HAZEL GROVE

VITAL AND VIABLE STOCKPORT DISTRICT CENTREs

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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 24th March 2022, attended key local stakeholders from Hazel Grovel. 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.

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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 the result of 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 High Street Change report[1]. Drawing on the 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 Hazel Grove, 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 Hazel Grove 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. Hazel Grove 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 Hazel Grove in 2019[5], overall, the centre appears to have retained many businesses, maintained its core retail convenience offer[6] with strong anchor stores, maintained a good hospitality offer, and unlike other district centres has retained several banks and estate agents. 87 of the 127 units in Hazel Grove are retail, with a good proportion of non-retail uses, which limits the exposure of the centre to the restructuring affecting the retail sector nationally. The centre remains liveable with a good range of services either on the high street or located close by. Despite the impact of Covid, Hazel Grove has emerged from the pandemic with a relatively low vacancy rate figure (8.7% compared to 14.1% GB average in Q1 2022), suggesting the location remains economically attractive. A slight area of concern is the relative lack of diversity of comparison goods (0.12 compared to the GB average of 0.15)[7]. Analysis of the LDC data suggests a challenge for Hazel Grove is to diversify its offer in all aspects including restaurants, consumer services, leisure, and services. Activity hours remain largely the same as in 2019, with most businesses closed by 5pm, which still leaves a mismatch between the retail and hospitality offer, which might be reducing trading opportunities. For example, there is a time in the late afternoon when many non-convenience stores are closed, but several eateries and bars are yet to open.

The core challenges affecting Hazel Grove largely remain as they were in 2019, with the high street still dominated by heavy traffic, exacerbated at the time of the second audit visit in March 2022 by roadworks, which created long tailbacks of standing traffic. Pavements are narrow, putting pedestrians very close to the traffic, and cycle infrastructure very limited. There is little space for on-street trading, and if there were spaces for outdoor seating, the experience would be compromised by loud traffic noise and clouds of exhaust fumes. Key non-retail anchors remain spatially fragmented and distant, and the large firms of solicitors have now moved out of the district centre. The high street is also long and rises uphill which may create challenges in terms of walkability. There remains ample parking options on surface car parks and side-streets although the visibility of these spaces to visitors is limited. Overall appearance is functional. Table 1 below summarises the strengths and weaknesses and remains largely unchanged since 2019, although we have added Diversity as an additional strength.

[4] See: https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=168756
[5] See Appendix 2 for an explanation of the updated 25 Priorities
[6] although LDC data reports a significant decline in convenience, we were unable to evidence this from site visits. Our impression is the district centre has retained several key anchor convenience stores.
[7] Based on OXIRM measure on the LDC data

Hazel Grove District Centre Strengths and Weaknesses	
Key Strengths	**Key Weaknesses**
7. Necessities - Substantial parking opportunities - Provides basics, cash points, toilets	3, 6 & 13. Vision & Strategy/Place Management/ Networks and Partnerships with Council - No vision or strategy for the district centre - Limited mechanism for stakeholders to collaborate. - Employment (solicitors have moved to Stockport town centre, leaving empty commercial premises)
8 & 16. Anchors / Attractiveness - Four national retail grocery anchors - Low vacancy rate	4. Experience - Mixed online customer reviews - Domination of road traffic and narrow pavements generates a poor-quality experience
15. Diversity - Range of shops, bars, and restaurants - Banks and non-retail offer - Supermarkets	

Table 1: Key strengths and weaknesses

Viability Assessment

The Viability Assessment is a measure of High Street Viability[8]. 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 Hazel Grove is **highly technologically viable** with a good score for **economic viability** (see Figure 1 below).

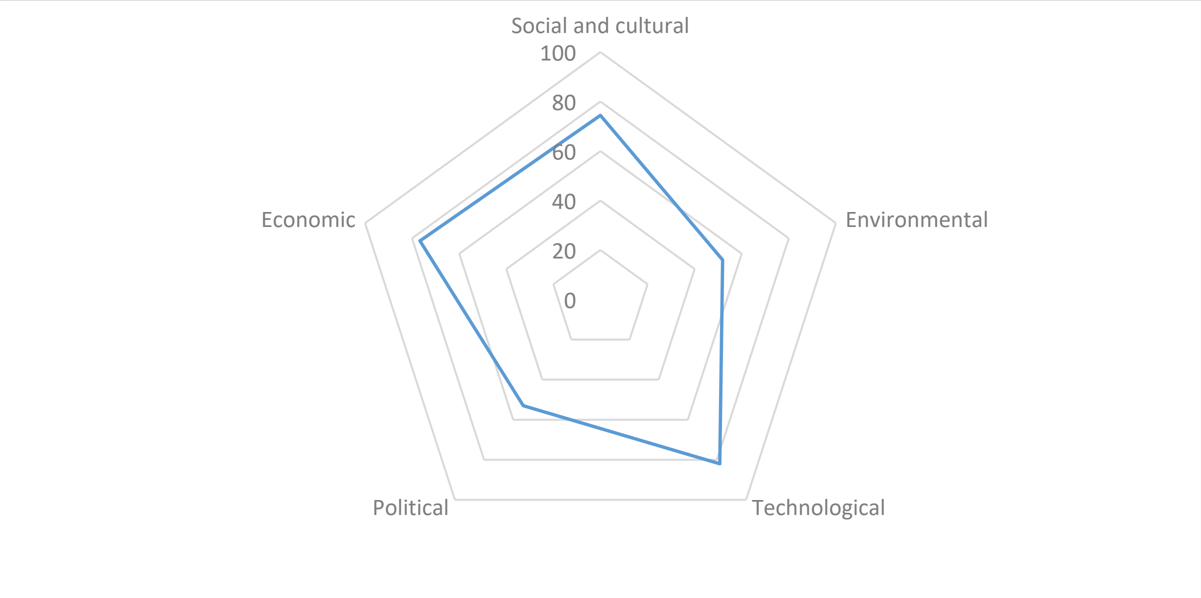

Figure 1: Viability Assessment

The key driver of this technological score is likely to be the good public transport options in Hazel Grove, a district centre which is accessible via both high frequency rail and bus connections, whereas the economic index suggests an employable workforce is also an asset. The challenge might be to link these attributes more strongly to the development of the district centre e.g., improved connectivity and walking routes with the station, driving local spend, creation of flexible co-working and attractive networking space.

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

Footfall Analysis

The annual footfall figure for Hazel Grove for the period of January 2021-2022 for the counter location was 424,142 suggesting Hazel Grove is correctly defined as a **district centre** based on the estimated activity level[9]. The footfall counter in Hazel Grove reported the smallest annual footfall count of all Stockport district centres.

In summary, the average daily footfall is around 1200 a day, July is the busiest month, Fridays and Saturdays are typically busy, whereas Sunday is typically the quietest day. We could not establish whether events strongly boosted footfall, although there is potential for them to do so.

Activity rates in the district centre, however, are likely to be affected by the spatial structure of the high street, essentially a long linear strip where key convenience, hospital, train station, open space anchors are dispersed rather concentrated close to one another. It is unlikely users of high street will walk from one end to another during a visit, and instead will restrict their movements within a particular cluster of activity. It is entirely feasible one part of the high street may be very busy, whilst at the same time an area further down the road is quiet. To fully understand this functionality would require additional footfall counts and hourly footfall analysis, as we imagine activity patterns will vary greatly in different parts and at different times as usage switches from everyday commuting and convenience to evening hospitality.

Monthly Footfall Analysis

Monthly footfall calculated for the year 2021 suggests Hazel Grove has the profile of a **multifunctional centre,** offering a convenient mix of goods and services[10]. The relatively flat footfall profile suggests the centre mainly serves a local catchment (Figure 2 and Table 2). Although Hazel Grove 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.

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)[11] 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 a district centre such as Hazel Grove footfall should have recovered both to its pre-pandemic levels of footfall and footfall signature.

Another consideration, which will require additional analysis, is the extent Hazel Grove has been affected by the drop in commuter levels. Whereas the strong local convenience offer is likely to have sustained a reasonable level of activity throughout the pandemic, reported passenger numbers at

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

Hazel Grove Station[12] fell massively from a recent high in 2018/19 of over 800,000 to just over 100,000 across 2020/21. This significantly reduced the power of this transport anchor to drive footfall on the high street. It remains to be seen whether this will recover given the trends towards greater flexibility in terms of working at home. Early suggestions are commuter levels are slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels. These developments, however, expose a vulnerability in Hazel Grove. Consequently, whereas the signature pattern is unlikely to have changed from multifunctional, there is concern about the extent commuting levels via the station are back to where they were before the pandemic which may impact on the overall volume of visitors.

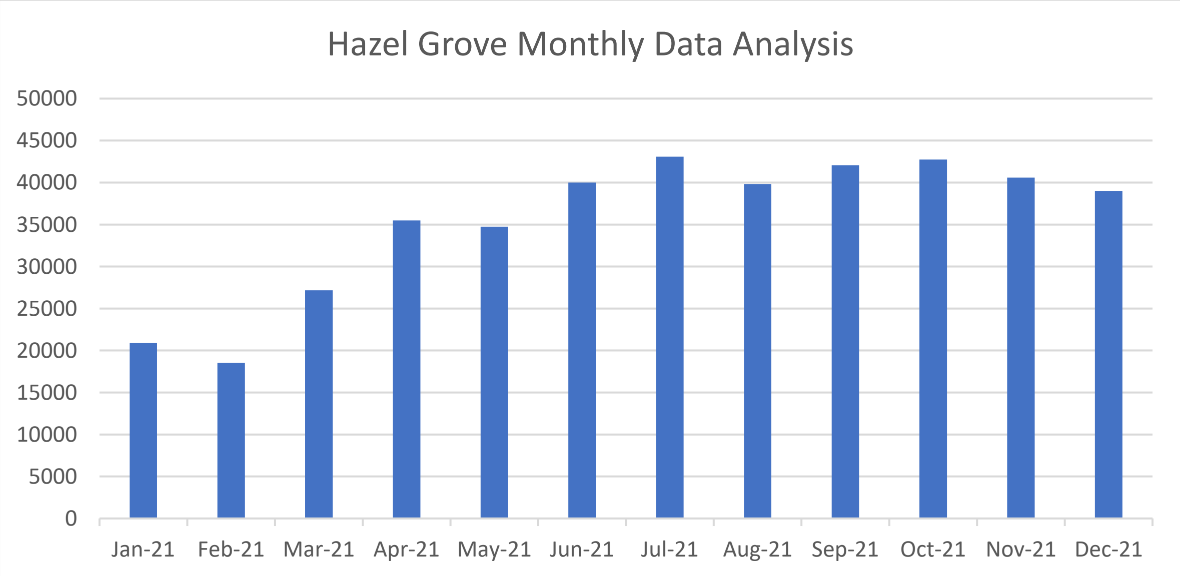

Figure 2: Monthly Footfall Data

Month	Hazel Grove Monthly Data	Monthly Data as Percentage
Jan-21	20891	4.9%
Feb-21	18530	4.4%
Mar-21	27163	6.4%
Apr-21	35488	8.4%
May-21	34742	8.2%
Jun-21	40007	9.4%
Jul-21	43085	10.2%
Aug-21	39830	9.4%
Sep-21	42055	9.9%
Oct-21	42738	10.1%
Nov-21	40593	9.6%
Dec-21	39020	9.2%
Annual Footfall	424142	100.0%

Table 2: Monthly footfall count and percentage

[12] Office for Rail and Road

It is estimated that footfall during the first months of 2021 will have been hindered by the third COVID-19 national lockdown (which started on January 6). 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. From June 2021 onwards, Hazel Grove's footfall appears to be stable, with a peak in July and a slight drop in December, which can probably be attributed to the surge of the Omicron variant during that time.

Events and footfall

Unlike other district centres in Stockport, Hazel Grove appears to host several events, which should potentially drive footfall up. The Christmas Drive-in Cinema that took place between 17-19th December created very busy days for Hazel Grove (2092 counts on Saturday December 18th). However, more data would need to be collected (e.g., sales data, dwell time, visitors' perceptions) to identify the full effects and possible synergies of these events to drive linked trip with local retail and hospitality businesses located on the high street.

Weekly Footfall Analysis

Figure 3 summarises the weekly footfall pattern for Hazel Grove. Previous research (Mumford et al., 2017) has shown centres like Hazel Grove will exhibit one of two distinct weekly patterns (a distinct Saturday peak or a Monday through Saturday peak) in footfall profiles. Hazel Grove exhibits a Monday through Saturday peak, with a slight drop on Sunday that is consistent with smaller neighbourhood centres and reflects that many local traders do not open on this day. The busy Friday and Saturday pattern is unique compared to other Stockport district centres, likely driven by Hazel Grove's strong and diverse evening hospitality offer, an attribute which is worth exploring further as a unique selling proposition for businesses. As discuss earlier, Hazel Grove's weekly signature may be influenced by the continuing effects of the pandemic (e.g., hybrid working arrangements). Nevertheless, understanding how the centre functions on a weekly basis can help towards the development of strategies and initiatives that fit the centre's profile and catchment.

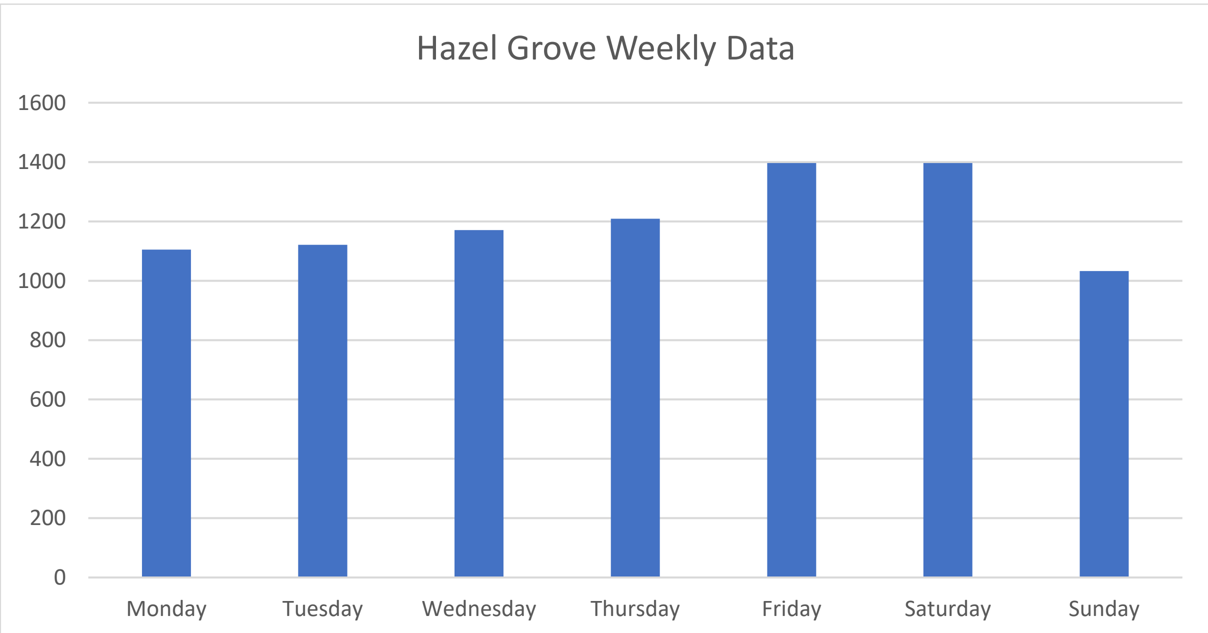

Figure 3: Weekly footfall pattern for Hazel Grove

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

Participants draw attention to Hazel Grove's strong non-retail offer, which is large, and comprised of a relatively diverse range of food and drink options which supports an evening economy. Hazel Grove remains one of the few district centres which still retains a night club. Other than that, there is not a single category of attractor that stands out, rather participants drew attention to the wide range of services and diverse offer available in Hazel Grove. This is a key strength as a diverse offer is likely to drive activity at different times and on different days throughout a typical week.

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

One clear barrier that stands out in Hazel Grove according to participant is a lack of convenient parking when visiting the centre. However, our place quality audit challenges this perception, as it appears Hazel Grove has multiple and substantial designated free and low-cost car parks, without even counting any additional parking spaces on the street. The issue here actually may be that there are several car parks which are not well-signposted or visible from the high street.

The other barriers, however, are valid and require addressing. The overall appearance of the centre is a challenge, with participants drawing attention to poorly maintained public realm, litter and lack of cleanliness, poor maintained shop fronts, and a general lack of greenery on the high street. These factors are likely to impact negatively on perceptions of the high street and damage place reputation.

3. Applying the IPM's 4Rs Framework to Hazel Grove

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[13] 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.[14]

[13] https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/transformation-routemap-webinars/create-a-transformation-routemap-for-your-town/
[14] 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.

A key challenge is that Hazel Grove 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 reduce traffic levels flowing through the centre and increase public space. Whatever vision is decided, it must garner support and buy-in from all stakeholders and the broad support of the wider community.

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 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.

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.

Whereas we have established that several events take place in Hazel Grove to activate the centre, we cannot say what specific impact these have on the high street in terms of maximising trading opportunities. 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.

Key to reinventing Hazel Grove is overcoming the challenge of the poor appearance and poor-quality public realm. A shop front scheme to improve façade, signage and shutters would greatly help to change the image and reputation of the centre. Whereas there is limited scope for major improvements in the short term given the restrictions of the highway, there are several side streets, alleyways and micro-public spaces which could be quickly activated through basic placemaking improvements (additional greenery, seating, lighting, murals, pockets parks etc.). Measures like this could be introduced in the short-term as the precursor to investment in the long term, as well as priming sites for potential commercial investment. They may also provide opportunities for existing hospitality businesses to extend their business e.g., out-door seating and dining, creating event space etc. We are mindful, however, the development of the night-time economy in any location also produces potential conflicts, noise, ASB, broken glass / litter. It is important, therefore, for this to be managed by local stakeholders in a proactive fashion, to jointly identify potential solutions or mitigation of conflicts. In Withington (South Manchester) the local civic society, for example, organises regular litter picking activities using its volunteer network. Businesses might consider how to minimise commercial waste. A simple solution might be to work with local refuse collection services to reschedule when they operate in the district centre.

Whereas long-term plans might address the domination of traffic through the district centre, it should be noted that highways can be dynamically rebalanced at different times and on different days on a temporary basis. Many places did this during the pandemic to create additional walking and cycling routes and additional outdoor seating for traders. Highways are also quickly narrowing on a routine basis to enable this kind of activity. In Bramhall, a whole section of roadway is routinely closed to accommodate the market. We might suggest that such measures might be trialled in Hazel Grove as well e.g., temporary lane closures on a Sunday or during the evening when traffic levels are lower.

Rebranding

Sometimes there are good plans, based on good evidence, that 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 sub-group 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.

Despite concerns about the appearance of Hazel Grove, the overall reputation of the town is positive, and there remains a strong community attachment. Our 2019 audit revealed a strong digital footprint generated through multiple communication channels which are used to promote local events and businesses, but the overall messaging was quite disjointed and required greater focus and consistency. This has not really changed.

Indeed, a broad concern revealed in wider research by Maybe*[15] is that during the pandemic individual use of social media increased greatly, whereas business use declined sharply, which had implications for trading when shops reopened. It is imperative local traders in Hazel Group understand their businesses need to become more hybrid operations, with both an on and offline presence, frequently using social media to drive footfall into stores.

The generation of consistent messaging would be greatly enhanced if Hazel Grove had a strong over-arching place-brand. The findings outlined in this report point to a unique business proposition – the hospitality offer which might underpin this vision. Discussions from the workshop suggests local stakeholders might benefit from developing a shared understanding of what the centre has to offer and act more as ambassadors to further 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. 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.

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 Hazel Grove, 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.

[15] https://www.maybetech.com/blog/uncategorised/15-reasons-covid-19-has-increased-social-media-use-and-e-commerce/

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 this issue in a proactive way.

More work needs to be done to build a local stakeholder group willing to take responsibility for the various actions outlined in this report. Attendance at the workshop was quite low and key stakeholder groups not represented. Going forward, efforts need to be made in reaching out to local traders and event organisers, volunteer groups, and we would also advise commercial employers, managers of major retail units, and transport providers are involved. Like many smaller centres Hazel Grove does not have a formal place management organisation, such as a Business Improvement District, town-team, or similar partnership. It is important the activities and recommendations made in this report are both actioned and coordinated. We would advise therefore, that the district centre manager makes steps to start building a district centre partnership group or taskforce to manage both short and long-term change. We would recommend the formation of a sub-group of local hospitality businesses to focus on issues regarding the management and promotion of the evening economy.

Restructuring may also involve physical regeneration when spatial challenges are a barrier to change. In Hazel Grove, there are three main concerns. First is the A6 and the traffic flowing through the centre which totally undermines the quality of experience and limits possibilities for dwelling due to an absence of substantive civic space, together with a very poor pedestrian and cycling environment. This limits opportunities to extend pavements, create cycle lanes and space for on-street trading – and is likely to negatively impact on dwell time, overall experience, and place reputation. Second is the fragmentation of the key anchor institutions. This might be partly addressed through improved signage, wayfaring and route making along the length of the high street, with links to other anchors (the station, greenspace, hospital), with markers detailing walking times to encourage active travel. Overall improvement to the infrastructure supporting active travel, however, will be key in the long-term. Finally, there are several tired and dated, but substantial units and properties where redevelopment might provide opportunities to modernise and densify 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. 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 Hazel Grove based on evidence, which addresses specific challenges, and is well-defined in spatial terms.
Review evening activity and establish a clearer understanding of the night-time economy	Share findings with local hospitality businesses
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

Developing place analysts

E-Learn - Repositioning your high street (4Rs) | 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)

Repositioning: developing collaborative, inspiring visions that achieve change

Understanding Place Data | High Streets Task Force

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

Specific resources to consider

Developing a Night-time Strategy

Reinventing

QUICK WINS	LONGER TERM
Review the range of place-based anchors (retail, employment, transport, green space, heritage, culture, evening economy), 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 consistent 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. There are opportunities in relation to building on Hazel Grove's relatively strong hospitality offer.
Work with local property owners to activate empty shops units, e.g., meanwhile use, pop-ups, community use – and improve shop frontages.	Lower barriers to entry and generate more opportunities of innovation and non-retail function e.g., start-up scheme, flexible leasing, rents etc. Activate small grants to enable basic improvements to building frontages, facades, signage, and shutters.
District Centre Manager to review good practice (e.g., Withington) and then facilitate a placemaking workshop involving local stakeholders to identify potential quick wins and barriers currently preventing activity from happening.	Construct a placemaking action plan which provides an audit of sites and identifies specific projects for businesses and community groups to take forward. This might include consideration of temporary measures to rebalance traffic priorities on the A6. This group could be tasked in identifying joint solutions to litter, commercial waste, and other factors which compromise the appearance of the centre.
Complete an audit of public, to identify micro public spaces, alleyways, and side streets, which could be activated to provide additional pedestrian and trading space.	Identify a particular site and trial low-cost tactical improvements, working with local hospitality businesses and event organisers to curate a programme of activity for the space.
District centre manager to coordinate local volunteers to organise regular litter picking activities.	Develop the capacity of this group to take responsibility for installing and maintaining low-cost planting and greenery.

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)

Specific Resources to Consider

FaceLift: A transparent deep learning framework to beautify urban scenes

Grey to Green in Sheffield: creating the UK's largest inner city 'Green Street'

How can I improve the night-time economy in my town centre?

Incredible Edible

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

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

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

Temporary Public Realm Changes

Withington Power of Community Video (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Rebranding	
QUICK WINS	**LONGER TERM**
Consolidate and sustain existing social media.	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.	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 is 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 start constructing a 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). In the case of Hazel Grove, this could include a sub-group of hospitality businesses with responsibility for managing and promoting the night-time economy.
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

Approaches to Managing the Night-time Economy

Curbside Management Practitioners Guide

Pedestrianisation in Hackney Case Study

Streetscape Guidance

Traffic Calming Measures Fact Sheet

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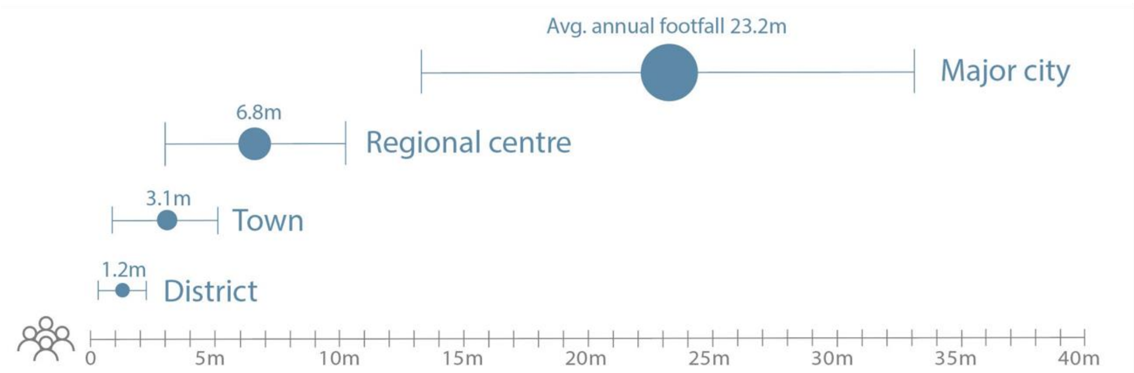
Appendices

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 IMD Health IMD Housing IMD Education	IMD Living Environment			IMD Income IMD Employment
Wellbeing Index People	Education and learning 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 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

Hazel Grove Location Report Highlights		
	Count	Percentage
Total Units	127	
Retail (shops)	87	68.5%
Leisure	40	31.5%
	Count	Percentage
Vacancy Rates	11	8.7%
Retail (Shops)	9	7.1%
Leisure	2	1.6%
Classification Mix	Count	Percentage
Comparison	29	22.8%
Convenience	6	4.7%
Service	48	37.8%
Leisure	38	29.9%
Net Change in Openings/Closures	Count	Difference in Classification (percentage)
Comparison	1	3.6%
Convenience	-3	-33.3%
Service	1	2.1%
Leisure	4	10.0%
Independent vs Multiple Mix	Count	Percentage
Independents	95	76.6%
Multiples	29	23.4%

Appendix 5: Footfall Signature Types

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