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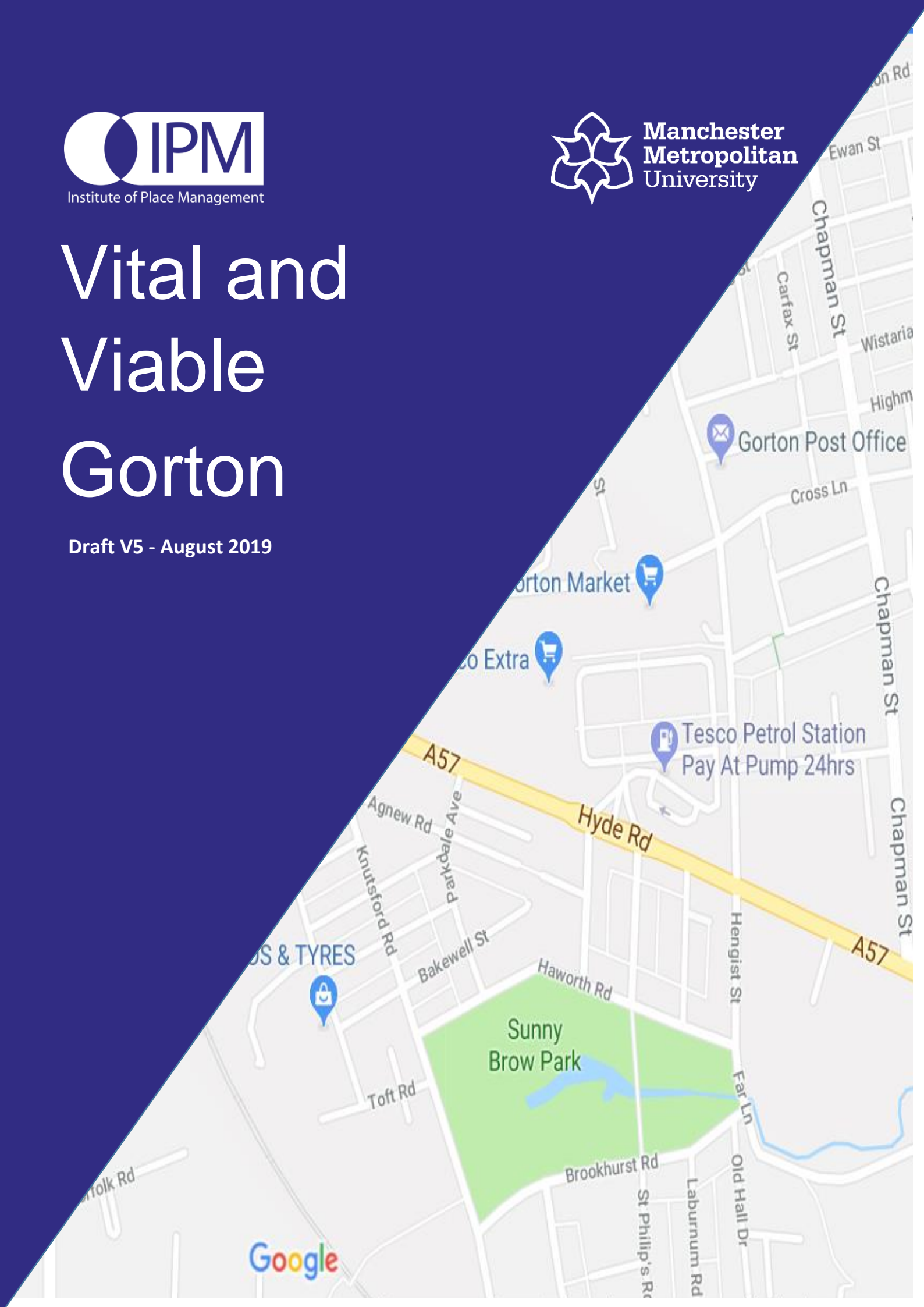
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# Vital and Viable Gorton

Draft V5 - August 2019



## Foreword

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

Based on secondary data, a primary audit of Gorton, meetings with Gorton's Neighbourhood Team, two workshops held with 25 local stakeholders, and footfall data, this report explores Gorton's activity patterns, in relation to the IPM's 'footfall signature types'. It also outlines the centre's key strengths and weaknesses by drawing upon the IPM's 'Top 25 Factors'. It concludes by detailing what stakeholders in Gorton can do going forwards to improve its vitality and viability, in relation to the IPM's '4Rs' framework.

## About the Institute of Place Management

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

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# Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres: Gorton Report

## 1. Introduction

The Institute of Place Management (IPM) based at Manchester Metropolitan University, and Manchester City Council (MCC) are currently leading a project to improve the vitality and viability of district centers across Manchester. Footfall data is also being provided by project partners Springboard to track the activity levels of 10 district centres in Manchester. And so, for the first time, activity and performance across the whole city can be analysed. *The Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres* project, which began in 2016 and will finish in 2019, has the following key aims:

- 1) To inform the Terms of Reference and Work Programme of the District Centres Subgroup.
- 2) To develop a long-term vision and strategy for neighbourhood centres across Manchester, in full partnership with MCC and district centre stakeholders, that is rigorous and based upon the latest academic and performance evidence.

This work will, in turn, have a measurable impact upon:

- a) The sustainability of Manchester's existing centres as places that serve the needs of their catchment communities; and
- b) The liveability of neighbourhoods that are currently, or at risk of being, underserved in terms of access to district centre services.

As part of the project, the IPM and MCC are also working more closely with a range of stakeholders (including residents, councillors, local traders, neighbourhood teams, and other key individuals) within four place management pilot centres. This approach is to help foster stakeholder collaboration, and ensures any interventions that have most impact on vitality and viability are prioritised and can be implemented locally. Gorton has been selected as one of these centres. This report details the outcomes of our work with Gorton, including analysing its current strengths and weaknesses, in addition to looking at what stakeholders in the centre might be able to do to improve its vitality and viability.

The report is structured as follows:

- It first details the issues currently impacting traditional retail centres in the UK.
- Second, it discusses the challenges of defining what a district centre is, before more specifically addressing Manchester's district centres.
- Third, the report details key findings stemming from the IPM's *High Street UK 2020* (HSUK2020) and *Bringing Big Data to Small Users* (BDSU) projects, which underpin our analysis of Gorton's performance.

*(the above sections are useful for providing a context and background to the analysis of Gorton which follows)*

- Fourth, the key insights about Gorton emerging from the *Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres* project are outlined, drawing on centre audits, footfall data, meetings with the neighbourhood team, and two workshops with local stakeholders.

- The report concludes by proposing several recommendations regarding how Gorton's vitality and viability can be enhanced, in relation to the IPM's '4Rs' framework (*reinventing, repositioning, rebranding, restructuring*).

## 2. Challenges impacting traditional retail centres

As many of our traditional retail centres and high streets have been market places for around a thousand years, it is perhaps easy to think that they are places of constancy and that the challenges they are facing today are unprecedented. It is certainly the case that the challenges are significant; but traditional retail centres have always faced change, and the majority have proved to be resilient in their response. Many have overcome disruptive change from industrial development, the impact of new transport modes, and rapid population growth. Though most city, town, and district centres are still retail centres, they are also increasingly looking to their other traditional roles as places of entertainment and leisure, as civic, educational and service centres, of employment and business, and as places to live, to ensure they have a sustainable future.

There are a number of critical trends that are currently impacting traditional retail centres in the UK. Population growth in the country as a whole is significant, having risen from 52.4 million in 1960 to just over 66 million in 2017, and forecast to reach 72.7 million by 2040 (ONS, 2018). This creates demand for the services that town centres offer; but some of that demand is now being met elsewhere. Since the 1970s, we have seen much retail expenditure head to out of town locations. Despite various attempts by central government to restrict new development of out of town centres through planning policy, some 4.6 million square metres of new out of town floorspace was built in the first decade of this century. This, coupled with changes to our shopping habits, has contributed to a developing issue of over-supply which we are now beginning to see affect our traditional centres, leading to vacant primarily A1 usage units (average GB retail vacancy fell from 14% in 2012 to 11% in 2017, though is now beginning to rise again - Local Data Company, 2017). This recent trend is likely to continue over the coming years, with retail vacancy increasing, simultaneous with a fall in demand for this space. As a result, reduction in space or a change in usage are the likely outcomes.

In terms of changing shopping habits, as well as out of town retailing attracting expenditure away from town centres, the UK is also the world-leader in adapting to online retail. According to the Centre for Retail Research (2016), some 16.8% of UK retail spend was online in 2016. The growth in this has been very rapid. In 2002 it was just 1.6%, and is forecast to reach 21.5% in 2018. It is perhaps no surprise, therefore, that the share of retail expenditure in town centres which fell below half in 2000, continues to decrease, having fallen below 40% in 2014 (Parliament, 2014). The growth of online retailing has been having a profound impact on the presence of multiple retailers in town centres. Various commentators have suggested that a multiple retailer needed to be in over 250 town centres in 2000 to have a national presence but can now exist in just 70.

Away from pure retail, other impacts are also being felt on the High Street. Around one fifth of all pubs in the UK have closed since 2010 (CVS, 2017); and though the rate of closure appears to have slowed, there are concerns about the impact the recent business rate revaluation will have on many pubs. And it is a combination of these factors that have driven a general rise in retail vacancy across the UK.

Despite vacancy levels beginning to rise over the last twelve months, the fall in retail vacancy between 2012 and 2017 suggests some cause for optimism. Branded coffee shops continue to expand across the UK, growing by 6.9% in 2016 alone (Allegra, 2016) and, on current trends, will overtake the number of pubs by 2030. This has contributed to an overall growth in leisure in town centres in 2016, and likewise service retailing is increasing (hairdressers, nail bars and the like) as is convenience retailing (Local Data Company, 2016).

Whilst much focus has been assigned to reversing the fortunes of city and town centres, surrounding these larger places are smaller district centres like Gorton, on which local communities rely. And it is these smaller centres at the centre of the Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres project to which we now turn our attention.

### **3. District centres**

#### **3.1. *What are district centres?***

District centres lie at the heart of the Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres project. Yet understanding what a district centre actually is has always been a difficult task for planners and academics. This is since they “generally lack the historical associations of market towns, and often have a less clearly defined and established role” (DoE, 1998: 5). Usually, researchers based their assumptions on subjective sub-divisions of these centres, taking into account various measures (e.g. business trade, retail turnover, size, catchment, merchandise, uses, assortment, and floorspace) (Guy, 1998; Reynolds and Schiller, 1992). Schiller and Jarrett (1985) argued that district centres are less specialised than regional and town centres, as they tend to be the main weekly shopping centres that supply convenience and durable goods. Whilst the diversity of these centres led Reynolds and Schiller (1992) to classify them into minor and major, depending on the number of variety stores in the centres. However, with the closure of many shops due to the effects of retail decentralisation, many district centres declined to a residual status serving less mobile local residents, and offering a top-up or emergency shopping function for the remainder (Thomas and Bromley, 1995).

In PPG6, a district centre was defined as “groups of shops, separate from the town centre, usually containing at least one food supermarket or superstore, and non-retail services such as banks, building societies and restaurants” (DoE, 1998: 18; also see DoE, 1993, 1996). However, this definition can also apply to large food stores with other unit shops and in-store services that can potentially perform the role of a district centre, even though these were not recognised as such (Lowe, 1998). One significant outcome of such policies, was the advent of the corporate food store in district centres, which was considered by some academics as a vital anchor in maintaining the quality and range of shopping in district centres (Thomas and Bromley, 2002, 2003; Wrigley and Dolega, 2011).

In the NPPF, a minor adjustment was made to the existing PPG6 definition, highlighting the importance of local public facilities (such as a library) in district centres, and the social community focus that these centres provide (DCLG, 2012; Gransby, 1988). However, the ambivalence of what a district centre is, and how it differs from the traditional town centre, still remains, as the report clearly states that:



“A town centre is an area defined on the local authority’s proposal map, including the primary shopping area and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. References to town centres or centres apply to city centres, town centres, district centres and local centres but exclude small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance”.

What is not under question from the above, is the importance of district centres in planning policies and sustainable development. District centres, just as any other type of centre, need to steer away from mono-functional, retail-oriented representations, and emerge as multi-functional ones, supporting leisure and recreation, employment, tourism, heritage, culture, housing, employment, education, health and wellbeing, as well as retail (Millington et al., 2015), thus becoming resilient to anticipated future economic changes (DCLG, 2012). As such, there is a clear requirement for centres to adapt to ensure that they meet this challenge.

### **3.2. Manchester’s district centres**

In the City of Manchester, planning and strategic approaches towards district centres have mostly followed the directives of national planning policy, such as PPS4 and NPPF. Core strategies for the City have identified that district centres provide “the focus for local accessible shopping facilities and a full range of community services, with the City’s neighbourhood centres primarily serving local residents’ day to day needs” (MCC, 2009). Whereas economic development remained the main driver behind district centre strategies, other documents stressed the importance of a sense of community, and the creation of successful neighbourhoods that attract and retain people from diverse communities, and in which people feel secure and supported. The majority of Manchester’s residents seem to have similar opinions about what a district centre should be:

“Regarding the role of district centres, a very high percentage (90%) of respondents stated that local areas should provide nearby residents with the core goods and services to support a sustainable centre. This would help reduce the use of transport, alleviating the need for unnecessary travel to shops and services further afield. Also, assist in the building and expansion of local communities, to support the City Council’s Community Strategy” (MCC, 2009: 3–4).

The Core Strategy (see MCC, 2012) identified 17 district centres in Manchester, which varied in the quality and range of facilities and services they provided; but comparison goods functions were associated with bigger district centres (e.g. Chorlton, Wythenshawe, and Cheetham Hill). Furthermore, there is also a clear distinction between district centres led by convenience retail anchors such as superstores (e.g. Hulme and Sportcity), and those that have a broader range of retailers and services, making them more attuned to the traditional notion of a district centre. At that point, different retail functions, as well as public investment for health and community centres, were proposed as areas for improving the City’s centres, with an attention on community empowerment and inclusion. Manchester’s Community Strategy documents have also been consistent with these directives; however, they have also emphasised how place-specific factors, such as

cleanliness, safety, green spaces, and public services (i.e. libraries, sports, and cultural facilities), are critical to the fabric of successful district centres. Manchester City Centre and its district centres are places to shop, work, eat, drink, enjoy leisure activities, access services, and increasingly to live. They are also a key economic asset, with the City Centre recognised as the primary economic driver for the City Region. Essential to delivering Manchester's community strategy vision of a successful city that attracts and retains successful people, is ensuring that everyone has access to a range of shops, community facilities, services, leisure, and culture opportunities that meet their needs in a sustainable way. Accessible district centres and local centres are thus important in creating a sense of place and focus, and in turn to creating neighbourhoods of choice.

#### 4. HSUK2020 project: Factors impacting vitality and viability

There are two main research projects conducted by the IPM underpinning the Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres project, and the analysis of the centres within it, the first of these being High Street UK 2020 (HSUK2020). And this project will now be briefly outlined.

In 1994, the government commissioned the publication of a research report called *Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge* (HMSO, 1994). This report led to changes in national planning policy, which then placed a clear focus on town centres first for future development. The report defined vitality and viability in respect of town centres. They are both concerned with life: the first (vitality) being about whether a centre feels lively and the second (viability) whether a centre has the capacity to attract the investment needed, not only to maintain the fabric of the place, but also to allow for adaptation to changing circumstances. The terms vitality and viability were used in national planning policy, used by local authorities and local partnerships, and much discussed by researchers. A wide range of initiatives were also undertaken in town centres across the country with the aim of promoting vitality and viability.

In 2014, as part of the ESRC-supported HSUK2020 project, the IPM undertook a comprehensive literature review to identify factors contributing to centre vitality and viability (see Parker *et al.*, 2017). This produced some 160 factors and these were discussed with a number of stakeholders from ten UK town centres who were partners in the project. This meeting identified additional factors, some of which were found in the wider literature, and some of which had not yet been researched. In total, the study identified 201 factors that impact on town centre vitality and viability. However, as they stood they had no sense of priority or importance. And so 22 leading town centre experts drawn from practitioners and researchers were asked to rank them using two scales: how much a factor impacted on town centre vitality and viability, and how much local control could be exercised over a factor. This then led to the 'Top 25 Factors' impacting vitality and viability, detailed below:

1. ACTIVITY HOURS	Ensuring the centre is open when the catchment needs it. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?
2. APPEARANCE	Improving the quality of the visual appearance. How clean is the centre?

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

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

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

## **5. The BDSU project: Footfall signature types**

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

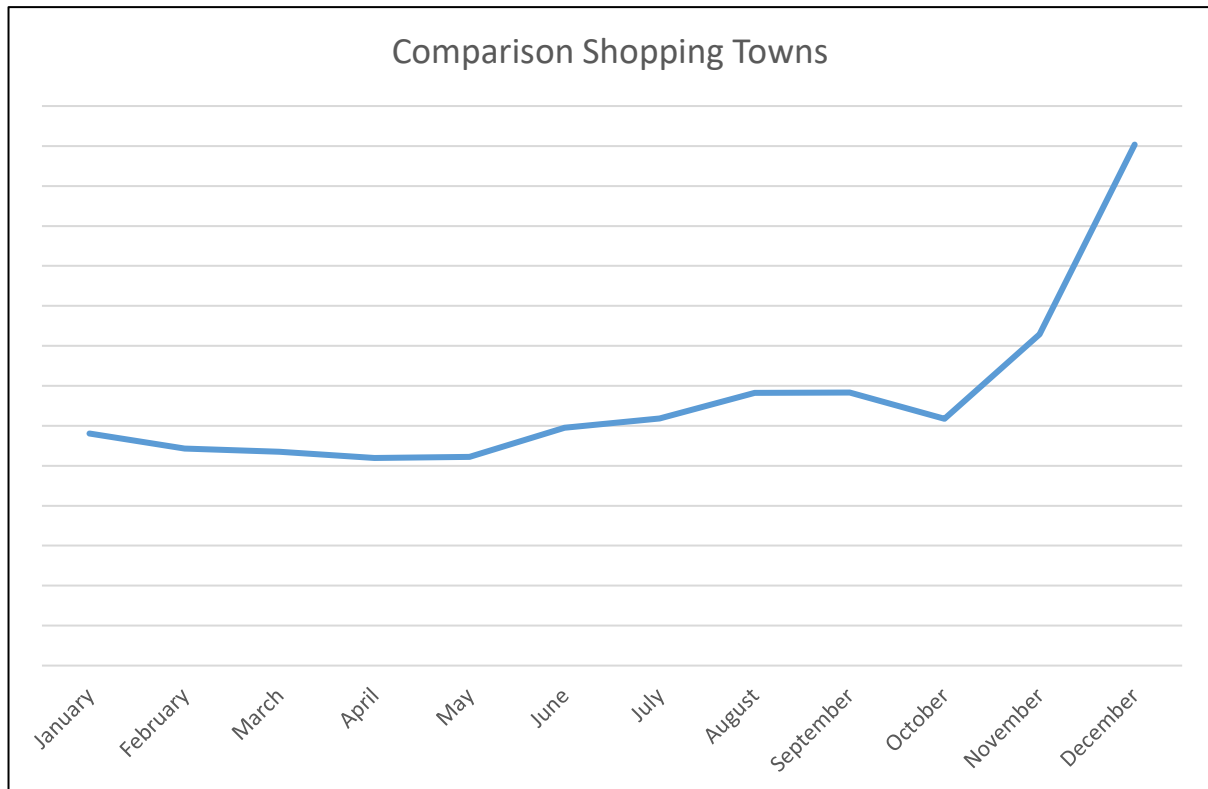
Analysis of this data has identified four basic patterns that have profound significance in thinking about the future of traditional retail centres. The patterns show usage of a centre by month over a twelve-month period. Whilst it had traditionally been assumed that most centres show an increase in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

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

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

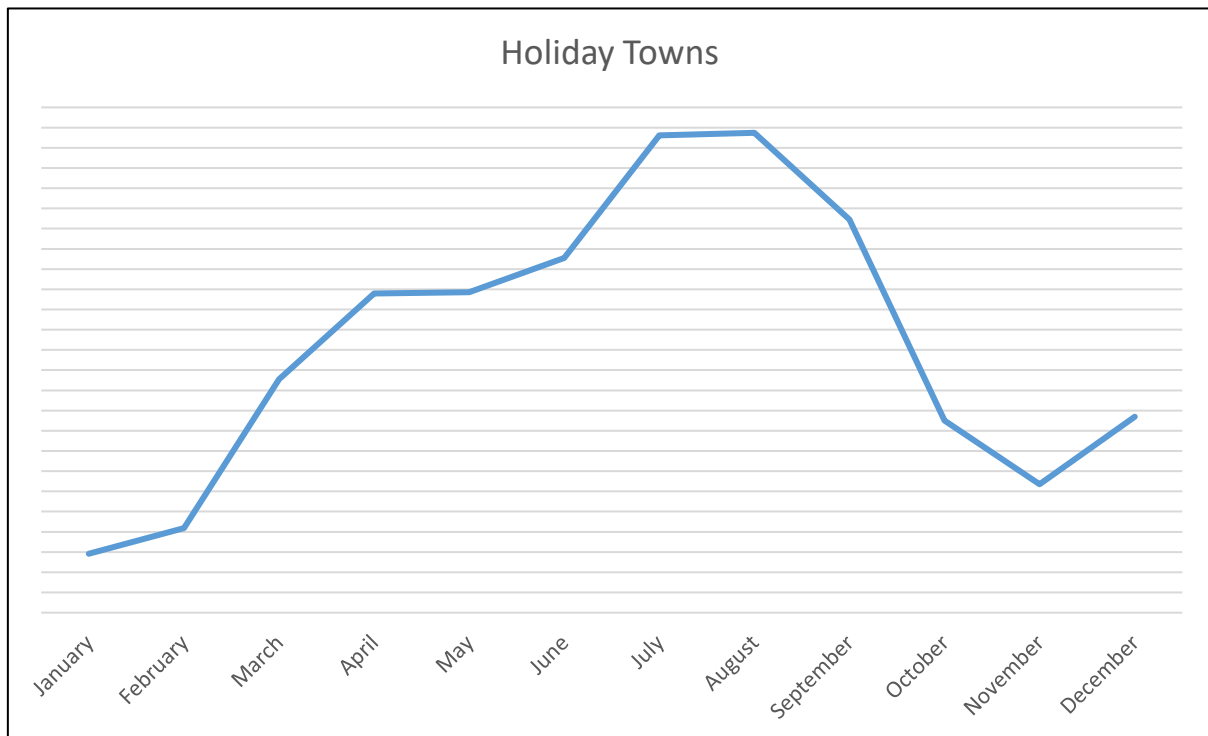
### **Comparison shopping towns**

Comparison shopping centres tend to be located in larger town and city centres, and their monthly town signatures can be identified by a footfall peak in December, coinciding with the Christmas preparation period (as seen in the figure below). Here you will typically find a range of department stores, major variety stores, and a solid line-up of fashion and other comparison retailing. They draw people from a wide catchment area, though visits may be relatively infrequent. As such, they need to be accessible by a choice of means of transport with good links to the region they serve. These centres compete with other similar centres and with other retail channels.



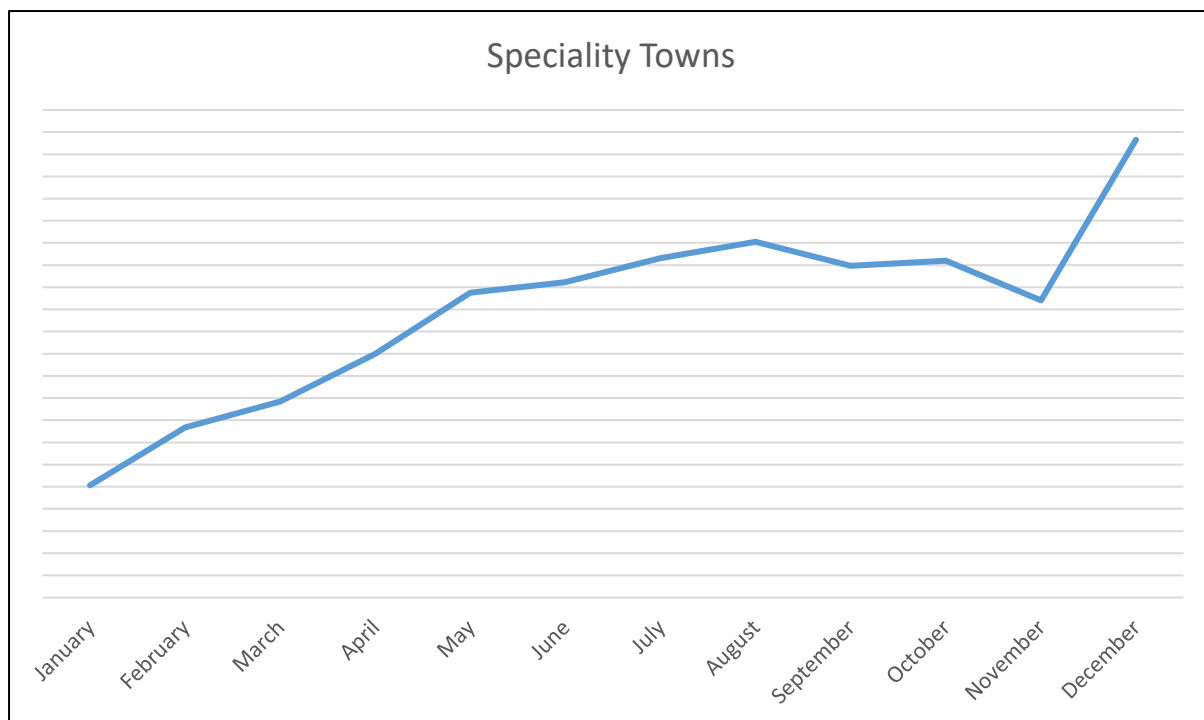
### Holiday towns

In holiday towns, the peak pedestrian flow is in the summer months (as seen in the figure below). Although these are usually coastal resorts, this pattern is also found in some inland places with strong visitor appeal. Their anchor is usually not retail but perhaps a natural feature like a beach or the countryside. The retail offer in the town is very much geared towards tourists and does not serve the local community very well, as reflected in the lack of use out of season. These centres need to maximise trade in the peak months, through extended opening hours and increased trading areas, but in the future, they need to look at extending the visitor season and providing more for local communities.



### Speciality towns

Speciality towns have a notable Christmas shopping peak, but they also attract visitors through the spring and summer (see figure below). They offer something unique and special that appeals to visitors from a wide area, in many cases including overseas visitors. Their anchor is not retail but perhaps a distinctive cathedral, museum, city walls, or unique quarter. Speciality towns primarily organise themselves to protect and promote their identity and positioning. It would appear that people spend longer on their visits to these centres and this may be supported by a strong retail and leisure/hospitality offer. This means these centres do also provide well for their local communities. They need to focus on how they make themselves more special and distinctive, whilst still meeting the needs of their catchment.

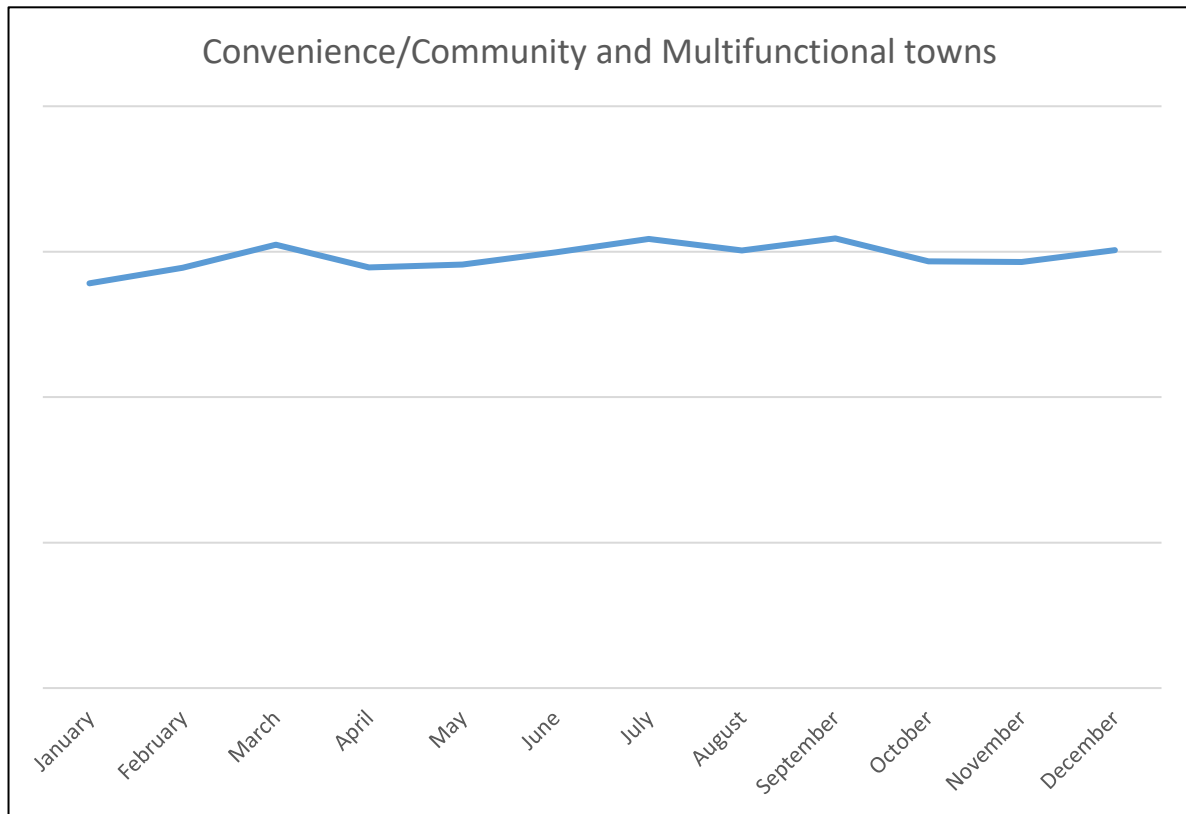


### **Convenience/community towns and multifunctional centres**

The largest group of centres identified by usage, termed convenience/community towns and multifunctional centres, have a fairly steady footfall profile throughout the year (see figure below). And centres of this kind are focused on their local community. Their anchor might be food retailing, employment, access to public transport, or a strong resident base. They are places that offer a convenient mix of goods and services. Centres with a relatively low volume of footfall through the year need to think about how they are locally connected and focus efforts on improving convenience for people in the immediate area. This may be through ensuring trading hours meet local needs, through introducing new offers such as parcel collection from retail units or lockers, pop-up retailers and restaurants or regular markets which bring in new product lines and services on an occasional basis, home-working and small business facilities, a very strong customer service approach focused on maintaining customer loyalty, or other things that enhance convenience and respond to community need. Centres with a higher annual footfall may be quite large and have a strong retail offer but they have steady footfall flows because they are multifunctional centres. Their employment base, hospitality offer, culture and entertainment, strong service offer, and central housing all ensure that footfall remains steady through the year. They also need to think about connectivity, but perhaps at a regional level, and about ensuring they can support the range of activities that take place in the centre.

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





## 6. Investigating Gorton's vitality and viability

To understand more about how the trajectory and development of centres can be changed in line with the 'Our Manchester' philosophy, the IPM has been working with stakeholders in four of Manchester's district centres. A rationale for centre selection was developed between the IPM and MCC, along with a suggestion of four centres that would benefit from the research programme. The four suggested centres- Chorlton, Gorton, Harpurhey, and Northenden- were then approved by the District Centres Sub-committee.

The work we have undertaken that has led to this report was not an in-depth study of Gorton. We were not commissioned as consultants to undertake extensive local research, or spend time really getting to know the centre. We have, however, read various background documents provided by MCC, undertaken a primary audit of the centre, had meetings with Gorton's Neighbourhood Team to learn a bit more about the centre, and also ran two development workshops with local stakeholders.

We will now discuss what we learned about Gorton from this work, before moving onto presenting some recommendations about what the centre could do to further enhance its vitality and viability going forwards.

## 6.1. Primary centre audit

To enrich our understandings of Gorton's performance, members of the IPM research team undertook a primary audit of the centre based upon the 25 factors identified in the HSUK2020 project (Appendix 1), in addition to updating MCC's retail use list (Appendix 2).

From this audit, we were able to identify Gorton's key strengths and weaknesses in terms of those factors which have the most impact on its vitality and viability. Five factors for which Gorton is performing well, and five for which there is room for improvement, are detailed in the table below:

FACTORS WHICH ARE A STRENGTH IN GORTON	FACTORS WHICH ARE A WEAKNESS IN GORTON
<p><b>Factor 8. Necessities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centre provides a basic convenience offering for locals.</li> <li>• There is car parking provision on Tesco Extra, which provides free parking for customers for up to 2 hours.</li> <li>• Toilets are easily found in Tesco Extra.</li> <li>• ATMs available in Tesco.</li> <li>• There are benches along Hyde Road.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Factor 2. Appearance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst there is some pleasant greenspace in Gorton, and The Plough pub is well-kept, in general the units in the centre look quite dishevelled and outdated. The centre has quite a 'hard' functional image on the whole.</li> <li>• There was furniture and household appliances on the street outside some of the units along Hyde Road.</li> <li>• There was also some littering and shattered glass noticeable on the pavements and grass areas.</li> <li>• The Gorton Market is not overly inviting due to its opaqueness.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Factor 11. Diversity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The units in Gorton primarily provide a convenience offer, comprising food/groceries and household items. The addition of the market, and retailers aimed at the ethnically mixed community in Gorton help to engender a sense of diversity in the centre.</li> <li>• There are also a wide range of services available in Gorton (e.g. hairdressing, doctors, pharmacy, repairs etc.)</li> <li>• However, the centre is perhaps lacking in leisure, food and beverage.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Factor 4. Vision and Strategy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no Traders Association bringing the retailers together around a shared vision/strategy, nor any groups bringing together other key centre stakeholders to encourage collaborative working.</li> <li>• Engagement with managers of local nearby attractions appears to be limited</li> <li>• Despite a wide range of civic and voluntary groups within the area, few appear to be engaged at a strategic level</li> <li>• There seem to be tensions around some traders leaving furniture outside of the units on Hyde Road.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Team does, however, have regular contact with residents about issues within the</li> </ul>

	centre such as waste, parking, and general complaints.
<p><b>Factor 16. Accessibility</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hyde Road runs through the centre, meaning that it is easily accessible via car (although the road was congested and busy at the time of visit).</li> <li>There are three nearby train stations (Belle Vue, Gorton, and Ryder Brow).</li> <li>Bus routes 7, 201, 203, and 207 also run along Hyde Road.</li> <li>There were no noticeable cycle lanes in the centre.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Factor 5. Experience</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorton lacks a 'centre feeling'. The centre is dissected in half by Hyde Road, which is very busy with traffic, and there is currently no real central hub indicating to visitors that they have arrived in Gorton.</li> <li>The centre on the whole has a dishevelled appearance, especially along Hyde Road due to outdated looking units, littering, and furniture and appliances in front of some shops, which contributes to a negative experience, and functional image.</li> <li>There are limited places for people to dwell and socialise in the centre.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Factor 23. Liveability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorton provides a good range of basic services for its local community, i.e.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A police station</li> <li>-Pharmacy</li> <li>-Park/playground</li> <li>-Community centre</li> <li>-Library</li> <li>-Dentist</li> <li>-Medical centre</li> <li>-Post office</li> <li>-Funeral care</li> <li>-A church</li> <li>-Three schools near to Hyde Road.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Factor 12. Walkability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The pavements along Hyde Road are quite wide, flat, and easy to navigate. However, there was some litter and shattered glass along the pavements and parallel grass areas, as well as some examples of inconsiderate pavement parking which can hamper pedestrian movements.</li> <li>Hyde Road is very busy and cuts the centre in two; however, there are not many points at which the road can be easily and safely crossed by pedestrians. The Tesco Extra car park would also be difficult to cross as a pedestrian at busy times, as traffic uses the car park as a short cut between Hyde Road and Garratt Way.</li> <li>The centre on the whole seems to cater for cars more than pedestrians.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Factor 24. Adaptability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a few vacant units in the centre, both along Hyde Road and on adjacent streets, which could offer opportunities for new businesses to enter Gorton, and the potential development of a central hub of activity.</li> <li>There is a very large car park to the front of the Tesco Extra, which at the time of visiting, was very underutilised.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Factor 17. Place marketing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a lot of independent traders along Hyde Road who seem to be working in isolation from one another not offering a consistent place image.</li> <li>Gorton Market has an 'it's your market' branding approach to presumably encourage a community feel; yet the images used to promote it on the market's frontage look a bit outdated.</li> <li>There does not seem to be much active promotion of Gorton as a place.</li> </ul>

There is potential for new civic or greenspace or other uses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was good signage in Gorton pointing visitors towards the market, park, gymnastics centre, and local key services (e.g. the police station), but little signage or acknowledge of attractions just outside the centre.</li> </ul>
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## Retail use type audit

	2015	2018	Change
A1 - Shops	52	53	Plus 1
A2 - Financial & Professional	3	3	No change
A3 - Café & Restaurant	5	4	Minus 1
A4 - Bar/pub	3	4	Plus 1
A5 - Hot food/takeaway	7	7	No change
B2 - General Industrial	1	1	No change
D1 - Non-resi Institutions	4	5	Plus 1
Sui Generis	9	9	No change
Vacant Building	8	6	Minus 2
Vacancy Rate (%)	9	6	Minus 3
Total Business Units	92	93	Plus 1
Business Turnover (against previous use list)	23	31	Plus 8

The research team also updated Gorton's 2015 retail use type survey during the audit visit. Results of the survey are shown in the table above. The centre has retained a solid level of retail occupancy over the past three years, with vacancy actually decreasing by 3% during the period. Whilst business turnover for the period exceeds the rate of change recorded in the last audit (23 business changes recorded in the period to 2015, compared to 31 changes between 2015 and 2018), it is encouraging that when there has been vacancy, it has not taken long for this to be filled. Overall, at a time when many centres are experiencing a rise in vacant units, Gorton's performance in this respect is very encouraging, and points to a centre that is on the whole meeting the immediate needs of its local catchment.

## 6.2. Footfall data

As part of the Vital and Viable Neighbourhood Centres project, project partners Springboard have installed footfall counters in 10 of Manchester's district centres. A footfall counter has been capturing around the clock footfall data in Gorton since November 2017.

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

Automated footfall monitoring provides data on the volume of customers in a centre, and is critical for practitioners in the evaluation of whether strategies and initiatives to drive increases in footfall are effective. The dynamic nature of footfall means that this data delivers the most immediate response to any initiative, and so enables practitioners to be able to readily identify the impact of initiatives on the success of the centre.

In addition, recording footfall in this way removes the reliance on secondary or associated indicators such as public transport or car parking usage, which often are limited in their effectiveness due to paucity of data or a less than direct correlation to customer activity.

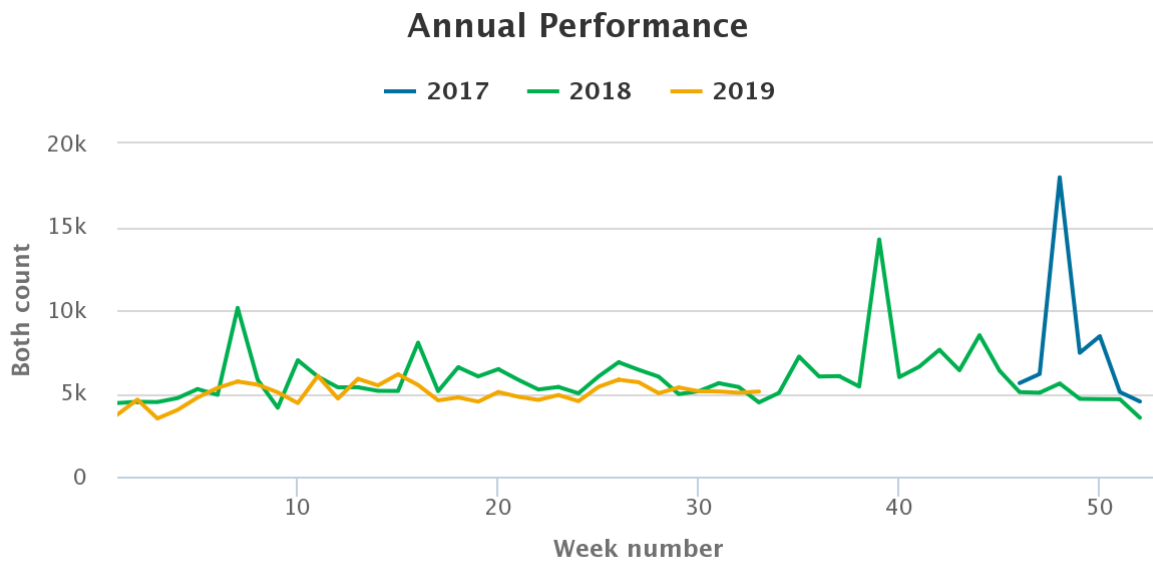
Footfall monitoring has a number of key applications and supports a centre by:

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

Gorton's counter is located on Hyde Road, as seen in the image below. This counter, installed in November 2017, has been recording footfall 24 hours per day. As such, we

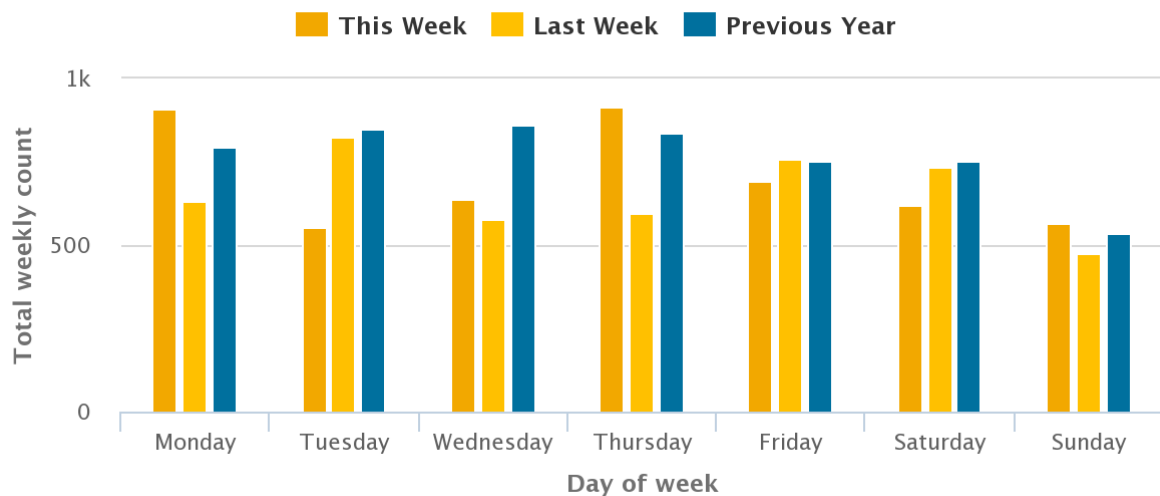
currently have approximately 21 months of data that we can use to decipher how the centre is being used. As the data set grows, the longitudinal nature of the information collected will allow us to develop an enhanced picture of how the centre is performing throughout the year, and against previous years. As such, the location of the counter (and the count itself) is of less importance than the usage trends and patterns it allows us to draw out. This insight will be invaluable for tracking the success of any interventions which are put into place. A summary of the data analysed so far is explained below.





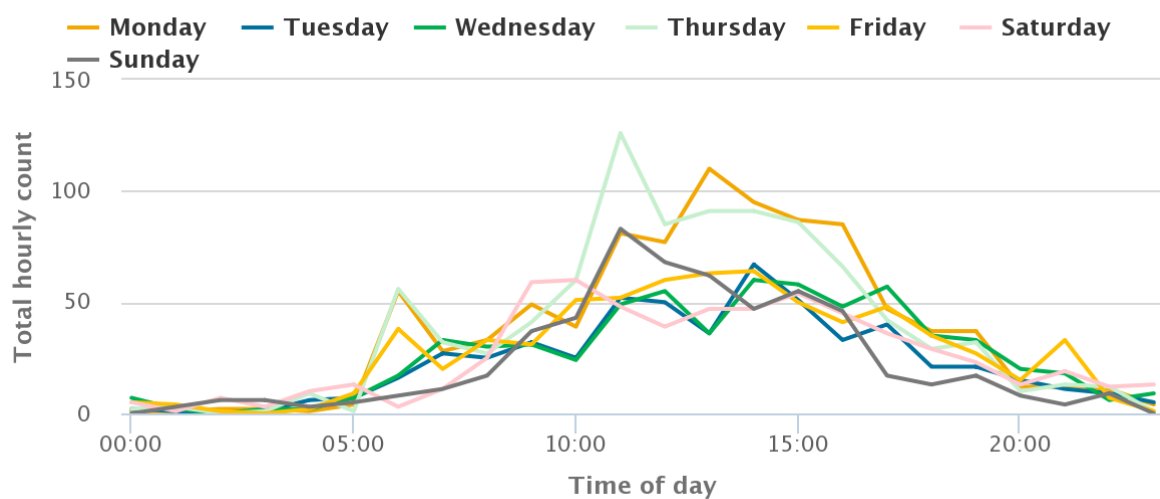
The graph above shows the total weekly footfall figures from the week commencing November 20<sup>th</sup> 2017 to the end of the week commencing 12<sup>th</sup> August 2019. The range varies from 3490 (w/c 14/1/2019) to just under 18,000 (w/c 27/11/2017) movements per week. The latter is an outlier amongst a relatively consistent usage pattern, with only w/c 24/9/2018 showing a similar spike of 14,238 movements. It emerged at the workshop that was held that the spike in November 2017 was more than likely due to the Christmas lights switch-on taking place during that week. Bar these infrequent outliers, we can see that there is relatively little deviation away from the average weekly footfall of approximately 6,000 movements per week. As such, we are beginning to see a pattern of relative consistency from week to week. With reference to our town signature types, the centre is displaying characteristics of a typical convenience/community centre, which fits with our assumptions and the views of the local stakeholders.

## Daily Comparison (Week 23 : Mon 3 Jun 2019 – Sun 9 Jun 2019)



If we delve into a little more detail and look at the average daily footfall for the w/c 3/6/2019 (the week the stakeholder workshop took place), again we can see a broadly consistent pattern of between approximately 500 and 900 movements per day. Sunday is the quietest day, with an average of just over 500 movements recorded – a figure that is likely to be affected by a significant proportion of the businesses in the centre being closed on a Sunday (including the market), and the Tesco Extra operating much shorter Sunday opening hours.

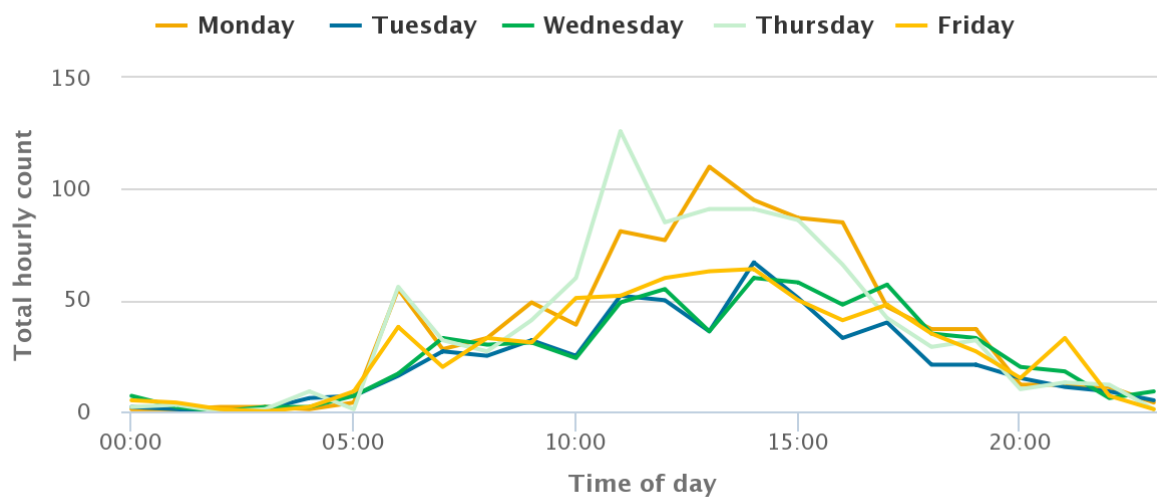
## Hourly Comparison (Week 23 : Mon 3 Jun 2019 – Sun 9 Jun 2019)



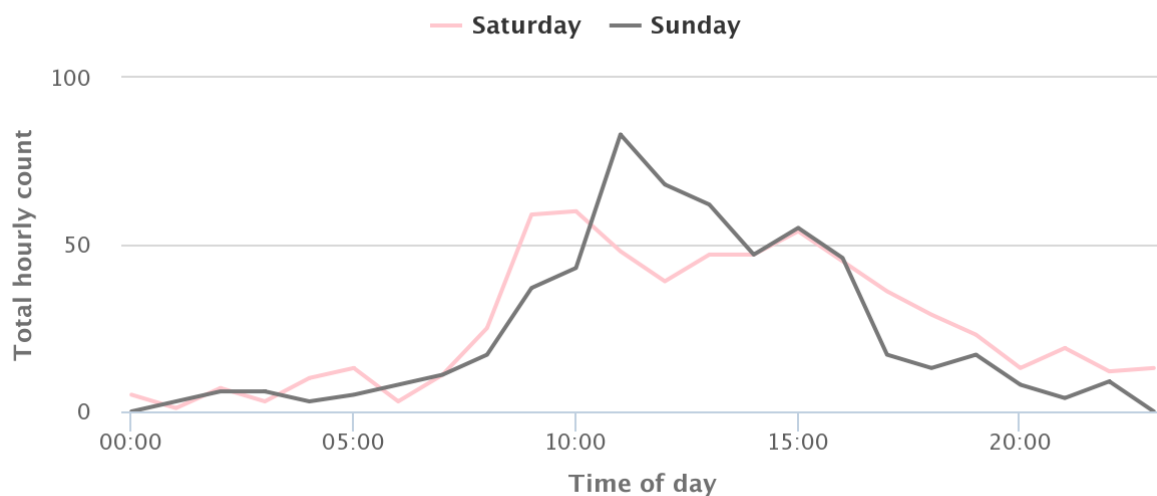


Going into further detail, the counter's 24 hour recording allows us to break down the data into average hourly footfall. We can see that the footfall builds during standard business operating hours (9am-5pm), reaching a peak around 11am-midday, possibly due to people visiting the centre during their lunch break. Footfall then plateaus throughout the early afternoon, before gradually tailing off towards the evening. This is largely in-line with what we would expect to see in a convenience centre. Given that Gorton does not position itself as an evening economy destination, it is perhaps not surprising that footfall post 5pm falls fairly sharply. We might conclude, therefore, that activity in the centre aligns closely with the market trading hours (9-5.30pm), and there is currently little provision in the centre to drive an evening economy.

### Hourly Comparison (Week 23 : Mon 3 Jun 2019 – Sun 9 Jun 2019)



### Hourly Comparison (Week 23 : Mon 3 Jun 2019 – Sun 9 Jun 2019)

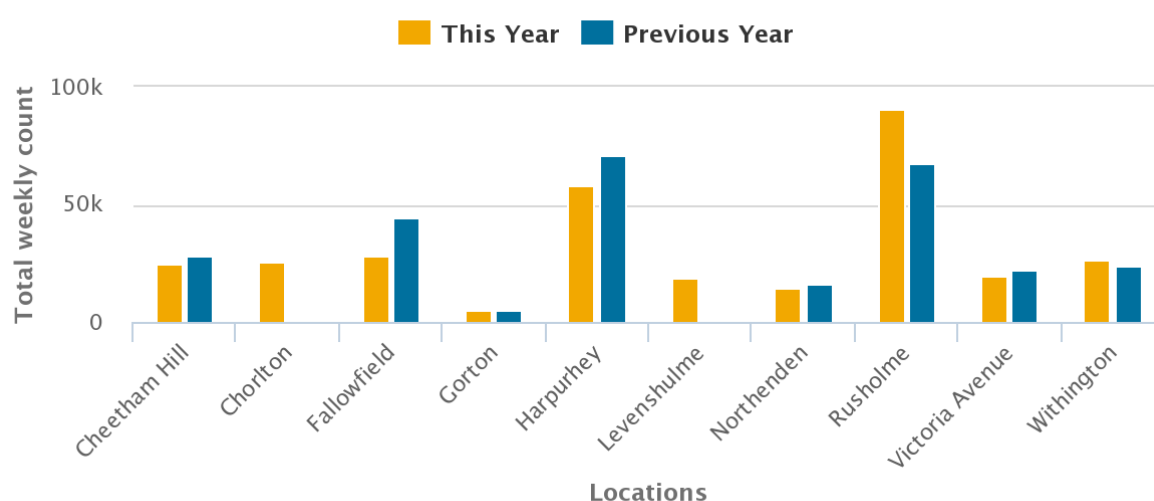


If we look at the split between footfall recorded during the traditional working week (Monday-Friday), and the weekend (Saturday-Sunday), we can see that each follow a similar pattern. There are less visitors earlier at the weekend than in the week (as one might expect with those travelling to work taken out of the picture), though in the main we can see a broad consistency in footfall. The weekdays displayed (w/c 3/6/2019) experience slightly higher movements in the late afternoon (again, possibly attributable to school/business closure around this time bringing more people into the centre), with movements for both weekdays and weekends falling around 6pm onwards, with Sunday in particular showing a sharper drop after 3pm. With the weekend typically a time when people will go out in the evening, one would expect to see a higher level of footfall around this time than in the week, but instead we see parity. Again, this points to a lack of evening economy in Gorton.

What this initial analysis of footfall in Gorton tells us, is that the centre is likely to fit the convenience/community town type signature. Overall, the centre is performing largely as we would expect in terms of use pattern, with peak hours of operation during typical business hours. It appears that the centre is being used as a functional requirement for those that visit, which is of course in keeping with the characteristics of a centre of this nature. The lack of footfall in the evenings is disappointing but not surprising. It is likely that the evening economy offer is not meeting the local catchment's needs, as such there is room for improvement in this area.

If we look at Gorton's footfall performance in comparison to other district centres in Manchester, we can see the scale of the challenge that is being faced. However, given the local catchment size, it also represents an opportunity.

### Location Comparison (Week 23 : Mon 3 Jun 2019 – Sun 9 Jun 2019)



As we move forward, developing a longitudinal data set will allow us to build an increasingly accurate picture of how the centre is performing throughout the year. Significantly, it will allow the impact of any interventions (similar to what we have already seen with the Christmas lights switch-on) to be measured against previous periods, informing future activity as a result. This data-driven approach to the implementation of measures to drive

more footfall to the centre will enable stakeholders to make better-informed decisions, which can only be good for the future of Gorton.

### **6.3. Meetings and workshops**



To learn more about current issues and developments within Gorton, IPM met with the Neighbourhood Team in January 2018. From this meeting, we learned that there are some key anchors within Gorton, including the Tesco Extra, Gorton Market, and a respected

gymnastics centre. The demographic of the local catchment has been shifting over recent years, with African and Eastern European communities settling in the area, thus adding to Gorton's multicultural vibrancy. In terms of future developments, a pioneering multi-service health and community hub is planned for the heart of the centre, which will bring together a partnership of public sector organisations, including Manchester City Council, health and social care partners and housing and community service providers.

However, in terms of public realm, it was generally felt that Gorton currently lacks a recognisable central hub or main area. It was suggested that when visiting Gorton, the lack of focal point or recognisable hub - somewhere that when you arrived you knew that you were now in Gorton - is a problem. Indeed, it was suggested that the 'centre feeling' in Gorton has been eroding over the past 30 years. Hyde Road (a busy four-lane carriageway) runs through the centre, dissecting it in two. There are limited points at which the road can be crossed by pedestrians, and it also poses congestion, noise, and air quality issues. Along this main thoroughfare, which likely acts as the primary route in for those visiting Gorton, there are some appearance issues. Several of the independent retail premises operating along Hyde Road are unkempt, with the furniture and appliances left outside. As well as reducing the attractiveness of Gorton, some of these units pose a health and safety hazard.

To further enrich our understandings of Gorton, we also conducted a two-hour workshop with 10 key local stakeholders, including residents, business owners, and local councillors, at the local library on 14th March 2018. A follow-up workshop to allow further stakeholders to attend was held on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2019, with 17 in attendance, again at the local library. The workshops gave stakeholders an opportunity to meet each other, and voice their opinions on what makes Gorton a great place to live, and the opportunities to make this even better.

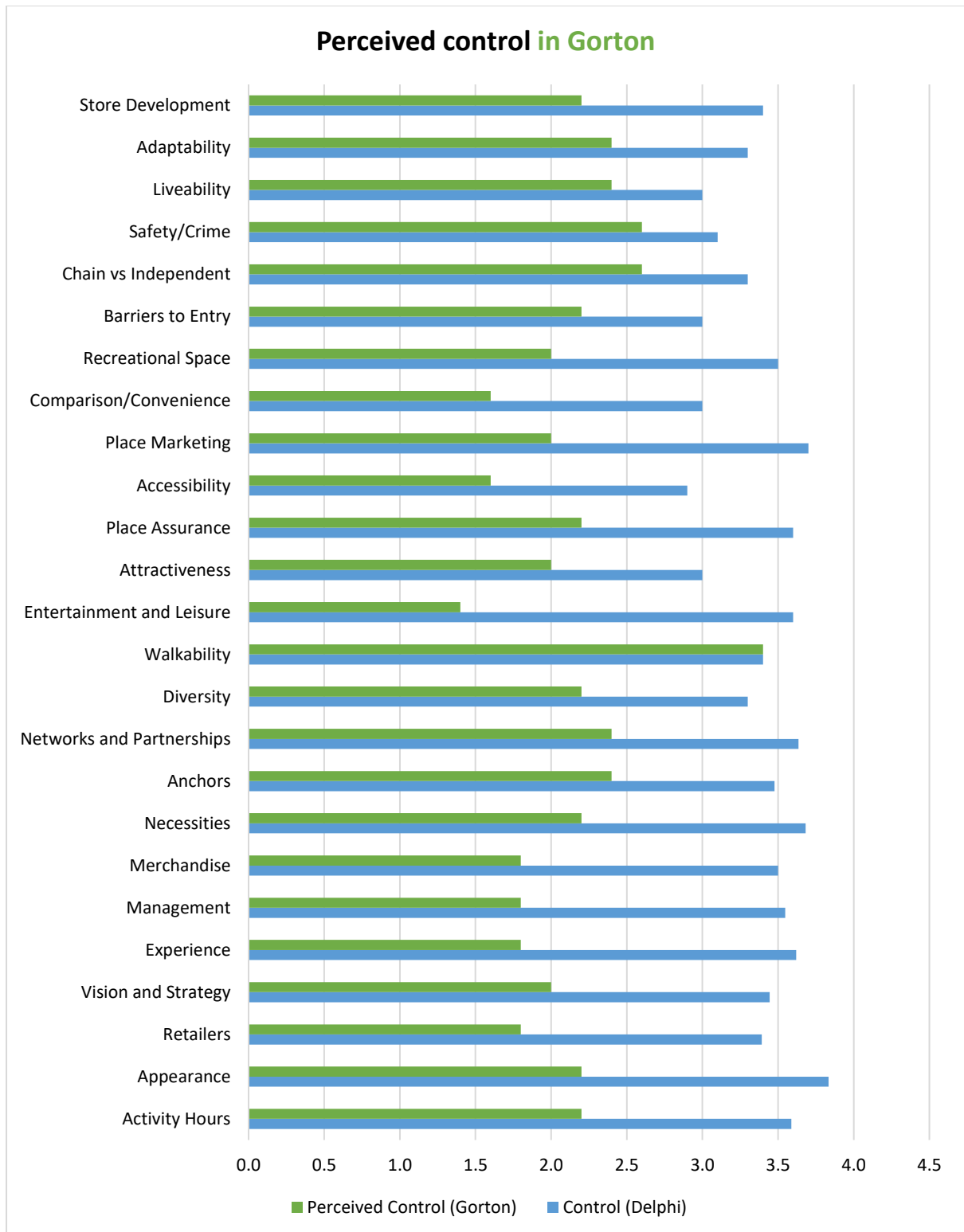
Within stakeholders' discussions of Gorton, we were able to identify what they considered as being Gorton's main positives, in addition to the key challenges the centre currently faces, as detailed in the table below.

KEY POSITIVES WITHIN GORTON	KEY CHALLENGES GORTON FACES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is an increasingly <b>diverse local catchment</b> in Gorton which contributes to a sense of vibrancy, and offers potential to further meet its needs. Retail has adapted to serve the needs of these communities, with speciality produce shops and ethnic takeaways opening up over recent years.</li> <li>• There are some <b>successful events</b> bringing the community together, such as the Christmas lights switch-on and a local carnival. These are organised by a small events committee.</li> <li>• The centre is well served by <b>public transport</b>, being close to three local railways stations. There are also good</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is <b>no real central hub</b> in Gorton, creating a sense of the centre being <b>disjointed</b>, coupled with a lack of a distinctive place <b>identity</b>. The planned community hub should help with this.</li> <li>• There are some <b>connectivity issues</b> within the centre due to Hyde Road dissecting the centre. In addition, the centre is not well connected to nearby railway stations or attractions, such as sports and leisure services on Hyde Road, and the Monastery</li> <li>• Gorton is <b>dominated by the Tesco Extra</b>, whereby people tend to do their shopping there instead of exploring the</li> </ul>

<p>bus links to surrounding areas, despite some concerns over the bus services being reduced over recent months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite concerns around the effect the Tesco Extra would have on local <b>independent retailers</b>, they have continued to operate successfully. This is testament to their importance to the local community. Despite some of the tensions regarding the siting of the Tesco, the store is a key anchor, providing potential to develop linkages and synergies within the centre.</li> <li>• <b>The market</b> provides a vibrant independent retail offer, and helps to foster a sense of community.</li> <li>• There is an opportunity for population growth in Gorton due to new <b>affordable housing</b> being built.</li> </ul>	<p>rest of the centre and making linked trips.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centre caters primarily for its local catchment, rather than having the <b>pulling power</b> to attract visitors from further afield. Unless you have a historical connection to Gorton, there is nothing for people to connect to.</li> <li>• There are <b>appearance issues</b> with some of the low-end retailers along Hyde Road creating a negative image. The market is a key anchor but is also not very inviting due to its opaque frontage.</li> <li>• There is a lack of places to dwell in the centre (e.g. especially in terms of leisure activities, cafes, bars, and restaurants), which participants identified as meaning there is <b>no reason to linger</b> in Gorton.</li> <li>• There are some <b>governance issues</b> in Gorton, as there are no channels in place to bring stakeholders together and encourage collaborative working.</li> </ul>
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The workshops also included a task whereby participants were asked to rank the 25 factors from the HSUK2020 project in terms of how controllable they felt they were. Akin to when this task has been conducted in other centres in the UK, we found that stakeholders in general felt that they had less control over these factors impacting vitality and viability, with the exception of 'walkability', than they might in reality have (see figure below). This is significant, as informing people of their capability to enact change is just as important as advising them how to enact it.

We will now move onto discussing interventions that stakeholders could collaboratively make in Gorton to make it an even better place to work, live, and spend time.





## 7. Recommendations: What can Gorton do?

It became clear from the meetings with the Neighbourhood Team, and the workshops with local stakeholders and Councillors, that there is an appetite to see Gorton improve, to build on the positives the centre possesses, and to work collaboratively to tackle some of the things that the research has pointed to as areas for improvement.

Our starting point for any advice is that decisions should be made based on evidence. Too many centres have followed what others have done without understanding whether the action taken is appropriate in their town. This has often resulted in wasted investment, had little or no impact on overall vitality and viability, and led to widespread disillusionment.

We recommend that Gorton should take into account the top 25 factors that impact on a centre's vitality and viability (as discussed in this report) and start by tackling the weaknesses identified in Sections 6.1 and 6.3. We recommend that action plans are drawn up to deal with each of these factors, each of which can be influenced to a considerable extent locally. It may be, however, that given the resource implications associated with this, that the mechanisms and partnerships needed to bring about these changes need developing and strengthening. The timescale needed to make these changes should also be considered. If many of the weaker areas will take years to achieve, then much momentum for change could be lost and the centre may decline before it improves. We think, therefore, that it is also important to identify some 'quick wins' that will address areas of concern, but which can engender wider engagement and enthusiasm. Quick wins could come from a more active place marketing presence (especially via social media), the use of pop-up/temporary retail provision, such as Makers Markets, or re-use of the existing market after normal trading hours to provide a different offer. Such measures would start to improve the diversity of the offer, as well as providing further intelligence about the potential to attract new services into the centre.

Other interventions might include community events to add more entertainment and leisure opportunities, improved signage, and fostering more stakeholder collaboration. However, again, even quick-wins are dependent on resources/community capital being in place – so whilst all the recommendations presented are done so on the assumption that adequate resources are in place to enact them, it may be that some degree of prioritisation will be required. Indeed, the *restructuring* recommendations set out below serve to address this very point.

Based on the key findings discussed in this report, we will now present several recommendations regarding what stakeholders in Gorton could do to enhance its vitality and viability. We will present this advice in relation to the IPM's '4Rs' framework, which was explained in the workshop, and includes *repositioning*, *reinventing*, *rebranding*, and *restructuring* as the four main areas in which a place can improve its performance.

## 7.1 Repositioning

- **Reviewing and interpreting footfall data is key**
- **Facilitating knowledge exchange around the data recommended (opening up data to wider audience, and encouraging ongoing stakeholder collaboration)**
- **Build on local diversity, and local attractions such as Gorton Monastery, as means of differentiation**

Repositioning is a strategy that relates to clearly identifying and communicating a place's market position (Millington and Ntounis, 2017; please click [here](#) to read more about repositioning). It can be used to counteract decline, and enables centres to identify potential competitive advantages. The starting point is understanding forces of change, and the value of unique responses that reposition centres. Such responses should build on a place's distinct capabilities, whilst also being accommodative of future trends in order for a centre to be resilient. Knowledge exchange between stakeholders is also crucial in such strategies to generate a shared understanding of a centre's identity and function.

From the primary audit, we identified that necessities and liveability were strengths in Gorton (see Section 6.1), since in addition to the local retail offer (which provides all the essentials), there are public realm features such as a local park, as well as basic additional services available in the centre (e.g. a pharmacy, a library, medical centre, and dentists). The provision in Gorton is focused around a basic convenience offering, and so, in this respect, Gorton is functioning in line with its position as a community/convenience centre.

However, whilst Gorton provides the essentials very well, there is currently little in the centre to create a sense of experience for the local catchment, particularly outside of normal business operating hours (as the footfall data illustrates; see Section 6.2); nor to attract visitors from outside the local catchment. And the poor appearance of some of the units along Hyde Road, in addition to some littering in the centre, contributes to a negative experience in Gorton (see *Reinventing*).

The workshop revealed that a local events committee are working hard to provide an entertainment offer in Gorton, and they have been responsible for the Christmas lights switch-on event and the local carnival (see Section 6.3). Such events are helping to create more of an experience and entertainment offer in Gorton; injecting some life and colour into what, by and large, is a very functional, as opposed to attractive, area. However, such events, whilst being very successful – as exemplified by the footfall data recorded to date – are temporary. Hence, to reposition Gorton as more of an attractive centre to visit, a wider group of stakeholders could collaborate to put on more events in the centre year-round, to alleviate the pressure on what is currently a small core group. Access to the footfall data can assist in these efforts, enabling the stakeholder group to track the success of any interventions made, in turn aiding the planning of future events. We would note that the diverse socio-demographic profile of the local community may provide an opportunity in this regard, with events themed around these groups likely to appeal to them, whilst simultaneously providing an opportunity for the local community to come together.

Aside from events, the general experience in the centre could be improved upon by linking the centre more explicitly to local attractions that it already possesses. Gorton Monastery,



for instance, is a great attraction, and in close proximity to the centre; yet it is relatively hidden away and so visitors might not even know it exists. Thus, more should be done to enhance the visibility of attractions such as these, and people's awareness of their existence, perhaps through additional signage, or even local artwork that could be incorporated in the centre (see Rebranding for further information about this).

Integral to repositioning Gorton via the strategies detailed above is through stakeholders' ongoing engagement and collaboration. The neighbourhood team are already working on 'getting to know you' type initiatives with the local community, and the workshops held during this project also provided a good starting point for involving local stakeholders in community action. But collaborative working now needs to continue to develop. How will this be facilitated? A project area on the IPM website can be created to enable the sharing of information between interested stakeholders; however, there is potential for more regular meetings to take forward specific action (e.g. around local events and festivals).

### Quick Win

Analysing and understanding the footfall data may offer an opportunity for a wider group of stakeholders to come together to better understand the centre and how it functions. IPM can provide some more analysis of footfall patterns; but we would recommend that the stakeholders in the centre (on the proviso that the *restructuring* recommendations below support this) start to analyse the data themselves, and share this information so that more informed and collaborative decisions can be made in Gorton. The neighbourhood team would provide the ideal lead for this type of activity.

## 7.2 Reinventing

- **Improve the general appearance of Gorton through some simple public realm clean up activity and planters/hanging baskets (potentially via 'In Bloom' style event)**
- **Introduction of community hub/centre welcome development, however the creation of a more recognisable public realm focal point or hub - perhaps through reinvention of the market, is required**
- **Potential extension of opening hours of local amenities, such as the library**
- **Create opportunities by lowering barriers to entry to local enterprise and young entrepreneurs**

Reinventing strategies relate to the activities undertaken to revitalise a place's identity and offer (Theodoridis, Ntounis, and Pal, 2017; please click [here](#) to read more about reinventing). Any place, however, should understand and seek to meet the needs of its catchment, and be sensitive to these insights when making any changes within a centre. As previously mentioned, initial footfall data analysed so far suggests that Gorton functions as a convenience/community centre (see Section 6.2); so the question is, does it meet the needs of its local catchment?

As discussed above, Gorton is meeting the immediate needs of the local catchment through provision of a typical convenience offer. The varied provision of both convenience retail and essential services (such as the medical centre, dentists, post office, and local schools), coupled with the provision of green space in nearby Debdale and Sunny Brow parks, make the centre very liveable (one of its key strengths identified in the audit; see Section 6.1).

However, the overall appearance of Gorton represents a clear area for improvement, as it was identified as one of its key weaknesses both in the primary audit, and by stakeholders in the workshops (see Sections 6.1 and 6.3). Potential appearance interventions vary from simple, low-cost activities that would improve the aesthetic of the place (e.g. flowers and cleaned up litter), to more fundamental work to 'humanise' the centre, re-designing certain aspects to cater more for the pedestrian rather than the vehicle. At the simple end of the scale, strategically placed planters or hanging baskets could be incorporated around the centre. Gorton is currently dominated by concrete, giving it a functional look, and the addition of some flowers would soften the appearance, in turn creating a more welcoming environment. The centre would also benefit in this respect from further public realm clean-up work, since there was some litter and shattered glass apparent during the audit visit.

Local traders at the workshop suggested that the arrival of the Tesco Extra created some concern amongst local independents, who feared a negative impact on their trade. Whilst we do not have data on whether this has transpired, feedback from the workshop suggests that there are few linked trips carried out in the area, with many people travelling by car to the Tesco, doing their shopping, and leaving again. Encouraging these people to visit more retailers, and dwell in the centre for longer, perhaps over a coffee, is a challenge for Gorton. With several vacant units, potential to use public space next to market, and ideas to re-purpose the market outside normal trading hours, there is potential to create opportunities for new local enterprises, which might provide additional services to deliver the centre's offer. Markets are a proven effective mechanism for achieving this objective because of low barriers to entry.

The Tesco Extra has become the dominant feature of the centre, becoming the quasi hub and focal point that would ideally be provided by a local square, or precinct encouraging people to dwell and socialise. Whilst the introduction of the integrated hub that will house community services is a positive addition to the centre, the development of a 'traditional' central aspect – in terms of public realm that could be considered the central aspect of the centre - is something that would benefit Gorton, creating a legitimate focal point that it currently lacks. Enacting this change is a more fundamental development task, and one that would require significant investment. Were this agenda to be taken forward, focusing on the development of the market building would be a possible opportunity (see Restructuring for further detail). Markets often provide the ideal focal point for towns/centres. However, Gorton's market is quite uninviting and a somewhat threatening space in its current form due to being located in a rather opaque building lacking windows. Making the inside more visible to passersby would encourage further custom; and around this ready-made focal point, a hub could develop, providing Gorton with the recognisable centre that it needs.

The opening times of certain amenities have also been mentioned as being insufficient during the workshop- the library being one example. After 5pm, the majority of businesses in the centre are closed, the notable exceptions being the Tesco Extra and the Aldi. The footfall shows that this leads to a steep decline in movements in the evening. As the footfall analysis in centre reveals, activity levels closely align with market trading days and activity

hours. As Gorton is very much a convenience centre, with many independent operators, it would not seem sensible to recommend changing this on a permanent basis. However, if efforts were made to regenerate the evening economy, temporary extended business opening hours could be trialed and linked to community-led initiatives, such as special events/festivals. Pivotal might be creation of opportunities for local enterprise and young creatives, through specialized pop-up markets. We have demonstrated evidence elsewhere, such interventions are helpful in testing the ground in terms of potential demand for new services, and changing local perceptions of the centre to appeal to a wider demographic.

### Quick win

As the quickest and lowest cost reinvention activities, hanging baskets and flower beds – perhaps through an ‘In Bloom’ style event - could be included around the centre to enhance its appearance and attractiveness, encourage dwell time, and increase perceptions of safety in the centre. The footfall data is also a valuable resource, and we would recommend that this is utilised frequently – as a longitudinal pattern develops and the impact of interventions can be measured, this will become ever more useful.

### 7.3 Rebranding

- **Utilise proximity to Gorton Monastery to create a positive image for the centre**
- **Installation of signage in the centre to direct people to these attractions and strengthen links**
- **Introduction of public art in centre to emphasise these links and reanimate areas in need**

Strategies of rebranding focus upon the application of branding, marketing communications, and public relations techniques in order to deliver a consistent place identity, which relates to the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions in the minds of potential consumers of a place (Ntounis, and Kavaratzis, 2017; please click [here](#) to read more about rebranding). Successful place brand management can lead to positive word-of-mouth, and also assist in the transformation of previously negative, or just as problematic, non-existent images.

Gorton people and community groups are fiercely proud of Gorton, but the centre currently lacks a coherent or distinctive place identity, as observed by workshop participants (Section 6.3) and a shared vision and strategy amongst stakeholders was identified as one of its key weaknesses during the centre audit (see Sections 6.1). However, this can be rectified relatively easily, as the centre possesses positive features that can be harnessed through place marketing activities. The centre is close to Gorton Monastery, a grade two listed tourist attraction that is open to visitors 11am-4pm Sunday-Friday, and features a café, a shop, and hosts tours and events regularly. The monastery has received significant investment to redevelop it as a tourist attraction; however, when visiting the centre you would be forgiven for not knowing it existed. This type of asset is something that Gorton should be proud of, and the centre should

seek to reflect this pride by referencing the monastery in marketing activity in the centre.

Signage to direct people to these attractions, whilst simultaneously reinforcing and their link to the centre, would be an advisable start. Furthermore, given that the centre is in need of aesthetic improvement (see Reinventing), the potential for the introduction of public art celebrating these assets could be an interesting way to reanimate the centre. Local artists could be used in these activities, for example, in turn helping to build community links in the process.

Developing a network or group of stakeholders to oversee this type of activity will be an important step towards developing these links and establishing Gorton as a centre with positive assets on its doorstep. By establishing a group that can drive forward place marketing activity, Gorton can only benefit. Once a core group of stakeholders - perhaps led by the neighbourhood team - is in place, a wider group can be engaged in order to gather as many viewpoints as possible as to which other aspects of Gorton could provide suitable focus for further marketing/branding efforts- the monastery providing an obvious starting point.

### Quick win

Develop branding/marketing efforts around the centre's proximity to the Gorton Monastery; providing Gorton with an identity that it is perhaps lacking currently. The roll-out of this message can be incremental, not necessarily requiring a costly design/campaign to implement – stakeholder engagement could be maximised by involving the local population in the production of public art works that would reanimate the centre. Signage to these attractions would strengthen the links. Establishment of a network of stakeholders to drive the process, ideally led by the neighborhood team, is a pre-requisite.

## 7.4 Restructuring

- **Capitalise on engaged stakeholders**
- **Bring together stakeholders in regular meetings/through establishment of a partnership/forum/group**
- **Use these meetings as opportunities to review footfall data**
- **Sub-groups can be established for specific projects/aspects of place improvement activity**

Restructuring strategies relate to both governance structures and forms of management, and also the physical structuring of a place (Peel and Parker, 2017; please click [here](#) to read more about restructuring). The first requires the cooperation of all place stakeholders and creation of strategic networks and public-private relationships that will nurture conditions for the sustainable development of a place, rather than taking top-down approaches. The second requires the proper use of current infrastructure, in addition to the development of new retail spaces to enhance place attractiveness and place development.

Comprehensive physical restructuring of Gorton would be challenging, owing to the cost and complexities associated with this, coupled with the disparate land ownership and lack

of land suitable for development in the centre. Nevertheless, the lack of a core focus for the centre, and the dominance of the Tesco Extra car park, does limit the experiential aspects of Gorton. Were efforts to be made in this regard, redeveloping the market and immediate surrounding area as the central hub would be a potentially effective course of action. With retail vacancy in the centre at only 6%, this is not a particular area of concern as from a functional point of view, Gorton meets the basic needs of its catchment – however a number of these vacant units are clustered around a recent development on Wellington Street/Cross Lane. To this end, exploring opportunities with the landowners as to how to fill the space would be advised. One very positive development in this regard will be the introduction of the integrated community hub/centre.

Accessibility into the centre is strong, being as it is, based along a prominent arterial route into Manchester City Centre (Hyde Road). However, whilst this is positive for vehicle users, the centre is less pedestrian-friendly. Further work dedicated to improving the walkability of the centre, and addressing the issue of Hyde Road effectively splitting the centre into two distinct halves, would be something that could lead to improvements and make the centre more attractive to the local population by improving walkability between the centre and adjacent residential catchments. Again, the remit of efforts emerging from this project are unlikely to cover this aspect of the centre. However, it is important to note all areas for improvement as these could be looked at in the future. The forthcoming community/service hub, located on Garrett Way, will provide the centre with a boost. As well as drawing the local population to the centre, this consolidation of key public services will create employment opportunities, with the additional workforce contributing to centre vitality. As we have seen in other centres such as Harpurhey, concentrating public services in this manner complements, and can act as a catalyst for, local retail/other services. As such, this is a very positive development for Gorton that could provide the impetus needed for wider place improvement. Ensuring that the hub becomes just that, through appropriate signage and maximising linkages to other parts of the centre, will be important in ensuring this development fulfils its clear potential. However, as noted above, this development is unlikely to satisfy the centre's requirement for communal space/public realm, with the market and immediate area appearing to offer better potential for satisfying this need.

In the shorter term, efforts in Gorton would be better directed towards working with the existing topography of the centre, essentially building on its existing strength as a liveable centre, and tweaking areas of weakness – most obviously appearance - whilst working to a coherent vision. To this end, development, facilitation, and management of this vision is a key aspect for consideration. Once a vision and strategy, perhaps utilising some of the suggestions outlined in this report, is in place, the community buy-in should follow. Engaging the community in this way, and incorporating them into the development of a centre of which they can feel a part of, is likely to yield positive outcomes.

At the workshop, it was suggested that Gorton has a small group of stakeholders who currently work to put on events/carnivals. At present, this long-standing and active group relies on a small number of dedicated volunteers to deliver projects. It would be beneficial to work with this group, building on their knowledge and expertise to develop a strategic approach to these events. The neighborhood team can play a crucial role in coordinating this, fostering a participatory approach to local change that can yield positive results.

The workshops offered the ideal opportunity to bring local stakeholders together under one roof and they indicated a shared appetite for collaborative working in Gorton going forward. The neighbourhood team should seek to conduct similar meetings, perhaps on a regular basis. As well as bringing the stakeholders together, forming a network of engaged participants, these meetings could serve as information sharing opportunities. Footfall data is being fed to the neighbourhood team on a regular basis – reporting on this, particularly in light of any significant intervention or events held, will be key to keeping stakeholders engaged and giving them a feeling of ownership over what is happening in Gorton. The value of assigning holistic and joint actions developed through participatory visioning exercises cannot be understated. A likely result of these meetings/the establishment of a core group of stakeholders would be an increased motivation to drive interventions that can have a positive effect in Gorton. For example, a task force approach to various issues could be taken, with sub-groups established to oversee different actions. It cannot be stressed enough the change that can be enacted when a community possesses an engaged and committed action group made up of a range of centre stakeholders, and this is something Gorton should be seeking to establish.

To this end, it is important to keep the initial momentum gained through the workshops going. Implementing a forum, or partnership structure, that can engage interested stakeholders into action will be key to this. The neighbourhood team could facilitate the group, with the direction coming from the stakeholders themselves. Longer term, this activity might shift delivering community/social outcomes, to include a greater prioritization on supporting and nurturing local enterprise.

### **Quick win**

Establish a community/stakeholder group, facilitated by the neighborhood team. From this, sub-groups can be established to enact change in particular areas – appearance being an obvious priority area. This harnesses the existing resource in the centre and brings it together with a view to creating a joined-up/collective approach to centre improvement.

## **8. Conclusion**

Gorton is a functional district centre, which benefits from providing a convenience-centric offer to the local community. The level of interest of the attendees at the workshops and the high level of interest in the project from the neighbourhood team, the community, and local elected members shows that there is capacity to get things done – and tackle the immediate weaknesses in the centre.

Current provision in Gorton serves the needs of the local community from a convenience perspective, and it provides essential goods and services very well. Gorton is weaker, however, when it comes to non-essential provision, and this, combined with the current lack of a discernible hub, contributes to the centre being one that, whilst functional, is lacking in its ability to create an ‘experience’. The dominance of the Tesco Extra in Gorton sees many people apparently driving into the centre, doing their shopping, and leaving again, with dwell times and linked trips minimal. Addressing this through improving the

overall appearance of Gorton, and creating inviting spaces for people to spend more time together, would soften what is currently a fairly 'hard' feeling functional centre.

Gorton's current place identity is also somewhat unclear. However, given the centre's close proximity to local assets, particularly the Gorton Monastery, more can be done to harness these assets in the creation of a more distinctive place image— both in terms of brand/marketing imagery and the introduction of signage to make these links clearer.

In conclusion, Gorton is a centre that currently serves the needs of its community very well. However, it suffers from a poor image, exacerbated by certain aspects of its appearance. Interventions based around improving the appearance, and strengthening links to local attractions – both relatively straightforward areas for improvement - are likely to improve the experience of those visiting the centre. In turn, this will lead to increased footfall and a more positive level of vitality in the centre. Our recommendations centre around developing community/stakeholder engagement in the centre, harnessing and building on the existing resource – who are doing a good job in what appear to be challenging circumstances - in order to action change that can lead to 'quick wins'. Utilising the footfall data collected in order to track progress, measure the success of interventions, and build future intervention plans accordingly, will be an integral part of this.

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## Appendix 1: Primary centre audit

## General centre overview

**NAME OF CENTRE:** Gorton

Information required	Response
<p><b>Identification of centre area (map)</b></p> <p>Please include a map of your centre in the space provided.</p>	 <p>The map shows the Gorton area in Manchester. Key features include:         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Belle Vue</b> (highlighted in blue) and <b>Gorton Park</b> (highlighted in green) in the upper left.</li> <li><b>Hyde Rd</b> (A57) running diagonally across the center.</li> <li><b>Mount Rd</b> and <b>Stanley Grove</b> in the lower left.</li> <li><b>Belle Vue Greyhound Stadium</b> (green icon) and <b>Showcase Cinemas</b> (blue icon) in the lower left.</li> <li><b>Tesco Extra</b> (blue icon) and <b>PureGym</b> (green icon) in the lower right.</li> <li>Surrounding streets include Gorton Ln, Crossley St, Farnworth Rd, Taylor St, Beyer Ct, Green Ln, Chapman St, Pinnington Rd, Ewan St, Handbarn St, Wistaria Rd, Highmead St, Cross Ln, Wellington St, Hobart St, and Far Ln.</li> </ul> </p>

<p><b>Demographics of local population</b> (population size, age, occupation etc.)</p> <p>Please provide a summary for your centre using the statistics available.</p>	<p><b>Age structure</b></p> <table><tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Persons</th></tr><tr><th></th><th colspan="2">Gorton North 2011 Census Ward</th></tr><tr><th></th><th>count</th><th>%</th></tr><tr><td>All usual residents</td><td>16,440</td><td>100.0</td></tr><tr><td>Age 0 to 4</td><td>1,653</td><td>10.1</td></tr><tr><td>Age 5 to 7</td><td>751</td><td>4.6</td></tr><tr><td>Age 8 to 9</td><td>342</td><td>2.1</td></tr><tr><td>Age 10 to 14</td><td>1,027</td><td>6.2</td></tr><tr><td>Age 15</td><td>186</td><td>1.1</td></tr><tr><td>Age 16 to 17</td><td>424</td><td>2.6</td></tr><tr><td>Age 18 to 19</td><td>420</td><td>2.6</td></tr><tr><td>Age 20 to 24</td><td>1,100</td><td>6.7</td></tr><tr><td>Age 25 to 29</td><td>1,334</td><td>8.1</td></tr><tr><td>Age 30 to 44</td><td>3,728</td><td>22.7</td></tr><tr><td>Age 45 to 59</td><td>2,870</td><td>17.5</td></tr><tr><td>Age 60 to 64</td><td>689</td><td>4.2</td></tr><tr><td>Age 65 to 74</td><td>1,037</td><td>6.3</td></tr><tr><td>Age 75 to 84</td><td>641</td><td>3.9</td></tr><tr><td>Age 85 to 89</td><td>155</td><td>0.9</td></tr><tr><td>Age 90 and over</td><td>83</td><td>0.5</td></tr><tr><td>Mean Age</td><td>34.8</td><td>-</td></tr><tr><td>Median Age</td><td>33</td><td>-</td></tr></table> <p>(Source: ONS, 2011)</p>		Persons			Gorton North 2011 Census Ward			count	%	All usual residents	16,440	100.0	Age 0 to 4	1,653	10.1	Age 5 to 7	751	4.6	Age 8 to 9	342	2.1	Age 10 to 14	1,027	6.2	Age 15	186	1.1	Age 16 to 17	424	2.6	Age 18 to 19	420	2.6	Age 20 to 24	1,100	6.7	Age 25 to 29	1,334	8.1	Age 30 to 44	3,728	22.7	Age 45 to 59	2,870	17.5	Age 60 to 64	689	4.2	Age 65 to 74	1,037	6.3	Age 75 to 84	641	3.9	Age 85 to 89	155	0.9	Age 90 and over	83	0.5	Mean Age	34.8	-	Median Age	33	-
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### Ethnic group

	Persons	
	Gorton North 2011 Census Ward	
	count	%
All usual residents	16,440	100.0
White	11,000	66.9
English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British	9,934	60.4
Irish	301	1.8
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	29	0.2
Other White	736	4.5
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	787	4.8
White and Black Caribbean	338	2.1
White and Black African	193	1.2
White and Asian	118	0.7
Other Mixed	138	0.8
Asian/Asian British	1,982	12.1
Indian	127	0.8
Pakistani	1,004	6.1
Bangladeshi	104	0.6
Chinese	441	2.7
Other Asian	306	1.9
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British	2,436	14.8
African	1,730	10.5
Caribbean	333	2.0
Other Black	373	2.3
Other ethnic group	235	1.4
Arab	109	0.7
Any other ethnic group	126	0.8

(Source: ONS, 2011)

### Car or van availability

	Households	
	Gorton North 2011 Census Ward	
	count	%
All households	7,052	100.0
No cars or vans in household	3,701	52.5
1 car or van in household	2,685	38.1
2 cars or vans in household	588	8.3
3 cars or vans in household	66	0.9
4 or more cars or vans in household	12	0.2
sum of all cars or vans in the area	4,110	-

### Economic activity

	Persons	
	Gorton North 2011 Census Ward	
	count	%
All usual residents aged 16 to 74	11,602	100.0
Economically active	7,311	63.0
In employment	5,859	50.5
Employee: Part-time	1,555	13.4
Employee: Full-time	3,712	32.0
Self-employed	592	5.1
Unemployed	961	8.3
Full-time student	491	4.2
Economically Inactive	4,291	37.0
Retired	1,186	10.2
Student (including full-time students)	774	6.7
Looking after home or family	722	6.2
Long-term sick or disabled	1,106	9.5
Other	503	4.3
Unemployed: Age 16 to 24	234	2.0
Unemployed: Age 50 to 74	151	1.3
Unemployed: Never worked	212	1.8
Long-term unemployed	408	3.5

**TOP 25 PRIORITY AREAS** (scores 1= poor - 5= excellent)

1. Activity Hours	Response
<p>The centre's hours of operation should meet the needs of the local catchment. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?</p> <div data-bbox="190 571 427 890"> <div>Repositioning</div> <div>Reinventing</div> <div>Rebranding</div> <div>Restructuring</div> </div>	<p>The opening times of Gorton's key anchors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tesco Extra is open 24-hours Monday-Saturday (11am-5pm on Sundays)</li> <li>• Aldi is open 8am-10pm Monday-Saturday/10am-4pm Sunday</li> <li>• Manchester Gorton Market opens 9am-5.30pm Monday-Saturday (closed on Sundays)</li> <li>• Gorton Gymnastics Centre is open 9am-12pm and 2pm-9pm Monday-Friday; 8.30am-5pm Saturdays; and 8.30am-2pm Sundays.</li> </ul> <p>The opening times of Gorton's key services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gorton Medical Centre is open 8am-12pm and 1pm-6pm Monday-Friday</li> <li>• Gorton Library is open 8.30am-5.30pm Monday-Saturday</li> <li>• Lloyds Pharmacy is open 8.30am-6.30pm Monday-Friday and 9am-4pm Saturday</li> <li>• One Manchester Community Centre is open Monday, Tuesday, and Fridays 10am-3pm.</li> <li>• Whilst there are several takeaways and pubs in Gorton, there doesn't seem to be much of an evening economy, nor much open at the weekends to encourage footfall or dwell time. Some of the amenities also have notably short business hours (e.g. the library).</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>

2. Appearance	Response
<p>How clean is the centre? What is the quality of the public realm? What does the façade of the retailers look like? Are the shops well-maintained? Are there any noticeable litter issues?</p> <p>Reinventing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whilst there is some pleasant greenspace in Gorton, and The Plough pub seems particularly well-kept and inviting, in general the units in the centre look quite dishevelled and outdated. There was, for instance, furniture and household appliances left outside some of the units on Hyde Road (e.g. Talk Home and D.F.A Furniture and Appliances).</li> <li>• The Pound Shop had an especially cluttered appearance, with many notices on the frontage.</li> <li>• There was also some littering and shattered glass noticeable on the pavements and grass areas.</li> <li>• The Gorton Market is not overly inviting due to its opaqueness and outdated photos, and the centre has quite a 'hard' functional image on the whole.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>
3. Retailers	Response
<p>The retailers in the centre should meet the needs of the local catchment. What retailers are represented (this includes retailers of products and services)?</p> <p>Repositioning</p> <p>Reinventing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The units in Gorton primarily provide a low-end convenience offer, revolving around food/groceries and household items (e.g. Tesco Extra, Aldi, Gorton Superstore, Talk Home, and D.F.A Furniture and Appliances; see Appendix 2 for an updated retail use survey).</li> <li>• The centre seems to be more service-led than product-driven (e.g. there are a range of hairdressers, repair shops, a funeral service, pharmacy, post office, and takeaways in Gorton).</li> <li>• Whilst there is a range of stalls in the Gorton Market, there is an apparent lack of retail diversity in the centre on the whole, although there is notable provision for the diverse ethnic community.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

4. Vision and Strategy	Response
<p>Having a common vision and some leadership is important in centres. Do the high street stakeholders collaborate? Is the vision incorporated in local plans? Is the vision adopted in stakeholder plans?</p> <p>Restructuring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no Traders' Association in the centre bringing the retailers together around a shared vision or strategy, nor any channels to encourage other key stakeholder groups to collaborate.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Team, however, has regular contact with residents about issues within the centre such as waste, parking, and general complaints.</li> <li>• The place identity of Gorton is quite unclear and lacks a sense of distinctiveness currently.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2/5</p>

5. Experience	Response
<p>Considering the quality of the experience within the centre. What is the overall image provided by the centre? How are customer service levels perceived? What are residents'/visitors' overall levels of satisfaction with the centre?</p> <p>Repositioning</p> <p>Rebranding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gorton lacks a 'centre feeling'. The centre is dissected in half by Hyde Road, which is very busy with traffic, and there is no real central hub indicating to visitors that they have arrived in Gorton.</li> <li>• The centre on the whole has a somewhat dishevelled appearance, especially along Hyde Road due to outdated looking units, littering, and furniture and appliances in front of some shops, which contributes to a negative experience.</li> <li>• There was an outside market on at the time of visit (Wednesday morning) which was quite busy and created a bit of buzz around the Tesco carpark/Gorton Market area.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>

6. Management	Response
<p>Is there effective management of the centre? What management structures are in place for managing the centre? Is there effective collaboration between centre stakeholders in managing the centre?</p> <p>Restructuring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no Traders' Association in the centre bringing the retailers together around a shared vision or strategy, nor any channels to encourage other key stakeholder groups to collaborate.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Team, however, has regular contact with residents about issues within the centre such as waste, parking, and general complaints.</li> <li>• It is unclear who takes responsibility for managing the centre.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2/5</p>

7. Merchandise	Response
<p>The merchandise on offer in the centre should meet the needs of the local catchment. What is the range and quality of goods on offer?</p> <p>Repositioning</p> <p>Reinventing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The units in Gorton primarily provide a low-end convenience offer, revolving around food/groceries and household items (e.g. Tesco Extra, Aldi, Gorton Superstore, Talk Home, and D.F.A Furniture and Appliances; see Appendix 2 for an updated retail use survey). Some of the household items displayed outside a couple of the units on Hyde Road seemed to be of a low quality.</li> <li>• The centre seems to be more service-led than merchandise-driven (e.g. there are a range of hairdressers, repair shops, a funeral service, pharmacy, post office, and takeaways in Gorton).</li> <li>• The market and retailers catering for the ethnic diversity of the centre help to install a greater sense of merchandise diversity (e.g. Polish shops).</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>



8. Necessities	Response
<p>A centre should ensure that basic facilities are present and maintained. Is there appropriate car-parking, toilets, and places for people to sit down in the centre?</p> <p>Reinventing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The main car parking provision is on Tesco Extra, which provides free parking for customers for up to 2 hours. Otherwise the centre seems to lack car parking facilities.</li> <li>• There are public toilets easily found in Tesco Extra.</li> <li>• There were a few benches along Hyde Road, but no apparent bins (which conceivably contributes to the noticeable litter issues).</li> <li>• There is an RBS bank in the centre, as well as a ATM in Tesco.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3.5/5</p>

9. Anchors	Response
<p>Is there an anchor in the centre which has pulling power and drives footfall into the area? This could be retail (like a department store or large supermarket), a busy transport interchange, or a large employer.</p> <p>Rebranding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key anchors in Gorton are the Tesco Extra, Aldi, the Gymnastics Centre, and the Gorton Market. However, the centre primarily centres around a low-end convenience offering for local residents, rather than having the pulling power to attract visitors from further afield.</li> <li>• The Showcase Cinema might also function as another anchor for Gorton, although it is located slightly outside the main centre.</li> <li>• Hyde Road runs through Gorton, and it is very busy. People imaginably drive through the centre to get to and from Manchester City Centre rather than having an incentive to stop/dwell.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

10. Networks and partnerships	Response
<p>Are there strong networks and effective formal/informal partnerships in the centre? Are there any traders' associations or community groups? Do centre stakeholders communicate and trust each other?</p> <p>Restructuring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no Traders' Association in the centre bringing the retailers together around a shared vision or strategy, nor any channels to encourage other key stakeholder groups to collaborate.</li> <li>• The Neighbourhood Team, however, has regular contact with residents about issues within the centre such as waste, parking, and general complaints.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2/5</p>

11. Diversity	Response
<p>How diverse is the offer provided in the centre, for both retail (types of retailer/multiples/SMEs etc.), and non-retail (leisure activities, events etc.)?</p> <p>Repositioning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The units in Gorton primarily provide a convenience offer, revolving around food/groceries and household items. The addition of the market, and retailers aimed at the ethnically mixed community in Gorton help to engender a sense of diversity in the centre.</li> <li>• There are also a wide range of services available in Gorton (e.g. hairdressing, doctors, pharmacy, repairs etc.)</li> <li>• However, the centre is perhaps lacking in food and beverage.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

12. Walkability	Response
<p>Are linked trips between areas possible, or are the distances too great? Are there other obstacles that stop people walking through and around the centre (e.g. potholes, bollards, cars etc.)? How easy is the space to navigate with pushchairs/wheelchairs etc.?</p> <div> <div>Repositioning</div> <div>Reinventing</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The pavements along Hyde Road are quite wide, flat, and easy to navigate. However, there was some litter and shattered glass along the pavements and parallel grass areas, as well as some examples of inconsiderate pavement parking which can hamper pedestrian movements.</li> <li>• Hyde Road is very busy and cuts the centre in two; however, there are not many points at which the road can be easily and safely crossed by pedestrians. The Tesco Extra car park would also be difficult to cross as a pedestrian at busy times, as traffic uses the car park as a short cut between Hyde Road and Garratt Way.</li> <li>• The centre on the whole seems to cater for cars more than pedestrians.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2/5</p>

13. Entertainment and Leisure	Response
<p>What is the entertainment and leisure offer provided in the centre? Does this appeal to the local catchment? Are there any festivals, fairs, and events held in the centre?</p> <div> <div>Reinventing</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entertainment and leisure provision is lacking in Gorton, since the centre largely revolves around a low-end convenience and basic services offering.</li> <li>• The Showcase Cinema is nearby, but not located in the main centre.</li> <li>• There is also a Gymnastics Centre but this seems to be primarily targeted at children.</li> <li>• There are a couple of pubs in the centre, and The Plough seems well-kept.</li> <li>• A fun fair held in Debdale Park (located just outside of the main centre) was being advertised near to Tesco Extra on the day of visit. The park also has tennis courts, a football pitch, and a play area. A charity family fun day also took place at Gorton Market in May 2018 (advertised on visit day).</li> <li>• A local events group has also put on a Christmas lights switch-on, in addition to a local carnival.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

14. Attractiveness	Response
<p>Is the centre able to attract visitors from a distance; or does it primarily serve the needs of the local community? What is there in the centre which might make it a visitor attraction?</p> <p>Rebranding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although Gorton has several key anchors, such as the Tesco Extra, Gorton Market, and the Gymnastics Centre, the centre primarily caters for its local community- providing low-end convenience offerings and basic services. It seems that most people drive through Gorton on Hyde Road to and from Manchester City Centre, rather than stopping off in the centre as there is nowhere really to dwell (the centre notably lacks cafés, bars, and restaurants).</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>

15. Place assurance	Response
<p>Does the centre offer a basic level of customer service; is this consistent? Or do some operators, or parts of the offer, let this down? Is the centre getting the basics right for their local community?</p> <p>Restructuring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although some units in Gorton are well-kept, such as the Plough Pub, others contribute to a dishevelled appearance due to low quality furniture and appliances being left outside on the pavements (e.g. Talk Home) and cluttered shop frontages (e.g. the Pound Shop).</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>

16. Accessibility	Response
<p>How convenient is the centre to access? What modes of transport are available to access the centre? Are there any cycle lanes? What car parking options are available? Are there clear pathways to walk</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hyde Road runs through the centre, meaning that it is accessible via car. However, the road was very congested and busy at the time of visit (Wednesday morning). Parking might also prove problematic, as the Tesco Extra car park only provides free parking for customers for up to 2 hours, thus potentially dissuading people to stop in Gorton.</li> <li>There are three nearby train stations (Belle Vue, Gorton, and Ryder Brow).</li> <li>Bus routes 7, 201, 203, and 207 run along Hyde Road.</li> </ul>

to and through the centre?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There were no noticeable cycle lanes in the centre, nor a tram into Gorton.</li> </ul>
Restructuring	Score out of 5: 3/5

17. Place marketing	<b>Response</b>
<p>How does the centre market and promote itself? Do enough stakeholders communicate in a way that builds a coherent place brand image? How well does the centre orientate visitors and encourage flow with signage and guides?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a lot of independent traders along Hyde Road who seem to be working in isolation from one another not offering a consistent place image.</li> <li>Gorton Market has an 'it's your market' branding approach to presumably encourage a community feel; yet the images used to promote it on the market's frontage look outdated.</li> <li>There does not seem to be much active promotion of Gorton as a place.</li> <li>There was, however, good signage in Gorton pointing visitors towards the market, park, gymnastics centre, and key services (e.g. the police station).</li> </ul>
<div>Repositioning</div> <div>Rebranding</div>	Score out of 5: 2/5

18. Comparison/convenience	Response
<p>What comparison shopping opportunities are available in the centre? What convenience shopping is on offer in the centre? What is the ratio of comparison shopping compared to convenience?</p> <div> <div>Repositioning</div> <div>Reinventing</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorton primarily revolves around a low-end convenience offering for its local community (e.g. groceries and household items), whereas it is lacking in comparison shopping, which matches up with its apparent function as a convenience/community centre. However, it seems that some of these convenience items might be of a low quality.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>
19. Recreational space	Response
<p>Are there areas in the centre where people can enjoy spending time without spending money (e.g. parks)? What is the quality of the recreational areas and public space/open space in the centre?</p> <div> <div></div> <div>Reinventing</div> </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debdale Park, located just outside of the main centre, offers some good greenspace for the local community, and other activities such as a playground, tennis courts, and football pitch. Sunny Brow park was also featured on signage within the centre.</li> <li>Within the main centre, however, there is a lack of civic space and recreational areas for people to gather together and spend time for free. And the benches are located at the edge of roads.</li> <li>There were quite a lot of grassy areas in the centre that more could perhaps be made of, e.g. providing more seating in these areas.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

20. Barriers to entry	Response
<p>What obstacles are there which make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the local market? What is the location doing to make it easier for new businesses to enter the centre?</p> <p>Restructuring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are a few vacant units dotted around the centre, both along Hyde Road and on adjacent streets (e.g. where a fish and chip shop and Queerloo hairdressers used to be) which could offer opportunities for new businesses to enter Gorton.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

21. Chain vs Independent	Response
<p>What chains are on offer in the centre? What independent stores are there in the centre? Is this suitably balanced, and does this provision meet the needs of the local community?</p> <p>Reinventing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In terms of chains, Gorton has a KFC, Tesco, Aldi, and WHSmith (see Appendix 2).</li> <li>Regarding independents, Gorton has a range of takeaways (some catering to the ethnic diversity of the local community), hairdressers, a café, sandwich shop, and household item stores.</li> <li>The number of independents in Gorton outweigh the number of chains; however, some of the independents seem to offer low-quality produce (e.g. the furniture and appliance stores).</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

<b>22. Safety/crime</b>	<p>Of the 32 wards for which Manchester City Council holds crime information, Gorton is amongst the wards with the highest number of recorded crimes, as shown in the graphs below for May 2018 data:</p> <div data-bbox="689 260 1182 1038"> <p>Count &gt;&gt; All Crimes - May 2018</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Count</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wards 2018</li> <li>92.0 - 188.6</li> <li>188.7 - 207.2</li> <li>207.3 - 284.0</li> <li>284.1 - 347.6</li> <li>347.7 - 1,451.0</li> </ul> </div> <div data-bbox="1218 260 2069 895"> <p>All Crimes &gt;&gt; May 2018</p> <p>Count &gt;&gt; All Crimes</p> </div> <p>Source: MCC, 2018 (<i>intelligence hub</i>)</p> <p>Score out of 5: 2.5/5</p>
<b>23. Liveability</b>	<p><b>Response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gorton provides a good range of basic services for its local community, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-A police station</li> <li>-Pharmacy</li> <li>-Park/playground</li> <li>-Community centre</li> <li>-Library</li> </ul> </li> </ul>



<div>Reinventing</div> <div>Restructuring</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Dentist</li> <li>-Medical centre</li> <li>-Post office</li> <li>-Funeral care</li> <li>-A church</li> <li>-Three schools located nearby Hyde Road.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 4/5</p>
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24. Adaptability	Response
<p>How flexible is the space/units in a centre for new development opportunities? Are there any inflexible and outdated units that are unlikely to be re-let or re-purposed?</p> <div>Restructuring</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are a few vacant units dotted around the centre, both along Hyde Road and on adjacent streets (e.g. where a fish and chip shop and Queerloo hairdressers used to be), which could offer opportunities for new businesses to enter Gorton, and the potential development of more of a central hub of activity.</li> <li>• There is a very large car park to the front of the Tesco Extra, which at the time of visiting, was very underutilised. There is potential for new greenspace or other uses.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 3/5</p>

25. Store development	Response
<p>Are retailers and property owners in the centre willing to coordinate/cooperate in updating activities? Or do they act independently (or not at all)?</p> <div>Reinventing</div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears that stakeholders in Gorton operate quite independently at the moment, since there is no Traders Association in Gorton, and there is not a consistent place image conveyed by the businesses in the centre, especially along Hyde Road.</li> </ul> <p>Score out of 5: 2/5</p>

## Photos taken during audit visit

### Key anchors in Gorton



### Good signage in Gorton







Outdated and dishevelled looking units





## Areas for potential development



Wide, flat  
pavement  
s along  
Hyde  
Road  
Busy Hyde  
Road  
cutting  
through  
the centre





**Bus route along Hyde Road**



**Benches found in the centre**



**Some littering issues**





Community events and branding in Gorton

## Appendix 2: Retail use survey

<b>Name of Business 2018</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Retail Type 2015</b>	<b>Use Class 2015</b>	<b>Retail Type 2018</b>	<b>Use class 2018</b>
Roots African & Carribean Restaurant	518 Hyde Road		Restaurant	A3		
Crystal Drive & Shine Car Wash & Valeting	520 Hyde Road		Car Valeting	Sui Generis		
EA Electronic Alarms	522 Hyde Road		Security Firm	A1		
Vape A lot	524 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	Vacant	E-cigarettes	A1
Madam Africa	526 Hyde Road		General Store/Newsagents	A1		
Gorton Payless Wall Paper/Paints	528-532 Hyde Road		Decorating Store	A1		
Vacant	534 Hyde Road		Vacant	Vacant		
Pennies to Pounds	536-538 Hyde Road		Household Goods	A1		
Fitzs's Hair Extensions	540 Hyde Road		Hairdressers	A1		
GB Mobiles	542 Hyde Road		Computer/ Mobile Phone repairs	A1		
Oluwambe Pelumi	546 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	White Goods	A1	African goods shop	A1
Easy Homes Estate Agent	544 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Store	A1	Estate agent	A2
Manchester City Furniture Company	548 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Second Hand Furniture	A1	Second hand furniture	A1
Cloe's Beauty & Tanning Centre	550 Hyde Road		Beauty & Tanning	Sui Gneris		
M&S Mobile Service ltd	552 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Second Hand Furniture	A1	Electronics	A1
RBS	554-556 Hyde Road		Bank	A2		
Flames Kebab House	558 Hyde Road		Takeaway	A5		



Big Discount Convenience Store	560-562 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Convenience Superstore	A1	Convenience superstore	A1
Fabrics/bags and shoes/Internet Café	564 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Courier Service	A1	Clothing store	A1
Elegance	564 Hyde Road		Hairdressers	A1		
Metro Convenience store	568 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Store	A1	General store	A1
DFA Furniture & Appliances House Clearance	570 Hyde Road		Furniture & White Goods	A1		
Fayowole & Sons	570 Hyde Road		Second Hand Furniture	A1		
Wembly Restaurant African & European Foods	572 Hyde Road		Takeaway	A5		
Unique Sparkles hair salon	574 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barbers	A1	Barbers	A1
Next level lounge african restaurant and bar	576 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Takeaway	A5	Restaurant/bar	A3
Bensonni classic tailors	576 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hair & Beauty	A1	Tailors	A1
Glorious Derich Hair Salon	576 Hyde Road		Hairdressers	A1		
Gorton Superstore	578 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Second Hand Furniture	A1	Cash & carry/off-licence	A1
Furniture Empire	580 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	A1	Second hand furniture	A1
Betfred	582 Hyde Road		Bookmakers	Sui Generis		
Arise & Shine Christian Ministries	582 Hyde Road		Charity	A1		
Flats 1-43	584-610 Hyde Road		Dwelling	C3		
Dwelling House	612-614 Hyde Road		Dwelling	C3		

Craig Gee Solicitors	616 Hyde Road		Solicitors	A2		
Dwelling House	618-624 Hyde Road		Dwelling	C3		
Gorton Evangelical Church	626-628 Hyde Road		Church	D1		
California Pizza	630 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Takeaway	A5	Takeaway	A5
Flat	630a Hyde Road		Dwelling	C3		
Veez Hair World	632 Hyde Road		Hairdressers	A1		
Pizza Deluxe	634-636 Hyde Road		Takeaway	A5		
Euro Stars	638 Hyde Road		General Store	A1		
Mabs	640 Hyde Road		Homeware	A1		
N.A. Grocers	642 Hyde Road		Off Licence/ General Store	A1		
Haircare Store	644 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	Vacant	Hair & beauty	A1
Opti Eye Care	646 Hyde Road		Opticians	A1		
Kims	646-648 Hyde Road		Hair & Beauty	A1		
Pro Cut barbers	650 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Store	A1	barbers	A1
Da Blues Unisex Salon & Textile Shop	652 Hyde Road		Hairdressers	A1		
Mulligans Funeral Services	654 Hyde Road		Undertakers	A1		
Vacant	656 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Takeaway	A5	Vacant	Vacant
Just Nails	658 Hyde Road		Nail Bar	Sui Generis		
Bella Pizza	660 Hyde Road		Takeaway	A5		
Vacant	662 Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hair & Beauty	A1	Vacant	Vacant
Convenient Store & Off Licence	664 Hyde Road		General Store/ Off Licence	A1		
Lord Nelson	975 Hyde Road		Pub	A4		

C Taylor Funeral Directors (Co-Op)	973-969 Hyde Road		Undertakers	A1		
Terracotta Warehouse	961-967 Hyde Road		Garden Ornaments	A1		
Vacant Units	929 Hyde Road		Vacant	Vacant		
New Trinity Baptist Church	Wellington Street		Church	D1		
African food store	118 Wellington Street	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Hairdressers	A1	food store	A1
Riches Corner	117 Wellington Street		Café	A3		
Pound Shop	113-115 Wellington Street		Discount	A1		
Dean's Hair & Beauty	111 Wellington Street	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Beauty	A1	Hair & beauty	A1
The Plough	925-927 Hyde Road		Pub	A4		
Tesco Extra Petrol Station	919-923 ? Hyde Road		Petrol Station	Sui Generis		
Tesco	913 ? Hyde Road		Convenience Superstore	A1		
Vacant	Unit 1, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road		Vacant	Vacant		
Indigo Sun	Unit 2, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	Vacant	Tanning centre	Sui generis
Indigo Sun	Unit 3, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road		Tanning Centre	Sui Generis		
Subway	Unit 4, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road		Sandwich Shop	A1		
Coral	Unit 5, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road		Bookmakers	Sui Generis		
Age UK	Unit 6, Within Supermarket, fronting Hyde Road		Charity	A1		

Gorton Market	Garratt Way		Market	A1		
Sivori's Cafe	Garratt Way	☑	N/A	N/A	Café	A3
Lloyds Pharmacy	Garratt Way		Chemist	A1		
Age Concern	Garratt Way		Charity	A1		
Kings Dental	Garratt Way		Dentist	D1		
Vacant	79 Wellington Street	☑	Discount	A1	Vacant	Vacant
Annaliese Hairdressers	77a Wellington Street		Hairdressers	A1		
Christina's clothing	77 Wellington Street	☑	Second Hand Furniture	A1	Clothing store	A1
Casa Romaneasca Romanian Café	75 Wellington Street	☑	Vacant	Vacant	Café	A3
Coffee Pot	73 Wellington Street		Café	A3		
Johns Hair Fashion	6 Cross Street		Hairdressers	A1		
Martins Bakers	8- 10 Cross Street		Bakers	A1		
Moon Carpets	Cross Street		Carpet Shop	A1		
D & M Carpets	2 Jessop Street		Carpet Shop	A1		
Caterbake	14 Roxborough Street		Catering	B2		
The Angel pub	Wellington Street		Pub	A4		
WH Smith Local/Post Office	Wellington Street		Shop/Post Office	A1		
Ace Learning Plus	59 Wellington Street	☑	N/A	N/A	Learning centre	A2
Prajitura Casei Romanian Café & Cake Shop	61 Wellington Street	☑	N/A	N/A	Café	A3

Home Discount/Pound Shop	63 Wellington Street	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	Home discount store	A1
1-40 James Court	Wellington Street		Dwellings	C3		
Gorton Library	Garrett Way		Library	D1		
Manchester Gymnastics Centre	Garrett Way	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	N/A	N/A	Gymnastics centre	Sui generis
The Suburban Hotel	Garrett Way		Pub	A4		
Eastland Homes	Garrett Way		Housing Agents/ Offices	A2/B1		
Police Station	Garrett Way		Police Station	Sui Generis		
Gorton Medical Centre	Garrett Way		Doctors	D1		
KFC	Hyde Road/Garrett Way	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Vacant	Vacant	Restaurant	A3
Crawshaws fresh meat factory shop	Hyde Road/Garrett Way	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Restaurant	A3	Meat shop	A1
Texaco Filling Station	Hyde Road/Garrett Way		Petrol Station	Sui Generis		
Aldi	Hyde Road		Convenience Superstore	A1		