

# Understanding the Research on Town Centre Use

## Summary

- Four central columns, however a permeable distinction between them.
  - Business Incubation
  - Not For Profit Sector
  - Leisure & Entertainment
  - Temporary Use
- Underpinning all of these efforts has to be recognition of the ‘digital’ nature of the current / future high street accompanied by awareness in the value of linking to a place’s heritage.<sup>1</sup>
- These understandings should resonate throughout the project regardless of the specifics of the scheme.

Business Incubation	Not for Profit Sector	Leisure & Entertainment	Temporary Use
Heritage-led Regeneration			
The Digital High Street			

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<sup>1</sup> ‘A. High Street Community Appraisal’, The Digital High Street 2020

## Business Incubation

- Business incubators offer a space, and sometimes advice, to start-ups in order to cultivate local innovation.
- Town centre located business incubators encourage growth by supporting fledgling business to locate within the area, often by way of financial incentives.<sup>2</sup>
- Co-working spaces are key here, taking into account the relatively constrained nature of the site. A provision of space for micro businesses of just one or two people is perhaps the best approach.<sup>3</sup>
- Another aspect to consider is the brief of the workspace provider, whether that be job creation, business support or wider community engagement.<sup>4</sup>
- The business incubator is an umbrella idea, with a diverse range of applications.
  - ***The Tech Start-Up*** – Emerging digital technology is a key market that would make great use of a business incubation space.
  - These are often small teams of developers and so a high spec collaborative area would be highly sought after.
  - A potential link with the 'Games Hub', dependent on its success, is a possible avenue here.
  - 'It is anticipated that a 'bespoke' facility can then be designed to be incorporated into the Union Street development.'<sup>5</sup>
- CASE STUDY – 'Boho One' – Middlesbrough
  - A new digital space was set up for start-ups with a number of specific modifications to cater for them. (Ultra-high speed internet / efficient cooling system etc.)<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> <https://beta.centreforcities.org/reader/delivering-change-putting-city-centres-heart-local-economy/city-centre-case-studies/>

<sup>3</sup> 'Supporting Places of Work: Incubators, Accelerators and Co-Working Spaces', Greater London Authority

<sup>4</sup> 'Creating Open Workspaces', Greater London Authority

<sup>5</sup> 'Aldershot Digital – Games Hub', Cabinet Report 21<sup>st</sup> August 2018

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.middlesbrough.gov.uk/business/find-premises/boho-zone>

- ‘The building, which opened in 2009, is becoming recognised as the UK’s most vibrant digital hub.’<sup>7</sup>
- ***The Independent Retailer*** - A test space for trade ideas is another potential avenue whereby entrepreneurs can trial schemes with a level of mitigated risk.
- Small scale, local companies are those most likely to make best use of a space such as this. Using the opportunity as a springboard.
  - CASE STUDY – ‘The Emporium’ – Middlesbrough
    - ‘Entrepreneurs were incubated for up to six months and a business coaching package included one to one support and business growth assistance.’<sup>8</sup>
    - ‘Helped launch 48 businesses in the past three and a half years’ (2011 – 2014)<sup>9</sup>
- ***The Creative*** – Another option would be one with a clear focus on creative businesses. Separate from general retail / trading this would be an area converted into studio, gallery or selling space for local creative businesses.
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Created in Tamworth’ – Tamworth
    - ‘The building can accommodate five creative businesses with each having their own studio and sharing the gallery and shop space on the ground floor.’
    - ‘The business rates are subsidised for two years, after which the business will pay market rent or move onto other premises.’<sup>10</sup>
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Fish Island Labs’ – London

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.thejournal.co.uk/business/business-news/space-start-ups-middlesbroughs-boho-one-5317964>

<sup>8</sup> ‘Developing Resilient Town Centres’, Department for Communities and Local Government

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.gazettelive.co.uk/news/teesside-news/emporium-start-up-unit-fledgling-businesses-7841558>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.tamworthinformed.co.uk/new-tenants-set-up-shop-at-created-in-tamworth/>

- A co-working space specifically focused on kick starting 'the careers of a new generation of emerging talent whose work spans technology and art.'<sup>11</sup>
  - Covers everything from 'sculpture, installations and physical performance to coding, film editing and digital art.'<sup>12</sup>
- CASE STUDY – 'BlackHorse Workshop' – Walthamstow
    - 'The space offers both permanent workshop space for small maker businesses, as well as shared workshop space for paying members.'<sup>13</sup>
    - 'Members have shared access to hand held tools, specialist woodworking and metal working equipment, and spray booth.'
  - ***The Social Enterprise*** – A final option would be to use a business incubator space as an opportunity to develop social enterprise within the local area.
  - By supporting new businesses which are committed to reinvesting in the local community these schemes have real value during regeneration efforts.
  - CASE STUDY – 'Hatch' – London
    - 'Provide community – based entrepreneurship programmes to emerging entrepreneurs through an eco-system of support that includes the provision of knowledge, mentorship and workspace.'<sup>14</sup>
  - There are currently five Impact Hubs in the UK (four in London and one in Birmingham) that offer 'co-working spaces for individuals and ventures interested in social innovation.'<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> <http://blog.barbican.org.uk/2015/08/fish-island-labs-interfaces/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://blog.barbican.org.uk/2015/08/fish-island-labs-interfaces/>

<sup>13</sup> 'Creating Open Workspaces', Greater London Authority

<sup>14</sup> <https://hatchenterprise.org/about-us/>

<sup>15</sup> 'Social Enterprise in the UK', British Council



## The Not for Profit Sector

- Engaging with the not for profit sector is a viable alternative to a more traditional focus on private sector investment.
- It provides opportunity for ‘a better balance between economic efficiency, ecological sustainability and social equity.’<sup>16</sup>
- By creating a more enterprising local community who are more interested in business, real economic development can arise as a consequence.<sup>17</sup>
- Alongside that, social cohesion, as people work together and participate towards a common goal, is a valuable additional benefit.<sup>18</sup>
- One disclaimer would be that the most successful schemes here have come from below rather than above. Engaging with local residents to see if there is the appetite for establishing these projects would help evaluate their viability.

- **Charities**

- CASE STUDY – Every One Every Day Initiative – Barking and Dagenham
  - An initiative formed out of a partnership between registered charity Participatory City and Barking and Dagenham Council.<sup>19</sup>
  - The scheme will ‘introduce projects such as knowledge sharing, creating dedicated spaces and resources for families to work and play together, and providing facilities for bulk cooking, food growing or tree planting.’<sup>20</sup>
  - The scheme ‘will work with 25,000 residents across the borough to create over 250 neighbourhood-led projects and form more than 100 new businesses over the next five years.’<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> ‘Social Enterprise and Urban Regeneration: A Model for the Future?’, Juliet Carpenter

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, Page 143

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Page 143

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.participatorycity.org/blog/2017/7/23/ighbourhoods-made-by-everyone-for-everyone-multimillion-pound-initiative-set-to-launch-in-barking-and-dagenham-this-year>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.participatorycity.org/blog/2017/7/23/ighbourhoods-made-by-everyone-for-everyone-multimillion-pound-initiative-set-to-launch-in-barking-and-dagenham-this-year>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.participatorycity.org/blog/2017/7/23/ighbourhoods-made-by-everyone-for-everyone-multimillion-pound-initiative-set-to-launch-in-barking-and-dagenham-this-year>

- ***The Community Interest Company*** – CICs exist to benefit the community rather than private shareholders by using an ‘asset lock’ to tie the company’s assets into their social objectives, whilst also restricting their pay outs to shareholders.<sup>22</sup>
- A rapidly growing sector of over 14,000 registered CICs.<sup>23</sup> ‘CIC’s outperform mainstream businesses against a range of metrics.’<sup>24</sup>
- If there exist any local CIC’s, offering them a space, at perhaps a reduce rate, in the heart of the town would give them a chance to establish themselves as a hub of the community.
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Allendale Creative Arts – Allendale
    - An art gallery was established with accompanying café which quickly became a social hub for the community, complete with exhibition programme and youth projects.
    - ‘Each year it hosts a cultural festival with workshops, live music and artwork displays.’<sup>25</sup>
- ***The Community Shop*** – The rise of the ‘community shop’, specifically within villages who have very limited commercial options, is an interesting development and worthy of note.
- They trade with the aim of benefitting the community and have open and voluntary membership, whereby members are part owners of the business and have equal say in its running.<sup>26</sup> Their focus is on sourcing local produce and goods.
- ‘They have average turnovers of £155,000, support local producers and suppliers and create employment.’
- ‘95% success rate of community shops’ compared to ‘46% average small business success rate.’<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/set-up-a-social-enterprise>

<sup>23</sup> ‘Annual Report 2017 – 2018’, Regulator of Community Interest Companies

<sup>24</sup> ‘Annual Report 2017 – 2018’, Regulator of Community Interest Companies

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/allendale-creative-artists>

<sup>26</sup> <https://plunkett.co.uk/community-shops/>

<sup>27</sup> <https://plunkett.co.uk/community-shops/>

- There are limited / if any examples of a 'community shop' within a larger town context however the idea is a novel approach to retail.



## Leisure & Entertainment

- There is a noticeable lack of research surrounding entertainment and leisure led regeneration strategies. Many places are looking towards these two sectors however very little evaluative commentary exists.
- What is recognised is that ‘for many towns, the simple fact is that, in the future, they will require a smaller, more focused retail core, repositioned for future consumer and retailer needs.’<sup>28</sup>
- Consequently, alternative uses for this vacant retail space are required, with leisure and entertainment the prime targets.<sup>29</sup>
  - ‘Leisure services like coffee shops and restaurants remain amongst the fastest growing categories of business on the high street.’<sup>30</sup>
  - ‘The leisure aspect of shopping trips is a significant driver of footfall; the leisure offer increases not only dwell time, but also the average spent during trips to town centres and high streets.’<sup>31</sup>
  - ‘Consumer spending on leisure is projected to increase further over the next ten years, with restaurants, cafes and gyms continuing their growth.’<sup>32</sup>
  - ‘Additionally people more and more see the value of leisure spaces ... as community meeting hubs and places for mobile working and networking.’<sup>33</sup>
- ‘Early evidence suggests that the expansion of the evening economy of town centres and high streets can offer employment opportunities, possibilities for new ventures and can contribute to high street vitality hours. However, this still remains an undeveloped area of research.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> ‘Beyond Retail’, Distressed Town Centre Property Taskforce

<sup>29</sup> ‘Beyond Retail’, Distressed Town Centre Property Taskforce

<sup>30</sup> ‘British High Streets: from Crisis to Recover? – A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, University of Southampton

<sup>31</sup> ‘British High Streets: from Crisis to Recover? – A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, University of Southampton

<sup>32</sup> ‘High Street Performance and Evolution’ – A brief guide to the evidence, University of Southampton

<sup>33</sup> ‘British High Streets: from Crisis to Recover? – A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, University of Southampton

<sup>34</sup> ‘British High Streets: from Crisis to Recover? – A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence, University of Southampton

- Importantly this change of use needs to be supported by a flexible approach to planning policy.
- ***The Food Industry***
  - ***The Café***
    - ‘The growth is continuing but slowly.’<sup>35</sup> // ‘Demand for coffee tends to be fairly resilient to economic fluctuations as many consumers consider coffee to be closer to a necessity than a luxury.’<sup>36</sup>
    - ‘81% of people now visit a coffee shop weekly, spending £9.5bn a year in over 24,000 outlets.’<sup>37</sup>
    - ‘Despite the mixed year for the big chains, the excellent news for the smaller chains and independents is that it’s the year of the disruptors who are bucking the trends and selling the experience, not just the coffee.’<sup>38</sup>
      - ***Joe & The Juice***
      - ***Blacksheep***
    - ‘By offering in-store experiences such as tastings, barista theatre, and in-house roasting, the industry has generated a unique and highly attractive cultural proposition.’<sup>39</sup>
    - ‘This year it seems that apps are reaching critical mass, with 63% of people saying they use a coffee shop app.’<sup>40</sup>
  - ***The Restaurant Industry***

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<sup>35</sup> <https://www.cafesuccesshub.com/uk-coffee-shop-market-2018/>

<sup>36</sup> ‘Market Report: A Snapshot of your Market Sector’, Business Gateway

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.cafesuccesshub.com/uk-coffee-shop-market-2018/>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.cafesuccesshub.com/uk-coffee-shop-market-2018/>

<sup>39</sup> <https://www.worldcoffeeportal.com/Latest/InsightAnalysis/2018/5-key-themes-The-changing-face-of-British-coffee>

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.cafesuccesshub.com/uk-coffee-shop-market-2018/>

- Restaurants are suffering because of the ‘triple threat of wage increases, food price inflation and falling consumer confidence since the EU referendum.’<sup>4142</sup>
- ‘Despite this growing threat, consumer trends for fine dining and alternative cuisine have supported wider industry revenue growth, at an estimated compound annual rate of 3.2% over the five years through 2018 – 19.’<sup>43</sup>

#### **Technology in the Restaurant Sector**

- ‘Deliveroo and Uber Eats have continued to grow and play a major role in the Food and Beverage sector.’
- Some operators such as Wagamama ‘have utilised the tool to ride the wave and expand their offer to new customer segments who may have not visited their stores previously.’
- ‘A major grip for leisure operators is the impact this service has had on the in-restaurant experience as drivers and patrons congest entry points and the perceived quicker service drivers get than customers causing complaints.’

#### • ***The Fitness Industry***

- ‘The UK fitness industry has continued to grow in size and value, with the number of gyms hitting 7,000 for the first time in history.’<sup>44</sup>
- ‘During the 12 months to March 2018, the number of fitness facilities increased by 4.6 per cent – with 275 new openings – while total membership grew by 2 per cent.’<sup>45</sup>
- ‘When it comes to operators, budget chain Pure Gym and charitable enterprise GLL have strengthened their positions as the UK’s leading private and public operators.’<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> ‘Market Report: A Snapshot of your Market Sector’, Business Gateway

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jun/28/uk-restaurant-numbers-drop-for-first-time-in-eight-years>

<sup>43</sup> ‘Market Report: A Snapshot of your Market Sector’, Business Gateway

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.leisureopportunities.co.uk/news/State-of-industry-report-UK-fitness-industry-worth-5bn/337551>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.leisureopportunities.co.uk/news/State-of-industry-report-UK-fitness-industry-worth-5bn/337551>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.leisureopportunities.co.uk/news/State-of-industry-report-UK-fitness-industry-worth-5bn/337551>

- 'The market size of the wellness and fitness segment in the United Kingdom has been growing steadily and is estimated to reach 22.8 billion British pounds by 2020.'<sup>47</sup>
- 'Key opportunities to hone revenue streams across core growth demographics include digital integration for millennials, holistic healthcare services for older consumers, and innovative group fitness concepts for women.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> <https://www.statista.com/topics/3411/fitness-industry-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>

<sup>48</sup> <http://www.leisuredb.com/blog/2018/4/10/project-fitness-uk-2018>

## Temporary Uses

- Embracing flexibility and temporality within town centres is a key aspect to current regeneration efforts marking a break from traditional perspectives on fixed building use.
- Temporary urbanism is an attempt to carve out a purpose for commercial premises, derelict sites, and forgotten car parks which have lost their way in the modern town centre.<sup>49</sup>
- There exists a distinction here between temporary but regular markets and yearly festivals which are cyclical and 'one off' pop up shops and public art installations.<sup>50</sup>
- Both represent valuable contributions to regeneration efforts.
  - ***The Regular Market*** – Recent research shows that 'markets can significantly increase footfall by between 15 – 27% compared to locations without markets' whilst also providing important social and political functions.<sup>51</sup>
  - The 'Markets Matter' report published as part of the High Street UK2020 project compellingly argues for the myriad of advantages markets provide.<sup>52</sup>
  - 'The 2013 Ethical Consumers Market report provides evidence to suggest that the number of shoppers specifically looking to buy local produce increased from 15% in 2005 to 42% in 2012.'<sup>53</sup>
  - The market space is one of huge potential; however it demands careful management of the mix of traders in order to respond to changing consumer markets.
  - Two possible approaches include:
    - CASE STUDY – 'Food'<sup>54</sup> – Altrincham
      - In 2010 Altrincham had the highest number of shop vacancies in the UK with nearly a third empty.

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<sup>49</sup> 'Multifunctional Centres: A sustainable role for town and city centres', Institute of Place Management

<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> 'Markets Matter', High Street UK2020

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<sup>54</sup> 'Revitalising Town Centres: A handbook for council leadership', Local Government Association

- Accompanied by a multi-million pound investment from Trafford Council a local businessman bought the Altrincham Market and ‘populated it with a carefully curated line up of small-time food and drink traders.’<sup>55</sup>
- Became an award winner and acted as a catalyst for further regeneration in the town.
- CASE STUDY – ‘Culture’ – Deptford
  - Deptford has a strong Nigerian, Caribbean and Vietnamese community and consequently has engaged with this depth of culture to provide a vibrant and unique market.
  - What is sold reflects their tastes and so the whole experience is elevated above the generic.
- CASE STUDY – ‘Both’ – Time Out Market – Waterloo
  - ‘Will be the centrepiece of the new ... development ... turning the station’s former Eurostar terminal into a new South Bank hotspot.’<sup>56</sup>
  - Will ‘host 17 of London’s most acclaimed chefs and restaurateurs serving all kinds of cuisines, plus three bars and a space for cultural experiences showcasing the best London talent.’<sup>57</sup>
- ***The Meanwhile Project*** – A concept developed by Brent Council, the idea behind this was to explore a ‘lighter, quicker cheaper approach’ which supports projects that can rapidly deliver.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/altrincham-trafford-boom-town-market-14299990>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/hello-london-were-opening-a-time-out-market-in-waterloo-121318>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.timeout.com/london/news/hello-london-were-opening-a-time-out-market-in-waterloo-121318>

<sup>58</sup> <https://www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/regeneration/what-is-a-meanwhile-project/>

- These are initiatives that can appear almost spontaneously and help bridge the gap within the often long and protracted development process.<sup>59</sup>
  - Often they work with local communities to breed good will during the process and trial any community uses that may be part of the final scheme.
- CASE STUDY – Drapers Yard – Chichester
    - In 2016 ‘erected 13 sheds in the defunct pub garden to create a hub for small retail independents to encourage creatives and their talents.’<sup>60</sup>
    - The occupants ‘come either by the week, month or ad hoc day.’<sup>61</sup>
    - ‘Away from the homogenized high-street ... Mawar’s quest to foster new talent is realised at The Test Shed.’<sup>62</sup>
    - ‘Here fledgling businesses have an opportunity to rent retail space a day at a time to research the market.’<sup>63</sup>
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Coastal Housing Association’ - Swansea Town Centre
    - Bought up large empty shops when major retailers left the area.
    - Developed a relationship with artists and creative people in the town and temporarily converted some space into galleries, with offices above and a night club below.<sup>64</sup>
    - Brought variety and life into a high street without a clear future.

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<sup>59</sup> <https://www.placemakingresource.com/article/1497615/advice-promoting-meanwhile-uses-part-regeneration>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.drapers-yard.co.uk/about-us/>

<sup>61</sup> <http://www.drapers-yard.co.uk/about-us/>

<sup>62</sup> <http://www.drapers-yard.co.uk/about-us/>

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.drapers-yard.co.uk/about-us/>

<sup>64</sup> <https://www.placemakingresource.com/article/1497615/advice-promoting-meanwhile-uses-part-regeneration>

- 'The meanwhile uses have helped attract other permanent developments.'<sup>65</sup>
- CASE STUDY - 'Beyond the Finish Line' – Glasgow
  - A year- long initiative giving young social entrepreneurs the opportunity to set up businesses in response to issues facing local residents.
  - It made practical use of empty spaces around Glasgow and provided the individuals involved with specialist support.<sup>66</sup>
- CASE STUDY – 'Open Doors' – MHCLG
  - The scheme will match landlords struggling to find tenants for their empty properties with community groups looking for space.<sup>67</sup>
  - 'This pilot will support community groups who may need premises for several hours a day but are unable to take on a full lease, or who can often struggle to pay rents on town centre premises.'<sup>68</sup>
  - It will also bring empty properties back into use, increasing footfall and bringing life back into an area.<sup>69</sup>
- CASE STUDY – 'Pop Up Museum' – Blackpool
  - 'Brought 128 local residents together with seven local artists to create a resource of pop-up museums.'<sup>70</sup>
  - 'As well as making the borough's historic collections more accessible, the participants discovered a renewed pride in their town and have become champions of local history.'<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> <https://www.placemakingresource.com/article/1497615/advice-promoting-meanwhile-uses-part-regeneration>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.creativescotland.com/explore/read/stories/design/2014/beyond-the-finish-line>

<sup>67</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-doors-pilot-call-for-landlords>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-doors-pilot-call-for-landlords>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/open-doors-pilot-call-for-landlords>

<sup>70</sup> 'People, Culture, Place: The role of culture in placemaking,' Local Government Association

<sup>71</sup> Ibid



- A potential idea building upon this concept is linking with the Aldershot Military Museum. Using some of its assets to populate a pop up museum seems feasible and would be a chance for local residents to engage with the history of their town in an accessible and interactive way.

## Relocating Public Services

- Local Authority offices and services are often sprawling and decentralised, located in numerous buildings throughout a town.
- Relocating public services to the town centre has a number of beneficial outcomes:
  - It concentrates workers in the town centre, who then go on to contribute towards the local retail and services offering.<sup>72</sup>
  - In today's society, many people are time-poor, and lunch breaks are often a good (and sometimes the only) opportunity to buy the things they need.<sup>73</sup>
  - Also by concentrating services in fewer buildings, a substantial saving on running and maintenance costs can occur.<sup>74</sup>
  - Finally, these schemes usually free up land that can then be developed, offsetting building and relocating costs.
- CASE STUDY – 'Covent Garden Scheme' – Warwick
  - 'Warwick District Council's Riverside House offices are too large, costly to run, in need of significant investment and relatively inaccessible to people without a car.'<sup>75</sup>
  - 'Therefore the Council is seeking to move to smaller, modern, energy efficient and more economical offices.'<sup>76</sup>
  - 'The new office building will be paid for by the sale of the Riverside House site and new town centre apartments built as part of the overall scheme.'<sup>77</sup>
  - This will allow the Council to move its workforce into the heart of the town centre, supporting local businesses, improving

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<sup>72</sup> 'Collected case studies: City Centre Regeneration, Centreforcities

<sup>73</sup> 'Town Centres: Planning for the Future', North East England Chamber of Commerce

<sup>74</sup> 'Collected case studies: City Centre Regeneration, Centreforcities

<sup>75</sup> 'Covent Garden Scheme Context', Warwick District Council

<sup>76</sup> 'Covent Garden Scheme Context', Warwick District Council

<sup>77</sup> 'Covent Garden Scheme Context', Warwick District Council

public access to its HQ building and provide a modern 'one stop' shop for service users.'<sup>78</sup>

▪ CASE STUDY – 'HQ Relocation' – Slough

- 'Slough Borough Council plans to relocate its offices and civic headquarters to a new 80,000 sq ft town centre building in a move aimed at anchoring its regeneration aspirations.'<sup>79</sup>
- 'The move would also see the release of its home at St Martins Place for conversion to a mix of social and affordable rented residential accommodation.'<sup>80</sup>
- The Council will 'seek to lease out overhanging space to third-party organisations to reduce liability and generate an income stream.'<sup>81</sup>
- 'The Council plans to reduce from an 8:10 for most staff to 5:10 for all staff desk ratios creating additional space to lease, generating additional income.'<sup>82</sup>

▪ CASE STUDY – Bradford

- 'In order to revitalise its city centre, Bradford Metropolitan District Council [has] the key aim of relocating staff to the city centre, helping to boost retail and encouraging new investment there.'<sup>83</sup>
- 'The sale of 44 buildings between 2008 and 2013 raised £21.2 million and saved £64 million in maintenance costs.'<sup>84</sup>
- 'The move saw public sector jobs in the city centre increase by 1,300 between 2008 and 2010.'<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> 'Covent Garden Scheme Context', Warwick District Council

<sup>79</sup> <https://www.businessmag.co.uk/slough-council-looks-relocate-hq-part-regeneration/>

<sup>80</sup> <https://www.businessmag.co.uk/slough-council-looks-relocate-hq-part-regeneration/>

<sup>81</sup> <https://www.businessmag.co.uk/slough-council-looks-relocate-hq-part-regeneration/>

<sup>82</sup> <https://www.businessmag.co.uk/slough-council-looks-relocate-hq-part-regeneration/>

<sup>83</sup> 'Collected case studies: City Centre Regeneration, Centreforcities

<sup>84</sup> 'Collected case studies: City Centre Regeneration, Centreforcities

<sup>85</sup> 'Collected case studies: City Centre Regeneration, Centreforcities

## Heritage-led Regeneration

- There exists substantial opportunity to draw on the ‘individual identity’ of a place, regenerating a town’s historical fabric as a catalyst for further growth.<sup>86</sup> (Unique Selling Point)
- As Bill Grimsey puts it, retailers ‘spent the whole of the last century cloning every town,’ standardising their offerings into the generic.<sup>87</sup>
- A place’s heritage and history were frequently overlooked in favour of a focus on the big high street brands propagating homogeneity.
- In recent years, using the historical environment as an asset and working to give it a new life, has been integral to the economic and social regeneration of towns and cities.<sup>88</sup>
- **Digital Place making** – ‘Boosts the social, cultural, environmental economic value of places by using location-specific digital technology to foster deeper relationships between people and the places they inhabit.’<sup>89</sup>
- ‘Digital place-making can act as a cost effective alternative to building physical infrastructure.’<sup>90</sup>
- ‘Inclusive and accessible, digital place-making for heritage can range from gamified tours for children ... to geo-locational audio tours.’<sup>91</sup>
- ‘Projects like these lever creative storytelling to build emotional engagement across communities.’<sup>92</sup>
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Street Stories’ – Kings Cross, London
    - ‘The Guardian approached Calvium with an idea to create audio street-stories based around King’s Cross station.’<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> ‘The Grimsey Review 2’, Bill Grimsey

<sup>87</sup> Ibid

<sup>88</sup> ‘Heritage Works’, Deloitte

<sup>89</sup> <https://calvium.com/about/digital-placemaking/>

<sup>90</sup> <https://calvium.com/about/digital-placemaking/>

<sup>91</sup> <https://calvium.com/about/digital-placemaking/>

<sup>92</sup> <https://calvium.com/about/digital-placemaking/>

<sup>93</sup> <https://calvium.com/projects/guardian-street-stories/>

- Allowed 'the listener to wander as they please instead of following a direct route.'<sup>94</sup>
- 'Designed a manual and automatic interface so that stories would automatically play when you were on location but you were also able to play them manually when you were not.'<sup>95</sup>

○ CASE STUDY – 'Stockton Flyer' – Stockton

- 'An automation combining material and form consistent with the Georgian architecture, with a daily event of movement and sound.'

High Street 2030: Achieving Change – Institute of Place Management

'Aldershot is well-known as the 'home of the British Army' – but apart from one gun at the station there is little clearly discoverable in the town centre that makes references to this heritage.' (Page 11)

'Likewise, Aldershot has a large Nepalese community and there are now Nepalese shops and leisure facilities but nothing is made of this opportunity in the strategy.' (Page 11)

- 'It celebrates Stockton's place in railway history' in a unique and dynamic way, informing visitors and town residents alike.'<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> <https://calvium.com/projects/guardian-street-stories/>

<sup>95</sup> <https://calvium.com/projects/guardian-street-stories/>

<sup>96</sup> ibid

## The Digital High Street

- Irrespective of the specifics of a scheme, there ought to be an underpinning recognition in the value of digital technology to transform the high street.
- This is a topic of considerable depth with substantial research existing surrounding the integration of technology into the town centres of the future.
  - The 'Digital High Street 2020 Report' is perhaps the most exhaustive analysis of the importance of technology for the future of town centres.<sup>97</sup>
  - While the 'Digital Influence Index' compares the digital output of a town against 1,300 others daily.<sup>98</sup>
- **Basic Digital Infrastructure Provision** – Digital tools (such as 4G and Wifi) provide smaller retailers with the means of adopting new ways of conducting their daily business alongside facilitating consumer's mobile shopping habits.<sup>99</sup>
- **Facilitating the Adoption of Digital Technologies** – Small retailers may find it difficult to evaluate whether particular digital solutions may prove useful, or whether their benefits outweigh their costs.<sup>100</sup>
- Providing these solutions on a free trial basis makes them more accessible and can stimulate their adoption once their benefits have been experienced first hand.
  - CASE STUDY – Liberte Living-Lab - Paris
    - 'Enables shopkeepers to take part in tests with start-ups and trial digital solutions for free over several months.'<sup>101</sup>
    - 'In turn the start ups can establish a physical presence through a 'pop-up shop' with a short term lease, to sell their innovate digital products.'<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> 'Digital High Street 2020 Report', Digital High Street Advisory Board, March 2015

<sup>98</sup> <http://www.wdyt.org.uk/uk-digital-index/>

<sup>99</sup> 'Facing the future: A practical guide for fostering the revitalisation and modernisation of the small retail sector', European Commission

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

- Moreover increasing small business knowledge and skills surrounding digital technology can help them respond to the demands of the modern consumer.
- There exist companies located online which provide a learning platform and support for independent retailers who wish to improve their online presence.<sup>103</sup>  
(HighStreet13.com // SocialRetail.co.uk)
  - CASE STUDY – ‘Wembley High Road’ – Brent Council
    - ‘Brent Council contacted the private consultant Clockwork City to provide a series of digital skills workshops for 20 small retailers.’
    - ‘The workshops included one-to-one mentoring to ensure that the skills and tools provided were relevant to their specific circumstances.’
    - ‘100% of the participants said they found the training useful ... 72% had put the lessons they learned into practice.’<sup>104</sup>
- **Local Authority App** – By providing an app LA’s can communicate more effectively with their residents, improve employee efficiency and collect valuable data which can be used to inform decisions.<sup>105</sup>
  - **Features:**
    - Check recycling and bin collection days.
    - Ability to report infrastructure problems.
    - Browse events listings.
    - Keep up with the latest news.
    - Access contact information.
    - Directions to local facilities.
    - Access a retail directory whereby small local businesses can offer promotions and discounts.
- **The Future of Retail**- A key concept is an omni-channel shopping journey, whereby online, mobile and contactless are incorporated into the shopping process.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> ‘Beyond Retail: Redefining the shape and purpose of town centres’, Town Centre Property Taskforce

<sup>104</sup> <https://www.brent.gov.uk/council-news/press-releases/pr6306/>

<sup>105</sup> <https://fliplet.com/blog/essential-local-council-apps/>

<sup>106</sup> ‘A. High Street Community Appraisal’, The Digital High Street 2020

- Town centres need to market themselves as convenient hubs for collecting products ordered online<sup>107</sup> as more and more 'retailers are ... using physical stores as logistics hubs.'<sup>108</sup>
  - Buy online, pick up in store.
    - 'Online pickups still represent only a single-digit percentage of retailers' sales but are growing at 30 to 40 percent a year.'<sup>109</sup>
    - CASE STUDY – Macy's – US
    - Customers 'use a QR code on their emailed receipt to open a ... locker and retrieve their purchase.'<sup>110</sup>
  - Reserve online, try in store.
    - CASE STUDY – Nordstrom – US
      - 'Nordstrom erected a large modular fitting room next to' its storage of online orders.<sup>111</sup>
  - Customer loyalty apps
    - CASE STUDY – The 'GL Card'
      - 'Run by Marketing Gloucester and Gloucestershire Live. It is free to join and can be used in the city centre.'<sup>112</sup>
      - 'Get discount vouchers from Voucher Points which can be used at local businesses.'<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> 'Beyond Retail: Redefining the shape and purpose of town centres', Town Centre Property Taskforce

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20171117/ISSUE01/171119885/brick-and-mortar-retailers-accommodate-online-shoppers>

<sup>110</sup> <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20171117/ISSUE01/171119885/brick-and-mortar-retailers-accommodate-online-shoppers>

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/article/20171117/ISSUE01/171119885/brick-and-mortar-retailers-accommodate-online-shoppers>

<sup>112</sup> <https://glcard.co.uk/faq>

<sup>113</sup> <https://glcard.co.uk/faq>



- BLE Beacons – ‘Retailers can send personalized notifications to each shopper’s mobile, depending on where they are in the store.’<sup>114</sup>
- ‘Rather than using stores as the main way of selling goods, many retailers are improving their in-store experience, offering consulting services, after-sale service, and richer interactions with products.’<sup>115</sup>
- Alongside technological integration is more of a focus on unique experience.
- Town centre engagement has shifted from the functional to the more recreational, whereby consumers are drawn in by the offer of experiences rather than the acquisition of basic goods.<sup>116</sup>
- ‘Activities – classes in pottery or sewing for example – are offered as well as products’<sup>117</sup> thereby providing something that the internet lacks.

*\*\* An interesting development within this space is the fact that some UK SME e-retailers ‘were planning to expand into physical stores ... as they increasingly feel the pressure from online competition sales.’<sup>118</sup>*

## Service Retail

Physical services, which are impossible to obtain on the internet, are perhaps best placed to differentiate themselves in the future retail environment.

The fastest growing retail category in the first six months of 2018 was barbers with a net increase of 349 units across GB, adding to the 624 store net increase in 2017.

The top 10 categories for growth was dominated by health and beauty categories with beauty salons (+160) and health clubs (+50) featuring.



**Figures obtained from the LDC H1 2018 Report**

Source: LDC

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> ‘Everything Must Go...’, The Observer, 02.12.2018

<sup>118</sup> ‘British High Streets: from Crisis to Recover? A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence’, Economic and Social Research Council

- ***A Digital Public Realm*** - 'To thrive in the digital age, high streets need to be walkable, accessible, diverse and vibrant.'<sup>119</sup>
- 'An emerging area of research is the impact of augmented reality on urban planning, and specifically, using technology to increase permeability, walkability and navigation.'<sup>120</sup>
- 'Augmented reality can apply navigational information in real time for pedestrians.'<sup>121</sup>
- 'The technology could also help highlight poorly maintained paths or routes based on public data participation or official tracking to increase accessibility.'<sup>122</sup>

- CASE STUDY – Bird Street, London

- 'From July – December 2017, Bird Street was re-purposed into the world's first smart street.'<sup>123</sup>
- The street showcased a range of new sustainable technologies:
  - Airlite's clean air bench.
  - Air purifying paint.
  - A Pavegen surface converting the footfall of visitors into electricity.
- 'The project offered low trading fees of £108 per day ... and a collection of pop-up retailers offered visitors a changing mix of fashion, technology and out-door dining on the street.'<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

<sup>120</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

<sup>121</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

<sup>122</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

<sup>123</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

<sup>124</sup> 'The Pedestrian Pound', Living Streets

- Within the Strategic Economic Plan of the LEP 'Digital' is mentioned 70 times / 'Tech' mentioned 48 times. Technological modernisation is undeniably a core concept that they are basing their future on.

## Parking

- 'Each town needs a customer-led parking strategy, catering to the different needs of workers, visitors and local residents.'<sup>125</sup>
- 'The introduction of innovative and flexible parking policies should be encouraged to attract shoppers and other town users during off-peak periods.'<sup>126</sup>
- 'High street visitors rate access as their top criteria and good access correlates with average spend increase of between 35% and 38%.<sup>127</sup>
- ***In ground parking sensors*** – Magnetic and infrared technology enables operators to have a detailed understanding of occupancy and consumer behaviour.<sup>128</sup>
- This information can be used to dynamically adjust rates at meters.<sup>129</sup>
  - CASE STUDY – 'SFpark' – San Francisco
    - Using in ground parking sensors 'SFpark periodically [adjusted] meter and garage pricing up and down to match demand.'<sup>130</sup>
      - 'Average parking rates were lower.'
      - 'Parking availability improved.'
      - 'Easier to find a parking space.'
      - 'Greenhouse gas emissions decreased.'
      - 'Vehicle miles travelled decreased.'
  - ***Parking apps*** – 'Ease the congestion and stress involved in searching and paying for parking and [help] consumers identify the most economical and time-efficient parking options.'<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> 'The Grimsey Review 2', Bill Grimsey

<sup>126</sup> 'Beyond Retail', Distressed Town Centre Property Taskforce

<sup>127</sup> 'The Grimsey Review 2', Bill Grimsey

<sup>128</sup> <https://www.government.europa.eu/smart-parking-transforming-the-experience-of-parking/90505/>

<sup>129</sup> <https://www.government.europa.eu/smart-parking-transforming-the-experience-of-parking/90505/>

<sup>130</sup> <http://sfpark.org/about-the-project/pilot-evaluation/>

<sup>131</sup> <https://www.government.europa.eu/smart-parking-transforming-the-experience-of-parking/90505/>

- **Overhead guidance indicators** – Clearly highlight whether a space is occupied or not through a simple, and cost effective system.
- Can be incorporated to include on-screen availability information.
- Allows for ‘instant identification of available space to drivers’ alongside ‘disabled, parent & child and other special spaces’.<sup>132</sup>
- **Automatic Number Plate Recognition**- Allows for real time recognition of a vehicle’s number plate and so can automatically calculate amount to charge.
- Importantly, in terms of the SEP and its priority of embedding a ‘Clean Growth approach in all that we do’, these smart parking measures reduce emissions by limiting circling thereby reducing vehicle miles driven.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> <https://www.smartparking.com/technologies/overhead-guidance-indicators>

<sup>133</sup> <https://www.governmenteuropa.eu/smart-parking-transforming-the-experience-of-parking/90505/>

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