarding the cleanliness of the town centre. The public is encouraged to report incidents.

- A Community Toilet Scheme in operation.

Independent Business Owner and former Director of Northampton BID

- Developing Northampton as a market town is key to its growth.
- Small business units in the town centre and those located in Kettering Road and Wellingborough Road could be developed.
- It is unlikely many new shops will locate to the town centre. The Independent business owner could not foresee the economic downturn improving within the next five years.
- Village groups could be encouraged to visit the town centre, attracted by community events.
- Keeping traffic moving in the town centre, managing noise and pollution from traffic is helpful to businesses.
- Business rates are increasing. The impact of this is higher for businesses when car parking charges rise.
- Car parking issues and charges often mean that many people no longer travel from other places to shop in the town centre.
- Localised car parking should be investigated.
- Issues with the cleanliness the stairwells of some car parks, the Mayorhold and Grosvenor Centre, were reported to the Scrutiny Panel.
- Channels of communication between NBC and businesses has improved over the last year, which was welcomed.
- Olney and Market Harborough have created a pleasant and attractive environment. Northampton could develop the strengths of the traditional market.
- Town centres should not only be a retail experience but also cultural and leisure occurrences. There are opportunities for Northampton to make use of the market square, being one of the largest in Europe.
- The loss of some main employers that were located in the town centre has affected the viability of the town centre.
- Issues regarding safety and anti-social behaviour need to be addressed regularly.

University of Northampton

Impact of the recession on retailers

- Value retailers outperformed the market, growing by almost 6% in 2009 to achieve sales of £8.1 billion, with companies such as Primark and Matalan benefiting from the trading down trend.
- Over 20 clothing and footwear companies, accounting for over £2.9 billion of sales, have collapsed including Ethel Austin, Adams children's wear and Mosaic Fashions, but most occurred at the start of the recession. (Mintel June 2010)

Consumer spending patterns in 2009 and intentions for 2010

- Over half of the population did not reduce their spend on clothes in 2009 despite the recession. While more than four in ten adults spent less in 2009 than they usually would, they did not cease buying clothes altogether, indicating that while many people are being more cautious, they now consider buying clothes as a necessary spend.
- Some pent-up demand will be released this year as nearly one fifth of consumers plan to spend more on clothes in 2010, more than the one in ten who spent more in 2009. The year 2010 was, nevertheless, set to continue to be challenging for retailers, with one in three adults planning to spend less on clothing in the coming year. (Mintel June 2010)
- Research findings suggest that consumers are still spending, but perhaps not as much as they would like. With regards to shopping in the report (Mintel 2010):

    - Marks & Spencer is the most popular place to shop for clothes overall, in-store and online, and is used by over half of clothes buyers.
    - Value retailers and supermarkets have become the preferred places to buy clothes in-store and are both used by six in ten consumers.
    - Just under half of consumers currently shop at midmarket fashion stores. These retailers need to do more to target the fashion conscious 25-34s, which are set to increase by 11.4% by 2015.
    - Over four in ten consumers shop at Next in store and more than one in ten shop online.

- Department stores' sales have performed well during the recession, particularly John Lewis, as they benefit from a customer base that tends to be more affluent and were the big-spenders of 2009 and again in 2010. If Northampton wants to support the retail experience in the current climate a focus on the retailers that consumers are using would be beneficial.

- Northampton needs to try and attract consumers into High Street. If the multiple chains could focus on enhancing their current merchandise mix to try and target new markets then perhaps this could attract consumers who would normally go to Milton Keynes or London into the area. Independent retailers need to try and specialise, so by finding niche markets they could attract visitors. Perhaps programmes trying to attract specialists into the town centre would be advantageous, similar to the efforts in Leamington Spa.

- Over Christmas 2011, Corby enhanced the appeal of the town centre through free parking and an ice rink to attract visitors to shop in Corby. Northampton could use a similar approach this year by attracting consumers by providing Christmas entertainment. This could also be an opportunity to show new visitors the benefits of coming to Northampton.

- There have been a few events taking place in Northampton town centre that the representative became aware of by accident. There seems to be a lack of communication on events that are being hosted by the town. Some more communication is needed to attract consumers from villages on the outskirts of town could improve the appeal of the town.

- The need for easy parking and consideration to free parking at key times would influence consumers from further afield to come into town.

- The recent student lock in the Grosvenor Centre was an excellent idea, and the students at the university were very excited about the event, however, the University is not aware of the overall success of the event and whether it was worthwhile for the retailers.

- A retail forum is perhaps advisable where new legislation and new practise techniques could be discussed.

- The town centre needs to attract independents into the high street. If Northampton could differentiate itself from every other high street then a real advantage could be gained. Good eating and cafe facilities are needed to satisfy the experience for visitors. A cafe culture is certainly growing in the UK and the high street needs to embrace this consumer need.

- Easy access into the town is needed for retailers, and convenient parking facilities in order to compete with the out of town retail parks.

- Independent retailers need to complete with the larger multiples on the basis of addressing a niche market and providing better more personalised service to the consumer. Everyone needs to embrace the internet and independents need to use this technology to enhance their own offering. While there has been a significant growth in shopping on line, consumers still want the retail experience, where shopping is seen as a leisure activity, therefore the additional facilities of cafes, restaurants and entertainment is essential to attract shoppers into Northampton.

- The representative suggested that she would like the town centre to include the following in five years' time:
    - Ease of parking and access to shops
    - A varied retailer selection from mainstream high street stores to more specialised retailers offering exclusivity, additional service and variety.
    - Good cafes and eating places.
    - Entertainment or Pop up markets to give variety to the town.
    - Limited number of mobile stores and charity shops
    - At the weekend shopping needs to be family orientated, with children's entertainment included.
    - A good modern department store with prestige brands on offer, as middle aged shoppers want to shop in department stores, but they also want a good variety of merchandise, from own brand through to designer options.
    - Northampton is directly competing with Milton Keynes and London. If you look at Milton Keynes, it has lots of parking, lots of entertainment nearby, so that shoppers can turn their trip into an all-day event. There are excellent facilities from baby facilities through to eating places. The centre of the Mall has a regular new themed event going on most months from Christmas experiences to arts exhibitions to summer time beach events. Northampton has to complete against this to attract the shoppers into Northampton rather than consumers travelling to Milton Keynes.
- The representative uses the Internet all the time, hardly ever shopping in the town or at a shopping centre because it is convenient.
- The representative enjoys the shopping experience but likes to combine it with other treats such as a nice lunch and a beauty treatment. These enhance the shopping experience.
- Retailers can also combine the internet type of technology with in-store experience and there are examples of high tech shopping experiences coming

forward, where consumers still go to the high street but have the option of using technology to browse and select merchandise and even virtually try on garments, prior to asking for the garments to be taken to traditional changing rooms.

- Consumers are more demanding and are looking for specialised retailers. If Northampton can entice these specialists into the town, new consumers will be attracted into the town time and time again.

- From the experiences had in Northampton, it is felt there are many retailers missing from Northampton town centre that would continually attract people into town.

- Northampton does not attract its fair share of shoppers in from the local geography. Many shoppers will choose to travel to other locations rather than come into town. This can only be addressed by changing the mix of retailers in the town and trying to attract specialists and niche retailers into Northampton. Supported by good facilities and attracting events and entertainment to enhance the shopping experience would give the retailers a better chance of being successful in the long term.

Chair of Northampton BID

Partnership Working

- Two Councillors are BID Directors, which provides a two way process.
- The Northampton Forum involves many partners including the Borough Council, Highways and the Police.
- BID is committed to Northampton Alive project.
- There is rigid adherence to planning policy, particularly in terms of use class designation. Possible change of use should be considered particularly in terms of potential short term uses.
- Enterprise's cleaning targets should be highlighted and cleaning standards consistently applied.
- Stagecoach is already involved as partners in publicising events on the buses and is keen to encourage more people into the town centre for its own commercial reasons.

Retail Issues, Marketing and Promotion

- There needs to be a focus of improvement and that should be on Abington Street and Market Square Area.
- Consideration could be given to providing Shop Front Improvement Grants- this was accomplished in Rugby on a match funding basis.

- Some work was undertaken in the Drapery on refurbishing street furniture, litter bins and sign posts. In 2013 BID will be doing some work on street clutter.
- Consideration should be given to putting distances on street signs.
- Traffic messaging signs could also be used to give information on events and parking availability. Signs should also give as full information as possible i.e. road closed until …., which helps people to plan future journeys etc.
- One longer term aim could be the creation of specific"quarters" with arches over the road to announce them. There could also be signs to these quarters around the town. These would create a better sense of space.
- Encouraging longer shopping hours; particularly in the 5-7pm slot between work and theatre, entertainment etc.
- Parking costs are a perceived problem - free first hour parking and free parking after 3pm are promotions that have been introduced to try to overcome this. Extending the 1 hour bays to 2 hours would allow shoppers time to shop/browse and enjoy the town.
- Provision of street stages, particularly in Abington Street and Market Square.
- Parking Permits for town centre businesses are available, but they are not particularly well promoted and could be extended.
- More flexibility towards shop front vinyl advertising which could generate advertising revenue.
- Pop up shops should be encouraged. A "made in Northants shop" will be opening on St Giles Street.
- Street Lighting could be improved in certain areas.
- The Police and PCSO'S do a good job, but additional PCSO's would be welcomed.

The Internet

- The Internet should be seen as an opportunity to sell goods to a wider client group. High speed Internet should be encouraged. The free Wi-Fi available at the Market Square should be more widely promoted.
- "Love Northampton" website should be supported as a way of getting information about events and promotions to as wider group as possible.

Building Projects

- The BID embraces the projects unreservedly. Liaising with business is key to delivering successful projects, as much notice as possible is vital. It is also important to make sure that town centre users are aware of changes that might affect them such as parking restrictions or road closures.

5-Year Plan

- The BID has three remaining years to run. Its focus will be around the Abington Street Market Square area. It would like to see positive changes to the Market Square layout to make a central stage area and stands to allow events and performances to have a permanent space. Varied events programmes would increase footfall.

- It is also wishes to encourage the expansion of the retail day to 7pm, by encouraging town centre workers to stay after work and use the shops and facilities.
- BID itself has reorganised which has freed director time which will allow directors to go out to the local big companies and ask about their future programmes. These could then be co-ordinated with BID projects to maximise their effectiveness.

Neighbourhood Warden (Town Centre)

- Northampton Borough Council (NBC) can further develop partnership working with the town centre business community by continuing and improving on-going working through Town Centre Task Group, Town Centre Partnership and BID working groups. It can provide advice and information to businesses about steps that are required to comply with legislation and signpost to relevant sources of information e.g. plans are in hand to provide links from the NBC website to the ERWIN site which provides a one stop website for regulatory information for businesses.

- NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of major building projects by ensuring that accurate and timely information is provided to businesses regarding the impact of any works, road closures etc.

- Further town centre events to attract more people into the area, improved parking, including use of park and ride (this also has benefits in relation to air quality) would have a more positive impact on retailers.

- Action is taken to improve the appearance of the town centre by education and enforcement of littering legislation. Problems are experienced with commercial waste collections occurring at various times of day which lead to accumulations of materials which can result in litter etc. Possible solutions to this issue are being investigated.

- Personal observations from the team are that it would like to see a vibrant town centre with a good range of large multiples and independent retailers together with a range of eating and drinking places offering a welcoming and unique experience to visitors in five years' time.

- It is considered that communication channels are reasonably effective but that they could be improved.

- The Neighbourhood Warden has occasionally purchased items from Amazon and similar sites on the basis of price and ease of availability.

Community Safety Manager, Northampton Borough Council

- There are already good working links between Northampton Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and the businesses in the town centre. Representatives from the Town Centre Partnership and the BID sit on the CSP Town Centre Task Group, which is made up of a range of agencies who look at a variety of issues around crime & disorder and community safety.

- The town centre also benefits from a retail and pub link radio system that links in directly with the CCTV control room. This contributes towards a speedy response to real time issues relating to crime and disorder

- NBC already link in closely with the Police Architectural Liaison Officer, who works from the Planning Department one day per week. This ensures that careful consideration is given to all plans, providing the opportunity to highlight any potential crime & disorder issues, and providing expert advice and guidance.

- Effective marketing and promotion which would benefit the town's retail sector could include safer shopping, Safer car parks – promote positive aspects; promote Northampton retail crime initiative to shoppers as well as retailers.

- Activities that could have a more positive impact on retailers - encourage membership of the Retail Crime Initiative and the NBC Retail and Pub Radio Link. Partnership working with the Police to address issues around shop lifting, purse theft etc. and proactively address issues of crime and disorder. Strong regulation of charity collectors, promoters and street traders, who may cause harassment to shoppers and deter them from the town centre.

Asset Director, Enterprise Management Services (EMS)

- It is clear that there are a number of educational campaigns that must be undertaken to re-engage the public's emotional contract with the tidiness of the town.

- It is also clear that there is a substantial lack of enforcement which has led to complacency and a lack of any consequences for littering in our town centres.

- It is important that relationships are strengthened with partner organisations, alternative authority departments and businesses generally. Examples include smoking areas, independent food outlets and car parks.

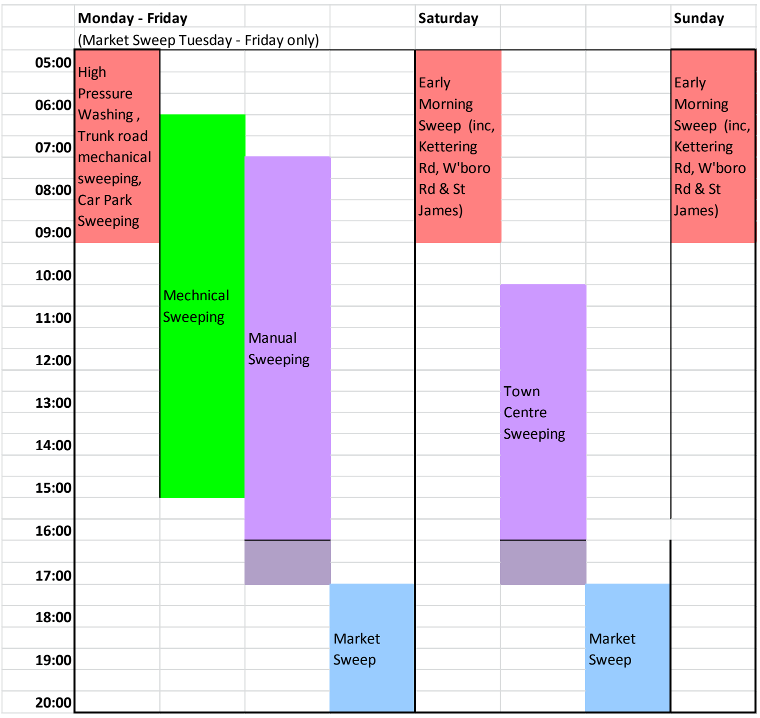
- A consistency in approach is required so that the standards can be maintained and scopes of service fully understood. For example, there is confusion around the responsibility for certain town centre car parks that do not form part of EMS' contract.

- Possibility exists of closer relationships with outreach centres that can help reduce the impacts of rough sleepers and vagrancy.

- A holistic approach to planning that gives opportunity for consultation with those responsible for maintenance. For example, removal of installations which give opportunities for graffiti. And the use of “buff” coloured slabs.

- Containerisation of waste from businesses should be on the agenda.

- The Cleaning Rota for the town centre is attached at Appendix D. Below is the sweeping schedule for the town centre:



Improvements:

1. Extended working days to cover peak shopping and home times which sees street sweeping delivered until 8pm (previously 3pm)
2. Provide litter bin washing programme
3. jet wash for urination hotspots every Monday morning
4. Reintroduced barrow sweeping rounds around town centre residential areas for a more effective sweep.
5. Provide additional services of abandoned shop front clean-up which we are looking to extend.

- The following are identified as hotspots from EMS' trend data in the town centre:

- EMS employees work with Wardens and liaise on a day to day basis to highlight and alert immediate issues across the town centre but with particular focus on these hotspots at certain times and days. For example Saturdays outside Fast food outlets and graffiti hotspots during school holidays and weekends.

- EMS responds to incidents within timescales that are strictly monitored and fall within the contract KPIs.

- Resource within the town centre is immediately diverted to problem areas when notified. However as issues become more prevalent and are not addressed by education or enforcement it is plain that the resources will be severely stretched and unable to fulfil many daily routine duties.

Hot spots - Litter from Food Outlets

1. The Drapery, MacDonald's (they clear the rubbish away)
2. The Ridings, Sports Direct
3. Gold street
4. Abington street - KFC

Hot spots - Leaflets from Pubs & Clubs

1. Bridge Street
2. Lady Lane, Roadmender

Hot spots - General

1. Mercers Row black bags
2. Gold Street black bags
3. The Drapery black bags
4. Market Square black bags
5. Abington Street black bags

Hot spots - Graffiti

1. Emporium Walk
2. Drum Lane
3. Swan Yard
4. Lady Lane, County Court Walkways
5. Jeyes Jetty

Assistant Director, Highways, Northamptonshire County Council

- Initial communication and consultation will commence with local County Councillors and appropriate stakeholders for larger and more contentious projects. Thereafter, communication is via BID and the local media for proposed highway changes that will affect town centre businesses. There are also letter drops to affected properties. For more routine matters, letter drops alone are deemed sufficient. In certain cases where there could be a significant impact, meetings are held in the affected area. A Forum meeting was held regarding the changes around the Plough Hotel.
- Significant changes to street furniture are planned. The most immediate being in the Bridge Street and the Drapery areas. Changes to street furniture in the Drapery will take place at the same time as the bus interchange works. Bridge Street area proposals were made as a result of consultation with several partners, with the aim of improving the Public Realm perception in that area and delivering a quality product to try and make the whole area more user friendly, in particular for pedestrians and significantly to improve the public realm and aesthetic appearance of the area.
- There are proposals to provide landscaping enhancements in the Castle Station Black Lion Hill area to coincide with the works at the station. A key aim being to help to make this area feel more central. Enhancements are also being proposed for the Beckett's Park/Promenade area. In addition other enhancements in and around the town centre are being explored to assist in general improvements and specifically to reflect the local heritage and this is being carried out in partnership with Northampton Borough Council.
- The major issue over the next year or two will be keeping the traffic and pedestrian movements flowing, whilst the developments are taking place. Communication will be crucial.
- Communication with partners is vital. The Assistant Director, Highways, attends many meetings of local organisations, including the Town Centre BID, and such forums help to build better understanding between partners. Communications between partners has improved greatly over the past two to three years.
- Processes should be simplified where possible. It would be helpful if there could be more compromise and consensus between partners.
- Northampton has some attractive architecture which is not promoted to its full advantage.
- In order to compete effectively, Northampton should better promote what it has on offer. Too often it under-sells itself and all parties need to address this issue.
- There are a lot of positive features that are taking place in Northampton. It is vital for all partners to adopt a united purpose and focus on sending that positive message out to the public.
- A team is investigating a range of initiatives in promoting and introducing sustainable transport. This includes smart bikes, cycle and pedestrian walkways and Infrastructure improvements. Work is underway examining potential cycle routes from the railway station, the University and Brackmills as well as other potential key routes in and around Northampton.

- Reduction of signage work is on-going and is a key initiative not only within Northampton but across the county.

Northampton Federation of Residents' Associations

- Reduction in car parking income, indicating potential reduction in visitors to the town
- Number of vacant retail units and office units in the town, and over-provision of bookmakers and pawnbrokers
- Need for more premium retail outlets
- Concerns regarding the approaches to the town centre
- The market was once the pride of the town centre
- The town could become a centre for culture, catering for everyone's taste, including art, music and learning

Director, Association of Town Centre Managers (ACTM)

The Director, ACTM, provided some documents that he felt would be useful background information for the Panel. This information was provided instead of a formal response from ACTM to the Panel's core questions.

The documents provided:-

- 100 ways to help the High Street – A Toolkit for Town Centres
- Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

100 Ways to help the High Street

The Toolkit comprises eight key sections:

- Building a Sustainable Partnership
- Accessing the High Street
- Enhancing the Streetscape
- Place Identify, Branding and Experience
- Attracting New People and Businesses to High Street and Keeping the Old Ones
- The Safe and Secure High Street
- The Evening and Night-time Economy
- Training, Development and Accreditation

Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

The reported purpose of the Guide is around setting up and evaluating town centre management initiative. The Guide is set out in two sections:

An outline of set up and evaluation – A brief description of the core elements in the life cycle of a successful town centre management initiative, an explanation of the set up and evaluation process, and guidance on when, why, how and by whom the process should be undertaken.

Implementing set up and validation – Examples of good practice are provided and detailed checklists for setting up and validating each of the core elements of successful town centre management initiatives:

Strategy and vision
Partnership and structure
Business and Action Plans
Funding
Key Performance Indicators

Comprehensive details at Appendix E.

Northants Police

- Without specific details regarding footfall to the town centre it is not possible to ascertain whether crime has an effect. It is thought that crime does not affect footfall, with the possible exception of any high profile cases of crime which may cause short term concerns. The environment in which someone is looking to shop is more likely to affect footfall. The places to park, the cleanliness, the availability of a selection of shops will affect whether someone decides to visit the town centre or to shop elsewhere.
- Antisocial behaviour, perceived or otherwise, such as young people 'hanging about', incivilities, drinking in the street and environmental crime provide for an unwelcoming environment.
- Resources should be invested in ensuring the cleanliness of the town; reducing the signs of spiral of decline and "broken window syndrome". By ensuring general cleanliness is maintained, broken pavements mended, streets cleaned of rubbish and graffiti, chewing gum removed, soft landscaping maintained visitors will be presented with a positive impression of Northampton town, and shown an environment where they will want to visit and shop. When left unaddressed all those maintenance tasks collectively present an uncared for town, and can create an environment for misuse and anti-social behaviour to flourish.

- An increase uniformed presence should be encouraged by partners, alongside the use of powers of partners in seizure of alcohol.
- Partnership campaigns such as the ‘kill with kindness campaign’ promoting the support of charities should be continued to help break the cycle of homelessness.
- Retailers need to be encouraged into the town, potentially through grants or reduced rates. For those empty retail outlets to be presented in a manner which look occupied / cared for.
- Without specific details relating to footfall to the town centre it is not possible to answer as no correlation between anti-social behaviour (ASB) and footfall can be drawn. However, in the absence of any data it is felt that ASB may have an impact on whether persons will visit the town centre. It is believed that street drinking and begging may impact on visitors who would rather shop in what they consider to be a safe environment. What is important to note however, ASB is not solely due to drinking or begging and may be shown in other forms which could equally impact on whether a person chooses to visit the town.
- In 2011 there were 497 arrests countywide for Drunk and Disorderly and 19 arrests for Begging/Vagrancy. This compares to 438 arrests for Drunk and Disorderly and 34 arrests for Begging/Vagrancy in 2012.
- The levels of ASB for the Northampton Central Area shows the number of recorded ASB incidents for begging/ vagrancy has risen from 52 in 2011 to 61 in 2012. In 2011 there were 37 incidents of street drinking, however these figures cannot be compared as street drinking ceased to be a specific type of ASB in 2011.
- Between July and November 2012 there were 447 seizures of alcohol undertaken within the Central Sector (relating to police data only).

Northampton Community Forums

Members of the Panel attended various meetings of the Northampton Community Forums and ask attendees for their responses to the Panel’s core questions. Key points:

- One Forum felt that the bus interchange would increase the amount of footfall in the town centre which in turn would increase the use of the market.

- It was noted that the Business Improvement District (BID) was developing ways forward by looking at a variety of options to improve and attract new business to the area.

- Improved signage was suggested as was the introduction of more maps or audio-visual devices to assist shoppers.

- A number of Forum members used the town centre for clothes shopping and buying goods from the independent stores. Buying from the Internet was also popular.

- A number of respondents supported the independent stores, particularly those located in St Giles Street.

- A number of Forum members use the market.

- The LGBT and Q Forum suggested that local artists could create artwork on display boards outside buildings

- The rise of the supermarkets had led to the deterioration of town centres. It is convenient to be able to buy goods from the same shop.

- Parking facilities was referred to and the suggestion of a park and ride scheme was proposed. There are three car parks within the town centre where charges are not applicable for the first hour, which is of great benefit for people coming in to the town to shop.

- In general, communication with the Borough Council via the Forums was felt to be good but communication with visitors could be improved.

- The Love Northampton website was supported as was the recent Pride of Lions display.

- Northampton's heritage should be celebrated.

3.11 **Northampton Youth Forum**

3.11.1 The Youth Forum put the Panel's core questions to its members and various connections over the summer period but unfortunately received no responses. Therefore the survey was re submitted in September 2012, ending on 31 October 2012 and it was also listed on the consultation page of the Council's website

3.11.2 Six individuals responded to the Youth Forum's survey and their comments included celebrating the rich sporting suggestions for the introduction of more free periods of parking and more on street parking facilities, support for the independent stores was given. The respondents suggested regular litter picking and jet washing of the footpaths would be useful. The streets art projects were supported. Comments advised that good information was available on line but it would be useful for there to be other communication methods. A number of respondents shopped on line mainly due to the cost and convenience.

3.12 Ward Councillors

3.12.1 All Councillors were contacted and invited to provide details of their experiences of shopping within Northampton. Three responses were received.

Key points:

- Comments received about the shopping experience in Northampton suggested that more events and entertainment would also attract more visitors to shop. Cleanliness of the town, anti-social behaviour and the need for more chain and departmental stores was referred to.
- Councillors felt that in order to enhance the shopping experience at Northampton, there was a need to increase the offer of the shops both in terms of departmental stores and independent traders. One Councillor advised on the need for premium brand stores too. More entertainment was suggested, with the aim of attracting more visitors and more places to eat.
- The three Councillors advised that they would like to see a vibrant, cultural, buzzing and extremely clean town centre with a diverse retail offer in five years' time.
- The three Councillors use of Internet shopping was mixed with varying reasons from ease of purchase, cheaper goods, to only using when goods are not available to buy in Northampton.

- One Councillor suggested how the aesthetics of the Weston Favell shopping area could be improved by way of a feature wall.

3.13 Skillsmart Seminar

3.13.1 Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel attended the Skillsmart Seminar: The Town Centre Challenge.

3.13.2 Skillsmart Retail is the Sector Skills Council for retail. It reports that it acts as a catalyst to increase investment in skills to improve productivity and profitability, sets industry-wide standards for retail skills and career paths to enhance the reputation of retail careers, delivers products and services which are fit for purpose and accessible to all and operates a sustainable business that promotes continuous professional development in retail.

3.13.3 Aims of the Seminar:

- Introduce how Skillsmart Retail can help towns and cities build a more profitable and striving retail sector
- Emphasise the need for partnership working between stakeholders
- Launch Skillsmart Retail's new Retail Apprenticeship Training Agency

3.13.4 Key facts and statistics:

- Retail continues to be the UK's largest private sector employer with 2.77 million employees
- The UK's top 75 retailers employ 2/3 of the total workforce
- The turnover of the retail sector in 2011 was £343 billion, equating to 8% of UKS GVA
- 188,000 retail enterprises, operating in around 286,000 retail establishments in the UK

3.13.5 Current challenges:

- Shop vacancy rates 14.6%
- Independent retailers struggling
- Low skill levels in retail
- High youth unemployment

3.13.6 The Seminar received a presentation from the Head of Economic Regeneration, London Borough of Newham around "Why shopping centre doesn't have to mean the decline of the town centre".

3.13.7 A presentation from the National Skills Academy for Retail, The Learning Shop, Bluewater on "The Y Factor: Keeping Young People in your area" was given.

3.13.8 Key points:

- Work based training programmes designed around the needs of employers, which lead to nationally recognised qualifications
- Designed to attract 16-18 year olds

- Can be used to train new and existing staff
- Retailers provide one year, full time job placement
- Effective way to attract and keep people in employment
- Economic benefits
- The number of retail apprenticeships over the past five years has increased by 190%
- The majority of retail apprenticeships are currently via larger retails
- The Retail Apprenticeship Training Agency helps to resolve issues such as independent retailers offering apprenticeships

3.13.9 The value of retail:

- Over 8% of UK Gross Value added
- 28% of UK business rates are paid by retailers
- Over 150,000 sole traders in the sector
- A third of the workforce are under 25 and a quarter are 50+

3.13.10 Reported key facts around Town Centre Management: *A tried and tested formula….”* :

- The right people around the table
- A shared vision for the future
- The Plan
- Actions (not just words)
- Sustainability
- Communicating success

3.14 Site Visits

3.14.1 Three Site Visits took places. The purpose of which was to make a comparison with other town centres against that of Northampton.

Norwich

3.14.2 The Chair of the Panel visited Norwich on 10 August 2013. Key points:

- Norwich is a pleasant city to visit. The entrances to the city centre are tree lined roads with very attractive hanging baskets.

- Parking is not so easy and there appears to be a lack of parking near the city centre. There is no park and ride system.

- The streets around the city centre are very clean, as are the shop fronts.

- No beggars or “chuggers” visible.

- Some street entertainers were observed which gave the centre a nice atmosphere for shopping.

- Norwich City Council has a Litter Warden who hands out tickets to anyone who he sees dropping litter.

- The Chair of Panel revisited the city centre in the evening and spoke with some local residents. They advised that the roads around the centre are cleaned every morning. Litter picking takes place every day around the city centre.

Peterborough

3.14.3 Representatives of the Panel visited Peterborough on 11 October 2012. Key findings:

- The bus interchange is a reasonable sized area with the feel of a street but it was completely under cover. The sides were all clear panels with closing doors leading to the bus bay on both sides. Entrance was achievable both from the street and the main shopping centre, Queensgate. The facilities included a news kiosk and toilets as well as area to sit. The clear sides and roof gave an overall bright feel to the interchange and the area was kept very clean with bins provided.

- Queensgate is a large shopping centre owned by a company who also own other centres including the Bull Ring in Birmingham. John Lewis is the primary shop and a large Primark is in the process of being fitted, making this one of the very few shopping centres in the country to have both stores. There are very few units empty at this time and there is a high success with short term renting. There is a large range of different types of stores including fashion, jewellery, computing and grocers, as well as Price Range, New Look, Poundland, M&S, Waitrose. There are also retail merchandise units, promoted as a shop with no walls, offering all the facilities you would expect within a retail mall unit. Organisations operating in this way include Sky and the Nut Hut.

- A reasonable number of people were using the centre on a weekday just before lunch. There is a wide range of eating areas but most are within large shops rather than restaurants and café. The main downside is that signs are not very visible. It was not easy to see if there were any toilets nearby or where exits were or where to pay for parking. Signs are in the process of being replaced to address this issue.

- The centre has a large car park over many floors but each floor is very narrow with small spaces making parking rather difficult.
- Footfall is reported to be on average around 300,000 visitors per week. Average dwell time is 81 minutes and visitors within the top five MOSAIC is 56%.
- As well as the bus interchange, Peterborough has a train station and large number of car parks across the city centre making it visitor friendly with good driving access. With a mix of old, Cathedral and Church, and new buildings working well together.
- It is a very pretty and lively centre. Great care is taken over the city centre as litter and graffiti were not visible on our trip and a large number of bins provided.
- A disadvantage was the large number of people on the street collecting for regular charity donations.
- The signing was clear, visible and place at many locations making navigating around the city easier.
- The street had many seating areas and was decorated with trees giving a friendlier atmosphere.
- Few shops were empty and there seemed to be a large number of people in the centre.
- The tourist information was located near the Cathedral and was fully staffed with helpful employees. It was set out in a shop selling souvenirs and books about Peterborough.
- There were a number of hotels and pubs but not so many that they dominated the city centre.

Market Harborough

3.14.4 A member of the Panel visited Market Harborough on 15 October 2012. Key findings:

- An extensive and varied range of independent retailers on offer.
- The cobbled streets and pretty Georgian buildings made it a good shopping experience.
- Bennett's Court Place also comprises a number of independent retailers and has the provision of free parking for up to two hours.
- There are three travel agents located within the town centre.
- The retail market is held within the Market Hall with a total of 87 stalls which includes a food hall. It is open three days a week, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday, between the hours of 8am and 4pm. An Antiques and Collectables Market is held on Sundays.

- There is a further shopping area – St Mary's Place which includes stores such as Waitrose, Lidl, Aldi, Sainsbury's Homebase and Brantano's. A large car park is located need to St Mary's Place with a number of spaces painted red and situated close to the shop fronts where shoppers can park up to half an hour without the need for a ticket.

- There were no vacant shops visible and no beggars or street drinkers were seen.

- Signs regarding the restrictions of alcohol are clear and prominent.

- The town is very clean with strategically placed flower beds and pots which are sponsored by local businesses.

Milton Keynes

3.14.5 A member of the Panel visited Milton Keynes in October 2012. Key points:

- Milton Keynes is very easy to travel to, with good public transport connections.
- A wide variety of eating establishments and plenty of facilities are available.
- It is very big shopping centre. It reflects the fact that it was built as a shopping centre and as such it lacks atmosphere.

Southall, Greater London

3.14.6 A member of the Panel visited Southall, Greater London in October 2012. Key findings:

- Southall is clean. Rubbish is continually cleared so there is no unsightly build up.

- Shops are open later and there is a good retail offer.

- The railings in the town centre have been painted black, which adds to the aesthetics of the town centre.

Grosvenor Centre, Northampton

3.1.4.7 A member of the Panel visited the Grosvenor Centre, Northampton, in February 2013. Key findings:

- The Grosvenor Centre is generally clean, open and airy with a nice ambiance. Although a little dated a pleasant shopping experience was created. Seating areas are in situ in both the upper and lower malls. The Centre Manager advised that he was in discussions regarding a possible refresh of the malls to make the Centre more contemporary and sustainable.
- There were a number of rubbish bins available for shoppers' use. Mats are available at each entrance but it was noticed that the tiled flooring did become slippery.
- Upon arrival there were not many shoppers around but this was expected as it was a snowy Monday morning. Towards the end of the site visit there were a lot more people present.
- Security staff, wearing smart uniforms, are visible with the Centre. The site visit observed cleaning of the centre being carried out, both on the upper and lower malls. The Grosvenor Centre Manager advised that he encourages staff to extend cleaning outside the centre, under the canopy area onto Abington Street (that is not owned by the Centre).
- Children's rides were available on the lower mall and these were being used.
- The Grosvenor Centre has its own webpage , which includes details of:

  - Shops
  - Location map
  - Events
  - News

- A number of vacant retail units were seen within the Grosvenor Centre, but the Centre Manager advised that some new lettings were likely to be completed shortly.
- The range of retail units within the Grosvenor Centre include:

  - Boots
  - HMV
  - Disney Store
  - Sainsbury's
  - New Look
  - WH Smith
  - I Store
  - Pandora
  - Body Shop
  - Nationwide Building Society
  - Superdrug
  - Monsoon
  - House of Frazer

- BHS
- H Samuel
- Superdry
- Millie's Cookies
- Michael Jones Jewellers
- Warren James
- Diechmann Shoes
- Vision Express
- Costa Coffee
- McDonalds
- Ernest Jones
- Card Factory
- Burton's
- Poundworld
- Kiss Cards
- Costa Coffee
- Claire's Accessories
- Mr Simms Sweet Shop
- The Perfume Shop

- Organisations have to adhere to strict criteria should they want to promote their services within the Grosvenor Centre.
- The toilet area is clean and easily accessible.

- Clear signage was in place in the Grosvenor Centre.
- The Centre Manager liaises with Northampton Borough Council regarding events and potential events to ensure there is no duplication and whether work can be done together on certain events. Staff at the Grosvenor Centre have a dialogue with the University of Northampton regarding fashion presence.

- Initiatives to enhance the retail experience take place, for example a local jeweller took part in a recent "red rose" promotion.
- Prior to the festive season, space is made available in the Grosvenor Centre for the Christmas present wrapping charity event.

- Annual footfall is 11.5 million. Footfall on Sundays had increased with the offer of free Parking on Sundays. The street fair that took place in October 2012 had a positive impact on footfall, but not all retailers outside the Centre had co-ordinated opening times to take advantage of that.

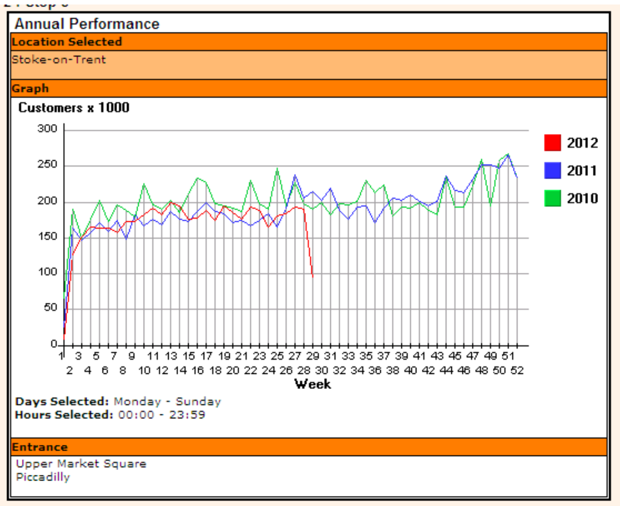
- The car park is owned and maintained by the Council. Major renewal work to the car park, including re-waterproofing and resurfacing was carried out approximately 18 months ago. More recently there have been lighting upgrade works.

3.15 Desktop Research

3.15.1 As part of its evidence gathering process that desktop research would be undertaken regarding the offer, profile, image and catchment of Stoke and Walsall and Metropolitan Borough of Walsall.

Stoke on Trent

- Population figures for Stoke on Trent are approximately 250,000.
- Footfall figures, month by month, 2010 – 2012:



- Stoke on Trent is made up of six towns Hanley, Stoke, Burslem, Longton, Fenton and Tunstall. Hanley is classed as the City Centre of Stoke on Trent which is what this information is based on.
- All large retailers are located within the shopping centre. Outside the shopping centre, there are about 50% independent 50% large retailers.
- The Cultural Quarter is reported as a hub of creative and entertainment venues in the City Centre. There are two main theatres: The Regent Theatre and Victoria Hall. The Cultural Quarter is noted as having a more relaxed atmosphere than a typical high street, with a number of cafes and a variety of restaurants.
  Further visitor attractions in Stoke on Trent include the Potteries Museum and the Art Gallery which is reported to host the world's best collection of Staffordshire ceramics and host to the Staffordshire Hoard. Emma Bridgewater Limited, a pottery manufacturer, with visitor attractions including a pottery factory shop, pottery café and factory tours. Other attractions include Dudson Museum, the Regent Theatre and the Victoria Hall and the Mitchell Arts Centre.

- The offer of shopping comprises a number of well- known high street names. There are also a number of independent retailers such as:

- The city centre also has an indoor market consisting of around 130 stalls. A Sunday market and car boot sale takes places attracting around 40 stalls.

- The catchment area to the shopping centre is reported as a one hour's drive time.

- There is not currently a BID for Stoke on Trent. The Stoke on Trent City Centre Partnership is in existence and is made up of 40 businesses from the city centre. This Partnership has been in place in one form or another for the past 15 years.

- Like a lot of cities, Stoke on Trent has a lot of vacant shops and businesses have suffered. Regeneration of the city centre is underway. The city has a brand new bus station that is due to open early 2013, a new shopping centre – "City Sentral" due for completion 2015, Central Business District and re-development at the Potteries Shopping Centre that will include six new restaurants and a cinema. Public Realm works of the main pedestrian area are under way.

Metropolitan Borough of Walsall

- The population of the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall is approximately 178,853.
- Footfall statistics gathered from the shopping centres are confidential. Walsall Council is currently investigating funding streams so that it can gather footfall figures for the town centre.
- An Art Gallery is located within the town centre, within close proximity to the Park Place shopping center and the railway station, also nearby is the Walsall Canal Basin.
- Walsall town centre comprises over 300 retail stores with a broad range of shops from independents to national retailers. It also has a wide selection of pubs and restaurants. The centre has been a focal point in Walsall for over forty years and well known retailers.
- Located within the town centre is the Old Square Shopping Centre. The Old Square Shopping Centre is home to a diverse range of stores. An £11 million retail-led regeneration project at Walsall's Old Square Shopping Centre is set to revitalise the town, attracting further investment, and creating hundreds of jobs. Three new retail units will be created, including a new 30,000sq ft two-storey Primark on Digbeth that will recruit around 100 people. A four-storey building will be occupied by Mid Counties Co-op, creating around 60 jobs, and this will also include commercial space above. A third retail unit inside Old Square Shopping Centre will also be delivered.

There has been an increase in enquiries from independent retailers regarding retail space at the Old Square Shopping Centre. A market takes place five days a week close to the Old Square Shopping Centre. The market operates every Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and trades between 8.30am and 5.00pm. Walsall Council regards its Walsall Market as the traditional heart of the town. It has been in existence since 1219. It is reported that the market has a fantastic reputation throughout the West Midlands and has an excellent choice of stalls. The market comprises 100 stalls, which measure 3m (10ft) x 2.5m (8ft), with counter boards provided for traders.

- Park Place Shopping Centre is well served by local public transport outes with the bus and train station situated close to Park Place and various car parks are also with easy walking distance.
- Park Place Shopping Centre is situated in the centre of Walsall, close to the Art Gallery and Crown Wharf. The centre fronts Park Street which is the main shopping street in Walsall, West Midlands. Some independent retailers are located in Park Place Shopping Centre
- Free face painting and balloon modeling is offered every second Saturday of the month.
- There are a number of retailers located around the town centre
- There is no BID for Walsall. A Town Team has been in operation for the past 21 months, which comprises the Council and a number of local business. Town Team has produced an Action Plan and each champion has its own theme such as events, business support, crime and disorder.

4 Equality Impact Assessment

4.1 Overview and Scrutiny ensures that it adheres to the Council's statutory duty to provide the public with access to Scrutiny Reports/agendas/minutes and other such documents. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny/Scrutiny Panels are widely publicised, i.e. on the Council's website, copies issues to the local media and paper copies available in the Council's One Stop Shop and local libraries.

4.2 The Scrutiny Panel was mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking scrutiny activity so that any recommendations that it made could identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. This was borne in mind as the Scrutiny Review progressed and evidence gathered.

4.3 Any possible recommended changes may have perceived adverse and beneficial effects for all diversity groups.

4.4 In order that the Scrutiny Panel obtains a variety of views, a number of key witnesses provided evidence as detailed in section 3 of this report.

4.5 Details of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken can be obtained from the Overview and Scrutiny webpage.

5 Conclusions and Key Findings

5.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

5.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that evidence from both the Policy Briefing produced by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) that as the recession continues, the health and vitality of local high streets is likely to be an issue which scrutiny will wish to investigate. One of the approaches suggested by the Policy Briefing that Scrutiny may wish to look at is local issues. This was the approach that this Scrutiny Review concentrated on – looking at Northampton town centre and focusing on a range of key issues.

5.1.2 The Scrutiny Panel highlighted the Central Area Action regarding town centre regeneration, in particular the section "Delivering a Vibrant Retail Centre:

> Defining and strengthening Northampton's Primary Shopping Area (as shown on the 'Proposals Map') is vital if the Central Area is to fulfil its role as a town centre (as defined by PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth) and the principal shopping centre for Northamptonshire. To show the distinction between the types of use classes within Northampton Central Area, the Primary Shopping Area has been broken down into Primary and Secondary Frontages :
>
> - Primary Frontages are the focus for retail uses
> - Secondary Frontages will have a retail focus but provide opportunities for a greater diversity of uses away from retailing, such as financial services, restaurants and drinking establishments "

5.1.3 It was realised that creating better shop fronts may be an expense that cannot be afforded for some small retailers, it might therefore be necessary to decide which should be given priority getting a shop back into use or having an improved shop front.

5.1.4 Evidence collated indicated the need for more to be done to make the town centre a more visually attractive place. The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that de-cluttering of street furniture/signage was very important and gave a much better perception if the street scene was cleared. The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the announcement that was made during the evidence gathering of this Review that the Council was making £50,000 available for a town centre face lift. This funding will be spent on a general upgrade of street furniture.

5.1.5 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it was very important to encourage a much wider town centre experience, rather than just concentrate on the retail offer. It is important to promote a sense of place and having specific events helped to do this. There could also be a wider tie in to National and International events or "days".

5.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it was very important to raise the profile of retailing as a career and that it should not be seen as a job of last resort. They referred to the presentation that they had received from Skillsmart who provide retail training opportunities. Since this presentation, Skillsmart confirmed that it would liaise with Northampton BID to see how retail training could be promoted within Northampton.

5.1.7 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed the introduction of “pop up shops”, acknowledging that “pop up shops” are relatively low cost short term leases to get a retail property back into use. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be beneficial for services, such as the voluntary sector, to be signposted to the opportunity for pop-up campaigns.

5.1.8 During one of its meetings, the Scrutiny Panel heard of the town rangers that Rugby Town Centre BID had introduced. The Town Rangers were felt to be a very positive feature.

5.1.9 The Council’s good communication methods were acknowledged. It was felt that there was a dynamic relationship with the media, with the Council being proactive in media on Northampton Alive.

5.1.10 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that free parking is having an impact on the numbers of people using the town. Every survey that has been conducted by the town centre management has referred to the perception that parking is expensive. Often this is not the case and parking in several other towns is more expensive than Northampton.

5.1.11 It was emphasised that more needs to be done with partnerships. The Police is a key partner in controlling anti-social behaviour in the town centre. The Scrutiny Panel noted the responses from Northants Police that a cared for town centre can alleviate misuse of the environment and anti-social behaviour.

5.1.12 The Scrutiny Panel recognised that it is important that any negative perceptions of the town centre are dealt with, but at the same time everyone should be made to feel welcome in the town centre area, it was particularly encouraging to see activities such as the Northampton by the Sea event which had been held in summer 2011 as it encouraged families into the town centre. Northampton had used an approach to attract consumers to the town during the Christmas shopping period 2012 by providing Christmas entertainment, such as the ice rink. The benefit of this initiative was welcomed by the Scrutiny Panel.

5.1.13 Town Centre events have an impact of increased footfall.

5.1.14 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the enthusiasm of students of the recent student lock in at the Grosvenor Centre and noted from the evidence received that should future events be held that the overall success of such events be promoted.

5.1.15 The evidence collated alluded that people would like a vibrant town centre comprising both chain stores and independent traders, with a variety of good eating and drinking venues and is family orientated at the weekends. A number of respondents made reference to the town becoming a centre for culture.

5.1.16 Northampton has some attractive architecture and should be promoted to its full advantage.

5.1.17 Like a number of towns and cities, Northampton has a number of vacant shops.

5.1.18 Evidence received suggested the erection of artwork, created by local artists, on display boards, would enhance the aesthetics of the town centre.

5.1.19 From the evidence collated, the Scrutiny Panel is aware of the threats to traditional retailing that has already come from the expansion of the Internet for shopping. It was realised that there could be further threats due to forthcoming changes in technology.

5.1.20 It is highlighted that street entertainers in Norwich gave a nice atmosphere to the shopping experience and the Scrutiny Panel felt that this could be investigated for Northampton.

5.1.21 The Scrutiny Panel supported the provision of Litter Wardens that were employed in Norwich.

5.1.22 During the visit to the car park area at the Grosvenor Centre, it was noted that some lights were not working. A boarded up window was observed, as was an out of date maintenance sign. The advertising boards inside the lifts were empty. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the area around the lifts could benefit from a deep clean.

5.1.23 The evidence obtained from the site visits that the Scrutiny Panel undertook determined that a number of town centres visited had good signage in situ. The signage in the Grosvenor Centre, Northampton, was felt to be very good. Initiatives to enhance the retail experience that take place in the Grosvenor Centre were supported.

5.1.24 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged that the public is encouraged to report incidents in relation to street cleansing.

5.1.25 The Scrutiny Panel noted that reduction of signage work is on-going and is a key initiative not only within Northampton but across the county.

5.1.26 The Scrutiny Panel acknowledged the experience gained from the witnesses and the co-optee to this Review, particularly the wealth of knowledge and experience of the retail sector. It was recognised that it would be useful to continue this invaluable relationship to assist with the implementation of the recommendations of this Review.

6 Recommendations

6.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc.)
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

Scrutiny Panel 2 recommends to Cabinet that:

Retail Experience

6.1.1 The wider town centre experience is promoted and includes retail, leisure, culture, events and eating out.

6.1.2 Improved promotion of National and International events/activities.

6.1.3 Improved marketing of Northampton in relation to events held in the town centre.

6.1.4 Review the possibility of street entertainment (buskers) in the town centre.

6.1.5 Ensure town centre retailers and residents are informed on any proposed major developments/building projects in the town centre

6.1.6 Actively promote the hour's free parking and free parking on Sundays to Community Groups and Residents' Associations.

6.1.7 Investigate the opportunity to display local artists' artwork in vacant shop front windows in the town centre.

6.1.8 Promote Enterprise funding to the retail sector, Northampton BID and the University of Northampton.

6.1.9 Review Planning Policies with a particular focus on restricting changes of use from retail to other use particularly where there is saturation.

6.1.10 The success of the current Pop-up Shops is widely advertised and further promoted. It is also promoted to the Voluntary Sector so that it can run short-term campaigns using the Pop-up model.

6.1.11 A Town Centre Czar is appointed, in an advisory capacity.

Cleansing

6.1.12 The standard of street cleansing is maintained at a consistent level across the town centre.

6.1.13 Appropriate systems are in place to monitor the street cleansing contract.

6.1.14 Enterprise Management Services (EMS) works closely with partners (i.e. Town Centre BID) to improve engagement and understanding of partners' needs.

6.1.15 NBC works with town centre businesses around trade waste and where necessary takes the appropriate enforcement action.

6.1.16 Any cleaning matters be reported immediately to EMS to ensure a swift response is delivered.

6.1.17 An additional Town Centre Ranger is employed with a particular focus on litter. The Town Ranger is issued with a smart, clearly identifiable uniform and where possible existing Rangers are also issued with smart, clearly identifiable uniforms.

6.1.18 The "Report It" App is promoted to the wider community.

6.1.19 Northampton Borough Council has dialogue with retailers regarding the cleanliness of their forecourts.

6.1.20 The current status of Byelaws in relation to cleansing is investigated and enforced as appropriate or where Byelaws do not exist, consideration is given to the implementation of suitable Byelaws.

Partnership Working

6.1.21 NBC works closely with the Town Centre BID regarding any new business initiatives/opportunities.

6.1.22 NBC continues to work closely with all partners.

6.1.23 NBC develops an education package for primary schools around the importance of recycling and the prevention of littering.

6.1.24 Councillors and Officers from Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) and NBC work closely with town centre businesses around traffic and pedestrian movement throughout the redevelopment building projects in the town centre.

Recommendation to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

6.1.25 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

Appendices

Appendix A

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 2 – RETAIL EXPERIENCE

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To investigate how NBC can support the town centre business community.
- To investigate how NBC can support local businesses throughout the development period of any major building projects in and close by to the town centre (i.e. Grosvenor; bus interchange; university accommodation etc).
- To identify and examine good practice from other boroughs
- To identify ways to develop greater involvement / engagement with local, regional and national businesses in public land improvement initiatives

2. Outcomes Required

- To enhance the retail experience to attract new visitors / shoppers and increase the number of return visits to the town centre
- To provide short, medium and long term recommendations, which supports and develops the retail experience.

3. Information Required

- Context:
  - Local statistics
  - Demographics – local and national
- Baseline data:
  - National statistics
  - Definition of the Town Centre
  - Vision for the Town Centre

- Synopses of various research documents and other published documents
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from expert external witnesses
- Evidence from residents
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Best practice data
- Site visits
- Desktop research

4. Format of Information

- Officer reports/presentations
- Baseline data such as:
  - ➢ Performance data - town centre footfall
    Vacancy rates
    Numbers and types of retail within the town
    Car park usage
- Published reports (precis's) such as:

  - ➢ The Portas Review
  - ➢ The Right to Retail: Can Localism save Britain's small retailers
  - ➢ Understanding High Street Performance
  - ➢ Core Strategy – Northampton's Strategic Planning Policies
  - ➢ Sustainable Community Strategy

- NBC – Cabinet Member (Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise) evidence
- NBC – Cabinet Member (Environment)
- Evidence from Northampton BID
- Evidence from Mr Everall, former Director, Northampton BID
- Evidence from various local businesses and retailers
- Evidence from NCC - Highways
- Evidence from Northampton Community Forums
- Evidence from Enterprise Management Services
- Evident from Northants Police
- Evidence from Neighbourhood Warden (town centre), NBC
- Evidence from ACTM
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from Councillors regarding their shopping experience
- Evidence from the Chair, of the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Association
- Evidence from the Community Safety Manager, NBC
- Evidence from University of Northampton
- Expert advice
- Best practice
- Witness interviews/evidence

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Site Visits (if applicable)
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-

    - ➢ Key Partners as detailed in section 4 of this scope
    - ➢ Northampton Town Centre BID
    - ➢ Northampton Chamber of Commerce
    - ➢ Key Officers – Northampton Borough Council
    - ➢ Key Officers – Northamptonshire County Council
    - ➢ Cabinet Member (Regeneration, Planning and Enterprise) – Northampton Borough Council
    - ➢ Cabinet Member (Environment) – Northampton Borough Council
    - ➢ Surveyors/Valuers
    - ➢ Director, EMS

6. Co-Options to the Review

- Sheridan New, former Manager, Grosvenor Centre, and Simon Rushden, Legal and General to be approached suggesting that she is co opted to this Review for its life.

7 Equality Impact Screening Assessment

- An Equality Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

8 Evidence gathering Timetable

April 2012 to April 2013

- 25 April 2012 - Scoping Meeting
- 27 June – Evidence gathering
- 5 July - Evidence gathering
- 8 August – Evidence gathering
- 18 October – Evidence gathering
- 5 December – Evidence gathering

- 14 February 2013 – Evidence gathering (if required)
- 24 April – Approval of final report

Various site visits will be programmed during this period if required.
Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

7. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Marion Goodman, Head of Customer and Cultural Services
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

8. Resources and Budgets

Marion Goodman, Head of Customer and Cultural Services, to provide internal advice.

9 Final report presented by:

Completed by 24 April 2013. Presented by the Chair of the Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

10 Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (January/February 2013)

Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny

Appendix B

NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny
Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

Executive Summaries of published documents

1 Background

1.1 At its inaugural meeting the Scrutiny Panel agreed that as part of its evidence gathering process summaries of various published documents would be provided to the Panel:

- The Portas Review
- The Right to Retail: Can Localism save Britain's small retailers
- Understanding High Street Performance
- Core Strategy – Northampton's Strategic Planning Policies
- Sustainable Community Strategy

2 Information

2.1 Detailed below are the summaries of the above reports for the Scrutiny Panel's information:

2.2 The Portas Review

2.3 Summary

2.3.1 The decline of the local high street was reviewed by Mary Portas in 2011.

2.3.2 The overarching principle of the Review was the need to renew the high street and town centre as social as well as economic spaces. The Review states "they should become places where we go to engage with other people in our communities where shopping is just one small part of a rich mix of activities". The Review set out concerns about the character of high streets and with the way that money is kept within the local economy in order to maximise the benefit to town centres.

2.3.4 In response to the increase in out of town shopping, the Review stated "the sheer sophistication, speed and scale of both the web and major supermarkets … pushing new boundaries (meaning independent retailers) will never be able to compete sustainably on price". The Review went on to note that the decline cannot be blamed on external factors alone, but also on high streets failing to meet consumer needs for convenience, service and entertainment, whilst failing to play to their strengths as physical and social points for a town or area.

2.3.5 The Review comprised twenty eight recommendations on how to reverse the decline of high streets and town centres as drivers of economic growth and social capital. The main focus of the recommendations:

Regulation
Planning
Influencing landlords
Involving local communities in decision making

2.3.6 Summary of the 28 recommendations:

1. Put in place a "Town Team": a visionary, strategic and strong operational management team for high streets

2. Empower successful Business Improvement Districts to take on more responsibilities and powers and become "Super-BIDs"

3. Legislate to allow landlords to become high street investors by contributing to their Business Improvement District

4. Establish a new "National Market Day" where budding shopkeepers can try their hand at operating a low-cost retail business

5. Make it easier for people to become market traders by removing unnecessary regulations so that anyone can trade on the high street unless there is a valid reason why not

6. Government should consider whether business rates can better support small businesses and independent retailers

7. Local authorities should use their new discretionary powers to give business rate concessions to new local businesses

8. Make business rates work for business by reviewing the use of the RPI with a view to changing the calculation to CPI

9. Local areas should implement free controlled parking schemes that work for their town centres and we should have a new parking league table

10. Town Teams should focus on making high streets accessible, attractive and safe

11. Government should include high street deregulation as part of their ongoing work on freeing up red tape

12. Address the restrictive aspects of the 'Use Class' system to make it easier to change the uses of key properties on the high street

13. Put betting shops into a separate 'Use Class' of their own

14. Make explicit a presumption in favour of town centre development in the wording of the National Planning Policy Framework

15. Introduce Secretary of State "exceptional sign off" for all new out-of-town developments and require all large new developments to have an "affordable shops" quota

16. Large retailers should support and mentor local businesses and independent retailers

17. Retailers should report on their support of local high streets in their annual report

18. Encourage a contract of care between landlords and their commercial tenants by promoting the leasing code and supporting the use of lease structures other than upward only rent reviews, especially for small businesses

19. Explore further disincentives to prevent landlords from leaving units vacant

20. Banks who own empty property on the high street should either administer these assets well or be required to sell them

21. Local authorities should make more proactive use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers to encourage the redevelopment of key high street retail space

22. Empower local authorities to step in when landlords are negligent with new "Empty Shop Management Orders"

23. Introduce a public register of high street landlords

24. Run a high profile campaign to get people involved in Neighbourhood Plans

25. Promote the inclusion of the High Street in Neighbourhood Plans

26. Developers should make a financial contribution to ensure that the local community has a strong voice in the planning system

27. Support imaginative community use of empty properties through Community Right to Buy, Meanwhile Use and a new "Community Right to Try"

28. Run a number of High Street Pilots to test proof of concept

2.3.7 In February 2012, the Government accepted two of the recommendations to set up Town Teams and give communities the opportunity to pilot the creative plans they have for the future of their high streets. Each of the "Portas Pilot" towns selected will receive a share of £1million and receive support from the Government and Mary Portas.

2.3.8 The Government then formally responded to the Portas Review, accepting virtually all of the 28 recommendations; Grant Shapps, Minister for Housing, reported in March 2012 "Today, I'm accepting virtually all of the recommendations from Mary Portas's review... Her report has provided the catalyst for change that many towns have been craving. I now want to see people coming together to form their own town teams and turning their creative ideas into reality to ensure their high streets thrive long into the future".

2.3.9 The first 12 Portas Pilot towns, together with reported purpose, are:

Bedford, Bedfordshire - offering mentoring support for High Street businesses and community use of empty properties.

Croydon, Greater London - transforming the riot-stricken area's historic Old Town market into a thriving market, food and cultural quarter.

Dartford, Ken**t** - opening up central spaces for use by classes and clubs, from the Scouts to Slimming World and starting a 'school for shopkeepers'.

Bedminster, Bristol - putting Bedminster on the map for Street Art and Street Theatre. A bicycle rickshaw service and a review of parking will also tackle the traffic environment.

Liskeard, Cornwall - competing against the edge of town supermarket with a vibrant arts scene, guerrilla gardening and yarn bombing to inject fun back into the town centre.

Margate, Kent - putting education and enjoyment at the heart of the town centre's transformation with courses, 'job club' services and pop up shops.

Market Rasen, Lincolnshire - drawing customers in by restoring the market town look and feel, advertising free parking and mentoring new businesses.

Nelson, Lancashire - attracting local students with a young persons café, sports activities, and a new art and vintage market.

Newbiggin by the Sea, Northumberland - better branding of the town to draw people in, improving local transport and hosting pop up shops.

Stockport, Greater Manchester - realising the character and potential of the Markets and Underbanks area with a creative arts complex, outdoor screenings, a new parking strategy and street champions.

Stockton on Tees, Teesside - live entertainment at the Globe Theatre to boost the evening leisure economy alongside specialist High Street and evening markets.

Wolverhampton, West Midlands - bringing the city will to life with modern day town criers and on-street performers and a 'dragon's den' style competition to support local entrepreneurs.

2.4 The Right to Retail: Can Localism save Britain's small retailers

2.4.1 In 2011, ResPublica published its report "Right to Retail." The report considered the problems faced by high streets. It referred to vacancy rates are rising, the superstores are growing their market share, customers have less money to spend and the cost of regulation is rising. The report details changes to the retail economy, highlighting the power shifts from independent retailers. It reports that the number of larger stores located out of town increased from just under 300 in 1980 to more than 700 by 1990 and just under 1,500 in 2007 and over the same period the number of specialist grocery stores has declined significantly. It provided an example of the reduction of fishmongers from approximately 10,000 in the 1950's to around 2,000 in 2000. Currently over 97% of total grocery sales takes place at the 8,151 supermarkets

2.4.2 ResPublic reports that its recommendations reflect both the Government's wider commitment to local and civic empowerment and the specific commitment to receive the National Planning Policy Framework in order to make it "localist in its approach, handing power back to local communities to decide what is right for them". It goes on to say that its recommendations aim to make explicit that a successful localist agenda would be one which not only gave communities and individuals the power to shape to their physical environment, but also, crucially, their local economy.

2.4.3 Summary of local and civic recommendations :

Recommendation 1 – Allow Communities to Designate Retail Mix in Neighbourhood Plans

Recommendation 2 – A Community Right to Appeal

Recommendation 3 – Treat Shops as Local Assets

Recommendation 4 – Business Rate Reduction for Designated Retailers

Recommendation 5 – A Community Right to Buy

Recommendation 6 – A Community Right to Try

Recommendation 7: Embed Small and Medium Owners in Local Enterprise Partnerships

2.4.4 Summary of national recommendations:

Recommendation 8 – A community Interest Clause In Competition Law

Recommendation 9 – An Annual National Report on "buying power" and "price flexing"

2.4.4 Summary of recommendations for a joined up economy:

Recommendation 10 – Encourage Mutual Retail Models

Recommendation 11 – Encourage Community Run Retailers

2.5 Understanding High Street Performance

2.5.1 The Department for Business and Innovation and Skills published a report in December 2011 entitled "Understanding High Street Performance." The Report looks at a number of factors impacting on the economic and social performance of town centres and High Streets. The purpose of the report was to help inform Government and local authority decision-making regarding town centres, high streets and local economic growth. It also provided input to the Portas Review.

2.5.2 The framework of the report centered on the following areas:

Externalities – high streets are influenced by externalities that are generally outside user/occupier control.

Spatial and physical factors – high street performance is affected by factors such as the development of new residential areas or demographic changes; changes in the physical environment; accessibility related to car access and car parking and cycle/walking friendliness; amenity in terms of streetscape, public space and private/public space;

Market forces and competition – the development of the high street is undoubtedly affected by the emergence/presence of competitive alternatives to the high street, through a range of channels;

Demographics – changing demographic trends are likely to have important implications for our high streets. There are implications related to the impact of factors such as: ageing populations; transient populations such as students/immigrants; and the socio-economic catchment/level of disposable income that influence the face of high streets;

Regulation and legislation – a range of regulatory and legislative policy initiatives have impacted on high streets including planning policy and licensing legislation and the introduction of financial incentives;

Management - the management of high streets has the potential to affect change and can contribute to the differential impact of certain factors or events.

2.5.4 The study defined high street for its purposes as:

high streets in multi-dimensional town centres serving primarily sub-regional markets and driven by catchment and geography. These offer functions such as the provision of labour, a location for business, and an environmental asset;

high streets in ‘destination’ town centres, where the driver of use can be considered to be a specialist appeal or a particular product and where retail and service provision predominates over the functional roles;

service centre high streets in suburban districts that are serving more localised residential catchments.

2.7 Sustainable Community Strategy for Northampton 2008 – 2011

2.7.1 The Sustainable Community Strategy for Northampton covers to the period 2008-2011. It is reported that it outlines the vision up to 2031 and how it will be aimed to achieve this. The Strategy will be refreshed periodically to reflect changes and progress. The Plan focuses on activity that will take place during the first phase of the vision, up to 2011.

2.8 Central Area Action Plan

2.8.1 Extracts from the sections in relation to retail are detailed below

Definition of the 'Town Centre'

To be consistent with PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth, the 'Proposals Map' identifies the extent of the town centre and Primary Shopping Area. In sequential planning terms, the Primary Shopping Area is the preferred location for retail development, with the town centre being the preferred location for other 'main town centre uses'. Given the current imbalance and harm that is being caused by competition from out-of-centre developments, and other large district centres, the Plan seeks to ensure that an impact assessment is undertaken to developments proposing 1,000 square meters gross or more of main town centre uses. This will assist in controlling the extent to which additional developments outside the Central Area will continue to grow and compete with the town centre with regard to the variety of main town centre uses.

Policy 11

Town Centre Boundary

The 'town centre' boundary as defined on the 'Proposals Map' will, for the purposes of sequential testing, be the preferred location for main town centre uses, with the exception of retailing where the Primary Shopping Area will prevail, followed by edge of town centre sites.

Developments of main town centre~~s~~ uses of more than 1,000 square metres gross proposed outside the town centre boundary will be subject to impact assessment.

Delivering a Vibrant Retail Centre

Defining and strengthening Northampton's Primary Shopping Area (as shown on the 'Proposals Map') is vital if the Central Area is to fulfil its role as a town centre (as defined by PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth) and the principal shopping centre for Northamptonshire. To show the distinction between the types of use classes within Northampton Central Area, the Primary Shopping Area has been broken down into Primary and Secondary Frontages:

- Primary Frontages are the focus for retail uses
- Secondary Frontages will have a retail focus but provide opportunities for a greater diversity of uses away from retailing, such as financial services, restaurants and drinking establishments

The Council aims to develop a compact and quality retail centre by classifying the frontages and defining a Primary Shopping Area. The Council will also develop a robust retail circuit, which will create a more legible retail centre and strengthen the role of key retailing streets of Abington Street, Fish Street and St Giles Street. The retail circuit will seek to increase the vitality and viability of the town by promoting a range of quality retailing experiences for visitors. This range will include large-scale national stores that will locate in the Grosvenor Centre and its extension, through to smaller-scale individual specialist retailers in St Giles Street. Providing active building frontage on to streets throughout the Central Area and improving the design of shop frontages will be central to developing an effective retail circuit and increasing vitality, together with the increased perception of quality.

A substantial increase in high quality floor space that meets the needs of modern town centre retailers will be required to meet the Central Area's role as a town_centre. Therefore, the Council has identified future extensions to the Primary Shopping Area. These extensions include the planned extension to the Grosvenor Centre (Policy 17 'Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment') and the redevelopment of the former Fish Market (Policy 19 'Former Fish Market and Adjoining Buildings').

Policy 12

Definition of the Primary Shopping Area

Northampton Primary Shopping Area will become the main focus for shopping activity within the Borough. Retail development will take place in the Primary Shopping Area as defined on the 'Proposals Map'.

The Primary Shopping Area will be extended as shown on the 'Proposals Map' by the proposed Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment (as defined in Policy 17_'Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment'), the redevelopment of the former Fish Market and adjacent area (as defined in Policy 18 'Former Fish Market and Adjoining Buildings') and the Drapery (as defined in Policy 32 'Drapery').

Policy 13

Improving the Retail Offer

Within the Primary Frontages: 'The Character of Shopping Frontages'), the change of use from retail (Class A1) will be allowed where it will not result in:

- A significant decline in the total length of the identified retail frontage below 80%, or, where this is already below 80% reduce further retail frontage, and
- Two or more adjoining premises being used other than for retail

Within the Secondary Frontages 'The Character of Shopping Frontages'), the change of use from retail (Class A1) will be allowed where it will not result in a significant decline in the total length of identified retail frontage below 60%, or, where this is already below 60% reduce further retail frontage.

In addition, development at ground floor level within the Central Area will be expected to:

- Positively contribute to the character and function of a frontage (for primary and secondary frontages a brief assessment of the current and desired future character and function are set out in Appendix F: 'The Character of Shopping Frontages') and be compatible with adjoining uses
- Provide high quality shop fronts which will be consistent with the Shop Front Design Guide
- In the case of non-retail uses, to provide an active frontage with views into the unit or, if this cannot be achieved a high quality window display

Market Square

The Market Square is a destination in its own right through its function as a market and event space. It is a major historical landmark and area of public space. It provides a unique opportunity for Northampton to differentiate its retail and leisure experience from competing out-of-town retail parks and other retail centres. Recent investment in the public realm and a programme of events at the Market Square should be used as a starting point for future improvement and investment. In terms of role and function, the Borough Council intends to maximise the potential offered by this asset, by encouraging more restaurants and cafés to invest in the properties fronting the Square.

Policy 31

Market Square

The Council will seek to establish leisure uses within the Market Square and enhance its function and appearance by:

- Allowing more restaurants (A3) within the Market Square's Secondary Frontages
- Not allowing the loss of restaurants (A3), unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the proposal will meet the Council's strategic objective for the Market Square
- Ensuring that proposals will complement and improve the quality of the public realm in line with Policy ~~4~~ 3 'Public Realm'
- Ensure proposals respect or enhance the building design and character of the Market Square in line with Policy ~~2~~ 1 'Promoting Design Excellence'
- Working with property owners and occupiers to improve the fabric and appearance of buildings
- Seeking to sustain and enhance the Market Square as a venue for the market and as an event space

Drapery

This site is bounded by Bradshaw Street and King Street on the north, St. Katherine's gardens on the west, Drapery on the east and Jeyes Jetty on the south. It is bisected by College Street. It currently accommodates the Debenhams department store, associated car parking/ service area and other smaller retail, service, public house and eating and drinking establishments.

There is a strong likelihood that some of the current occupiers of this area, Debenhams in particular, will relocate into the redeveloped Grosvenor Centre. This will provide an opportunity for the area to be the redeveloped for additional comparison retailing floorspace of approximately 17,000 square metres after the opening of the Grosvenor Centre extension. This floorspace will be more suited to retailers' requirements, provide an extension to the primary shopping area and enhance the role of the Drapery as a primary shopping frontage. It can also create a better connection to and setting for the St. Katherine's Gardens and the listed College Street Church.

Policy 32

Drapery

The Drapery will be regenerated in a manner consistent with the development principles contained within Figure 6.14 of the CAA 'Policy 32: Drapery Development Principles'. It will:

- Provide an extension to the Primary Shopping Area
- Provide up to 17,000 square metres of comparison retail floorspace, together with associated eating establishments
- Positively address and enhance the setting and use of St Katherine's Gardens through appropriate uses and active frontages on the west of the development site
- Reuse and restore historic buildings wherever possible and enhance the setting and make a feature of the listed College Street Church and also 41 Drapery
- Have strong connections that promote movement to and from the Former Fish Market and Adjoining Buildings site in their role as extensions to the Primary Shopping Area
- Enhance Swan Yard and Jeyes Jetty through respecting their historic character whilst seeking to provide ~~,~~ attractive and safe links between Drapery and College Street

Meeting Retail Capacity

The Council is confident that a substantial extension to the Grosvenor Centre will be delivered, following the signing of a Development Agreement with Legal and General. As a logical extension to the Primary Shopping Area and the town's premier shopping destination, the Grosvenor Centre redevelopment proposal is the key to increasing and enhancing both the supply and quality of retail development for Northampton. It is anticipated that it will fulfil a substantial part of the identified retail capacity in the period to 2021.

It is anticipated that the Grosvenor Centre redevelopment will accommodate between 32,000–37,000 square metres (gross) of comparison floorspace. The Town Centre Health Check identifies the potential for a further 19,000–23,000 square metres (gross) of comparison goods floorspace to be accommodated within the town centre by 2026. The West Northamptonshire Retail Study indicates a potential for Northampton town centre to accommodate 4,500 square metres (net) of convenience floor space by 2021. The actual retail capacity within the Grosvenor Centre development will be determined through the detailed design of the scheme.

The Council has identified two further sites for retail development that have good prospects for delivery. These will help to meet identified retail capacity in the period to 2026. The sites are:

- Abington Street East
- Drapery and land on College Street

Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment

The Grosvenor Centre constitutes a significant part of the retail frontage within the Central Area. The site includes a purpose built shopping centre, the Greyfriars bus station with offices above, the vacant land to the west and east, the Mayorhold multi-storey car park together with associated land including subways and the Upper Mounts surface level car park on Victoria Street. It is one of the biggest and most important development sites within and adjacent to the Primary Shopping Area of the Central Area.

[2]The present development, which took place in the 1970s and 80s, whilst still functional and to a certain extent commercially successful, overall does not constitute an attractive environment. It also has a poor relationship with the rest of the historic environment that surrounds it. The buildings are bulky, monolithic and devoid of architectural interest and visual stimulation. Overall it does not form an attractive pedestrian environment as it is heavily trafficked and there is extremely limited pedestrian movement between the north and south in the daytime. The situation becomes worse in the evenings as it is very isolated when the buildings are closed.

Despite some recent investment it is now beginning to show its age. Its design and layout cannot be easily adapted to accommodate the needs of modern retailers and the demand for new retail premises in the town centre.

The bus station is an important building in terms of its function as a bus interchange and hub for bus services within Northampton as set out in Chapter 5. 'Accessibility and Movement'. The building itself is of its time and whilst warm and dry, is dark and can at times, particularly in the evenings, feel like an intimidating environment. It has a substantial amount (approx 14,000 square metres) of obsolete vacant office floor space and car parking above.

The Grosvenor Centre site redevelopment provides an opportunity for a logical extension and remodelling of the principal purpose built shopping centre within Northampton's centre. This will reinforce the existing primary shopping frontages and cater for longer-term retailer demand. This redevelopment is critical to sustaining Northampton centre's competitiveness as a retail destination and in delivering the Central Area vision. It should also provide the opportunity to accommodate a range of other town centre uses to reinforce the role of the Central Area and provide potential for significant improvements to the townscape.

Policy 17

Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment

The Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment will be in a manner consistent with the development principles set out in Figure 6.1 'Policy 17: Grosvenor Centre Redevelopment Development Principles'. It will:

- Provide up to an additional 37,000 square metres gross internal retail floor space plus ancillary uses including restaurant / leisure floor space as an extension to the existing Primary Shopping Area:
  - Provide a suitable long term, and if necessary interim, replacement for the bus station consistent with the criteria set out in Bus Interchange
  - Make the most effective use of the site reflective of its central location to accommodate a mixture of other main town centre uses, such as offices, leisure and entertainment, hotel and also residential development
  - Provide a new pedestrian route, which should be open and feel safe 24-hours a day, between the Market Square and Lady's Lane through to Newlands; and also a pedestrian route between Abington Street and Lady's Lane through to Victoria Street
  - Retain the existing amount of convenience floor space within the Grosvenor Centre and explore all possibilities of accommodating additional convenience floor space to meet identified available capacity
  - Provide sympathetic design of an appropriate scale taking into account the historic character of Sheep Street together with improved pedestrian and cycle connectivity north/ south and reinstate a building line in the missing gap to the north of Lady's Lane and to the south of Greyfriars
  - Be outward looking maximising external active frontages particularly at ground floor level
  - Ensure that new development is well related and sympathetic to the characterisation of the surrounding areas and in particular improves the appearance of all the facade on the Market Square and the setting of Welsh House
  - Provide appropriate public realm that is consistent with the ambitions of the Public Realm Implementation Framework and changes in the character of the highway particularly along Lady's Lane, Sheep Street, Greyfriars, Mayorhold, Victoria Street, Wellington Street, Abington Street and Market Square
  - In recognition of its identified designation as a proposed extension to the Primary Shopping Area (Policy 12 'Definition of the Primary Shopping Area') ensure that the development positively addresses the other sites proposed as extensions to the Primary Shopping Area (Policy 18 'Abington Street East) and also Drapery (Policy 32) to enhance their prospects of delivery
  - Include provision of secure cycle storage facilities: long stay

cycle parking for employees and for short stay shoppers, in accordance with the Standards set out in Appendix: E. 'Parking Standards: Central Area Zones'

- Have appropriate parking management measures consistent with Policy 10 'Parking'
- Remove the Greyfriars, Lady's Lane and Wellington Street subways whilst ensuring that pedestrian connectivity is not comprised

2.9 Northampton Town Centre Health Check 2009

2.9.1 The Northampton Borough Council Town Centre Health Check was published in October 2009. Roger Tym and Partners had been commissioned to undertake a comprehensive healthcheck of Northampton town centre. The objective of the study was to present a quantative and quallative assessment of the Northampton Central Area to inform the emerging Area Action.

2.9.2 Some key reported facts from the Health Check:

Northampton is tied with Peterborough. Amongst the comparator cities only Leicester and Milton Keynes rank higher:

Retail Rankings

Venue	2003/04 Ranking	2008 Rank	Change 2004-2008
Northampton	43	43	0
Peterborough	46	43	-3
Milton Keynes	29	30	1
Leicester	10	14	4
Oxford	44	45	1
Coventry	41	60	19

There were 97 vacant units in Northampton at the time of the Goad Survey (2008) which equates to a vacancy rate of 15% and is above the GB average of vacancy rate of 12%. The vacancy units are spread evenly throughout the centre. The vast majority being A1 use class. Two vacant banks, 8 vacant restaurants and 1 vacant public house. The remaining six unities were being redeveloped at the time of the Goad Survey. There were no vacant office units.

In May 2009 there were changes to the vacancy rates. In addition to the 97 identified in the Goad survey, there were 22 more, an increase of 23% in seven months. It was stated that this was probably due to the state of the economy at that time.

The Healthcheck identified that there is a good mix of multiples and independents. Compared with nearby town centres, the town is performing well – it has the same proportion of multiples as Leicester and Coventry:

Percentage of top 20 retailers

Centre	**Percentage of top 20 retailers**
Northampton	85
Oxford	75
Peterborough	80
Leicester	85
Coventry	85
Milton Keynes	70

Source: www.focusnet.co.uk

Northampton has very few high profile fashion multiples.

In terms of mix, Northampton is most like Coventry. Milton Keynes has a relatively high proportion of its retail in upper-middle markets. Only Oxford has a notable proportion of its retail offering in upper market shops (5%).

The Healthcheck went on to report that Northampton would clearly benefit from the addition of further mid-end and higher-end fashion retailers, which would bolster the quality and variety of the town centre's shopping offer and enable the town to better compete with neighbouring town centres.

It was reported that Zone A rents in Northampton average £1,507 per sq m in 2007. The rent was lower than all comparator centres: Oxford and Milton Keynes are approximately twice that of Northampton's.

In respect of retail yields, between 2000 and 2008 Northampton's yield has strengthened considerably. In October 2000 Northampton's yield was the strongest of all the comparators, but at the time of the Healthcheck it ranked third and stood at 7.25. The Healthcheck highlighted that yields in Northampton had weakened due to the recession.

The Healthcheck commented that Northampton town centre looked tired and the shop fronts and facades throughout the town were slightly run down with the notable exceptions of the Morrisons area, Fish Street and Marefair. The Grosvenor Centre was reported as dated and the Peacock Place mall described as more modern but many of the shops had closed down and had not been re occupied.

The Healthcheck included a survey with a random sample of visitors to Northampton in May 2009. 204 individuals completed a face to face interview. The surveys were taken on different days of the week. The purpose was to ascertain the respondents' reason for visiting the centre and ascertain their views and comments. In brief, some key facts from the survey:

- The majority travelled to the Northampton by car/van as the driver
- The main reason for the visit was to buy non food items
- Secondary reason for the visit was to buy non food items
- When asked why they would not be visiting an eating/drinking establishment, the majority of respondents indicated it was due to a poor selection/don't like
- In respect of likes and dislikes of the market area, the main positive comment was in respect of independent stalls
- The main dislike in terms of Northampton was the cleanliness and the main positive was eating and drinking closely followed by pedestrianised streets

A telephone survey with 400 households was undertaken in May 2009 in two Zones. Zone one from Moulton to Weston Favell areas and Zone two from New Duston to Collingtree. Respondents were asked about the most popular food and grocery shopping over the previous six months and in which centre they had spent most money on clothes and shoes in past six months:

Zone 1	Tesco Extra Mereway (26%) Sainsburys Sixfields (20%) Northampton (49%) Milton Keynes (22%)
Zone 2	Morrisions, Kettering Road (29%) Tesco Extra, Weston Favell (28%) Northampton (45%) Milton Keynes (16%)

The Market Square is popular with people visiting the town centre but is not very well used by residents overall.

The summary contained with the Healthcheck:

- The town centre has an average proportion of comparison floorspace but a below average proportion of convenience floorspace, with Sainsbury's at the Grosvenor Centre being the only large foodstore.

- Services as a whole are over represented, but restaurants, cafes and fast food are under represented. This is despite high per capita spend compared to nearby city/town centres and a high population within 15 minutes drive time.

- The town centre has 26 of the 31 Goad key multiples, on a par with Leicester and Coventry. It has a "middle" fashion ranking from Management Horizons Europe and is ranked below Milton Keynes and Leicester but at a similar level to the other comparator centres.
- However, occupier demand is low compared to the other centres, where high quality comparison and restaurant operators are seeking space. This is perhaps because of poor perceptions of the town and the lack of clusters of particular types of outlet (e.g. premium retailers or family restaurants).
- Vacancy is very high and as would be expected, this has worsened since the start of the recession. But, because vacancy has always been high compared to other centres, the losses suffered have not been as severe as in other areas.
- Prime Zone A retail rents are low in Northampton, presenting an opportunity for new retailers. Retail yields are strong – on a par with Milton Keynes – and have strengthened over the past decade, perhaps due to improvements to the public realm.
- Crime is recognised as an issue and there are schemes in place to target crime and improve perceptions of safety.
- The public realm is pleasant if somewhat tatty, for example with damaged street furniture. Much of the town centre is pedestrianised. There is generally good signage, although minimal signage from the station. Investment in the public realm has already taken place along Black Lion Hill and further work along Gold Street is due to be completed at the end of July.
- Pedestrian access to and through the centre is good, although the centre is spread out so it takes time to walk from one end to the other. Abington Street is the busiest location, with the Drapery and Gold Street also busy. Only around half of people visiting St. Peters Square, and hardly anyone visiting Morrisons, walk to the rest of the centre.
- Access by car is reasonable. There is less parking than in Leicester and Milton Keynes, but parking is cheaper than in the comparator centres.
- Train and bus links are good but the stations are peripheral and in poor condition. The visitor survey found that most people travel in by either car or bus.
- The town centre has a fairly local catchment – if another centre is either closer or the same distance away, it seems that people will visit that instead.
- Most people visit Northampton only once per month or fortnight, suggesting that they shop in other centres as well.
- Non food shopping is the most popular reason for visiting the centre, which accords with the fact that over half the floorspace is

comparison goods. Eating out is a secondary reason for some visitors, although people do not seem to see the town centre as a restaurant destination.

- The market is popular with visitors and they like the independent stalls although feel that there is a lack of choice.

- Overall visitors rate the town centre poorly, in particular for environmental factors including cleanliness, safety and character (although pedestrianised streets are liked).
- Around half of residents surveyed stated that Northampton town centre is their main comparison shopping destination. This accords with the findings of previous studies but is low compared to the situation in, for example, Milton Keynes.
- A low proportion of residents use the Sainsbury's store, stating that supermarkets outside the town centre are easier to get to and easier to park at.
- Reasons for not using Northampton are that it has a poor range of multiples and is difficult to park in. As discussed, there are actually quite a high proportion of multiples, although it is true that the centre lacks premium outlets. There is also reasonable parking provision as compared to surrounding centres.
- With regard to leisure, restaurants are a popular activity and the town centre is reasonably popular – although most people visit their local restaurants. Safety concerns were the most cited reason for not eating out in the town centre.
- Cinema and theatre are also popular – and town center provision for both is good.

2.9.3 Detailed below is the relevant section from the CAA in relation to the Health Check 2009.

"However, the Town Centre Health Check[10] identified that the appearance of much of the public realm is tired and has not had sustained investment over a substantial period. The opportunity exists to address some of these poorer areas, particularly the main shopping street - Abington Street - through redevelopment, together with related improvements and investments in transport and general improvements, through the policies and regeneration sites identified within the Plan. "

10 Roger Tym & Partners, Northampton Town Centre Healthcheck (2009)

2.10 Northampton Town Centre Shopping Survey June 2010

2.10.1 The Town Centre Survey was undertaken using a framework as set out in the Northampton Town Shopping Survey, January 2005.

Northampton Borough Council
Overview and Scrutiny

Street Name	Nº of Vacant Units	% of Vacant Units	Nº Occupied A1 Units	% of Occupied A1 Units	Total Nº of Units
Wellingborough Road - South(16-68)	5	29%	6	35%	17
Kettering Road - North (5-55)	5	27%	9	50%	18
Abington Square - South	4	18%	9	56%	17
Abington Square - North	1	6%	8	50%	16
York Road - East (27-37)	2	16%	5	46%	11
York Road – West (15 – 25)	4	36%	0	0	10
Abington Street - South	5	4%	26	53%	49
Abington Street – North	7	15%	29	59%	48
Peacock Place	12	41%	13	45%	29
Grovesnor Centre	5	7%	62	86%	66
The Parade	1	11%	6	67%	9
Market Square – South, West & East	4	17%	8	30%	23
Sheep Street – West (5-15)	1	16%	1	16%	6
Sheep Street – East (2-20)	2	20%	4	40%	10
Drapery - East	4	25%	4	25%	16
Drapery - West	5	24%	10	48%	21
Bradshaw Street	2	33%	1	16%	6
College Street Mews	0	n/a	5	83%	6
Gold Street - South	4	22%	8	44%	18
Gold Street – North	2	13%	13	50%	26
Gold Street Mews	0	n/a	8	80%	10
Marefair – South (7-21)	1	10%	4	40%	10
St Peters Walk East	1	11%	7	77%	9
St Peters Walk West	1	n/a	5	83%	6
St Peters Square	2	18%	8	72%	11

Bridge Street - West	3	11%	4	14%	28
Bridge Street- East	3	20%	3	20%	15
Mercers Row	0	n/a	6	60%	10
George Row	1	16%	1	16%	8
Wood Hill	0	n/a	2	40%	5
Derngate – North (1-23)	2	12%	5	33%	12
Derngate – South (2-8)	0	n/a	2	33%	6
St Giles Street – South (2-72)	5	18%	16	59%	27
St Giles Street – North (1-79 and Riding Arcade)	1	7%	22	58%	38
Fish Street – East	1	10%	1	10%	10
Fish Street - West	0	n/a	3	27%	11

Total N^{o} of Units = 638 Total N^{o} of Occupied A1 Units = 324 (50.5%)
Total N^{o} of Vacant Units = 97 (14%)

A1 Shop Fronts

Street Name	**Total Shop Frontage (Metres)**	**Total A1 Shop Frontage Occupied or Vacant (Metres)**	**% A1 Shop Frontage**
Abington Square – South (2-30)	77	57	74%
Abington Street - South	438	302	69%
Abington Street – North	428	276	65%
Peacock Place	374	353	94%
Grovesnor Centre	731	713	97%
The Parade	113	82	73%
Market Square – South	55	17	30%
Market Square - West	94	23	25%
Market Square – East	39	32	82%
Sheep Street –	58	31	53%

East (2-20)			
Drapery - East	130	52	40%
Drapery - West	178	106	59%
Gold Street - South	182	102	56%
Gold Street – North	239	100	41%
Mercers Row	73	40	55%
Wood Hill	52	21	40%
St Giles Street – South (2-72)	190	145	76%
St Giles Street – North (1-65)	122	53	47%
Fish Street – East	88	11	13%
Fish Street - West	78	7	8%

High street and town centre regeneration

Policy Briefing 21 October 2012

Report author: Ed Hammond, (020) 7187 7369, ed.hammond@cfps.org.uk

This briefing, the twenty-first in our policy briefings series, looks at town centre regeneration.

Since 2010 the Coalition Government has developed a number of policies to assist in regeneration and economic development, cutting across the responsibilities (principally) of the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) and the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), and other departments. Some of these have been at regional, and sub-regional level – the abolition of the RDAs and the establishment of LEPs, for example.

However, there has equally been significant work on local and district centres – both through the National Planning Policy Framework, the new powers in the Localism Act and other means, such as the Portas Review. These developments sit at the end of a fast-moving policy landscape that has been evolving for some years, and which presents different views and approaches of the solutions that authorities and their partners can take to what are uniquely local, and wide-ranging, problems.

As the recession continues, the health and vitality of local high streets is likely to be an issue which scrutiny will wish to investigate – scrutiny of economic development and regeneration plans, both specific to specific areas and council-wide, have proven especially popular with councillors over the past few years.

This policy briefing will explore the national context behind measures to push forward local regeneration, and examine ways in which scrutiny can use this evidence to support work at local level.

Contents

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1. Background: Councils' responsibilities for regeneration and economic development

1.1 Councils' responsibilities in this area are probably best divided into three categories – **planning, licensing** and **wider strategic issues** such as economic development and regeneration, community safety, health, education and other policy areas. A comprehensive review of policy in this area would look at all of these factors, and how they intersect with one another – as well as considering the extent to which the public, and businesses, in a given area have an opportunity to influence policy. This would obviously be a huge undertaking, and later in this report we suggest ways in which overview and scrutiny can sensibly disaggregate such a large and interconnected web of policy issues. This section, however, will set out the general context of where councils' responsibilities lie at the moment.

<u>Strategic duties</u>

1.2 Prior to the Local Government Finance Act 1989, local authorities had the responsibility for collecting the domestic, and non-domestic, rates in their area, and using those rates to finance council expenditure. This was seen as providing an impetus for local authorities to take action to promote the economic development of their areas. The 1989 Act created a national system for business rates, keeping collection local, but requiring all rates to be paid into a national pot, from which they were redistributed. Recently, the Government has taken steps[1] to alter the rules around business rate (NNDR) relief, giving local authorities the power to fund their own discount schemes for NNDR, and around

[1] http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detail?itemId=1086075746&type=RESOURCES

business rate deferral. At the same time, the relief available for small businesses has doubled, from 50% to 100%[2]. Government has also introduced a business rate retention regime, to encourage local authorities to do more to build up their receipts from rates[3]. Under business rate retention, the effects of localisation are dampened by some authorities being classified as "tariff" authorities (ie they pay more into the national system than they get out) and "top up" authorities (which get out more from the national system than they put in)[4].

1.3 Despite the removal of the local element of rating, councils retained their general duties of promoting local business and the economy, placed on a statutory footing most recently by the Local Government Act 2000[5], and supplemented by the general powers given by the Localism Act 2011[6].

1.4 Most councils aim to deliver these duties, at least in part, through the Local Development Framework (LDF)[7]. However, the strategic context will often be provided through an economic development strategy. This document would previously have been developed with regard to the strategy of the Regional Development Agency, but since the abolition of RDAs[8], councils' work on economic development will be tied to the agenda of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). We produced a policy briefing on LEPs in 2010[9]. LEPs are partnerships of business and local government (and other partners) and can be seen as providing the strategic framework for individual councils' approaches to economic development, and development and regeneration plans for specific areas, including town centres.

1.5 Most councils' economic development strategies focus on the need for joint working to achieve their ends, and recognise the limitations of trying to predict and plan for the economic position of a given geographical area over a five or ten year period. As such, strategies tend to rely on an extremely robust evidence base – usually an

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[2] http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1972672 - see also DCLG Statistical Release, 15 August 2012, http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/statistics/pdf/2198849.pdf

[3] "The business rates retention scheme: the economic benefits of local business rate retention", (DCLG 2012), http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/2146726.pdf

[4] "Local government resource review: proposals for business rate retention – technical paper 5, tariff, top up and levy options" (DCLG, 2011) http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/19695901.pdf

[5] Section 2, 2000 Act. See "The role of local government in promoting wellbeing", (LGA / NEF, 2011), http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=867e0406-35a5-4e91-910d-6b13305d2319&groupId=10171 for a consideration of the wider context of wellbeing, particularly seen in the context of health inequalities and other social and economic determinants of health.

[6] The "general power of competence" in section 1 of the 2011 Act can be taken as bolstering councils' responsibilities for place-shaping in their local area.

[7] Which councils are obliged to produce under the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2004 (referred hereafter as "2004 Regulations").

[8] Carried out by central Government in 2010, and also involving the closure of the regional Government Offices, following an earlier review of sub-national structures in 2009 which resulted in the closure of Regional Assemblies.

[9] "Policy briefing 6: local enterprise partnerships" (CfPS, 2010), www.cfps.org.uk/policy-briefings

economic assessment of some kind, sometimes but not always commissioned from a consultant. Kent is an example of an authority that has taken this approach[10].

Planning and licensing

1.6 The Local Development Framework - Councils are now required to put together a Local Development Framework (LDF), which is made up of a number of Development Plan Documents (DPD) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD), covering a wide range of geographical areas and planning policy issues[11]. Since 2006/07, planning authorities have been building their LDFs, a process which has been taking some time[12] owing in part to the long lead times involved in consulting on new planning policies.

1.7 The basis of the LDF is the Core Strategy, which often closely aligns to a council's economic development strategy[13]. It sets out major development and regeneration opportunities and the council's key planning priorities and policies. It provides the context for the DPDs and SPDs who sit beneath it. Such is the complexity of the LDF requirements that many councils are still working to their "saved" planning policies (such as Unitary Development Plans) that predate the LDF system, which was introduced in 2004.

1.8 LDF documents must comply with the national policy framework.

1.9 Action to deal with individual streets or town centres can usually be found in an Area Action Plan (AAP), an SPD which covers a smaller geographical area. Like any SPD, it has to go through long periods of consultation, and from start to finish the adoption of an AAP can take a number of years (sometimes as long as five or six). This has led to a situation whereby many AAPs, once adopted, do not take account of prevailing economic circumstances, or council finances.

1.10 Planning gain: s106 and the CIL – under s106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, local authorities can enter into agreements ("s106 agreements") for developers to make a contribution towards mitigating the effect on the wider community of a given development. More recently, the Community Infrastructure Levy has provided an opportunity for authorities to acquire a more generalised contribution from developers, that need not be tied to the development of a specific site. CIL contributions could therefore be used by councils to finance

[10] https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/business/economic-development/Scoping-Report-Final.pdf
[11] The LDF is not a single document. It is made up of a number of documents which are periodically updated and amended. This was a shift from the former unitary development plans, structure plans and local plans which were drafted by local authorities pre-2004, but which may still operate in some areas as "saved" policies.
[12] Many councils have only comparatively recently adopted their Core Strategies, and most are still operating at least some saved UDP policies from 2004 or earlier.
[13] Required under Regulation 6(1)(a), 2004 Regulations

capital investment in town centre regeneration – as a legal power, it has not been in place for long enough to make a judgment as to whether it will be used for this purpose.

1.11 General powers under the Localism Act - Under the Localism Act, local communities can come together to draft their own neighbourhood plans. Such plans, if agreed by the local populace, must then be adopted by the council as an SPD, in much the same way as an AAP. For this to happen, the plan must conform both with national policy and with other documents in the LDF (principally, the Core Strategy). A number of areas are engaged in drafting neighbourhood plans but the practice is not yet widespread.

1.12 The Localism Act also makes provision – via the linked Community Right to Bid and the Community Right to Build[14] – for more community involvement in prominent developments. This may be a particular opportunity to ensuring that land in a town centre or on a high street is used effectively.

1.13 Under the Right to Bid[15], if a plot of land, building or site is designated as a "community asset" (council are under an obligation to maintain a list of such assets), whoever owns it, the local community have a right to bid to take over ownership of that asset when it comes up for sale. The legislation builds in a period of time to allow local people to secure financing to do this.

1.14 Under the Right to Build, a local community group (which must be "formal" – eg a company limited by guarantee – and which must have as one of its objectives enhancing the well-being of the area) has the right to build housing, retail space, community facilities, allotments, or any other facility or development, where it owns or has use of the land and is able to secure a majority in favour of these plans in a local referendum. This effectively circumvents local planning provisions[16]. A national fund has been set up to assist local communities wishing to take this action, although the fund cannot be used for actually purchasing land. The fund is managed by the HCA – a separate fund for London exists, administered by the Mayor.

1.15 Licensing and planning often go together, as land use classes determine what licensable businesses can and cannot be carried out in a given premises. The Government has recently been carrying out a consultation on use classes[17], although it has withdrawn some of its

[14] Explained at http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityrights/righttobid/ and http://www.communities.gov.uk/communities/communityrights/righttobuild/ respectively. Further information on the right of build can be found at http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/newsroom/pdf/1647749.pdf.
[15] Locality have produced a guide: http://locality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Right-to-Bid-a-quick-guide.pdf
[16] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/21261671.pdf
[17] See both "Relaxation of planning rules for change of use from commercial to residential" (DCLG, 2011), http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1883189.pdf and "New

proposals (for example, those permitting a change of use from business premises to residential premises without planning permission).

1.16 Under authorities' licensing policies, conditions may be imposed on businesses – for example, "terminal hours" for pubs and entertainment venues, or conditions on the operation of late-night hot food takeaways. This sits on top of the requirement, where such premises have not been used for a given purpose before, to successfully apply for a change of use under the council's planning policies. So if a shopkeeper wanted to open a kebab shop in premises that had formerly been occupied by a florist, he would have to apply for a change in use from A1 (general retail) to A5 (hot food takeaway). The situation is further complicated by the presence of saturation policies, which in some areas limit the number of certain types of certain use class in a certain street or area, or which restrict or entirely prohibit certain changes of use.

1.17 Planning and licensing policies are hence used in conjunction to control, albeit bluntly, how high streets and town centres are permitted to develop, in line with the wider priorities for an area.

2. Reasons for the decline

2.1 A number of reasons have been mooted as to why town centres, and high streets, are in decline in a number of areas. The important point to note is that – as we make clear later – the reasons for decline, and the methods which can be used to reinvigorate town centres, will vary from place to place. There is no one "benchmark" against which regenerations can be judged.

2.2 We do not have space to consider all of these in detail, but they have all been put forward as challenges that need addressing, by a variety of sources. Readers will note that, while some of these problems have national facets, almost all of them present the opportunity to develop local solutions.

- Poor links between daytime and night-time economy (local)[18];
- Insufficient car parking, or car parking being too expensive (local)[19];
- Poor public transport permeability (local)[20];
- Restrictive approaches to business rate relief, business rate deferral, or borrowing against business rate growth (local and national)[21];

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opportunities for sustainable development and growth through the reuse of existing buildings: consultation" (DCLG, 2012), http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/2171937.pdf

18 "Regeneration of town centres" (NAW, 2012), p28

19 "The Portas Review", recommendation 9

20 Ibid, recommendation 10

- Planning restrictions (local and national)[22];
- The economic climate (local and national)[23];
- Prevalence of internet shopping (national)[24];
- Shifts to out of town shopping (national and local)[25];
- Poor quality public realm (local)[26];
- Lack of strategic thinking about improvement from local businesses, and others, possibly deriving from conflicts of use between different kinds of user of public space (local)[27];
- Disjointed approach to tackling the above issues at Whitehall level (national)[28];
- Lack of a distinctive local retail or business offer (local)[29];
- Lack of appropriate space available where demand for certain uses exists (local)[30];

2.3 We will look at these in the following section in the context of developing national policy on regeneration over the past six years.

2.4 In this section, however, we will focus here on out of town shopping as an example of complexity of the "cause and effect" arguments around town centre decline, as the increase in out of town developments could be seen as a symptom of the decline of town centres as much as a cause of it.

Case study: Out of town shopping

2.5 Much of the thinking around the decline of town centres has been centred on the shift in retail from town centres to out-of-town facilities, or more recently to the internet. The main causes of these moves have been said to include some, or all, of the following (some of which are contingent on one another)[31]:

- Increase in car ownership;
- Construction of more supermarkets, including out of town supermarkets;

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21 NAW 2012: recommendation 16; see also CLG select committee's report on regeneration (2011), particularly paragraph 83 onwards and Tax Increment Financing (TIF), which allows councils to borrow against future predicted growth in NNDR receipts. http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmcomloc/1014/101408.htm#a16
22 "Neighbourhood planning: from consultation to collaboration" (ResPublica, 2012)
23 "Twenty-first century town centres" (Association of Market Towns, 2012)
24 "The Portas Review", p9
25 Ibid, pp30-32
26 "Re-imagining urban spaces to revitalise our high streets" (DCLG, 2012)
27 This was a factor that had to be overcome in some of the areas bidding for Portas Pilot status (see below).
28 "Regeneration", report of the CLG Select Committee, November 2011, http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmcomloc/1014/1014.pdf paragraph 124.
29 NAW 2012, paragraph 72, citing Cadw's work on "distinctiveness" in Wales
30 "The Portas Review", recommendations 21 and 26
31 Cited by Portas; also by ATM (see above) and DCLG (2012 guidance)

- Many units in town centres being unattractive for chain retailers (ie too small);
- More attractive rents and higher footfall in out of town shopping centres;
- A shift in consumer preferences for more familiar brands over independent retailers (although this shift is now reversing in some areas).

2.6 A lot of activity and campaigning has focused on planning restrictions to make the construction of out-of-town developments more difficult, the presumption being that such developments are a component of a "zero sum game" that means that, as footfall and spending in out-of-town developments increase, there is a corresponding decrease in town centre business[32].

2.7 Concern about out-of-town shopping developments led (through earlier restrictions imposed in the 1990s) to PPS6, which requires authorities to carry out a "needs assessment" on their town centres, with additional development being permitted only when a specific need identified in the assessment would be met. PPS6 proved controversial, particularly with the retail sector. Retail groups claim that such a restriction hinders competition (particularly where an existing supermarket might exist in a given area which is then allowed to operate as an effective monopoly if the needs assessment prevents any more supermarkets from opening), and that out of town developments and supermarkets succeed because there is a market for them, and the experience they provide is what consumers want[33].

2.8 Planning policy on town centres since the introduction of PPS6 can be considered as an attempt to balance these two competing viewpoints – the response to this will be explored in the next section in the context of the approach that successive Governments have since taken to tackling this issue.

3. Responses to the challenge

3.1 We will look now at the non-Governmental responses to the decline of town centres in the form of the "transition towns" movements, before looking at national approaches that first the Labour Government, and more recently the Coalition Government, have sought to take – in the context of reports such as the Portas Review and the LGA's Local Growth campaign.

Transition towns

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[32] This is an approach specifically taken by the Portas Revew
[33] "Retail attacks 'insane' out of town curbs" (FT, 11 December 2011), http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b8413048-25b7-11e1-856e-00144feabdc0.html#axzz28QVoSSXe

3.2 The "transition towns" movement[34] developed in response to the notion that the transition to a low carbon economy would require significant change in the way that the economy operates. This is focused on local action, based on the idea that securing a global impact (reducing the impact of climate change[35] and the consumption of non-renewable fossil fuels, particularly in the context of peak oil[36]) is only possible by taking a range of practical, local measures.

3.3 These might include[37]:

- Localisation: working with local businesses to shorten supply chains and to increase diversity in the retail offer (thus making the local economy more resilient and sustainable, and having the benefit of providing a more compelling "offer" to local people);
- Encouraging businesses to take account of natural capital when providing services or goods. Natural capital is the flow of environmental goods and services that interact with the human economic system. The idea of natural capital expands economic models to include natural resources that have value to humanity, but no inherent price.
- Understanding the limits of natural resources and working within them. This is about reducing waste and increasing efficiency.
- Understanding the role of businesses within communities (ie seeking out and capitalising on business opportunities which have social as well as economic value).
- A steady state economy, meaning that economic growth (which may be unsustainable) is eschewed as an end goal in favour of social benefits, while avoiding stagnation.
- Alternative means of exchange, such as the creation of "local currencies" to keep money within the local community. There has already been success in this with the creation of the Brixton Pound[38] and the Bristol Pound[39].

3.4 Transition Towns initiatives, working towards some or all of these ends, have been set up in several dozen UK towns and communities. Many look at a wider area than a high street or a central retail area, but engagement with business (not only retail) is particularly important. .

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[34] More information at www.transitionnetwork.org. Totnes in Devon is generally regarded as the exemplar of transition in action.
[35] Climate change will have an impact on supply chains as retailers find it more difficult to source products that can no longer be grown / produced in more adverse environments.
[36] Rising oil prices, as reserves of cheap oil are depleted, will harm global supply chains and make it more difficult for large retailers to source stock globally, or even to operate national distribution systems.
[37] This is a precis of a range of information available on the website of the Transition Network - http://www.transitionnetwork.org/
[38] http://brixtonpound.org/. The Brixton Pound was launched in 2009. It is accepted in over 100 local businesses in the Brixton area.
[39] http://bristolpound.org/. The Bristol Pound was launched in 2012.

3.5 For many, "transition" has been a useful way to provide an intellectual bulwark to arguments around the long-term benefits to regeneration of small town centres. Some of its byproducts (such as local supply chains, and providing a unique "offer" through retail facilities) are familiar from more mainstream approaches to regeneration. That said, although the principles of transition are having a significant impact in a number of communities around the country, they are yet to consistently "bubble up" through the national literature.

The Labour Government response to the challenge

3.6 Business and Town Centres Project (2005-2008) -In 2005, DCLG commissioned the Business and Town Centres Project, a three year programme to develop Town and City Centre Partnerships in England[40]. This programme was seen as providing a framework for a range of formal and informal partnerships, with varying levels of public and private sector involvement, to bring about real change to town centres. The programme was built on five elements:

- Targeted stakeholder engagement;
- An evidence based strategy and action plan;
- A performance management framework;
- Clear governance arrangements, and;
- A robust financial management framework.

3.7 The programme envisaged a Town Centre Partnership that would lead and influence thinking about the improvement of a town centre, and that would be involved in service delivery. Importantly, the programme recognised the inherent interconnectedness between the TCP and the range of other local stakeholders, including other partnership bodies.

3.8 The programme involved the recruitment of 21 areas to explore the opportunities arising from the TCP model. DCLG produced guidance on "How to manage town centres" in 2007,[41] and a detailed report on progress was made in 2008 by PWC[42], to present a practical vision of how to proceed.

3.9 The inherent formality of TCP arrangements has meant that they have not become especially widespread in the precise way envisaged by the programme – in particular, they need a significant investment and impetus to get off the ground. Some areas highlighted by the PWC had established Business Improvement Districts, formal bodies that levy a tax on local businesses to support their work. The establishment of

[40] More information on these partnerships can be found on the website of the Association of Town Centre Managers - http://www.atcm.org/
[41] "How to manage town centres" (DCLG, 2007)
[42] "Managing town centre partnerships: a guide for practitioners" (DCLG/PWC, 2008), http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/doc/1017945.doc

BIDs is subject to a local vote of businesses, which can sometimes be divisive[43].

3.10 The Barker Review, "Planning for a sustainable future" (DCLG, Defra, DTI, DfT, 2007), Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 - The Review of Planning by Kate Barker[44] led to a Government White Paper in 2007[45]. This White Paper focused on national infrastructure projects, leading to the major economic development elements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009 – many provisions of which have been repealed. However, it also brought about some streamlining of the process that authorities would need to undergo to adopt Development Plan Documents (DPDs) and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) as part of the LDF. Reductions in consultation times and additional flexibility over the number and nature of such documents that authorities would have to prepare were all themes which have been carried over to the Coalition Government[46].

3.11 PPS4 Guidance (DCLG, 2009) - In 2009, DCLG issued guidance[47] further to PPS4 (on economic development) which sets out to provide particular advice on assessment and other evidence-gathering exercises which would be used to support town centre regeneration. It focuses on quantitative and qualitative assessments of local need, tied to the tension between out of town and town centre developments.

3.12 "Looking after our town centres" (DCLG, DIUS, DCMS, 2009)[48] - DCLG also released more general guidance in 2009, which built on the detailed research carried out as part of BTCP. It sets out the following approaches as to how councils, businesses and their partners can address problems for high streets arising from the downturn.

- **increasing commitment** to maintaining the attractiveness of the centre and ensuring that visits to the centre are positive experiences through enhanced cleaning, security initiatives, planting, art installations and working with property owners;
- **bringing together stakeholders with marketing budgets** to ensure consistent messaging. More careful targeting of these messages will also help to increase awareness of what a town centre has to offer;.
- **targeting visitors from countries that use the euro** or other currencies, who may be attracted to our towns at the current time;

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[43] http://www.rtaylor.co.uk/cbbid-cambridge-businesses-face-tax-hike.html
[44] "Review of land use planning", (Barker / HM Treasury 2006), http://www.ukcip.org.uk/wordpress/wp-content/PDFs/Barker_review_landuse.pdf
[45] "Planning for a sustainable future", (DCLG, 2012), http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/publications/planningandbuilding/planningasustainablefuture
[46] Through changes made in the Localism Act
[47] "Planning for town centres: practice guidance on need, impact and the sequential approach" (DCLG, 2012), http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/towncentresguide.pdf
[48] http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1201258.pdf

- **thinking more about the town centre** as a destination for UK visitors;
- **managing vacant retail premises** – innovative examples show how town centre partnerships are facilitating new cultural or educational uses into vacant retail premises. Elsewhere, vacant units are being used for promotional posters or maps; while other centres are developing initiatives to enable local businesses or start-ups to be supported in these types of premises. Larger centres are looking at recruiting international retailers who now find the UK more affordable;
- **increasing activities** by encouraging the use of the streets and venues by community or performance groups and local businesses;
- **bringing businesses together** to ensure they are fully aware of what is happening in the town centre and to pool their ideas on what can be done to support the centre and their businesses;
- **working closely with local media** – such as running awards with local papers so readers can nominate shops, restaurants and bars that offer excellent customer service;
- **understanding** what is going on elsewhere.

3.14 Some of these ideas will be more appropriate in some areas than in others – for example, the idea of attracting visitors from other parts of the UK, or abroad, may only make sense in the context of a wider economic development plan that sees tourism as a realistic prospect for securing additional inward investment.

3.15 All pre-2010 guidance should be read in the context of the abolition, in 2010, of the regional planning framework (including RDAs and RSSs). The funding landscape for such initiatives has also changed significantly since 2009. We will explore the issue of funding for town centre regeneration later in this report.

The Coalition Government response

3.16 The Portas Review and the Portas Pilots (2011) - In 2011 the Government commissioned television personality Mary Portas to undertake a review of the "future of high streets"[49]. The Review is best regarded as a personal reflection by Ms. Portas on some of the most significant challenges affecting local high streets, rather than a detailed study of previous policy and an assessment of its success or failure (there is, for example, no mention of the three-year DCLG town centres programme mentioned above, or the other work carried out by DCLG and the ATCM). Briefly, her conclusions were that:

- High streets should be run more like a single business, with a strategic vision guiding work being carried out;

[49] "The Portas Review: an independent review into the future of our high streets" (BIS, 2011), http://www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/business-sectors/docs/p/11-1434-portas-review-future-of-high-streets.pdf

- Better operational management exerted through so-called “Town Teams”, made up of local business leaders, and other partners, to plan, co-ordinate and agree improvement work, with these bodies also taking an important role in Business Improvement Districts;
- Government should make changes to the planning and business rate regime to reduce “red tape”;
- Government should change the planning regime to ensure that there is a more level playing field between out of town, and town centre, developments – including an explicit presumption in favour of town centre development in the NPPF[50];
- A tougher approach to landlords with vacant properties should be taken, with more use of CPOs and similar legal sanctions;
- The idea of customers as “co-creators of place” should be understood better, with more use of the neighbourhood planning and Community Right to Bid powers in the Localism Act.

3.17 Many of the findings focus on the need for partnership working in town centres, principally through the creation of “Town Teams” to take on collective responsibility for co-ordinating support for businesses and other improvements. The “Town Team” echoes the idea of the Town Centre Partnership developed in earlier work, but is arguably more dynamic as it does not involve the establishment of a stakeholder management and governance superstructure. However, the report does not engage with the wider partnership agenda at local level, with the difficulties of stakeholder engagement or the challenges of securing ongoing financial support for improvement work (in particular, the contentious nature of many BIDs). The assumption seems to be made that key stakeholders will be willing to come to the table with funding.

3.18 Portas feels that Town Teams can work at local level to bring about a range of practical improvements, which include[51]:

- A physical space for the “Town Team” to occupy; a kind of local “solutions centre”;
- A local “community chest” (this idea is not explained);
- Virtual High Streets; “an online ‘bottom up’ virtual version of their high street which is the easy automatic ‘go to’ for all things to do with your local area”;
- A “National Market Day”;
- Hubs for home-workers;
- Converting vacant spaces to other community uses, such as nurseries and schools.

3.19 Notably, the review did not look at business rates or rate relief (although part of the Government’s response did involve changes to

[50] Portas’s recommendation that the Secretary of State sign off any new out of town developments was not accepted by the Government.
[51] “The Portas Review”, page 45, “High Streets of the Future”

the business rate regime, that we set out at the beginning of this briefing).

3.20 Coming out of this review has been the announcement of two waves of "Portas Pilots" – town centres that will receive support by way of funding and direct assistance from Mary Portas. The process has not been without controversy; firstly, because of the comparatively small sums of money involved, and the fact that pilot funding is not effectively joined up with other forms of Government aid[52], and secondly because Portas's assistance with the piloting process is the subject matter for her next TV series, something which has led to some tensions[53].

3.21 Some bids for pilot status focused on visible, public realm-facing improvements – shopfronts, signage and seating, for example. Some have also looked at revitalising local markets and providing business advice and support[54]. The focus seems to be on capital investment rather than ongoing revenue support, but the principle is that the existence of the Town Team will make it easier for successful pilots to put in place more long term plans for success. In this context, the Portas Pilots could be seen as providing "pump priming" for a longer-term approach towards town centre regeneration. In this sense the pilots echo the wider, partnership-based objectives of the work DCLG carried out pre-2010.

3.22 The Government responded positively to the Portas Review, although the recommendation for Secretary of State approval for out-of-town developments was not accepted. Particular steps being taken are[55]:

- A High Street Innovation Fund, focused on bringing empty shops back into use ("kick-started" by £10 million made available by DCLG);
- A £1 million Future High Street X-Fund, to be awarded to the locations delivering the "most creative and effective schemes to revitalise their high streets" over 2012-13;
- A National Markets Day;
- A £500,000 fund for setup costs for BIDs.

3.23 <u>Guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government (2012)</u> - In July 2012 the Government issued guidance[56], further to the Portas Review, to assist local authorities in regenerating and revitalising town centres. As with Portas itself, it does not engage with research carried out by Government before 2010. While its

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[52] "The hard work on Britain's town centres has only just begun", Guardian, 17 September http://www.guardian.co.uk/local-government-network/2012/sep/17/portas-pilots-council-town-centres

[53] http://www.retail-week.com/property/mary-portas-high-street-review/portas-pilot-towns-have-my-backing-whether-they-feature-in-tv-show-or-not/5037583.article

[54] http://www.communities.gov.uk/news/corporate/2151943

[55] "High streets at the heart of our communities: the Government's response to the Portas Review" (DCLG, 2012) http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/portasreviewresponse

[56] "Re-imagining urban spaces to help revitalise our high streets" (DCLG, 2012)

approach has some superficial similarities with that earlier research, it arguably takes a more expansive approach in thinking about town centres less in the context exclusively of retail, and more about their use as public space.

3.24 It suggests an approach to town centre regeneration that builds more on the principles in the Localism Act[57], rather than the arguably more technocratic, professional-led approach exemplified by Town Centre Partnerships (reflecting Portas's Town Teams idea). It looks at the totality of public space, rather than just retail provision.

3.25 Beginning with understanding how people currently use space – in different ways and at different times of day – the guidance suggests using this information to help to develop a strategic vision for the town centre/high street. The guidance says that this will require "tough strategic judgments" (ie, that some ideas may not be realistic, and it may not be possible to develop a credible, distinctive offer for the high street in the way that some stakeholders might wish). The final stage is the development of an action plan to agree priorities and make changes happen.

3.26 The guidance focuses on public space infrastructure, and the design of public spaces to make them more attractive and to foster and encourage shared use. This is an approach that is not without controversy – an undue focus on infrastructure (particularly on capital spending) – will not automatically address retail or business failure, and a high quality public realm can be difficult to maintain without an appropriate financial investment. The report, however, does act as a useful (and broader) counterpoint to the more retail-focused work that DCLG carried out pre-2010.

3.27 <u>National Planning Policy Framework 2012</u> - The National Planning Policy Framework was subject to significant revision in early 2012. Amongst its new provisions were changes to the policies around town centre, and out-of-town, developments. Councils are required to take positive action to grow town centres, with those areas being given precedence in terms of development plans. This constitutes an expansion of the existing "town centre first" policy, mentioned in the section above on pre-2010 developments.

3.28 Applications for "main town centre uses" that are not in town centres (ie, supermarkets, other retail uses) are subject to a sequential test[58] – so, town centre locations are best, then edge-of-centre, and then, if no appropriate site is available, out-of-town. Even where out-of-town uses are approved, the site must be accessible from the town centre.

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[57] Particularly, the various rights given to local people under the Act in terms of place-shaping – neighbourhood planning, the right to bid and the right to build, which were discussed earlier.
[58] NPPF, Paragraph 24

3.29 Where an out-of-town use would be approved under the sequential test, planners will still have to carry out an impact assessment[59] for larger developments (generally, those over 2,500m2 [60]), assessing:

- the impact of the proposal on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in a centre or centres in the catchment area of the proposal; and
- the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality and viability, including local consumer choice and trade in the town centre and wider area, up to five years from the time the application is made. For major schemes where the full impact will not be realised in five years, the impact should also be assessed up to ten years from the time the application is made.

3.30 Where the sequential test is not satisfied and/or this assessment demonstrate "significant adverse impact". This is a term which the NPPF does not define, but which exists elsewhere in planning law and has been considered in the context of an appeal for a supermarket development in Lancaster, where a determination from the Secretary of State was received[61]. This determination suggests that the "town centres first" policy will be interpreted robustly, rather than "significant adverse impact" having a high bar. However, a similar recent overturned decision in Telford and Wrekin suggests that the position will only be clarified as case law develops[62].

3.31 The policy also places councils under a responsibility to assess the availability of space in town centres, and making more available where demand exists, and taking action to regenerate "declining" town centres.

3.32 These new NPPF policies give councils a significant opportunity to use planning laws to "place shape" in a way that invigorates high streets and town centres. Equally, councils that do not put robust steps in place for (for example) assessing local need, identifying the risk of significant adverse impacts or understanding the wider business and retail landscape risk subjecting the town centres for which they are responsible to further decline, or risk having planning decisions for edge-of-town or out-of-town developments overturned because their local policies are insufficiently robust to engage with the NPPF's requirements.

<u>The LGA's "Local Growth" campaign</u>

3.33 The "Local Growth" campaign throws into sharp relief some of the current challenges facing those in local government trying to tackle

[59] Ibid, Paragraph 26
[60] Ibid
[61] http://towns.org.uk/2012/09/04/testing-town-centres-first/
[62] Ibid

regeneration[63]. Although the scope of the LGA's research and its campaign are broader than just town centres, there are some key messages that are vital to consider in any effort to understand the limitations and opportunities inherent in a new approach to growth:

- Growth is inherently local – different approaches need to be taken in different areas, and there is no archetypal approach which can or should be taken[64];
- Public investment in regeneration is fragmented, and there is a need for strong civic leadership to pull different partners and opportunities together;
- More devolution is required – around education and skills, transport, and regeneration funding. The report cites the move towards City Deals, highlighting the possibility that, as more cities – and other council areas – sign up to these deals, it will make more sense just to devolve powers to all councils rather than to seek individually-negotiated solutions.

4. General analysis: the implications for local authorities

4.1 Notwithstanding significant effort having been put in by successive Governments, and more or less every local authority in the country, many high streets and town centres are still in decline. The Portas Review identifies many of the problems afflicting high streets as being national in nature – relating to national planning law, and to national trends towards more internet shopping and a different attitude to consumerism. However, the review, and other investigations, have also identified a multiplicity of highly local causes and symptoms of high street decline, and local economic decline more broadly. Work carried out by the LGA has similarly identified that any solution must be local in nature.

4.2 For local authorities, pressure on budgets will mean that they may find it difficult either to develop strategies to push economic growth in individual town centres, or that such measures become caught up in the traditional, planning-led approaches that typify the long development cycles of Supplementary Planning Documents. Even where capacity exists it might prove difficult to involve a cross-section of local people and local businesses – and to co-design solutions with them rather than to seek to control the agenda. While the LGA have highlighted the need for "civic leadership", there might be a tension here with the Government's stated aim, through the "Town Teams" idea, for an approach that is more business-led, or at the very least an equal partnership.

[63] "Local leadership, local growth", (LGA, 2012) http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=b9911ad7-ff47-4e9b-9661-ee5dd181e53f&groupId=10171
[64] Contrast with the DCLG approach pre-2010, which promoted a generic, national approach towards local regeneration.

4.3 Councils taking concerted action in this area will be those who recognise the knock-on impact of success or failure in town centres – impacts on jobs and skills, on the urban fabric and the public realm, on housing and planning, on income from business rates, and on transport – amongst other issues (health, community cohesion, social care etc). Councils who do not take action may not consider regeneration as a determinant of improvement in these areas – or it may recognise them, but feel that the return on investment for "preventative" work is not justifiable if there is pressure on budgets for acute services.

5. Role for scrutiny

5.1 A plan for a short, sharp review of a particular town centre is a positive one, but as this briefing demonstrates that are a significant number of cross-cutting issues that arguably need to be considered. Planning and licensing issues have significant impacts and the risks are that it will be difficult to disaggregate responses to need "on the ground" from the council's wider strategic plans, leading to a piece of work that is broad, wide-ranging, and possibly long-winded and resource intensive. For example, in the course of this research we have identified links between planning and licensing regimes (both nationally and locally), skills and education, partnerships and relationships between local government and the private sector, and public realm infrastructure. One of these topics on their own could constitute a detailed scrutiny review.

5.2 Scrutiny could take one of a number of approaches to considering town centres, and regeneration of high streets:

- **The local approach** – looking at a particular town centre and examining a focused range of issues. So, taking lessons from the DCLG guidance, those foci might be identifying what local people, and local businesses, might want from a particular area, and trying to reconcile those particular aspirations. Or, if this has already been undertaken, identifying practical actions, across a range of policy areas, that can be taken to put them into practice. Care would need to be taken on this approach to ensure that scrutiny did not become too operational in nature.
- **The specific approach** – looking at a given issue (skills and employment, licensing and planning, support to retailers and businesses) through the prism of town centre regeneration. The question could be asked as to what steps the council and its partners need to take on these wider policy issues in order to improve the economic health of a town centre or retail area.
- **The "wider determinants" approach** – looking at the same issues as the "specific" approach, but the other way round – how tackling regeneration can lead to more positive knock on impacts. This would be a review that would focus on the "return on investment" of work on town centre regeneration – possibly taking a similar

approach to that which we explore in our research on social return on investment, “Tipping the scales” (CfPS, 2012)

- **The partnership approach** – looking at the relationships that the council has built up with a range of partners, and identifying their robustness. Perhaps better viewed as a mapping exercise, this would help to ensure that the right people were making an input in the right way and at the right time,
- **The assurance approach** – checking that a range of policy issues are being considered as part of an existing, or development, set of town centre redevelopment proposals.

Centre for Public Scrutiny
12 October 2012

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Northampton TC Car Park prog	**Car Parks - Mechanically sweep car parks, litter pick adjacent shrubs and empty litter bins.**	**Car Parks - Mechanically sweep car parks, litter pick adjacent shrubs and empty litter bins.**	**Car Parks - Mechanically sweep car parks, litter pick adjacent shrubs and empty litter bins.**	**Car Parks - Mechanically sweep car parks, litter pick adjacent shrubs and empty litter bins.**	**Car Parks - Mechanically sweep car parks, litter pick adjacent shrubs and empty litter bins.**
	Midsummer Meadow	Wellington Street	Commercial Street - St. Peters Way Lower	Midsummer Meadow	Commercial Street - St. Peters Way Lower
	Commercial Street - St. Peters Way Lower	Upper Mounts	Iceland Car Park - St. Peters Way Upper	Wellington Street	Iceland Car Park - St. Peters Way Upper
	Commercial Street - TK Max	Newland	Market Street	Doddridge Street (St. Marys Street)	Upper Mounts
	Campbell Square	Iceland Car Park - St. Peters Way Upper	Melbourne Street	Horsemarket (Bath Street)	St. Johns Street
	Doddridge Street (St. Marys Street)	Albion Place	Mairfair - Free School Street	Chalk Lane	Albion Place
	Horsemarket (Bath Street)	Abington Place - St. Edmunds Road		Newland	Abington Place - St. Edmunds Road
	Chalk Lane			The Ridings	
	The Ridings				

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Round C1 mini mec	**Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins**	**Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins**	**Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins**	**Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins**	**Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins**
	CAMPBELL STREET	CHEYNE WALK	CAMPBELL STREET	CHEYNE WALK	CAMPBELL STREET
	CAMPBELL SQUARE	SPRING GARDENS	CAMPBELL SQUARE	SPRING GARDENS	CAMPBELL SQUARE
	CHURCH LANE ©	ST. JOHN'S STREET	CHURCH LANE ©	ST. JOHN'S STREET	CHURCH LANE ©
	NEWLAND ©	PASSAGE- St.John's St. to Victoria Gardens	NEWLAND ©	PASSAGE- St.John's St. to Victoria Gardens	NEWLAND ©
	VICTORIA STREET ©	SWAN STREET ©	VICTORIA STREET ©	SWAN STREET ©	VICTORIA STREET ©
	UPPER MOUNTS	ANGEL STREET ©	UPPER MOUNTS	ANGEL STREET ©	UPPER MOUNTS
	GREYFRIARS (including shrubberies)	FETTER STREET ©	GREYFRIARS (including shrubberies)	FETTER STREET ©	GREYFRIARS (including shrubberies)
	EAST END OF BUS STATION (paths, steps and grass)	VICTORIA GARDENS (Main road)	EAST END OF BUS STATION (paths, steps and grass)	VICTORIA GARDENS (Main road)	EAST END OF BUS STATION (paths, steps and grass)
	inc. 675 sq. mts. of grass and shrubs	VICTORIA GARDENS (Side road) ©	inc. 675 sq. mts. of grass and shrubs	VICTORIA GARDENS (Side road) ©	inc. 675 sq. mts. of grass and shrubs
	SUBWAY UNDER GREYFRIARS & WOOD STREET WALK (paths to rear of Grosvenor Centre to Beatties etc.)	VICTORIA PROMENADE (inc. parking bays- 293 yds shrubberies- 1152 sq. m	SUBWAY UNDER GREYFRIARS & WOOD STREET WALK (paths to rear of Grosvenor Centre to Beatties etc.)	VICTORIA PROMENADE	SUBWAY UNDER GREYFRIARS & WOOD STREET WALK (paths to rear of Grosvenor Centre to Beatties etc.)
	LADYS LANE (incl. Litter picking of shrubs)	ST. PETERS WAY	LADYS LANE (incl. Litter picking of shrubs)	(inc. parking bays- 293 yds	LADYS LANE (incl. Litter picking of shrubs)
	LADYS LANE (Roadmender cul de sac)	BRIDGE STREET to cotton end (paths and channels)	LADYS LANE (Roadmender cul de sac)	shrubberies- 1152 sq. m	LADYS LANE (Roadmender cul de sac)
	LADYS LANE SUBWAY and approaches from Wellington St.	GAS STREET	LADYS LANE SUBWAY and approaches from Wellington St. including litter-pick grass and shrubs (875 sq. mts.)	ST. PETERS WAY	LADYS LANE SUBWAY and approaches from Wellington St. including litter-pick grass and shrubs (875 sq. mts.)
	including litter-pick grass and shrubs (875 sq. mts.)	HORSESHOE STREET	COUNTY COURT RAMPS and paths leading from Upper Mounts / Ladys Lane to subway.	BRIDGE STREET to cotton end (paths and channels)	COUNTY COURT RAMPS and paths leading from Upper Mounts / Ladys Lane to subway.
	COUNTY COURT RAMPS and paths leading from Upper Mounts /		LOWER MOUNTS including litter-pick grass & shrubs	GAS STREET	LOWER MOUNTS including litter-pick grass & shrubs
	Ladys Lane to subway.	town centre plus markets 16.00 -1900	GRAFTON STREET	HORSESHOE STREET	GRAFTON STREET
	LOWER MOUNTS including litter-pick grass & shrubs		FITZROY TERRACE (passage of Grafton Street		FITZROY TERRACE (passage of Grafton Street
	GRAFTON STREET		ST. ANDREWS STREET	town centre plus markets 16.00 -1900	ST. ANDREWS STREET
	FITZROY TERRACE (passage of Grafton Street		BROAD STREET		BROAD STREET
	ST. ANDREWS STREET		HORSEMARKET		HORSEMARKET
	BROAD STREET		town centre plus markets 16.00 -1900		town centre plus markets 16.00 -1900
	HORSEMARKET				
	town centre plus markets 16.00 -1900				

Round C1 "Applied Green Machine"		Round C2 "Applied Green Machine"		Round C3 "Applied Green Machine"	
Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins		STREET SWEEPING (inc. litter-picking of grass + shrubberies + empty bins)		Street Sweeping (inc. litter-picking grass + shrubs + empty bins	
ABINGTON SQUARE (outside paths only)	EAST END OF BUS STATION (paths, steps and grass)	**Early morning sweeping**	**Other sweeping**	**Early morning sweeping**	**Other sweeping**
KETTERING ROAD (Abington Square to Wellingborough Road) (outside paths only)	inc. 675 sq. mts. of grass and shrubs	THE DRAPERY (McDonalds side) (path and channel)	GREYFRIARS (Toilet Subway)	THE DRAPERY (Auctioneers side - path only)	NOTRE DAMME MEWS ©
CHAPEL PLACE ©	SUBWAY UNDER GREYFRIARS & WOOD STREET WALK (paths to rear of Grosvenor Centre to Beatties etc.)	GOLD STREET (paths and channels)	MAYORHOLD - SUBWAY AND APPROACHES (including litter-pick shrub areas)	EMPORIIUM WALK - Paths from The Parade to Sheep St. and Bus Station (includes subway underLadys Lane) Inc.litter pick grass + shrubs	ALBERT PLACE ©
KETTERING GARDENS ©	LADYS LANE (incl. Litter picking of shrubs)	MAREFAIR (paths and channels)	ST. KATHERINES STREET ©	ALL SAINTS FRONTAGE inc. empty litter bins	WELLINGTON STREET
KETTERING ROAD (St. Michaels Road to Talbot Road)	LADYS LANE (Roadmender cul de sac)	BLACK LION HILL (paths and channels)	ST. KATHERINES TERRACE	MERCERS ROW (both sides)	(including 2 litter bins in Car Park)
KETTERING ROAD (Clare St. to Abington Ave.) ©	LADYS LANE SUBWAY and approaches from Wellington St.	BRIDGE STREET (Gold St. to St. Peters Way) (paths and channels)	ST. PETERS GARDENS (by church wall)	WOOD HILL (both sides)	SPENCER PARADE
MARKET ST. (entrance off Kettering Road) ©	including litter-pick grass and shrubs (875 sq. mts.)	COLLEGE STREET	KINGSWELL STREET ©	GEORGE ROW (both sides)	HAZELWOOD ROAD
WELLINGBOROUGH ROAD (Victoria Road to Abington Square) (outside paths only)	COUNTY COURT RAMPS and paths leading from Upper Mounts / Ladys Lane to subway.	COLLEGE STREET MEWS	FRANCES JETTY (Bridge Street to Kingswell St.)	MARKET SQUARE and THE PARADE (footpaths and channels)	DERNGATE
WELLINGBOROUGH ROAD (Victoria Rd. to Market St./ St. Edmonds St.) ©	LOWER MOUNTS including litter-pick grass & shrubs	KING STREET ©	ST. KATHERINES GDNS.(sweep footpaths,litter pick grass & shrubs & empty bins)	OSBORNES (or COCKERILLS) JETTY	CASTILLIAN STREET
WELLINGBOROUGH ROAD (Market St./ St. Edmonds St. to Bostock Avenue)	GRAFTON STREET	SILVER STREET (including litter-pick shrub areas) ©	GREEN ST. & WESTERN TERRACE (as far as subway to Station) ©	DRUM LANE	CASTILLIAN TERRACE
MARKET ST. cul de sac by Spread Eagle ©	FITZROY TERRACE (passage of Grafton Street	BRADSHAW STREET ©	TANNER STREET ©	CONDUIT LANE	ALBION PLACE
MELBOURNE ST. ©	ST. ANDREWS STREET	ALLEY YARD (including motor-cycle area)	NARROW TOE LANE (St. Peters St. to The Green) ©	ABINGTON STREET	GUILDHALL ROAD
NEW TOWN ROAD ©	BROAD STREET	MARKET SQUARE (paths and channels)	ST. PETERS STREET (St. Peters Way - Horseshoe St.) ©	FISH STREET	ST. GILES CHURCHYARD (sweep paths, litter pick grass & shrubs, empty bins)
BOUVERIE STREET ©	HORSEMARKET	JEYES JETTY	THE GREEN & COURT ROAD ©	DYCHURCH LANE	CHEYNE WALK
WEST STREET ©		SWAN YARD	GREGORY STREET ©	THE RIDINGS	SPRING GARDENS
VERNON STREET ©	**PLUS MON / WEDS / FRI.**	SHEEP STREET (Greyfriars to The Drapery)	FREESCHOOL STREET ©	ST. GILES STREET	ST. JOHN'S STREET
REGENT SQUARE & SHEEP STREET (Campbell Street to Ladys Lane)	Empty 4 litter bins at Upper Mounts Car Park and Campbell Square Car Park		WESTON WHARF (Carlsberg entrance) ©	ST. GILES TERRACE	PASSAGE- St.John's St. to Victoria Gardens
CAMPBELL STREET			ST. PETERS SQUARE (St. James St. to St. Peters Walk inc. link to Woolmonger St.)	ST. GILES SQUARE	SWAN STREET ©
CAMPBELL SQUARE			WOOLMONGER STREET ©	YORK ROAD (path only)	ANGEL STREET ©
CHURCH LANE ©			FOUNDRY STREET ©		FETTER STREET ©
NEWLAND ©			ST. JAMES STREET (Foundry St. to Commercial st.) ©		VICTORIA GARDENS (Main road)
VICTORIA STREET ©			COMMERCIAL STREET ©		VICTORIA GARDENS (Side road) ©
UPPER MOUNTS					VICTORIA PROMENADE (inc. parking bays- 293 yds shrubberies- 1152 sq. m
GREYFRIARS (including shrubberies)					

Extras:-

(MON ONLY)	**(TUES,THURS)**
Litter-pick grass area adjacent to St. Johns Catholic	ST. JOHN'S TERRACE and RUSSELL TERRACE
Church.(between Bridge St. & Victoria Gdns.)	(old streets off Swan St.inc.steps to
	Albion Place)
(MON,WEDS,FRI)	**WEDNESDAY ONLY**
ALBION PLACE Car Park- empty 3 litter bins CE Car Park empty 3 litter bins	ST. JOHN'S ST. - litter pick grass & shrubberies
	ST. JOHN'S ST. to VICTORIA GDNS. Passage (litter pick shrubberies)

Appendix E

Overview and Scrutiny

Scrutiny Panel 2 – Retail Experience

Briefing Note: Response to the core questions: Association of Town Centre Managers (ACTM)

1 Information

1.1 The documents provided, as attached, are:-

- o 100 ways to help the High Street – A Toolkit for Town Centres
- o Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

1.2 **100 Ways to help the High Street**

The Toolkit comprises eight key sections:

- o Building a Sustainable Partnership
- o Accessing the High Street
- o Enhancing the Streetscape
- o Place Identify, Branding and Experience
- o Attracting New People and Businesses to High Street and Keeping the Old Ones
- o The Safe and Secure High Street
- o The Evening and Night-time Economy
- o Training, Development and Accreditation

1.3 The Toolkit reports that it is a collection of schemes which, if implemented in the right place at the right time, can have a positive effect for town centres. It goes on to say that the Toolkit is primarily for town centre managers and local government. A running theme throughout the Toolkit is that whatever resources you have, and whoever takes the lead on many of these activities, success is achievable through co-operation.

1.4 The Toolkit comprises a number of case studies, the purpose of which is to demonstrate how some of these hints and tips originate from real life examples.

Building a Sustainable Partnership – The Toolkit states that good town centre management is often dependent upon strong partnership.

Accessing the High Street – The Toolkit advises that transport considerations are amongst some of the most important for town centres. Manchester was provided as a case study,

Manchester city centre is linked together by its free city centre bus service, the Metroshuttle which has been operating since 2002. It has three routes that navigate the city centre, linking the city's major thoroughfares and stations with its main commercial, financial and cultural districts. The Metroshuttle costs around £1.2 million to operate. Smaller schemes operate in Bolton and Stockport.

Enhancing the Streetscape – The Toolkit reports that streetscape is the physical aspects of public spaces in town centres. It advises that there are a number of different components which work together to create a streetscape, that would ideally be unique to the town but also being clean and orderly, avoiding clutter and dereliction, including landscaping, lighting, paving, planting, public art and effective signposting.

Edinburgh was provided as a case study – Castle Street Project. A new road surface was laid using granite setts and Caithness flags. New street furniture and improved lighting was also installed. Power pods were put in for activation of the streets for events. It is reported that controlled vehicular access and the restoration of a quality streetscape has made walking and exploring the whole area a more pleasant and satisfying experience.

Cardiff was provided as a case study – The project was put together by city centre management and Cardiff City Council, the Keep Wales Tidy Campaign and a range of private sector organisations as an innovative and direct way to engage with the growing population that live in the city centre. It featured a unique process of recycling and key locations were branded `thanksbanks'.

It was reported that as a result, more waste is recycled than deposited in standard litter bins and recycling in the city has increased by 43%.

The Kirkcaldy Art Trail was provided as a case study; the aim of which was to inspire and encourage people to visit different areas of the town centre. Art in shop windows was a creative initiative that transformed eight empty shop windows in Kirkcaldy town centre into works of art. An arts trail leaflet was produce providing details of a map and information of the displays.

Place Identify, Branding and Experience – The Toolkit reports that it is impossible for town centre managers to dictate, or predict what type of experience each visitor may have because there are so many disparate elements that make up a high street.

Wood Green: International Short Film Festival was provided as a case study. The Town Centre Manager was a film fan and filmmaker who had the idea of the best way to achieve this would be through the magic of cinema. In 2003 the Wood Green International Short Film Festival was launched as a one day event. By year three it was selling out in minutes of opening and attracts short films from all over the world.

Attracting New People and Businesses to High Street and Keeping the Old Ones – The Toolkit reports that effort has to go into getting the basics right to make any high street the primary destination for people and business. It suggests a few schemes that can act as the building blocks to constructing a viable place for people to trade, employ and reside:

Developing a general town centre website
Virtual tour of the High Street
On-line Town Centre Shopping
Free Wi-Fi Hotspots
Town Centre Loyalty card
Empty Property Scheme
Offering Incubator units
Community Ownership of businesses
Temporary Pop-up Services
Entrepreneurial Competition for Incubator Space
Building Upon Existing Footfall Generators
Branding of your Town Centre
Marketing with Neighbouring Town Centres
Turning Empty Shops into Temporary Art Galleries
Getting the Right Mix of Businesses
Cheque Book Promotion
Using Evidence to Promote your Town Centre to Investors
Distribution of Shopping Guides to Households
Know your consumers
Auction

Mansfield Christmas Auction was provided as a case study. The purpose of the auction was to raise funds for the town's Christmas lights by selling a range of goods and services pledged by local businesses. A total of £23,000 was raised in one day. It was stated that the event demanded effort and goodwill but very little cash outlay.

The Safe and Secure High Street – The Toolkit reports that the town centre is a central point for many. It goes on to say that it can attract undesired activities that threaten otherwise healthy high streets and damage people's perceptions of the town centre. It gives examples of successful efforts to improve safety and security of all town centre users:

Creating a Retail Specific Crime Reduction Partnership
Working with your Local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership
ShopWatch Scheme
PubWatch Scheme
Community Alcohol Partnerships
Retail Radio Link
Using on-Line Technology for Real-Time Crime Tracking
Re-Deployable CCTV Capability
CCTV Video Analytics
Making Crime Reductions Visible
Community Wardens
Member Exclusion Scheme
Safety Scheme for Lost Children
Penalty Notices and Fixed Penalty Notices

Rochdale's Safer Communities Strategy was provided as a case study. The Project introduced a number of initiatives, including:

Talking signs around the town
Dispersal orders and high visibility patrols
Subway murals
A magazine to 30,000 people informing them of what business is doing to combat crime
Local press advertising to promote safe venues
Plaques in situ around the town centre reminding visitors that the town has received a Safer Business Award
Monthly town centre columns in the local press

The Evening and Night-time economy – The Toolkit states that versatility can be the making of a great town centre. A town centre must strive to offer a clean, safe, vibrant and engaging environment for different types of people. It details a number of schemes which it feels would make this a possibility during the evening and night-time:

Planning for the evening
Managing the transition between day and night
Promoting of late night transport
Taxi marshal Scheme
Late night bus service
Purple flag – to establish national standards and raise the image of Britain's town centres at night.

Dedicated ambassadors for the evening economy
Accreditation Scheme for Licensed Premises

A case study was provided - Bolton has pioneering a time-time management structure that involves the employment of ambassadors for the evening economy. The aim being to reduce alcohol related anti-social behaviour and reassure the public that the town centre is a safe place to visit at night.

Training, Development and Accreditation – The Toolkit encourages a culture where training, development and accreditation are prerequisites. It goes on to support professional accreditation for Town Centre Manager and auditing the quality of the town's retail offer. Support is also given to:

Pointing retailers towards advice on training
Learn from real-life retail expert
Become a retail ambassador
Encourage junior managers to apply to Oxford summer school
Get young learners to learn through retail
Know what qualifications are out there
Local Business Awards

1.3 Getting it Right – A Good Practice Guide to Successful Town Centre Management Initiatives

1.3.1 The reported purpose of the Guide is around setting up and evaluating town centre management initiative. The guide is set out in two sections:

An outline of set up and evaluation – A brief description of the core elements in the life cycle of a successful town centre management initiative, an explanation of the set up and evaluation process, and guidance on when, why, how and by whom the process should be undertaken.

Implementing set up and validation – Examples of good practice are provided and detailed checklists for setting up and validating each of the core elements of successful town centre management initiatives:

Strategy and vision
Partnership and structure
Business and Action Plans
Funding
Key Performance Indicators

1.3.2 Examples of good practice have been drawn from the Guide:

Implementing Set up and Validation – The Guide reports that the essentials of good practice are both set up and evaluation must work to build and maintain Town Centre management initiatives based on good practice, including a focus on:

A clear Strategy, shared by all stakeholders
Robust partnerships
Strong partnerships
Matched funding and leverage
Consultation
Outputs

Strategy and Vision – The Guide reports that a shared vision is an essential component in finding the common ground necessary for all stakeholders to give their fullest commitments to the objectives of town centre management.

Partnership Structure - The Guide reports that to be successful, town centre management must comprise a genuine, robust and stable partnership between the public, private and community sectors.

Business and Action Plans – The Guide reports that key aspects of good practice are that the range of stakeholders and their differing contributions must be recognised for a town to achieve competitiveness and the best way to achieve this is for all parties to follow the same well developed business plan

Funding - The Guide reports that key aspects of good practice are that several sources of funding exist for town centre management, most importantly the public sector and private business, both large and small, all of which need to be fully explored.

Key performance indicators – The Guide reports it is important that the town centre management partnership establishes a number of benchmarks to determine how the town centre changes over time.