Institute of Place Management

Manchester Metropolitan University

# BRAMHALL

## VITAL AND VIABLE STOCKPORT DISTRICT CENTRES

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Placemanagement.org

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

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## Foreword

This report has been prepared following a workshop held on the 8th March 2022, attended key local stakeholders from Bramhall. Facilitated by the Institute of Place Management at the invitation of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, the event formed part a wider programme of work Stockport is undertaking to revitalise district centres in terms of post-pandemic recovery and long-term viability. This report builds, therefore, on findings collated by IPM to inform the council's approach to supporting Stockport's district centres.

*Please note this  report was written prior to I Love Bramhall going into liquidation*

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# 1. Introduction

Many factors affect the vitality and viability of high streets and town centres. Some of the changes we see today are long-term processes, some stretching back decades. The global pandemic brought new and additional challenges, but also provided the spur to reimagine and redefine the high street, not only to manage recovery, but to also prepare and adapt for a more resilient future. To help local communities gain insight into these trends please see the IPM's High Street Change report[1].

Drawing on IPM's extensive research and engagement with places across the UK and beyond in relation to the vitality and viability of high streets, this report presents findings from Bramhall, before outlining an adaptable action plan based on the IPM's 4Rs Framework – Restructuring, Rebranding, Repositioning and Reinventing, which includes recommendations for quick wins and longer-term priorities[2].

The findings are based on several research and data methods. These include:

1. Updates on the independent Place Quality Audits first undertaken in Bramhall in 2019.
2. Insights from the automated footfall counter located in the district centre installed by Springboard, which collected daily data over a 12-month cycle from the end of January 21 to January 22[3].
3. Local stakeholder workshop which took place in March 2022. During this 3-hour session, participants were tasked with identifying factors which they believed attracted people to the district centre, and barriers to change.
4. Insights from Local Data Company (LDC) data.
5. Application of IPM tools – including Activity Hierarchy, Diversity measure, and Viability Assessment.
6. Application of local evidence using the 4Rs frameworks.

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[1] Available on request – contact the IPM

[2] For more detail see: https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/4rs-regeneration-framework/

[3] This measures high street footfall at specific locations, to provide rapid access to anonymised data. The counter measures the physical presence of people and is not dependent upon any form of technology used by an individual (e.g., mobile data, WiFi data). The data can only provide a snapshot of activity in each location but nevertheless provides a robust indicator of activity.

## 2. Bramhall Place Quality Update and Assessment

In 2019, the IPM team conducted an audit for all Stockport district centres, categorising the collected information based on the Top 25 Priorities that impact upon the performance of district centres, to inform interventions which local place leaders should focus on. The outcomes of this audit can be seen in the Phase 1 report of the project[4].

Since we last visited Bramhall in 2019[5], overall, the centre has maintained a good image and appearance; and remains a pleasant place with a variety of specialist shops and independents. There are two areas of concern. First is the relative lack of diversity of comparison goods (0.12 compared to the GB average of 0.15)[6]. 100 of the 127 units in Bramhall are retail, which potentially exposes the centre to the restructuring affecting the sector nationally. Second, other than the normal turnover of businesses, Bramhall has lost all its bank branches and travel agents, leaving several vacant units that may be difficult to be repurposed quickly (due to their size and format). This largely explains the Local Data Company report of a decline of 18.9% in services businesses[7]. That said, Bramhall still has a low vacancy rate figure (7.9%, compared to 14.1% GB average in Q1 2022)[8].

Activity hours remain largely the same as in 2019, with most businesses closed by 5:30pm, which still leaves a mismatch between the retail and hospitality offer. There is a time in the late afternoon when most shops are closed, but several eateries and bars are not open. That said, we identified new hospitality businesses that open later, strengthening the evening economy. Despite being a small and compact centre, the overall experience is still compromised by the high frequency of road traffic which continues to dominate. The lack of regulated pedestrian crossings still hinders walkability. There is ample parking but limited outdoor seating in the centre, and no cycle lanes. Table 1 below summarises the strengths and weaknesses, with key changes highlighted in bold.

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4 See: https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=168756
5 See Appendix 2 for an explanation of the updated 25 Priorities
6 Based on OXIRM measure on the LDC data
7 See Appendix 3 for a summary of the LDC Data
8 See BRC https://brc.org.uk/news/corporate-affairs/fewer-empty-shops-but-uncertainty-ahead/

| Bramhall District Centre Strengths and Weaknesses | |
|---|---|
| **Key Strengths** | **Key weaknesses** |
| 5. Appearance<br><br>- In general, well-maintained frontages<br>- Clean, little evidence of litter<br>- Elements of greenery incorporated into the centre | 7 & 11. Necessities / Walkability<br><br>- Limited outdoor seating<br>- Lack of pedestrian safe crossing hinders walkability<br>- Narrow pavements and bollards obstructing walking |
| ***9. Non-retail offer***<br><br>- Good hospitality and community facilities<br>- Vast array of personal services businesses | 18. Recreational Space<br><br>- There is limited recreational space within the confides of the district centre<br>- Limited civic space other than Village Square |
| 10. Merchandise<br><br>- Strong essentials provision<br>- Good range of comparison offers e.g., children, men's, women's clothing<br>- Speciality independents, generally of high quality | 21. Adaptability<br><br>- Mix of old heritage buildings and new developments limit potential conversion<br>- Existing precinct difficult to adapt |
| 12. Place Marketing<br><br>- Strong digital footprint<br>- Multi-channel marketing<br>- Branding and promotion (Explore Bramhall, I love Bramhall) | ***23 & 25. Redevelopment Plans/Innovation***<br><br>- Signs of planning blight in key areas (Parade, Village Square)<br>- Limited opportunities for innovation due to lack of space and underused sites |
| ***17. Markets***<br><br>- Worker Bee Market generating interest | |

*Table 1: Key strengths and weaknesses*

## Viability Assessment

The Viability Assessment is a measure of High Street Viability[9]. This is based on analysis of five key indicators with data derived from the Index for Multiple Deprivation and the Co-Op Well Being Index. The assessment indicates Bramhall is **highly economically viable** with a good score for social and cultural viability showing low levels of deprivation, good access to affordable and inclusive cultural and leisure activities, services, and amenities (see Figure 1 below).

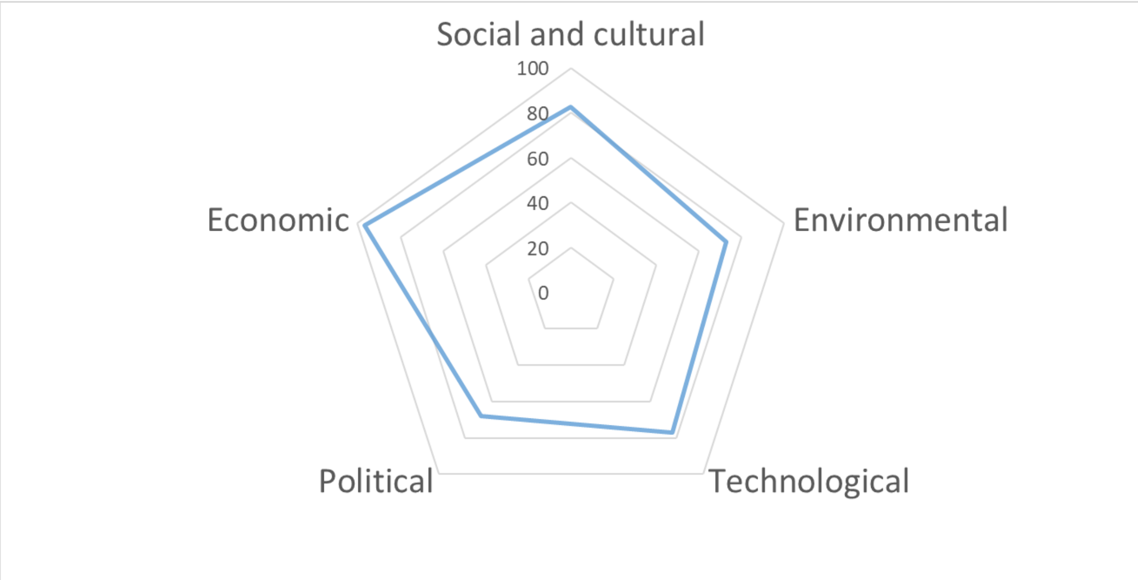


*Figure 1: Viability Assessment*

We posit that Bramhall fulfils the role of a residential centre, and despite its economic strengths there is perhaps finite growth potential in terms of the trading environment. The lack of large store formats hinders potential conversions with a few notable exceptions (e.g., the area around the petrol stations, parade, shopping centre). However, the centre benefits from a good non-retail offer (schools, community facilities, personal services, etc.), accessibility (train station an asset), and a non-retail anchor (Bramall Hall) that can attract people in the centre.

[9] See Appendix for an explanation of how the Viability Assessment is calculated.

## Footfall Analysis

The annual footfall figure for Bramhall for the period of January 2021-2022 for the counter location was 1,101,524 suggesting Bramhall is correctly defined as a **district centre** based on the estimated activity level[10].

In summary, the average daily footfall count is 3162, July is the busiest month, Saturdays the busiest day, whereas Sundays are typically the quietest day. The Summer Festival and Christmas Lights events significantly boost footfall in the district centre, and other events including the Worker Bee Market, Parkrun, and Church festival all produce a discernible increase in footfall.

### Monthly Footfall Analysis

Monthly footfall calculated for the year 2021 suggests Bramhall has the profile of a **multifunctional centre,** offering a convenient mix of goods and services[11]. The relatively flat footfall profile suggests the centre mainly serves a local catchment (Figure 2 and Table 2). Although Bramhall has a relatively low volume of footfall through the year, it is accessible and locally connected, which necessitates focusing efforts on consolidating or enhancing convenience for people in the immediate area.

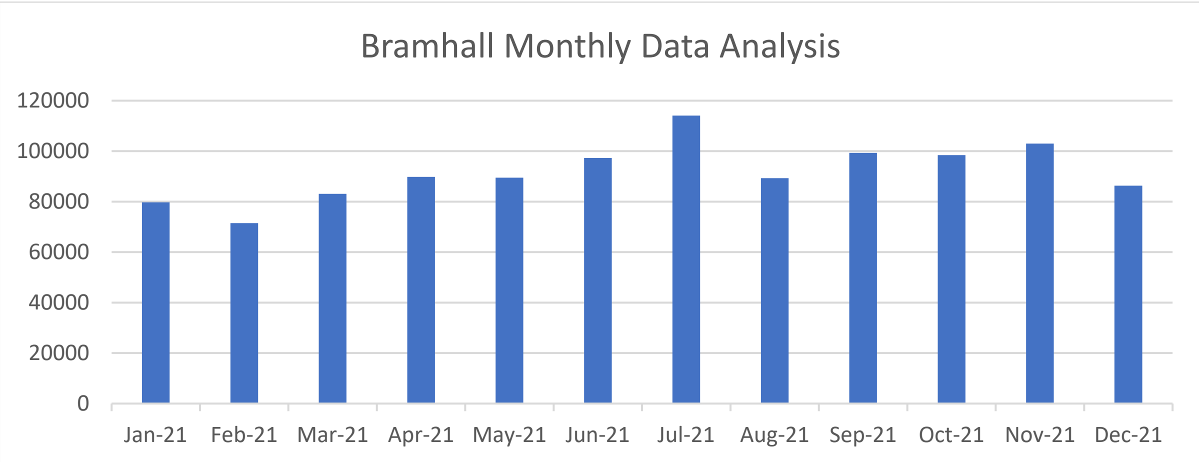


*Figure 2: Monthly Footfall Data*

Although COVID-19 clearly impacted all centres from March 2020 to late 2021, recent analysis of over 180 high streets suggests the lifting of restrictions contributed to a significant bounce-back in the number of people visiting high streets, boosted further throughout 2021 with the rollout of the vaccination programme. The Annual Review of Footfall produced by the High Street Streets Task Force (2021)[12] suggests smaller local high streets across England recovered more quickly than larger cities and regional centres. With footfall recovery associated with settlement size, we can reasonably suggest that for a district centre such as Bramhall, footfall should have recovered both to its pre-pandemic levels of footfall and footfall signature.

[10] See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the hierarchy is derived.
[11] See Appendix 5 for an explanation of the different signature types.
[12] See https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/media/hr5jbfev/footfall-report-2021-exec-summary-final.pdf

Table 2 provides a monthly footfall count for Bramhall. It is estimated footfall during the first months of 2021 may have been hindered by the third COVID-19 national lockdown (which started 6th January). There is a slight increase in footfall after April, which coincided with the re-opening of non-essential shops and outdoor venues such as pubs and restaurants.

| Month | Bramhall Monthly Data | Monthly Data as Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| **January** | 79765 | 7.2 |
| **February** | 71517 | 6.5 |
| **March** | 83080 | 7.5 |
| **April** | 89817 | 8.2 |
| **May** | 89527 | 8.1 |
| **June** | 97319 | 8.8 |
| **July** | 114128 | 10.4 |
| **August** | 89288 | 8.1 |
| **September** | 99312 | 9.0 |
| **October** | 98454 | 8.9 |
| **November** | 102974 | 9.3 |
| **December** | 86343 | 7.8 |
| **Annual Footfall** | 1101524 | 100 |

*Table 2: Monthly footfall count and percentage*

## Events and footfall

It is noticeable that in months when events take place in Bramhall, a massive uplift in footfall is clear. Both the "Summer of Love" festival and "Light Up Bramhall" Christmas lights event boosted footfall nearly five times as much as the average day in July and November respectively (see Table 3).

| Month | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **July** | Normal Saturday average footfall | Event Saturday | Multiplier Effect |
| | 3741 | 18222 | 4.9 |
| **November** | Normal Sunday average footfall | Event Sunday | |
| | 2039 | 9971 | 4.9 |

*Table 3: Multiplier effect of events in Bramhall*

Regardless of the importance of one-off events, more frequent events such as the Worker Bee Market during 2021 all appear to generate additional footfall in four out of eight instances (including the Summer of Love festival). October 2021 was probably a bit quieter than a normal October, with the Saturday being a particularly cold and rainy day for the month, whereas the Omicron variant outbreak may have influenced visitor numbers to the December market. Wider research has shown markets generate direct and indirect multiplier effects in terms of extra spending to the local economy, as well as promoting local traders and providing a sense of sociality. From these observations, however, we can only show that the market effect on footfall is apparent but not entirely clear[13], and more data needs to be collected (e.g., sales data, dwell time, visitors' perceptions) to identify the full market effect. Close monitoring can provide more insights into the market's influence on the social and economic vitality of the district centre (Hallsworth et al., 2015).

| Month | Saturday average | Market Saturday |
|---|---|---|
| **May** | 3574 | 4435 |
| **June** | 4290 | 4196 |
| **July** | 3741 | 18222 |
| **August** | 3171 | 3438 |
| **September** | 4410 | 4324 |
| **October** | 4520 | 3765 |
| **November** | 4096 | 4521 |
| **December** | 2970 | 2646 |
| **Overall** | 3846 | 5693 |

*Table 4: Comparison of footfall data on market versus no market days in Bramhall*

### Weekly Footfall Analysis

Figure 3 summarises the weekly footfall pattern for Bramhall. Previous research (Mumford et al, 2017) has shown centres like Bramhall will exhibit one of two distinct weekly patterns (a distinct Saturday peak or a Monday through Saturday peak) in footfall profiles. Bramhall exhibits a clear Saturday peak that slowly builds up from Thursday onwards. There is a noticeable drop on Sunday that is consistent with centres that have a busy Saturday (and reflects Sunday trading hours). Bramhall's weekly signature may be influenced by the effects of the pandemic (e.g., hybrid working arrangements). Nevertheless, understanding how Bramhall functions on a weekly basis can help towards the development of strategies and initiatives that fit the centre's profile and catchment.

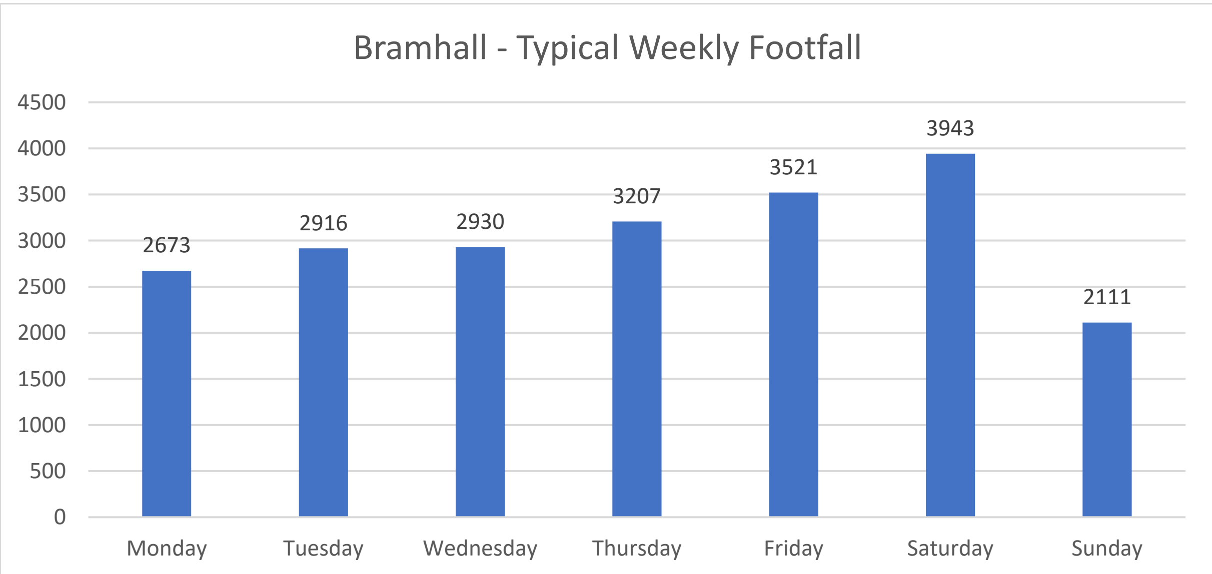


*Figure 3: Weekly footfall pattern for Bramhall*

[13] A two-sample t-test was performed to compare footfall count between market and no market Saturdays. There was not a significant difference in footfall between market Saturday (M = 5693, SD = 5100.8) and no market Saturday (M = 3846, SD = 578.1); t (14) = -1.018, p = .163.

## Attractors and Barriers

As part of the first interactive exercise, workshop participants were asked to write down three factors they personally believed attracted people to the local high street. Figure 4 below summarizes the responses of the group.


*Figure 4: Attractors word cloud*

Three themes dominate the analysis: **Community**, **Hospitality** (non-retail offer) and **Diversity** of offer. In the case of the latter, independent businesses particularly seem to play a great role in providing diversity and potentially contributing to a sense of community. Participants also drew attention to the quality of the shops and presence of speciality shops, as well as the good mix in offer in terms of the mix of retail and hospitality, although the Diversity Index above is quite low, with the centre dependent on retail.

The second part of this exercise required participants to identify barriers or constraints that they believe are holding back change in their local high street. Figure 5 below summarises all the barriers identified by whole group:

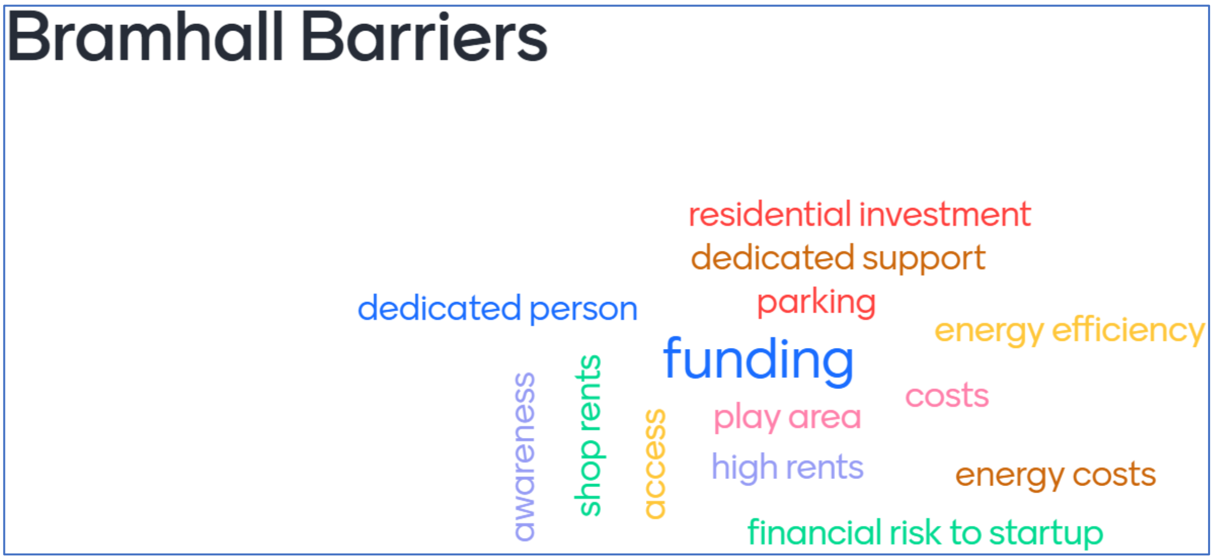


*Figure 5: Barriers identified by the whole group*

The barriers identified by the workshop participants focus on costs and funding, with comments about the high costs of setting up and running a business in the centre (e.g., energy, rents, and start-up costs), which can be a **barrier to new entrants**. This may present some challenges in finding tenants to occupy vacant shops. Additionally, participants pointed to the lack of a dedicated person to drive the change for transformation in the centre, although hopefully this will be partly resolved following the appointment of district centre manager by Stockport MBC. However, it may be important to manage expectations here, as the district centre manager can only do so much. The ongoing management of the centre, however, will require additional capacity through the formation of networks and partnerships.

# 3. Applying the IPM's 4Rs Framework to Bramhall

The 4Rs Framework provides a simple approach to developing a town centre action plan to create a vibrant centre for everyone that is fit for the future.


*Figure 6: 4Rs Regeneration Framework*

The Framework distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (*repositioning*), effecting change (*reinventing*), communication (*rebranding*) and governance/spatial planning and development (*restructuring*). An editable version of the transformation routemap with instructions can be downloaded[14] to help create a tailored Action Plan. Depending on where you start, the routemap will take time to deliver but is a useful tool to plan out both short and long-term priorities. Actions under each R may happen simultaneously, consecutively, or repeatedly. Further detail on each of the 4Rs can be found in the supporting resources on the High Streets Task Force website.[15]

[14] https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/transformation-routemap-webinars/create-a-transformation-routemap-for-your-town/
[15] https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/4rs-regeneration-framework/

## Repositioning

Repositioning is a strategy that relates to clearly identifying and communicating a place's market position (Millington and Ntounis, 2017). In some locations, there is a poor understanding of the catchment, the challenges and trends impacting on the place as well as a lack of data on which to base decisions. In these instances, a strategy of repositioning is sensible. This entails taking time to collect and analyse data and information, as well as develop appropriate visions and strategies that can get widespread buy-in. Repositioning can also be used to counteract decline and enable a centre to identify potential competitive advantages.

A challenge for all district centres in Stockport is availability of reliable longer term footfall data. Much of our analysis is based on analysis of just one year of data, whereas normally we would base our conclusions on two years of data. We suspect the insights we have drawn are reasonable assertions, but further analysis is recommended. Additionally, without access to hourly data we have been unable to perform more detailed analysis regarding peak times and the impact of specific events.

Developing greater knowledge and understanding of each centre is valuable for all local traders on the high street. Although historically retailers have been poorly supported in terms of national and European policy, there are emerging opportunities such as the Shop Local Initiative which can open access to business advice and support for both start-ups and established traders s e.g., guidance on marketing or digital technology, recruitment, or even rising energy costs. District centre managers, therefore, could play a vital role in linking high street businesses to this support. It is important the needs of local traders connect to a wider vision or strategy. For example, as the pandemic revealed small traders who were able to flip their businesses from instore to home delivery and online have proved to be more resilient. Raising digital skills of all local traders, such as using social media promotion to drive footfall into stores is another activity that can underpin future resilience.

A key challenge is that Bramhall still does not have a clear vision or strategy, and we would advise local stakeholders start a process to collaboratively produce a vision. We would advise this vision reflects findings from the Place Quality Audit and workshop findings in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the district centre. The vision does not necessarily need to involve radical change, but rather should focus on consolidating the centre's strengths, whilst tackling specific challenges through viable and measurable actions e.g., reuse of empty shops, lowering barriers to entry for new business, and widening diversity. However, the long-term vision might be more aspirational e.g., to create a car-free and walkable centre. Whatever vision is decided, it must garner support and buy-in from all stakeholders and the broad support of the wider community.

## Reinventing

Reinventing strategies relate to the activities undertaken to revitalise a place's identity and offer (Theodoridis, Ntounis and Pal, 2017). Any place should understand and seek to meet the needs of its catchment and the visitors it may attract and be sensitive to these insights when making any changes within a centre. Sometimes places have the data they need and sensible plans for how the town or city needs to change to better serve its catchment communities, but nothing is happening there. A process of reinvention is needed. Transformation needs to start, and this might be through temporary interventions, events, pop-ups, or experimental place-making.

There are already several activities taking place in Bramhall to activate the centre. The Bramhall Together Trust, for example, runs various events including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and Summer Festival. Whereas this may need some review, efforts need to be made to ensure the continuity of the existing activity as it appears to impact favourably on footfall. Local stakeholders might consider organising additional events at quieter times of the year or themed for different seasons. Future events might also introduce trials and experiments to diversify what the centre has to offer, to prepare for future adaption as the local catchment changes. We stress this is important given the centre's reliance on its immediate local catchment and changing demographic.

## Rebranding

Sometimes there are good plans, based on good evidence, and these are being brought to life. The place is both repositioning and reinventing – but catchment perceptions have not changed. People are still negative about the town or city centre. In this case, rebranding may be needed. Strategies of rebranding focus upon the application of branding, marketing communications, and public relations techniques to deliver a consistent place identity, which relates to the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions in the minds of potential consumers of a place (Ntounis, and Kavaratzis, 2017). Rebranding also includes stakeholder communications, not just marketing and PR activities. Ultimately, a strong place brand should be positive and consistent, and the product of local co-creation. Successful place brand management can lead to positive word-of-mouth, and assist in the transformation of previously negative, or just as problematic, non-existent images. It might be appropriate to establish a local subgroup to review and develop an appropriate participatory place branding process, which engages a wide range of local stakeholders. We would emphasise, this does not necessarily require professional branding assistance, and neither does the target audience need to be an external one. Rather, low-level, and low-cost social media communication across multiple platforms designed to engage and inform existing users of the town-centre, stakeholders, and residents, about existing activities and the wider offer in the centre might prove just as effective.

In this respect, the overall reputation of Bramhall is largely positive, and it has a relatively strong digital footprint, via multiple social media channels, which are used to promote local events and businesses. The challenge will be to maintain and strengthen this going forward and to ensure any new activities and events are included in the branding. Local stakeholders might draw inspiration from Bishopgate (York) where the community has developed both excellent online resources https://www.bishyroad.net together with creative maps promoting the local offer.

Perhaps connected to the lack of vision, is Bramhall also lacks a strong overarching place-brand. Discussions from the workshop suggests local stakeholders might benefit from developing a shared understanding of what Bramhall has to offer and act more as ambassadors to further to promote a positive image of the high street. Existing communication channels could be used to strengthen a shared understanding of the visioning and strategies between local stakeholders. This should extend to include a wider range of local businesses to generate more frequent social media messages.

Sometimes we encounter a disparity in places between the perceptions of a place held by local stakeholders and those of customers or visitors using the centre. It would be a useful exercise to undertake place sentiment analysis on a regular basis including to review and evaluate user experiences e.g., TripAdvisor or Google reviews. This is important to ensure marketing and branding messages are consistent and appropriate for the catchment. There are opportunities in this process to consider how better to promote synergies and linked trips within Bramhall, to establish the high street more as a destination in which visitors might dwell for longer using local shops and services, attending events, and visiting local bars and restaurants.

## Restructuring

Sometimes places just seem to be stuck in a state of inertia around decision making or, when decisions are made and action taken, it does not have the impact that was expected. This can be tackled through a process of restructuring. Strengthening existing synergies perhaps involves more than simply improving communications between local stakeholders, and instead calls for greater collaboration and coordination of local stakeholders. This may involve refreshing existing networks. Sometimes wider town partnerships meet too infrequently or are simply too large to be effective. It might prove useful, therefore, to consider delegating specific tasks to sub-groups, which meet more often, who report back to a smaller executive group. It is not for the IPM, however, to determine how this operates, the various local partnerships and stakeholders, including local government, need to work out what works best. Consequently, there are not many easy wins here, but hopefully the IPM's recommendation provides a springboard to address these issues in proactive way.

With an enthusiastic group of local stakeholders willing to get involved in the future of the centre, the Bramhall Together Trust, and now with the support of the district centre manager, Bramhall is well positioned to create a more formal board or network to action and coordinate a plan for the district centre. We would advise therefore, that Bramhall establishes a district centre partnership group or taskforce to manage both short and long-term change. This might extend to the coordination of event organisers and volunteer groups willing to get involved in supporting activity including markets, festivals, litter picking and community planting and so on.

Restructuring may also involve physical regeneration when there are spatial challenges or a barrier to change. In Bramhall, the overriding spatial challenge is the lack of recreational space in or adjacent to the district centre, together with limited opportunities for dwelling due to an absence of substantive civic space, together with a relatively poor pedestrian and cycling environment due to the traffic flowing through the centre throughout the day. This limits opportunities to extend pavements, create cycle lances and space for on-street trading – and its likely to negatively impact on dwell time, overall experience, and place reputation. It is noted that part of the highway can be closed to accommodate the market on a regular basis, and we would suggest this creates a precedent on which to explore further temporary or perhaps more permanent measures to reduce the impact of traffic.

Although Bramhall is an attractive place in terms of architecture and built environment, there are a few examples of planning blight which need to be addressed in the long term. These are the shopping parade, which is currently under-utilised, particularly in front of the ground floor units, which could be closed to traffic to create additional seating and trading space and the kind of civic space the centre currently lacks. Additionally, there are two petrol stations in the centre, which we imagine will become redundant with the phasing out of petrol and diesel vehicles. A future vision might begin to imagine how these sites could be repurposed to address the challenges identified above. For example, to create new and large retail formats, accommodate non-retail uses, civic and performance space, or simply greenery or a place to hold events. Finally, although the shopping precinct is active and well maintained, recent evidence suggests centres like this are becoming less viable – or coming towards end of life. This could provide a long-term opportunity for a more transformational projects e.g., mixed-use residential to ensure the future viability of the centre.

## 4. Recommendations

| Repositioning | |
|---|---|
| **QUICK WINS** | **LONGER TERM** |
| Ensure footfall data is widely available and can be accessed by local traders, event organisers and other place-based stakeholders to demonstrate success of delivery. | Continue to track effectiveness of interventions in the centre through monitoring and interpreting footfall data (volume and pattern of activity), providing impact assessment of events etc.<br><br>Establish a consistent, reliable, and sustainable method for collecting footfall data in the district centre. |
| Evaluate the specific impact of markets and events on footfall, sales, dwell time, and visitor perceptions | Refresh events programme to maximise trading opportunities. |
| Hold a visioning workshop with local stakeholders, facilitated by the District Centre Manager. | Construct a clear vision for Bramhall based on evidence, which address specific challenges, and is well-defined in spatial terms. |
| District centre manager to develop greater awareness of business support and available to local traders through a dedicated workshop. | Actively link local traders to specific initiatives which will help them develop or sustain their business – linking to the wider vision. |

**Supporting resources**

Repositioning: developing collaborative, inspiring visions that achieve change

E-Learn - Repositioning your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Vision and Strategy - 25 'vital and viable' priorities | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Paisley is open – A vision for Paisley Town Centre 2030 | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Understanding Place Data | High Streets Task Force

| Reinventing | |
|---|---|
| **QUICK WINS** | **LONGER TERM** |
| Review the range of place-based anchors (retail, employment, transport, green space, heritage, culture), everyday activity that significantly attracts footfall. | Ensure key place-based attractors are embedded in local plans and visions for the town centre and include in wider messaging. |
| Review funding and resources of existing activities to ensure they are sustainable and can be delivered in a predictable way, with the support of the district centre manager. | Extend and diversify the events programme to grow footfall in the high street and diversify local offer. |
| Work with local property owners to activate empty shops units, e.g., meanwhile use, pop-ups, community use. | Lower barriers to entry and generate more opportunities of innovation and non-retail function e.g., start-up scheme, flexible leasing, rents etc. |
| Undertake a district centre audit to compile a list of eyesores and unkempt sites, and opportunities to add greenery and floral displays e.g., planters outside traders. | Develop an action plan to identify specific projects which are then assigned to appropriate stakeholder groups. This might include resourcing plans e.g., accessing small grants, crowd-sourcing, stakeholder contributions etc. |

**Supporting Resources**

Barriers to New Entrants - 25 'vital and viable' priorities | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

E-Learn - Reinventing your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Open Doors: Pilot Programme Report | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Temporary Use as a Participatory Placemaking Tool | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

## Rebranding

| QUICK WINS | LONGER TERM |
|---|---|
| Consolidate and sustain existing social media good practice. | Use existing comms to extend and build a network of place ambassadors including key anchor institutions, stakeholders, and local business – to promote positive image in a sustainable way. |
| Undertake place sentiment analysis to build a clearer understanding of user experiences of Bramhall. | Adjust social media communications in alignment with these regular reviews. |
| Once the visioning workshop is complete - the district centre manager could facilitate a place branding exercise designed to activate the vision. Important this a participatory process in which the place brand is co-produced with the local community. | Construct a place brand to assist district centre development – to counter negative place perceptions which may be detrimental to future investment. |

**Supporting Resources**

E-Learn - Rebranding your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Place Marketing - 25 'vital and viable' priorities | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Understanding Place Sentiment | High Streets Task Force

| Restructuring | |
|---|---|
| **QUICK WINS** | **LONGER TERM** |
| District centre manager to strengthen existing stakeholder group – e.g., facilitate workshops and regular meetings. | Establish a more formal leadership group supported by subgroups with responsibility for specific areas of intervention (landlords, traders' groups, events, branding etc). |
| Review existing Local Plan and strategic urban regeneration framework and benchmark against IPM's 25 Priorities. | Undertake feasibility studies into specific projects which address the spatial challenges identified above and create a group to take forwards. This group could create a neighbourhood plan – or regeneration framework based on the 4Rs. |

**General Supporting resources**

25 Vital and Viable Priorities

Diagnostic: capacity and structures for managing change (IPM)

E-Learn - Restructuring your high street (4Rs)

Principles of Town Planning in relation to High Streets and Town Centres (RTPI)

Town Centre Partnerships (URBED)

**Specific resources to consider for the district centre**

Creating better streets: Inclusive and accessible places (CIHT)

Curbside Management Practitioners Guide (ITE)

Place investment and engaging landlords | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Streetscape Guidance

Traffic Calming Measures Fact Sheet

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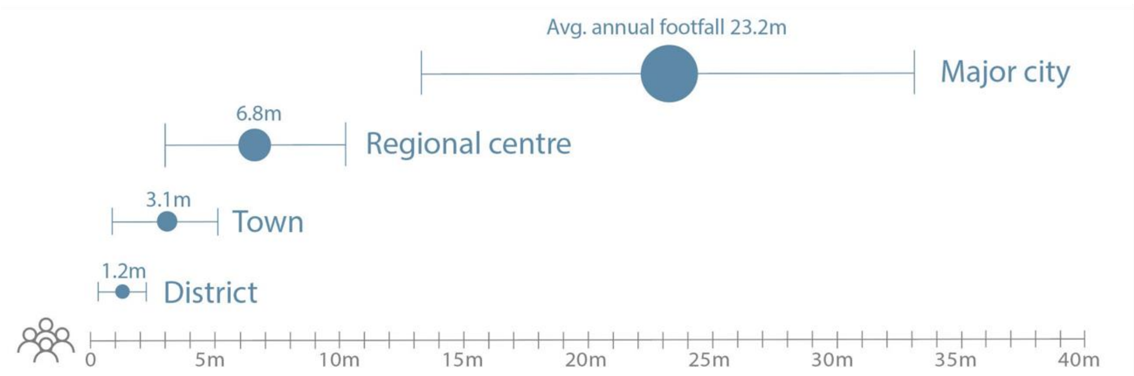
# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Activity Hierarchy

The activity hierarchy is a classification of settlement size based upon the annual volume of footfall. It is particularly useful for planners and decision makers, as it can enable local authorities and interested parties to monitor the evolution of their centres in a more consistent fashion (Mumford et al., 2021). The activity hierarchy uses a standard order of settlement size (Major city, Regional Centre, Town, and District), and is established by comparing a place's annual footfall volume with the mean footfall volume for each classification and the standard deviation (a measure of how much footfall volume varies across centres in these groups - see below).




Levels of activity hierarchy and average as well as standard deviation of annual footfall in each level of activity hierarchy

| Activity Hierarchy | Mean (million) | Standard Deviation (million) |
|---|---|---|
| **District** | 1.2 | 0.9 |
| **Town** | 3.1 | 2.2 |
| **Regional Centre** | 6.8 | 3.7 |
| **Major City** | 23.2 | 9.9 |

Mean and standard deviation (SD) in each level of the activity hierarchy.

## Appendix 2: Viability Assessment

Introduced below is an index of viability, which considers the multiple conditions that affect the overall viability of the High Street, and the interconnectedness between aspects of viability. This index - or tool to measure viability - has been shaped by academics and practitioners with an interest in the health of high streets and has been piloted with a series of towns in England. For this tool to be widely operationalised across high streets in England it uses data that is (1) pertinent to the conceptualisation of viability, (2) is easily available, and (3) enables a fine geographical granularity. The following indices and datasets are included in the tool:

1. Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 scores for the seven domains of deprivation.
2. Community Wellbeing Index (Co-op) for nine main areas that matter for community wellbeing.

| **Indices** | **Viability** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Social and cultural** | **Environmental** | **Technological** | **Political** | **Economic** |
| **CDRC Geodem (IMD 2019)** | IMD Crime<br>IMD Health<br>IMD Housing<br>IMD Education | IMD Living Environment | | | IMD Income<br>IMD Employment |
| **Wellbeing Index People** | Education and learning<br>Health | | | | Economy, Work and Employment |
| **Wellbeing Index Place** | Culture, heritage, and leisure | Housing, space, and environment | Transport, mobility, and connectivity | | |
| **Wellbeing Index Relationships** | Relationships and trust<br>Equality | | | Voice and decision-making | |

*Note: All five viability constructs are weighted equally - 20% each.*

## Appendix 3: Introduction to the updated 25 Priorities

In late 2019, the IPM team updated the list of "Top 25 Priorities" as part of the development of the High Streets Task Force, introducing new or amended priorities that correspond to the ongoing changes on the fabric of the high street. Table x provides the changes in the ranking of the 25 priorities. These amendments and new additions highlight the shift from traditional retail-oriented thinking into a more nuanced and multifunctional way of thinking about what constitutes a vital and viable centre. This is highlighted by the inclusion of "Non-retail Offer" as a separate priority in the 2019 update, the amendment of "Anchors" to include anything that is attracting a significant amount of people to a location (universities, hospitals, parks, train stations), the inclusion of "Markets" in their multiple forms (from collective retail to food halls), and the inclusion of "Redevelopment Plans", "Functionality", and "Innovation" as priorities that can influence centre transformation based on focused development, change in a centre's functions (e.g. from retail-dominant to multifunctional), and opportunities for community experimentation respectively.

| Priority Rank | Priority (Original 2014 study) | Priority (2019 Update) |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | ACTIVITY HOURS (Opening hours; shopping hours; evening economy) | ACTIVITY* (Opening hours; footfall; shopping hours; evening economy) |
| **2** | APPEARANCE (Visual appearance; cleanliness) | RETAIL OFFER (Retailer offer; retailer representation) |
| **3** | RETAILERS (Retailer offer; retailer representation) | VISION & STRATEGY (Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies) |
| **4** | VISION&STRATEGY (Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies) | EXPERIENCE (Centre image; service quality; visitor satisfaction; familiarity; atmosphere) |
| **5** | EXPERIENCE (Service quality; visitor satisfaction; centre image; familiarity) | APPEARANCE (Visual appearance; cleanliness; ground floor frontages) |
| **6** | MANAGEMENT (Centre management; shopping centre management; Town Centre Management; place management) | PLACE MANAGEMENT (Centre management; shopping centre management; Town Centre Management (TCM); place management; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)) |
| **7** | MERCHANDISE (Range/quality of goods; assortments) | NECESSITIES (Car-parking; amenities; general facilities) |
| **8** | NECESSITIES (Car-parking; amenities; general facilities) | Anchors* - Presence of anchors - which give locations their basic character and signify importance |
| **9** | Anchor stores - Presence of anchor stores - which give locations their basic character and signify importance | NON-RETAIL OFFER (Attractions; entertainment; non-retail offer; leisure offer) |
| **10** | NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL (Networking; partnerships; community leadership) | MERCHANDISE (Range/Quality of goods; assortments; merchandising) |
| **11** | DIVERSITY (Attractions; range/quality of shops; non-retail offer; tenant mix; tenant variety; retail diversity; availability of alternative formats) | WALKING (Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips; connectivity) |
| **12** | WALKING (Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips) | PLACE MARKETING (Centre marketing; marketing; orientation/flow) |
| **13** | ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE (Entertainment; leisure offer) | NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL (Networking; partnerships; community leadership; |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | retail/tenant trust; tenant/manager relations; strategic alliances; centre empowerment; stakeholder power; engagement) |
| **14** | ATTRACTIVENESS (Place attractiveness; attractiveness) | ACCESSIBLE (Convenience; accessibility) |
| **15** | PLACE ASSURANCE (Atmosphere; BIDs; retail/tenant trust; store characteristics) | DIVERSITY (Range/quality of shops; tenant mix; tenant variety; availability of alternative formats; store characteristics; comparison/convenience; chain vs independent; supermarket impact; retail diversity; retail choice) |
| **16** | ACCESSIBLE (Convenience; accessibility; public transport) | ATTRACTIVENESS (Sales/turnover; place attractiveness; vacancy rates; attractiveness; retail spend; customer/catchment views; Construction of out-of-town centre) |
| **17** | PLACE MARKETING (Centre marketing; marketing; tenant/manager relations; orientation/flow; merchandising; special offers) | MARKETS* (Traditional markets; street trading) |
| **18** | Comparison/convenience - The amount of comparison-shopping opportunities compared to convenience (usually in percentage terms) | RECREATIONAL SPACE (Recreational areas; public space; open space) |
| **19** | RECREATIONAL SPACE (Recreational areas; public space; open space) | BARRIERS TO NEW ENTRANTS (Barriers to entry; landlords) |
| **20** | Barriers to Entry - Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the centre's/High Street's market | Safety/Crime - A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting |
| **21** | Chain vs independent - Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street | ADAPTABILITY (Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; store/centre design; retail unit size; store development; rents turnover) |
| **22** | Safety/crime - A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting | LIVEABLE (Multi/mono-functional; liveability; personal services; mixed use) |
| **23** | LIVEABLE (Multi/mono-functional; connectivity; liveability) | REDEVELOPMENT PLANS* (Planning blight; regeneration) |
| **24** | ADAPTABILITY (Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; mixed-use; engagement; functionality; store/centre design; retail unit size) | Functionality* - The degree to which a centre fulfils a role – e.g., service centre, employment centre, residential centre, tourist centre |
| **25** | Store development - The process of building, upgrading, remodelling or renovating retail stores | INNOVATION* (Opportunities to experiment; retail Innovation) |

## Appendix 4: Summary of LDC Data

| Bramhall Location Report Highlights | Count | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **Total Units (Including Village Square)** | 127 | |
| **Retail (shops)** | 100 | 78.7% |
| **Leisure** | 27 | 21.3% |
| | | |
| **Vacancy Rates** | 10 | 7.9% (per total units) |
| **Retail (Shops)** | 9 | 7.1% |
| **Leisure** | 1 | 0.8% |
| **Classification Mix** | | |
| **Comparison** | 45 | 36.6% |
| **Convenience** | 15 | 12.2% |
| **Service** | 37 | 30.1% |
| **Leisure** | 26 | 21.1% |
| | | |
| **Net Change in Openings/Closures** | | |
| **Comparison** | 4 | 9.8% (per classification category) |
| **Convenience** | 3 | 25% (per classification category) |
| **Service** | -7 | -15.9% (per classification category) |
| **Leisure** | 0 | 9.8% (per classification category) |
| | | |
| **Independent vs Multiple Mix** | | |
| **Independents** | 98 | 76.6% |
| **Multiples** | 30 | 23.4% |

## Appendix 5: Footfall Signature Types

The following section presents the monthly data pattern in Bramhall. It is based on the findings of the Bringing Big Data to Small Users (BDSU) project, a collaborative research and development project funded by Innovate UK, led by retail intelligence specialists, Springboard, and involving the IPM, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cardiff University, MyKnowledgeMap, and other key partners. Through the analysis of hourly footfall data provided for more than 150 locations over 10 years, the project identified four basic patterns that have profound significance in thinking about the future of traditional retail centres.

| Footfall Patterns | Typical Characteristics |
|---|---|
| **Comparison** | People come here predominantly to shop<br>Busiest in the run up to Christmas<br>People travel a considerable distance to visit<br>Wide range of retail choice, leisure, food and beverage<br>Strong retail anchor(s)<br>Strong presence of multiples and international brands<br>Depth and breadth of merchandising<br>Large catchment area<br>Accessible by choice of means of transport<br>Organise themselves to compete with other comparison towns and channels |
| **Holiday** | People come here for a holiday or a 'day out'<br>Busiest times are July and August<br>People travel a considerable distance to visit<br>Focus on offering a good experience to visitors during the summer peak<br>Attractive to tourists but have a relatively weak comparison offer<br>Organise themselves to increase and enhance their entertainment and leisure appeal |
| **Speciality** | People come here for the overall experience<br>Footfall rises steadily from Easter to end of August - and peaks again around Christmas time.<br>People stay longer here (increased dwell time).<br>Anchor(s) not retail - offer something unique and special<br>Attract visitors but serve local population<br>Organise themselves to protect and promote identity and positioning |
| **Multifunctional** | People come for a mixture of everyday needs - shopping, accessing public transport, employment, education, services etc.<br>Large multifunctional towns have higher footfall figures than small multifunctional towns.<br>People travel further to access large multifunctional towns whilst small multifunctional towns just serve their local population<br>Retail offer, opening times, events, services and other uses focused on local community and/or a well-defined hinterland<br>Convenience anchor – work, public transport, food shopping, markets<br>Accessible and locally connected<br>Organise themselves to manage accessibility, concentration, reliability, and customer service |