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# Vital and Viable Coleshill

Professor Steve Millington
Ben Stephenson

October 2023

## About the Institute of Place Management

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

The Institute has guided the Expert Panel established by the former Minister for the High Street, Jake Berry (MP), and led by Sir John Timpson, who advocated for additional funding and support for town centres in his *High Street Report.* His recommendations draws on evidence collated by the IPM from several towns in England, captured in the report *High Street 2030: Achieving Change*, published in December 2018. In 2019, the IPM was appointed by the UK government to lead a consortium of partners who comprise the High Streets Task Force (HSTF). The HSTF provides expertise, knowledge, training, and support to local stakeholders involved in revitalising their local centres and high streets across the whole of England.

## Authors

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# Introduction

At the invitation of North Warwickshire Borough Council, we prepared this report following a workshop the IPM led in July 2023 for local stakeholders in Coleshill. It is worth noting this work follows a programme of activity  provided by the IPM which brought together agencies responsible for management, development, and marketing of towns across Warwickshire. This aimed to identify the key factors that will dictate the future of the county's towns and high streets and assess what stakeholders and partnerships need to focus on to survive and thrive over the next 15 years. Stakeholders in Coleshill can access all the materials from this project on The Warwickshire Future Places Routemap landing page.  The guidance underpinning this programme was developed through the IPM's academic investigation over many years, in consultation with key national stakeholders, policy professionals, practitioners, and importantly through partnership working with several places across the UK. We have translated this body of knowledge into two frameworks, the 4Rs (Reposition, Reinvent, Rebrand, Restructure) and the 25 Priority Interventions. Consequently, this report for Coleshill applies these frameworks to identify specific recommendations.

In Coleshill, we sought to engage a range of local stakeholders and listen to their views about the future of the high street.  Overlayed with our professional and independent insights, this report mainly captures the views of local business and stakeholders.

It clear, given the workshop attendance and levels of engagement, there is a strong group of willing local people who are invested in the town's future. To take the recommendations forward we would advise they utilise the HSTF website which hosts a compendium of free resources for people who want to improve their high streets, including online learning, policy guidance, case studies and over 800 reports and documents covering all facets of high street change. In this report, therefore, we provide not only strategic recommendations and a placemaking action plan, but also signposting to useful starter resources for the people of Coleshill to consider in their plans.

Professor Steve Millington, Director – Institute of Place Management

# Summary of key recommendations: transformation routemap

## Restructure

| Review existing partnership structures | Improve stakeholder communications | Add additional capacity and form sub-groups focused on delivery |

## Resposition

| Share existing data and develop a common understanding of the challenges across all main stakeholder groups | Undertake a visioning exercise to collectively develop a shared ambition for the high street |

## Reinvent

| Undertake a rapid programme of basic improvements to the appearance of the high street | Establish and clearly communicate a programme of events and activities | Improve shopfronts, signage, add greenery and creative interventions |

## Rebrand

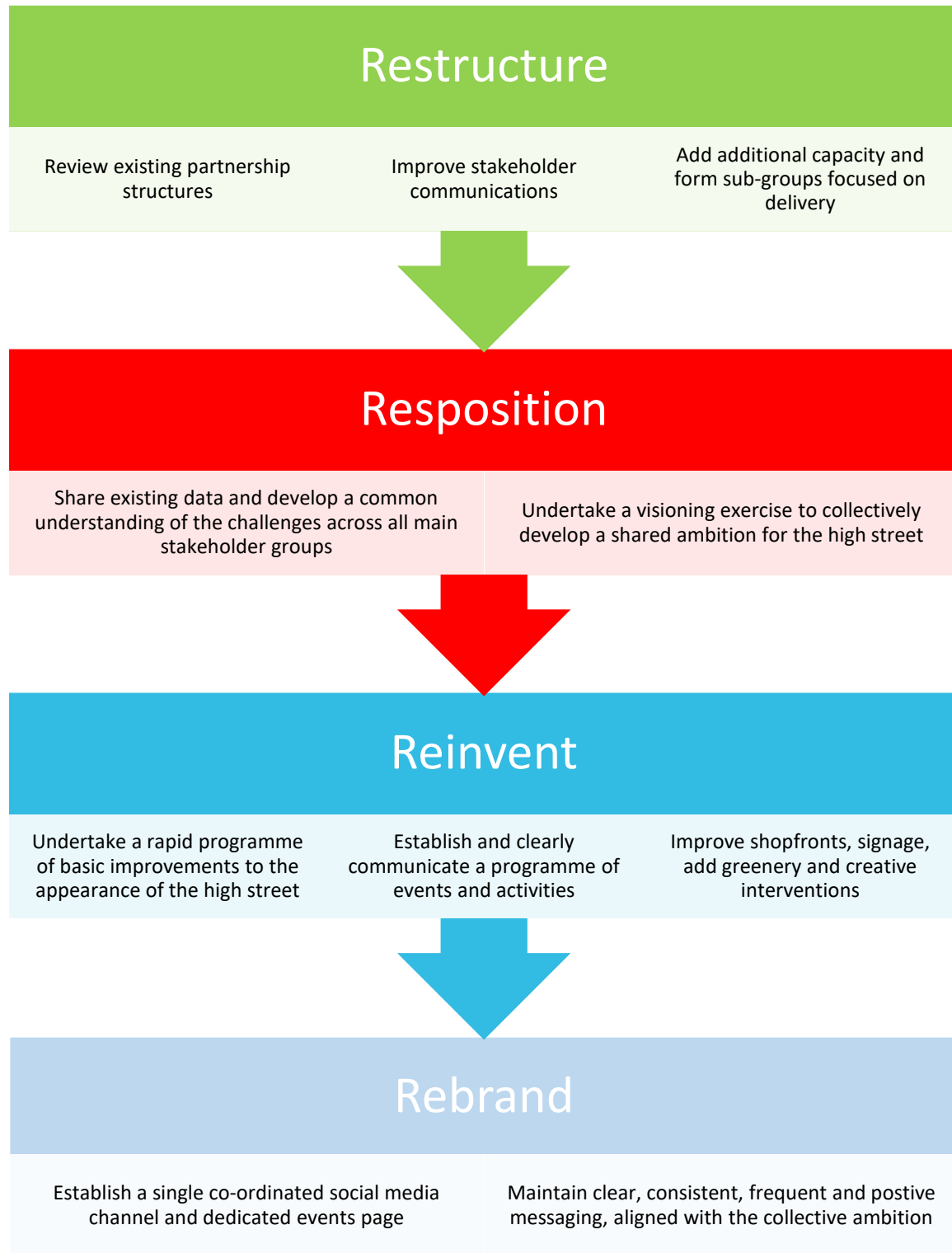| Establish a single co-ordinated social media channel and dedicated events page | Maintain clear, consistent, frequent and postive messaging, aligned with the collective ambition |

*Figure 1*

## How should local stakeholders respond to the challenge?

A common challenge we encounter is how the scale and complexity of the problems facing high street overwhelms local communities and can lead to paralysis and in-action. It is important we get over this hurdle by breaking challenges down into viable tasks. To help, the IPM has considered what makes high streets sustainable, places where people want to be, and centres where business can thrive. In 1994, the UK government commissioned the publication of *Vital and Viable Town Centres: Meeting the Challenge* (HMSO, 1994). This led to changes in national planning policy, which introduced the 'town centres first' concept.  Importantly the report defined vitality and viability. 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 IPM's view is vitality and viability remain important measures of high street progress, and we can use these ideas to build feasible plans for local high streets today.

The challenge of where to start is compounded by a lack of guidance for local stakeholders. The IPM, therefore, undertook analysis of over 9000 academic studies about vitality and viability, which it then tested with experts and with local partnerships in towns across the UK. The outcomes are the 4Rs Framework and 25 Priorities, which combine both expert opinion, peer-reviewed academic research, and insights from local stakeholders, to provide a framework to help places make the right decisions. The 4Rs provide long-term strategic direction, whereas the 25 Priorities encourages places to think about the delivery of plans and proposals.  Neither should be treated as a prescriptive programme for change. Rather, they allow local stakeholders to build their own customised programme of support for their specific high street.

## 4Rs of Regeneration framework

This is a strategic tool to help place leaders navigate their town and city centres and high streets onto a path of positive change. The 4Rs have been used in many places to identify higher-level priorities for a given location, including 150 local authorities receiving support from the High Streets Task Force. The framework underpins the HSTF's 'Routemap from Recovery to Transformation', a tool endorsed by the UK government designed to help centres navigate the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Previous research by the IPM such as High Street 2020 project has demonstrated how the 4Rs framework provides a structure to the incredibly complex process of place transformation. It distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (repositioning), effecting change (reinventing), communication (rebranding) and governance/spatial planning (restructuring). In summary:

| Repositioning | Reinventing |
|---|---|
| In some locations, there is a poor understanding of the catchment, the challenges and trends impacting on the place as well as a lack of data on which to base decisions. In these instances, a strategy of repositioning is sensible. This entails taking time to collect and analyse data and information, as well as develop appropriate visions and strategies that can get widespread buy-in. | Other places have the data they need and sensible plans for how the town or city needs to change to better serve its catchment communities, but nothing is happening there. A process of reinvention is needed. Transformation needs to start! This might be through temporary interventions, events, pop-ups, or experimental place-making. |
| **Rebranding** | **Restructuring** |
| Sometimes there are good plans, based on good evidence and these are being brought to life. The place is both repositioning and reinventing – but catchment perceptions have not changed. People are still negative about the town or city. In this case, rebranding may be needed. Rebranding includes better stakeholder communications, not just marketing and PR activities. It also involves using communication to channels to listen to what people say about a place. | Finally, some places just seem to be stuck in a state of inertia around decision making or, when decisions are made and action taken, it does not have the impact that was expected. This can be tackled through a process of restructuring. Either the governance and management mechanisms in the place need changing or, large scale spatial planning is needed to address large problems – for example the town is too fragmented and needs to be restructured around a centre of gravity that is not the town's current designated core. |

*Table 1*

## 25 Priorities for Vitality and Viability

This tool identifies potential areas of intervention which should have the most impact on making centres attractive, or resilient. Importantly, these interventions should also fall within the control of local stakeholders, provided they work together in collaboration. It is not the case that all places have to act on all 25 Priorities. Rather, the framework is designed to help communities establish local priorities and meaningful and practical solutions.

The underpinning research was initially undertaken in 2014 and identified 201 potential areas of intervention. Following a year of piloting and testing with 10 UK towns, additional interventions were identified based on this local experiences. This work was updated in 2020, through research for the High Streets Task Force, which identified 36 new factors said to impact on the performance of high streets/ centres, reflecting new developments from *crowd funding* to *hipster stores*. With 237 factors to consider, place leaders and local partnerships face a bewildering array of potential interventions. Through working with a panel of experts, and importantly local town teams across the UK, the IPM began to distil this complexity into more meaningful guidance. This involved organising the evidence in terms of:

1. How much *influence* each factor has on the vitality and viability of town centres/high streets? In other words, **what matters?**

2. How much local *control* there is over each factor? In other words, **what can you do about it?**

By calculating a score for each factor, based on both *influence* and *control* this enabled us to identify 25 Priorities that local place leaders should focus on, to support the vitality and viability of their high streets and centres. As part of our method, we have grouped the top-rated factors into 25 priorities, presented in detail in Appendix 1. But, to make the list more palatable to local decision-makers, we have organised the priorities in the following way:

**What affects the look and feel of the high street or centre?**
4) Experience 5) Appearance 12) Place marketing 20) Crime and Safety 22) Liveability

**How does the town centre function?**
1) Activity Hours 7) Necessities 14) Accessibility 11) Walkability 24) Functionality

**What does the town centre have to offer?**
2) Retail Offer 8) Anchors 9) Non-Retail Offer 10) Merchandise 16) Attractiveness 17) Markets 18) Recreational Space

**How does the town centre need to change?**
15) Diversity 19) Barriers to entry 21) Adaptability 25) Innovation 23) Redevelopment Plans

**How is the town centre managed?**
3) Vision and strategy 6) Place management 15) Networks and partnership

*Figure 2*

# Vital and Viable Coleshill

## Understanding what people love about the town, and what changes they want to see

During the workshop, we discussed the structural challenges, past, present, and future, before calling for participants to reveal the big changes they would like to see happen in Coleshill.  This was achieved by asking participants to map out from memory the broad structure of the high street, revealing what local people understand as constituting the high street and its limits. The mapping reveals a consistent understanding of the high street as constituting a linear strip running from the river, uphill to around Parkfield Road roundabout. Participants referred to several side streets and pedestrian connections to nearby facilities including parking, supermarket, cricket club and bowling green. Although the railway station is important more broadly to the town, it is simply too far away to be considered vital to the high street itself. The Croft and churchyard clearly resonate strongly with the participants.

We then asked people to mark out existing qualities they would want to see protecting for the future. For the final part of the first exercise, we asked people to mark out what change they would like to see. The tables below summarise what people identified, and we benchmarked the findings against the IPM's 25 Priorities.

| What affects the look and feel of the high street? | |
|---|---|
| **Things people love ♥** | **Changes people want to see ⭐** |
| • The church and the Croft <br> • Almshouses and cottages | • Use of vacant units <br> • Improvements to run down shopfronts <br> • Improved general appearance of the high street |

*Table 2*

The Croft and historic streetscape are clearly important to participants and are central to Coleshill's wider reputation as a historic town. The maintenance, restoration, and preservation of the town's architectural assets, therefore, are highly important, although this presents a challenge in terms of adaption and change. The other central concern however reflects features which compromise this historic identity, such as empty or degraded shops, and a general feeling the whole town needs a deep clean and basic maintenance in terms of public realm.

| How does the high street function? | |
|---|---|
| **Things people love ♥** | **Changes people want to see ★** |
| Various everyday functions | Pedestrianised high street |
| | Toilets |
| | Parking on the edges |
| | Clear and consistent parking regulations |
| | Better traffic management (bridge, limited turns) |
| | Clearer signage and wayfinding |
| | Improved public transport options |
| | Improved cycle routes and active travel connections |

*Table 3*

Our assessment is Coleshill is a liveable multifunctional town, with several heritage assets. Through the mapping exercise, participants mentioned a range of everyday facilities such as the library, petrol station, doctors, convenience stores. Although people may not necessarily 'love' these functions, they all contribute to the notion Coleshill is a liveable place.

The functionality of the town, however, raises several concerns. Change is needed in relation to necessities (improved traffic circulation, improved and consistent parking regime, public toilets), accessibility to the town from surrounding areas (through better public transport and improved active travel options), improved walkability (more space for pedestrians, improved wayfinding). There is scope to link up the town centre's main assets, and create a more contiguous and pleasurable walking experience, which might encourage visitors and locals alike to make linked trips and dwell for longer in Coleshill. The parking regime seems to be a concern and requires review. Whereas there are potential quick-wins here, many of the challenges cited by participants, such as improved public transport options, are long-term and will be dependent on significant resourcing. There is a need, therefore, for the local authority to think through these options in its longer-term plans.

| What does the high street have to offer? | |
|---|---|
| **Things people love ♥** | **Change people want to see ★** |
| Social and hospitality (Red Lion, George Pub, existing places to eat) | Beer and food festivals on the Croft |
| Independent shops, Glitzy Bitz, Partridges) | Small family and local events |
| Open space and recreation (The Croft, Football club, Cricket club, Social club, access to countryside and river and river park) | Dramatic performances |
| | Shared banking hub |
| Town Hall hub / Library | |

*Table 4*

It is refreshing to see participants in a workshop refer to multiple assets either on or close to the high street. Clearly there is a strong sense of civic pride. The Croft and the views it offers of the nearby countryside are great assets.  The suggested changes in terms of the offer all appear to be highly achievable. A programme of events and festivals utilising existing open space may simply

involve bringing greater attention to existing activities.  In terms of the future, a review is needed to assess the scope of hosting additional events throughout the year or scaling up existing activities. The shared banking hub seems like a sensible proposal, although the post-office can facilitate everyday banking.

| How does the high street need to change? | |
| --- | --- |
| Things people love ♥ | Changes people want to see ★ |
| Nothing mentioned | Greater variety of restaurants/eating options |

*Table 5*

In terms of change and adaptability, the only salient proposal relates to diversifying the range of local eating options.  In the short term this might connect to temporary events and activities, e.g., a food festival which trials new options, or pop-up cafes in vacant units.  This needs further exploration, however, as our view is the town is well-served by cafes and restaurants.  The long term barriers to change are more likely to stem from restrictions on adapting historic buildings and lowering other barriers to entry for new business ideas.

| How is the high street managed? | |
| --- | --- |
| Things people love ♥ | Changes people want to see ★ |
| Nothing mentioned | Groups working together<br>Joined up communications and marketing, sharing the love<br>Shared funding pot for events |

*Table 6*

An important message is addressing these priorities might not necessarily require major investment or significant capital funding, but instead could be tackled by improved through better coordination and communication of what is already happening locally. However, you may find your review of these priorities reveals the need for a more strategic reappraisal of future development plans. For example, improving synergies between the town centre and nearby residential area, might only require better signage, clearer waymarking, and some promotion e.g., to make the local catchment more aware of the local retail offer and direct them to it. Alternatively, it might require more substantive interventions to remove physical blockages and to improve active travel into the town centre from surrounding neighbourhoods, especially if plans were to involve rebalancing traffic priorities on the high street itself.

Nevertheless, the changes people want to see here provides a strong foundation on which to build collaborative working across the various stakeholder group. Ultimately, we would hope from this exercise, you can begin to develop a collective ambition for the town, which might consolidate Coleshill's identity as a historic centre serving its local communities.

## Barriers to change

During the second part of the workshop, we presented a range of placemaking ideas, before asking stakeholders to identify what barriers needed to be removed to enable similar activity to happen in Coleshill. Our examples, included ideas about trialling new activity times, spreading or moving activity into different parts of the town, greening, shop-front improvements, and a plethora of creative, micro-interventions. Importantly all these examples are real projects, found in other places mainly across the UK.  The examples are designed to inspire local people by providing insight into what is possible. The projects are also all scalable, to fit the requirements of specific locations, big or small. Finally, the examples are not prescriptions, rather they are presented as you might present items in a catalogue. We hope some of the projects will resonate locally, to inspire stakeholders to find simple solutions which make it easier for people to work together and gradually transform the high street. Once again we have grouped and benchmarked barriers against the IPM's 25 Priority Interventions, summarised in the table below.

Based on this evidence, there is little to suggest the town's offer/functionality are major barriers to change. Rather, and this is clear, participants are mainly concerned about how the high street is managed. A secondary, but related concern is around communications across the different stakeholder groups and the wider reputation of the high street within the local catchment.  Other local stakeholders might follow the example of Glitzy Bitz in creating strong and consistent social media messaging. Other towns have simply formed on online identity, but importantly, success requires constant and positive messaging. As discussed in the workshop, a challenge for Coleshill is not necessarily the high street has a poor reputation, but rather the local catchment appears unaware of the offer. A third area of concern reflects  issues round planning and bureaucracy. Greater clarity is perhaps needed here, a review of how guidance is communicated and might be simplified.

Many of these challenges perhaps reflect a lack of a collectively defined ambition for the high street. It would seem further work is required to identify a vision which would achieve wider buy-in and support. This should feed into a review of existing capacity and assessment of networks and governance arrangements for the high street. Additional capacity is needed, together with wider representation of voices from the local community, especially younger people.  The challenge for the IPM's approach is that our recommendations need to land with a coalition of the willing, and it seems more partnership development might be needed in this case.  A quick win, might be simply to improve communication between local stakeholders, including better interaction between and within the three local authorities to overcome both silo working and perceived lack of coordination. Other places, for example, have created their own local high streets Task Force to address issues like this.

| What affects the look and feel of the high street? | |
|---|---|
| Place marketing | • Negativity and apathy of local community<br>• Mindset – why what's the point, all money, no gain.<br>• Communication between residents, community, and business<br>• Keyboard warriors |
| **How does the high street function?** | |
| N/A | N/A |
| **What does the high street have to offer?** | |
| N/A | N/A |
| **How does the high street need to change?** | |
| Adaptability | • Limitations of /heritage conservation area, permissions and red tape, rules, and regulations<br>• Health and safety<br>• Council won't let me advertise or put stuff outside shops – planning etc. |
| **How is the high street managed?** | |
| Vision and Strategy | • Resistance to/fear of change, people<br>• Group communications, understanding ultimate missions<br>• People who say no to change, or chances to change<br>• Giving up before it gets going/ blame culture<br>• Liability – who's responsible |
| Place management capacity | • Apathy<br>• "Same few people doing their best … lots of people talk, the same people DO!"<br>• Negativity – "council responsibility"<br>• Needs to seek permissions or approval from others |
| Networks and partnerships | • Fragmentation, not enough working together/ territorial<br>• The local authorities are blockers<br>• Lack of communication between different levels of the local authorities (town, borough, county)<br>• Not joined up coms and decisions on doing things as a town<br>• Lack of representation of younger people |

*Table 7*

## Your ideas to transform Coleshill

Finally, we introduced the IPM's 25 Priority interventions. We then asked participants to share their ideas about potential short-term projects that could be enacted quickly by local stakeholders. These are captured in Table 8 below:

| What affects the look and feel of the high street? | |
|---|---|
| Appearance | Litter picking |
| | Deep clean the high street/sweep and clean up/clean up waste areas |
| | Buildings new attention/painting – looks run down |
| | Potholes on high streets/weeds/graffiti removal |
| | Tidy/clean-up shop fronts /Exciting window displays |
| | Change look of empty shops |
| | New businesses entering the high street might receive a £250 grant to refresh shop front e.g., paint/decoration |
| | Planters/tidy up existing planters/trees/community gardens |
| | A big plant-out day once a quarter – each person buys a plant and plant it |
| | Improve Chamberlain Walk (remove large planter, canopies for shops) |
| | Bunting, look of the high streets, personalised to Coleshill |
| | Art around town/ presentation of Coleshill is bland, not enough colour |
| | Coleshill 'bee-like' statue WET (wheel, elephant, teapot) |
| Place marketing | Collectively talking about Coleshill on social media in a positive way – bigging each other up e.g., have you been to here/there |
| | Push events on social media and other channels/positive shout outs/ #Coleshill/ #B46 Rocks |
| | positive promotional posters |
| | One dedicated events website/Whats on in Coleshill |
| | Create and promote an events calendar, get the shop to promote events to their customers |
| Crime and safety | Police presence, most days smell of pot/weed |
| How does the high street function? | |
| Activity | Late night shopping once a month |
| Necessities | Benches on Church Hill |
| | Improve parking at Social Club/improved directions to parking across the town/standard parking bays on Blythe Road/There is a huge sign that tells people Coleshill is here, but no signage for parking, none – where are the carparks? |
| | Community toilet scheme |
| Walkability | Better signage off main route. |

| What does the high street have to offer? | |
|---|---|
| Markets/events | More events on the Croft |
| | Pop-ups/Treasure Hunts |
| | Community Show case event |
| | Activate bandstand? |
| **How does the high street need to change?** | |
| Adaptability | Advice on possible changes e.g., listed buildings |
| Barriers to entry | Find out what is happening with block of shops |
| **How is the high street managed?** | |
| Vision and Strategy | Review positive reviews and messages |
| | All saying the same thing together |
| | Determine message for local community, short term visitors, identify correct channels |
| Place management capacity | Increase the size of the partnership, involving more residents, less business focused |
| | Coordination of events and bandstand |
| | Branding workshop, to develop logo and design guide for all comms |
| Networks and partnerships | Change the constitution of the partnership. Only four people have the vote at the moment. |
| | Work together and plan/talk to your neighbours/ |
| | Joined up communications/external = not closed Facebook |

*Table 8*

There is a strong consensus about the need to immediately address the general appearance of the town.  We would strongly advise this is a priority.  However, the ongoing management remains a concern.  Many of the ideas expressed above are viable but can only come about through better communication and collaborative working.  The second priority area appears to a be review of currently town partnership and governance arrangements, which would lead to improved communication between stakeholders to underpin the collaboration needed.  There is also a sense capacity is limited, and simply more people need to be involved. This does not necessarily mean creating a larger but unwieldy partnership structure. Rather we would advise creating a network of subgroups to lead on specific actions, with the town partnership providing oversight and direction. There should be clear lines of responsibility e.g., community to run events, facilitated by the council. Shop owners and landlords to take responsibility for shop frontages and other buildings. Council to lead on basic improvements to public realm etc.

# Recommendations: the main priorities

When we put all the evidence together, we have been able to identify strategic priorities and a starting point for Coleshill, using the IPM's 4Rs Framework. We considered the following questions:
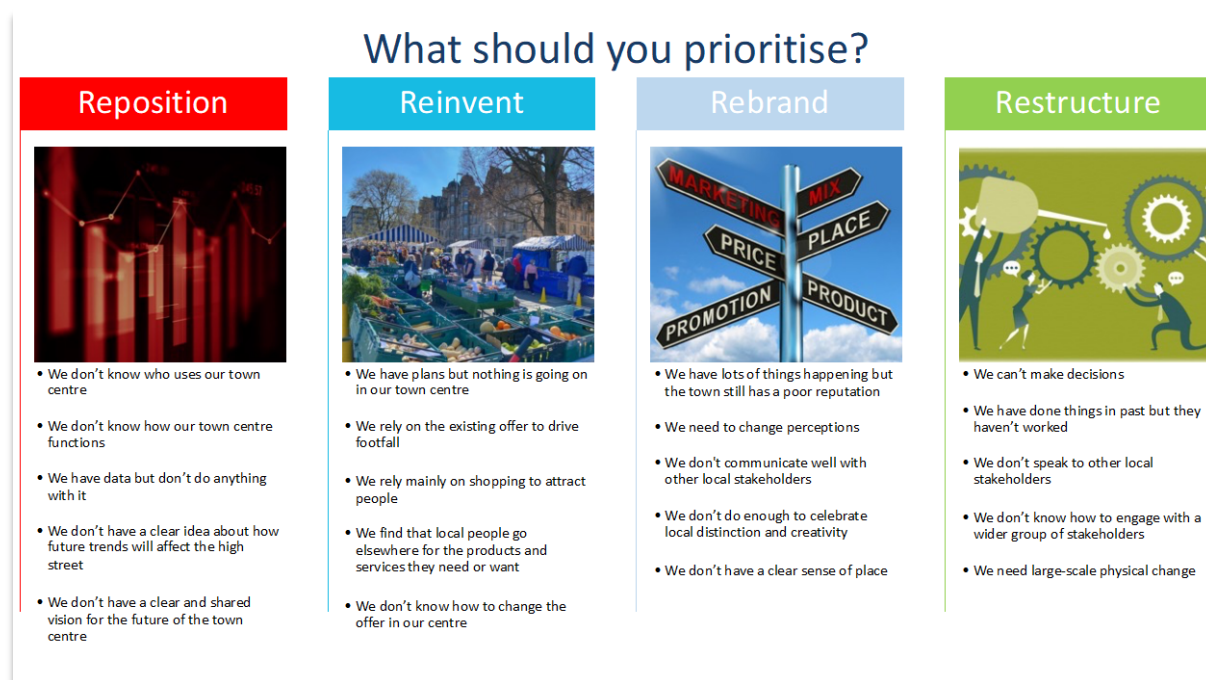


## What should you prioritise?

| Reposition | Reinvent | Rebrand | Restructure |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| • We don't know who uses our town centre | • We have plans but nothing is going on in our town centre | • We have lots of things happening but the town still has a poor reputation | • We can't make decisions |
| • We don't know how our town centre functions | • We rely on the existing offer to drive footfall | • We need to change perceptions | • We have done things in past but they haven't worked |
| • We have data but don't do anything with it | • We rely mainly on shopping to attract people | • We don't communicate well with other local stakeholders | • We don't speak to other local stakeholders |
| • We don't have a clear idea about how future trends will affect the high street | • We find that local people go elsewhere for the products and services they need or want | • We don't do enough to celebrate local distinction and creativity | • We don't know how to engage with a wider group of stakeholders |
| • We don't have a clear and shared vision for the future of the town centre | • We don't know how to change the offer in our centre | • We don't have a clear sense of place | • We need large-scale physical change |

*Figure 3*

## #1 Restructuring

The IPM's view is that Coleshill needs to revisit its partnership arrangements first, address the challenge of communication across the town and its stakeholder, and consider how new capacity might be added to existing structures and provide new impetus. Consequently, we see **Restructuring** as the top priority. Sometimes places just seem to be stuck in a state of inertia around decision making or, when decisions are made and action taken, it does not have the impact that was expected. This can be tackled by strengthening existing synergies, but this perhaps involves more than simply improving communications between local stakeholders, and instead calls for more greater collaboration and coordination of local stakeholders. This may involve a refreshing of existing networks. It might prove useful to consider delegating specific tasks to sub-groups, which meet more often, who report back to a smaller executive group. Aligned with this is a need to resolve local differences in opinion about the future of the high street, and instead work towards a shared and collective ambition, focusing on what people can agree on, whilst parking interventions which may lead to conflict and blockages. Developing a revised governance mechanism and associated shared visioning process might draw together potential new volunteers in residents, businesses, faith leaders and other participants. Many people are willing to contribute something if they understand the vision and their part in delivering it. It is not for the IPM, however, to determine how this operates, the various partnerships and stakeholders involved in Coleshill, including local government, need to work out what works best. Consequently, there are not many easy wins here, but hopefully the Vital and Viable workshop provided a springboard to address issues in a proactive way.

## #2 Repositioning

Second, there needs to be a shared understanding of the main challenges facing Coleshill, backed up with the necessary evidence.  Sharing footfall data and insights for a start, would be helpful. In some locations, there is a poor understanding of the catchment, the challenges and trends impacting on the place as well as a lack of data on which to base decisions. In these instances, a strategy of repositioning is sensible. This entails taking time to collect and analyse data and information, as well as develop appropriate visions and strategies that can get widespread buy-in. The next stage of Coleshill's development therefore should be **Repositioning**. We would advise once the partnership issues are resolved, local stakeholders should meet and start to define a shared ambition for the town. This needs to be a simple idea that wins backing of all stakeholders and community. For example, a clean, green, historic centre that serves its local communities, might be good start point for this discussion. A facilitated visioning workshop might be helpful in this case.

## #3 Reinventing

Once established, we feel **Reinventing** should follow.  The focus here should be on supporting action to improve the general appearance of the town through immediate short-term interventions, but also embeds the maintenance of the town's basic appearance as an ongoing activity. Medium and long-term plans then might focus on other challenges e.g., improving building facades, walkability etc.  A parallel workstream needs to focus on events and activation, which will draw in the local catchment more often and frequently, perhaps filling gaps in the existing offer, and priming the high street for adaption by introducing new activities or offers that would appeal to a diverse range of audiences. Broadly the workshop participants expressed a drive and passion to effect change, but there remains concern the town's unique attributes had not been fully exploited, and there seems to be a lack of clarity in terms of what to do next and move from a position of talking about plans for change, to delivering that change through practical interventions. Transformation might start, with temporary interventions, events, pop-ups, or experimental place-making,

## #4 Rebranding

Finally, once improvements are made and clear and full events programme established, its then logical to consider **Rebranding**, which might amplify the town's attributes, its historic streetscape, The Croft, events, independent retail, and hospitality offer. Resolving local communication issues, for example, might be achieved through a single co-ordinated online social media communication channel, will help Coleshill reconnect with its existing catchment by clearly communicating what is happening in the town and advertising its retail offer. Once the town has reactivated its existing offer it will then be timely to review how well the existing offer meets the needs of the local catchment and to think about new opportunities and markets. Ultimately, a strong place brand should be positive and consistent, and the product of local co-creation.  It might be appropriate to establish a local subgroup to review and develop an appropriate a participatory place branding process, which engages a wide range of local stakeholders. We would emphasise, this does not necessarily require professional branding assistance, and neither does the target audience need to be an external one. Rather, low-level, and low-cost social media communication across multiple platforms designed to engage and inform existing users of the town-centre, stakeholders, and residents, about existing activities and the wider offer in the centre might prove just as effective.

# Coleshill Placemaking Action Plan

## 1: Improving the look and feel of the town centre

| Challenge | Quick wins | Longer-term actions | Supporting resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Public realm and general appearance of the town centre is run-down, and comprising the historic nature or charm of the high street** | Undertake a deep clean<br>Organise volunteer litter picking to get more community people involved<br><br>Complete an audit of poor-quality public realm under council ownership as well as private ownership and identify community-led micro projects to improve each site. e.g., artwork, street furniture, bollards etc. | Establish an art and colour programme, commissioning local or nearby organisations to brighten the town centre. | Great Public Spaces: Guide and Evaluation Tool<br><br>Street Art and Community in Oxford<br><br>Pocket Park: Product Urban Design<br><br>FaceLift: A transparent deep learning framework to beautify urban scenes<br><br>How do I Improve Public Space in my Town Centre? |
| **Despite the Croft, nearby parks and views of the countryside, not enough planting, or greenery on the high street itself, to reinforce the connection between the town and its rural identity.** | Undertake a community led green audit to identify hard landscaped sites amenable to simple planting schemes<br><br>Encourage local traders to put planters/floral displays/hanging baskets, outside premises.<br><br>Encourage volunteer led micro-gardening and informal planting. | Ensure trees, pocket parks, and other green infrastructure is embedded into future redevelopment plans.<br><br>Encourage planting integrated into, new seating.<br><br>Facilitate both formal and informal community-led gardening initiatives, with greater involvement of community organisations and schools/businesses and volunteers to support maintenance – create a green network. | First Steps in Valuing Trees and Green Infrastructure<br><br>Façade Gardening<br><br>Incredible Edible<br><br>Trees in Hard Landscapes: A Guide for Delivery<br><br>Trees in the Townscape: A Guide for Decision Makers<br><br>The Canopy<br><br>Improving access to greenspace: A new review for 2020 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Inconsistent quality of shopfronts, shop display and premises upkeep.** | Undertake an audit of shop fronts and displays and provide guidance on merchandising.<br><br>Activate small grants to enable basic improvements, cleaning, and repairs to building frontages, facades, signage, and shutters. | Implement a collaborative initiative for shop displays to attract new audiences – Easter Egg Hunt / Christmas light displays / trails etc.<br><br>Start a shutter-art scheme.<br><br>Organise a best window display competition.<br><br>Identify best practice and encourage shop owners to share tips on window display and basic facade maintenance. | Plinth Rating Manual<br><br>The Art of Window Design |
| **The town centre offer is not well communicated to the local catchment, and has a small online presence** | Establish low-level, low-cost social media channels (managed locally) to ensure a clear, consistent messaging is used to promote the high street offer, festivals, and events. Ideally independent traders should lead this. This will highlight to others that change is happening, and they too can have role in this regard.<br><br>Create an Ambassadors Group from the existing local stakeholder group present at the workshop.<br><br>Organise a branding workshop, to develop logo and design guide for all comms | Conduct wider stakeholder engagement with people and organisations to evaluate joint promotion and offers to drive footfall and spend on the high street.<br><br>Communicate the benefits of the wider area not just in terms of its offer but also the access to nearby greenspace.<br><br>Develop a longer-term marketing and communications plan that includes a dedicated website. | Marketing<br><br>We are Withington<br><br>Digital, cultural and social connectivity<br><br>Decentralised place branding through multiple authors and narratives: the collective branding of a small town in Sweden<br><br>Love Bishy Road<br><br>Rebranding the High Street<br><br>Telling your story |

*Table 9*

## 2: Improving the functionality of the town centre

| Challenge | Quick wins | Longer-term actions | Supporting resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **There is a general lack of activity, specifically after shops close.** | Trial early evening events, markets, and pop-up stalls, marquees for flexible community use, street music and entertainment.<br><br>Locate or scale up events and activities to draw visitors to the high street.<br><br>Experiment with extended opening hours, especially to create synergy with non-retail anchors and boost activity during quieter hours. | The Council should remove barriers and incentivise community groups to run events in public space.<br><br>Establish a regular programme of community events throughout the year (at least one a month)<br><br>Locate or scale up events and activities to draw visitors to the high street. | Temporary Use as a Participatory Placemaking Tool<br><br>Trader and community-run markets: A practical guide to setting up, running your market and accessing support Street-trading<br><br>Meanwhile city: How temporary interventions create welcoming places with a strong identity |
| **Signage and wayfinding are poor, and might better support active travel into the high street** | Improve connectivity through basic signage and pathfinding, e.g., use planters and simple creative installations to mark routes and amplify pedestrian links and parking locations | Install new signage in keeping with local heritage architecture | 25 priorities – Walkable Footpaths Design on Renovation of City Centres: A Model of Assessments |
| **The high street is dominated by traffic** | Complete an audit to identify micro public spaces, alleyways, and side streets, which could be activated to provide additional pedestrian and trading space.<br><br>Trial and evaluate the dynamic rebalancing of highways to create space for temporary events | Introduce a parklets scheme on streets, working in collaboration with local traders.<br><br>Initiate a traffic planning study to assess creating a series of public spaces suitable for specialist markets, events, and possibly Pocket Parks | Guides for Creating Parklets<br><br>Street-space reallocation in the Oslo city center: Adaptations, effects, and consequences<br><br>Temporary Public Realm Changes From temporary arrangements to permanent change: Assessing the transitional capacity of city street experiments<br><br>Pedestrianisation in Hackney |
| **Key necessities are missing** | Trial a toilets scheme | Review redevelopment plans to ensure greater public access | A toilet on every high street: Regeneration workshop |

*Table 10*

## 3: Improving the town centre offer

| Challenge | Quick wins | Longer-term actions | Supporting resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Lack of on-street activation** | Review barriers to alfresco trading and hospitality and trial community, cultural, leisure and hospitality meanwhile uses on underutilised sites or in vacant/ underused buildings. | Establish meanwhile / pop-up food and drink hubs, explore café culture and alfresco dining experiences in both towns. | Advice for the hospitality sector on outdoor dining<br><br>Glaston-Bury<br><br>Tactical urbanists guide<br><br>Supporting al fresco trading during the winter (guidance from Westminster) |
| **The town needs to have regular programme of events throughout the year** | Use the Croft to trial makers markets and food festivals throughout year | Establish a regular markets programme | Foodie Friday (Stockport)<br><br>Trader and community-run markets: A practical guide to setting up, running your market, and accessing support |
| **The offer is unappealing to younger people.** | Focus events on engaging younger people e.g., run a Teenage Market, or similar, to provide a show case for local creative talent and entrepreneurs. | Establish more permanent activities on the high street likely to appeal to younger people, children, and families | Teenage Market<br><br>National Youth Market<br><br>How can cities reimagine public space to support children and families?<br><br>High Streets Taskforce Online Learning: Understanding Futures Users of the High Street |
| **There is not enough activity in the early evening** | Trial and evaluate opening times that extend into the evening. | Consider greater flexibility of opening times in alignment with events and long-term changes in shopping activity | A guide to managing your night time economy<br><br>How can I improve the night time economy in my town centre? |

*Table 11*

## 4: Creating opportunities to change

| Challenge | Quick wins | Longer-term actions | Supporting resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perception heritage and conservation rules stop change from happening** | The relevant council officers need to review existing guidance and engage local stakeholder directly to communicate what they can and can't do. | Use a wish list of potential improvements as a negotiating tool with the town and district council to challenge bureaucratic blockages.<br><br>Council to challenge internal procedures by empowering town council and district cabinet members with business portfolio to advocate for locals. | Case Studies: Architectural Heritage Fund<br><br>Tyldesley High Street Heritage Action Zone<br><br>Young People's Engagements with Heritage<br><br>Personalities of Historic Places (video) |
| **Limited opportunities for new businesses to find a presence in the town** | Engage landlords and commercials agents to gain access to vacant units | Trial pop-up shops and community events in vacant units. | High Street Rental Auctions<br><br>Planning in England: permitted development and change of use<br><br>A platform for places: Reviving town centres by changing how communities access property |

*Table 12*

## 5: Improving place management

| Challenge | Quick wins | Longer-term actions | Supporting resources |
|---|---|---|---|
| Concern existing partnership structures are not delivering enough activity | Review partnership working<br><br>Undertake a visioning exercise, but keep it social rather than administrative e.g., review positive reviews and messages for a user perspective<br><br>Provide leadership and co-ordinate events in the town centre.<br><br>Improve communication between key local stakeholders. | Explore options for a more formalized partnership tailored to the unique factors of either place.<br><br>Establish a placemaking partnership group meeting, and agree terms of reference, and appoint a leadership team and begin to establish sub-groups to lead on specific activities.<br><br>Determine message for local community, short term visitors, identify correct channels | Saving the High Street – the community takeover<br><br>Vital and Viable Factor: Community Power<br><br>Community businesses and high streets: 'taking back' and leading forward<br>Take Back the High Street: Putting communities in charge of their own town centres<br><br>Saving the High Street – the community takeover |
| **More capacity is need if the partnerships wants Coleshill to become the place they want it to be** | Identify additional partners, focusing on greater diversity, e.g., younger people<br><br>Increase the size of the partnership, involving more residents, less business focused | Delegate delivery of specific projects to named organisations/individuals.<br><br>Coalesce volunteering action around any emerging partnership. Crowdfund for equipment to start a greening group or a festival and events committee as the basis for more formal governance structure later. | Altrincham revitalisation<br><br>What makes effective place-based working<br>Shared decision-making<br><br>Community leadership<br><br>Withington: Power of Community |
| **Communication and coordination between the different levels of government need improving** | Identify all the relevant departments with responsibility for Coleshill and establish an internal working group | Establish a multi-partner Coleshill High Streets Task Force, with representation from all levels of local government | Networks and Partnerships with Councils<br><br>Developing strategies for effective town centres<br><br>Partnerships |

*Table 13*

# Appendix 1: The IPM 25 priorities for vitality and viability

## 1 Activity

Description: Activity (or town centre activity) is understood as patterns and levels of everyday usage. It refers to a high street or town centre being open for people for a variety of uses (retail, leisure, social exchange, entertainment, work, etc).

Activity includes Opening hours; footfall; shopping hours; evening economy.

## 2 Retail offer

Description: Retail offer is the overall range of retailers and services available on the High Street including the availability and variety of products and services (comparison/convenience, luxury, discount), retail channels (store-based, online only, click and collect) and retail formats (from small independent shops to shopping centres) that are aimed at satisfying the needs of consumers.

Retail offer includes Retailer offer, retailer representation

## 3 Vision and strategy

Description: The continuing economic, social, and other challenges that shape the High Street necessitate the development of a clear, shared, and compelling vision that sets out long-term aspirations, aims and goals. Effectively, a vision lays down the blueprint for future strategic development and regeneration of a place, which is then adopted by the wider community.

Vision and strategy include Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies.

## 4 Experience

Description: Experience refers to a person's perception and sense of a place, and can comprise physical, cognitive, and emotional attributes. Experience of a place can be related to several factors such as whether it feels welcoming, if it is a good place to spend time, overall customer service experience of retail premises, transport and public space, and environmental factors such as air quality, noise levels and lighting.

Experience includes Centre image; service quality; visitor satisfaction; familiarity; atmosphere.

## 5 Appearance

Description: Appearance refers to the quality of the public realm and aesthetics of a place. It involves cleanliness, but also other aspects that can translate into positive (or negative) experiences such as lighting, green elements (e.g., trees or flower baskets or beds), congruent landscape (in harmony with the vision and identity of the town), and management of unused spaces.

Appearance includes Visual appearance; cleanliness; ground floor frontages

## 6 Place management

Description: The Institute of Place Management (IPM) defines place management as "a coordinated, area-based, multi-stakeholder approach to improve locations, harnessing the skills, experiences and resources of those in the private, public and voluntary sectors".

Place management includes Centre management; Shopping Centre Management; Town Centre Management (TCM); Place Management; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

## 7 Necessities

Description: Necessities refers to basic amenities and facilities such as car and bicycle parking, benches and other street furniture, rain and shade structures, streetlights, public toilets, pavements, etc.

Necessities include Car-parking; amenities; general facilities.

## 8 Anchors

Description: A high street anchor can be described as any type of attraction or infrastructure that significantly increases the presence of people (footfall) in the high street and the surrounding areas. Anchors can be retail, employment, public transport hubs, greenspace, heritage, or culture etc.

## 9 Non-retail offer

Description: Non-retail offer refers to the opportunities in a centre beyond retail. It includes bars and restaurants; leisure, entertainment, arts, and culture; business and employment; education; health services; and housing.

Non-retail offer includes Attractions; entertainment; non-retail offer; leisure offer.

## 10 Merchandise

Description: Merchandise refers to the range, assortment, and quality of goods in a centre. It also refers to whether a centre meets the needs of the catchment through the merchandise it offers. Merchandise is not only about availability, but also about pricing, discounts, samples, etc. that customers benefit from.

Merchandise includes Range/quality of goods; assortments; merchandising.

## 11 Walking

Description: Walking refers to how walking-friendly an area is, the quality of walking conditions, including safety, comfort, and convenience. It also includes other aspects that can improve the walking experience: car free zones, appropriate lighting, signing, etc.

Walking includes Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips; connectivity.

## 12 Place marketing

Description: Place marketing is traditionally concerned with the development and subsequent promotion of a place product, as well as the construction of a sellable place image that can highlight local difference and enhance a place's competitive position.

Place marketing includes Centre marketing; marketing; orientation/flow.

## 13 Networks & partnerships with council

Description: Networks & partnerships with council refers to the presence of strong networks and effective formal or informal partnerships with council, business, and the community. It includes any collaborations that can positively influence the high street.

Networks & partnerships with council include Networking; partnerships; community leadership; retail/tenant trust; tenant/manager relations; strategic alliances; centre empowerment; stakeholder power; engagement.

## 14 Accessible

Description: Accessibility of a town centre or high street refers to its ease of reach, and to how convenient it is to access it, by a variety of different modes of transport.  It also includes how well the centre is connected digitally.

Accessible includes Convenience; accessibility; connected (including digital).

### 15 Diversity

Description: Diversity is about facilitating a variety of offers that makes a place attractive to live and work in and refers to the importance of making sure places are vibrant and viable at different times of the day, week, and year, attracting different markets for a range of activities.

Diversity includes Range/quality of shops; tenant mix; tenant variety; availability of alternative formats; store characteristics; comparison/convenience; chain vs independent; supermarket impact; retail diversity; retail choice.

### 16 Attractiveness

Description: Attractiveness is an economic term and refers to the 'pulling power' of a centre and relates to KPIs that measure its performance, over time.

Attractiveness includes Sales/turnover; place attractiveness; vacancy rates; attractiveness; retail spend; customer/catchment views; Construction of OOT centre.

### 17 Markets

Description: Markets add to the pleasure of the customer experience and for markets that sell locally produced goods they act as signifiers for local identity, providing colour and character and focusing on regional wares and specialities.

Markets include Traditional markets, street trading.

### 18 Recreational space

Description: Recreational space refers to the amount and quality of recreational areas and public space/open space and places that are uncommodified where people can enjoy spending time without spending money.

Recreational space includes Recreational areas; public space; open space.

### 19 Barriers to entry

Description: Barriers to entry refers to hindrances that are associated with the profile and characteristics of the location (land prices, rents, vacancy rates, whether there is ground for development, absence/presence of competitors, land uses, commercial lease agreements) that stop new entrepreneurs trading in the centre.

Barriers to entry includes Barriers to entry, landlords.

### 20 Safety/Crime

Description: Safety/crime is a centre KPI measuring perceptions of safety and crime and actual recorded crime including shoplifting.

### 21 Adaptability

Description: Adaptability refers to the flexibility of the space, property, and operators in a centre. It is about the flexibility of the planning system and how units can be re-let or re-purposed. It also involves how adaptable retailers are to change their type or style of retail activities in relation to potential shifting consumer behaviour and catchment needs.

Adaptability includes Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; store/centre design; retail unit size; store development; rents turnover; store/centre design.

## 22 Liveable

Description: Liveable refers to the resident population or potential for residence in the centre. Having town centre residents supports many businesses, particularly food shops, cafes, restaurants; that is, retail and non-retail offer that can improve the vitality and viability of a centre. A liveable place is concerned with quality of life and community wellbeing.

Liveable includes: Multi/mono-functional; liveability; personal services; mixed use.

## 23 Redevelopment plans

Description: Planning for redevelopment is a complex process involving developers, planners, landowners, investors, community groups, and businesses. Redevelopment plans can often exclude and silence the relevant and most vulnerable stakeholder groups (e.g., small businesses, consumers, residents) in favour of 'high-returning' redevelopment projects that are influenced by corporate capital and desensitise people from their place. Town centre regeneration, where misguided can stall plans and leading to situations that have a negative impact on town centres and high streets.

Redevelopment plans include Planning blight, regeneration.

## 24 Functionality

Description: Functionality refers to the degree to which a centre fulfils a role – e.g., service centre, employment centre, residential centre, tourist centre.

## 25 Innovation

Description: Innovation refers to transformation that is not just dependent on traditional investment and development but includes place leaders and partnerships being creative and experimenting in their approaches to town centre development. This approach could include encouraging pop-up shops, festivals, events, and community use of redundant retail space.

Innovation includes Opportunities to experiment, retail innovation.