



**successful town centres –
developing effective strategies.**

“understanding your high street”

executive summary.

The high street and the retail sector are facing a period of flux with tremendous pressures from local, national and global consumer trends, including rapid changes in the fiscal climate affecting local authorities. This situation has become particularly acute since the global economic downturn of 2008, which many see as the start of a significant long term global restructuring of the world's economy.

Building on the findings of recent Government thinking, including the "Understanding high street performance" report by Genecon and the UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills published in 2012, this study argues for a fresh approach to the situation faced by the retail sector, the high street and more generally, town centres across the country.

Instead of a reactive approach to consumer trends, this report argues for a re-think of the strategic positioning of town centres to reclaim them to their rightful position and role as places that serve their communities, visitors, businesses and key stakeholders, with a quality of experience that encourages them to keep coming back, and staying longer.

In line with this, the achievement of prosperity for town centres is aligned here with their strategic aspirations and ability to satisfy changing demands, which this report suggests includes a holistic approach to the integration and management of the daytime, evening and night time economies. These three segments of the 24-hr economy should be seen as part of one menu that town centres offer in an economy increasingly driven by customer experience and perceptions. To achieve this, key town centre decision makers - who should include the business community as well as local residents - need first to establish a vision for the future of their town centre that is anchored in the 'personality' or unique characteristics of their town, sometimes referred to as the 'DNA' of the place.



the aims of this study are to:

- 1. Present a set of tools that will help places of different sizes** (from small market towns to large city centres and potentially also villages and rural locations) to plot a locally tailor-made strategic road map towards prosperity, informed by their stakeholders.
- 2. Develop and present a state-of-the-art Town Centre Classification Matrix linked to a ‘personality’ test for town centres.** This tool, which can be used for individual retailers and businesses as well as entire towns and tourist destinations, represents the first stage of strategic positioning and includes key elements of perceptions among visitors, residents and businesses.
- 3. Develop and present a new and clear national performance framework for town centres.** This framework is linked to the Town Centre Classification Matrix and allows places to evaluate their current situation and to monitor progress towards their strategic vision or objectives. This is achieved through a ground-breaking approach that effectively demystifies the concept of town centre performance indicators. Each indicator is explained in an approachable manner with data collection methodologies that include the possibility of using commercially available data or adopting a do-it-yourself method to field research locally.
- 4. Empower and support communities:** Town Teams, Portas Pilots, local authority representatives, businesses operating in or near town centres, trader organisations, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), town centre managers, business improvement district managers, policy makers, town planners, charities, national retail associations, shopping centre managers, urban regeneration practitioners, tourism officers, consultancies and researchers.
- 5. Help locations and centres of all sizes to make key investment decisions,** adopting a strategic approach using decision support tools (including key performance indicators) that enable decision makers to prioritise and deal with local issues effectively.

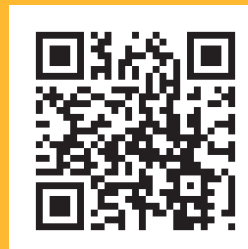
Additionally, the indicators used in this study also support users who wish to pursue further market research to gain a better understanding of their town centre and the complexity of interactions between different parameters. This includes the differences that may exist in some places between facts and perceptions (e.g. reported retail crime versus perceptions of crime and safety in the town centre). As in any change management context, it is vital to know the facts so that informed decisions can be taken to prioritise available resources effectively.



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