Southwold Town Centre Strategy; A Proposed Forward Framework

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Southwold Town Centre Strategy; *A Proposed Forward Framework*

Introduction

Background

Southwold Coastal Community Team

In January 2017, Southwold received confirmation from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) that its bid to become a Coastal Community Team had been accepted. As defined by DCLG: "A Coastal Community Team (CCT) is a local partnership consisting of the local authority and a range of people and business interests from a coastal community who have an understanding of the issues facing that area and can develop an effective forward strategy for that place."

An essential requirement for all CCTs is the production of an Economic Plan as a framework for the CCT's work and objectives in boosting the local economy. Locally tailored, this Economic Plan for the Southwold CCT is output and evidence based and aims to:

- Address challenges and opportunities
- Enhance economic prosperity and well-being
- Set out a programme of actionable initiatives
- Attract future funding and deliver results
- Benefit all living and working in Southwold

Revitalising the High Street

Although it is a highly regarded tourist destination and an attractive place both to live and work, Southwold has a number of significant economic sustainability issues; namely a declining and ageing population, high commercial rents, dramatic increase in business rates for some (April 2017), and a dependency of seasonal and low paid jobs.

One of the strategic priorities for the Economic Plan is to maintain and promote the vitality of the high street and the CCT wishes to ensure there is a united and proactive approach to galvanising the local business community in order to leverage the strengths of the High Street traders within the town.

For this be realised it has been acknowledged that a Town Centre Strategy is required which will seek to create a framework and clear plan for strengthening the success of the town's High Street with its mix of independent and known branded businesses. The study will need to:

- *Review of existing practices*: Carry out a review on past and current initiatives e.g. My Southwold and make recommendations on how best to develop these further
- *Evidence & analysis*: Carry out a SWOT analysis on Southwold as a retail destination and understand its existing customer base in relation to the offer.
- *Business confidence*: Understand the stability of independent retailers and their relationship to the national chains on the High Street.
- *Recommendations and action planning*: Make recommendations on the type of investment and retail mix that could be attracted to the High Street to maintain existing customers and attract new consumers.
- *Partnership development*: Identify ways in which to encourage partnership working across all businesses/sectors that contribute to the success of the High Street and Southwold as a destination.
- *Boosting employment*: Ascertain opportunities for maintaining local employment opportunities linked to the High Street.
- *Extending the season*: Look at ways in which to increase trade to local businesses to create a year-round retail destination

The People & Places Partnership

This project has been led by People & Places Director, Chris Wade. Chris has over 22 years' experience of running not-for-profit place-making businesses at a local level, as well as nationally as Chief Executive of the charity, Towns Alive. In 2014 Chris formed the People and Places Partnership Ltd. to provide 'hands-on' research, guidance and project management on community-led town centre regeneration. Chris previously served on the Government's Future High Street Forum was recently nominated as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts for his outstanding contribution to town centre regeneration.

The People & Places Partnership offers a proven track-record in evidenced-based, collaborative working to support local economies. People & Places have extensive experience of conducting research in to town centre performance and perceptions; businesses confidence; stakeholder engagement; partnership development; town centre action planning and delivery; and performance monitoring.

Outline of Approach

Developing a Forward Framework

Part of the challenge going forward in delivering sustainable town centre development in Southwold is determining how activity is best organised. In this review of the organisational development options for a Southwold Town Centre Partnership or Team, we use the F-Factors Framework created by People & Places Director, Chris Wade and acknowledged as good practice by the UK Governments Great British High Street Campaign.

This analysis begins with a detailed review of the 'foundations' in terms of existing strategies, collective objectives and new evidence from the recent survey work. This is followed by the review of key roles in terms of 'function'; options for organisational development through an appropriate 'form' and proposals for the roles of key stakeholders and wider engagement through 'folk'. Initial thinking on 'finances' will reference identified opportunities for fund raising and investment as well options for financial sustainability related to organisational development. The purpose of an over-arching 'Forward Framework' is to pull all these strands together in to a long-term strategy and shorter-term plans.

Foundations

Review of existing practices

The survey work was accompanied by a review and analysis of existing local reports and secondary data with an interactive presentation given to stakeholders on the Coastal Community Team. This is helpful in offering an objective survey overview and developing local engagement with businesses and other key stakeholders.

Evidence & analysis

The People & Places Partnership have adapted its national Town Centre Benchmarking process to undertake a SWOT analysis of Southwold town centre as a retail destination and local hub. This tried and tested nationally-used survey process enables the monitoring and analysis of town centre performance and trends in a way that is comparable with other similar-sized towns. This process provides evidence to help understand the existing customer base in relation to the retail, leisure and services.

Business confidence

The Benchmarking process also helps understand the stability of local retailers and their relationship to the national chains on the High Street. This is achieved in a way that enables comparison to traders in other, similar towns.

Function

Recommendations and action planning

On the basis of the evidence from the survey work, recommendations can be made on the type of investment and retail mix that can be attracted to the High Street to maintain its role, satisfy existing customers and attract new consumers. This draws on the wider understanding gleaned about what attracts customers to Southwold town centre. This defines a town partnership's function; what it is trying to achieve and why.

Form & Folk

Partnership development

Organisational form follows function. Based on understanding of what a partnership is seeking to achieve it is possible to determine how it might best be organised to help achieve this. This will include opportunities for maintaining local employment opportunities and looking at ways to create a year-round destination based on an understanding of the issues involved. This will enable identifying ways to encourage partnership working across all sectors and stakeholder groups to contribute to the success of the High Street and Southwold as a destination.

The way in which the partnership operates in terms of staffing, stakeholder representation, engagement, training and communication will key to getting the most out of the involvement of local businesses and other partners. To aid Action Plan development, Coastal Community Team sub-groups and stakeholder groups will be provided with project development briefings and templates for determining priorities.

Finances

Although beyond the scope of this piece of work, the study findings do nevertheless provide pointers on how fundraising and internal financial management can help provide a sustained income as well as an understanding of the scope for attracting future investment in the town centre.

Forward Planning

As with any organisation or business, it is important to constantly review and revise the future approach in terms of both 'products' and organisational development. This Forward Framework provides a template for how this can be articulated annually.

Foundations: Existing Practices

Overview

This section of the study reviews existing knowledge, consultations and policies relating to Southwold Town Centre. This supplements the survey work undertaken by reviewing and analysing existing local reports and secondary data; much of which was used to inform the Coastal Community Team's Economic Plan.

> *"Often in small towns there are not differences of opinions; simply opinions about different things"*

The purpose of this review is to help understand stakeholder perspectives and inform analysis. In doing so this review helps bring together knowledge and understanding derived from organisations and groups with a particular focus on the future development of Southwold. Such a review is helpful in understanding complementary approaches as often in small towns there are not differences of opinions; simply opinions about different things. These are summarised here as background here.

Review of Existing Strategies

Waveney Core Strategy (2009)

The Core Strategy provides the following over-arching vision for Southwold and adjoining Reydon; treating them collectively as the "wider Southwold/Reydon area".

"*Southwold will prosper as a unique and historic market town and resort town, not least because of the quality of its coastal location and built and natural environment. These qualities will continue to be protected and enhanced. More effective traffic management will assist in reducing the impact of visitor traffic on the environment. Situated in the Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB and Heritage Coast, only limited and small-scale housing development will have taken place within the built-up area. Development in the harbour area will have been managed so as to balance the needs of the fishing industry with the pressure for change, flood risk and the high quality of the environment. The adjacent village of Reydon will continue to function as part of a wider Southwold/Reydon area. Some employment development serving both communities will have taken place in Reydon. Likewise, some enhanced playing field provision will have been provided in Reydon to support local teams. The village will have experienced only small-scale housing development.*"

Waveney District Local Plan (2017)

The new Local Plan will cover the period to 2036 and will set out the amount of growth that needs to be planned for the District, where the growth should go and how it should be delivered. The new Local Plan will take into account the emerging Neighbourhood Plan for Southwold and will provide a basis and identify the 'Strategic Policies for the new Southwold Neighbourhood Plan to align with.

The main strategy for Southwold and Reydon is to allocate more housing to increase the range of affordable homes in the area whilst protecting the sensitive built and natural environment. The Plan recognises that currently more people work in the area than live in the area and there is a significant amount of in commuting in to Southwold from outside of the Southwold and Reydon area. More homes in the Southwold Reydon area, particularly affordable homes, will allow people who work in the area to live in the area.

The focus for housing is in Reydon with allocated sites providing an opportunity to deliver a significant number of homes. A total of 250 new homes are expected to be delivered in in the period to 2036.

The Plan also recognises that Southwold Harbour is a unique Conservation Area which needs careful management. For many years there has been a specific policy for the management of the Harbour, and this Local Plan rolls that approach forward.

Strategy for the Future of Southwold

The Town Council's strategy describes its plans for Southwold for the remaining through to 2020 along with its vision "For Southwold to be the successful, vibrant, attractive town on the East Anglian coast, where people want to live, work and visit"

Southwold Town Council's innovative strategy seeks to differentiate Southwold from other coastal towns in East Anglia. In particular it wishes to:

- Diversify the local economy by knowledge based businesses
- Reverse decline in resident population and attract more families to live and work
- Retain and enhance the natural and built environment
- Protect, maintain and enhance community assets
- Promote and maintain the independent character of the High Street
- Improve access, parking and transport within the town Southwold

Southwold Neighbourhood Plan

With a view to helping shape future planning policies at local level, a Neighbourhood Plan for Southwold is in its final stages of consultation and review. A series of focus group sessions were undertaken for the Neighbourhood Plan in early 2016 along with separate 1-2-1 interviews with key business owners (see analysis below). A questionnaire was circulated to all residents of Southwold, both full-time and part-time during the summer of 2016. They were asked for views on housing (including the high % of second homes in the town), affordable housing, community facilities, land use, environment, urban design and the town's future economy. A Neighbourhood Plan Update was circulated in late 2016 identifying specific policy areas relating to:

- High quality design
- In-fill and property extensions
- Low cost housing and affordable business space

- Protecting community assets
- Protection of the natural environment
- Second homes and holiday lets

Reydon Village Plan

The aim of the Village Plan is to identify what is needed "to retain what is good in our village, improve what could be better and develop provision that is currently lacking." It contains aims and objectives for:

- Housing
- Business and Employment
- Schools and Education
- Environment and Community
- Traffic and Transport
- Health and Caring

Waveney Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment

The relevant extract for Southwold from the Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment concluded: "Overall Southwold is a popular, attractive, vital and viable town centre. The main issue appears to be a lack of parking during peak holiday periods which can lead to severe congestion around the town centre. The identification of additional car parking and/or 'park-and-ride' provision to meet peak demand is a priority for the town centre."

Forecasts for retail capacity are made for 167m2 net of new retail floor space by 2026, increasing to 353m2 net by 2032. It is recognised that "there is limited scope for new retail floor space development in the town centre due to its historic nature. As a result, meeting the identified needs will have to occur through the conversion and change of use of existing buildings in the primary shopping area, and/or through 'infill' development as has happened in the past."

Southwold Coastal Community Team Economic Plan

An essential requirement for all CCTs is the production of an Economic Plan as a framework for the CCT's work and objectives in boosting the local economy. The Southwold Coastal Community Economic Plan follows an output and evidence based which identifies a number of underlying local issues. :

Although it is a highly regarded tourist destination and an attractive place both to live and work, Southwold has a number of significant economic sustainability issues namely a declining and ageing population, high commercial rents, dramatic increase in business rates for some (April 2017), and a dependency of seasonal and low paid jobs.

Holiday Homes and Falling Population

Southwold's prominence as a tourist destination has driven out younger residents and reduced the number of permanent residents. For the past 35 years the population of Southwold has been declining. The permanent resident population in 2014 was 1,098 (ONS Estimates) compared to 1,839 in 1981. It is also an ageing population with 60% of local residents over 60

Southwold's special character, its attractive mix of independent shops and above all its future sustainability, depend on developing the right mix of residents, second homers and holiday-let landlords, all of whom are important for the economy and character of the town. The attraction of Southwold property as an investment is key among the factors that are driving up the rapid increase of holiday-lets, which now account for over 20% of all residential properties. Meanwhile the proportion of residents' homes has fallen to less than 50%, with the balance of properties being second homes. The effects of this are already noticeable in the fall in off-season trade for local businesses and falling numbers at the local primary school.

A Dominant Visitor Economy

Southwold's thriving High Street, with its mix of hotels, pubs, restaurants and cafes and small shops now caters primarily for the main local industry, tourism. However, its numerous independent businesses, which contribute much to the town's individual appeal as a retail and visitor destination, have been joined in recent years by a growing number of national chains. This has arguably diluted the distinctiveness of the High Street and has resulted in dramatic increases in commercial rents, giving rise more recently to disproportionate and potentially devastating hikes in business rates.

For all the success of the town's visitor economy an over-reliance on tourism has a number of downsides. Its seasonality means that essential local businesses find it difficult to sustain trade all year round with local residents suffering the consequences when local shops and services close. Tourism related jobs are also seasonal and often low-paid. At peak periods the town can be congested and parking and infrastructure are put under strain.

The biggest local employer is the successful brewer, wine merchant and hotelier, Adnams, which also owns many local pubs. Adnams has had a strong influence on the evolution of the town over the past 50 years and plays a large role in the local community as a sponsor of local events and as a highly regarded responsible employer. The company is enjoying a period of sustained growth and its supply chain requirements present a potential opportunity for the town's economy.

Revitalising the Town Centre

One of the strategic priorities for the Economic Plan is to maintain and promote the vitality of the high street and the CCT wishes to ensure there is a united and proactive approach to galvanising the local business community in order to leverage the strengths of the High Street traders within the town.

Previous Consultations and Data

The tables below provide an extensive review of data and responses from three recent consultation exercise. The purpose is to add to background understanding and avoid any needless repetition questioning and possible 'survey fatigue'.

The three sources of comments and data are:

- Interviews with selected business about the Coastal Communities Team Economic Plan
- Survey responses from the businesses and residents about Coastal Communities Team, Economic Plan proposals
- Interviews with selected business about the Neighbourhood Plan

Interviews on Neighbourhood Plan with Businesses and other Key Stakeholders
Economic Plan interview: Sally Smith (My Southwold), Party Pant; Rebecca Bishop, Two Magpies Bakery; Dominic Parravani, MD, Durrants; Andy Wood, Adnams; Ericka Clegg, Spring; Jessica Jeans and Laurence Vulliamy, Southwold Hospital Project; Melanie Tucker, Southwold Town Council (Mayor); Philip O'Hear, Dexter Kirk, Southwold & Reydon Society. Neighbourhood Plan interviews: Kate Adey, Sail Loft Restaurant; George Mills, Butchers
Rent & Rates
• All independent traders are struggling with rising rents; • Rates crisis could be a catalyst; • Rates revaluation is having a huge impact; • Impact of the rates revaluation on businesses and potential erosion of the town's appeals to visitors and in turn his own businesses; • High Street businesses under serious pressure from rates increase and rising rent; • Business rate issue presents an extremely serious threat to the town. Level of commercial rents is a limiting factor; *Conclusion*: Rates rises in particular is a key issue that remains largely unresolved and the impacts of which will be beginning to be felt by businesses.
Staffing
• Attracting Staff: Difficulty of attracting and keeping staff because of lack of affordable housing even in villages. • Wages: Another reason we find it hard to compete is that Adnams now pays a living wage even to 17 year old KP's. We can't pay this. £8 minimum. *Conclusion*: The suggestion is that the inter-relationship between the seasonality of business; local living costs, poor transport and workers is at times a strained one. This needs further investigation and monitoring to understand how t might be a limiting factor.
Parking and Transport
• Need more car parking to reduce the negative impact of tourists; • Lack of parking causes big snarl-ups in the town; • Adnams 84 acre distribution centre site on edge of Reydon could play a part in a future park & ride scheme; • While a new car park e.g. on the site opposite Stella Peskett Hall would be good, she questions the severity of transport and parking; • Accessibility is a major issue. STC Parking Study recommendations awaited. MT has done a business plan for a Park & Ride scheme; WDC car parks first, then perimeter car parks; • The shuttle bus service (sponsored by Adnams with STC and RPC) is vital for elderly residents going

to the health centre or from Reydon to the shops in Southwold;

- Staff Parking: Now that council car park is pay and display, this can result in a staff parking fee of £6 per day. The idea of designated employee parking spaces is interesting. Transport for Staff: Transport is tricky unless you have a car. Our last staff go home at 11:30 or 12 so have to rely on their own transport.

Conclusion: Parking is widely perceived by businesses as an issue and this requires further investigation and survey work amongst town centre users to understand and verify the nature of any problems and potential remedies.

Visitor Economy

- Tourism is too seasonal – need year-round business;
- Recognises importance of the visitor economy but sees it as a 'curate's egg';
- Health and fitness economy could be much stronger;
- Arts offer could be stronger;

Conclusion: More needs to be done to understand the value, seasonality and wider impacts on business mix and housing costs associated with the visitor economy.

Local Customers

- With hindsight, it would have made more sense to establish ourselves in a town with full time population. I'm not sure that the tourism makes up for what we are lacking in full time residents. A constant stream of trade of ordinary meat is better than peaks and troughs.

Conclusion: In contrast to the seasonality of the visitor economy, more needs to be done to investigate the value of local customers and potential to improve.

Market

On market days, we do better because people come in from Wangford, etc to use the market, and pop down for lunch. A lot of retired people still come into Southwold by bus and they come to us.

Conclusion: There is a need to understand the strength of the Monday and Thursday markets and their ability to attract more people in to the town centre

Marketing & Promotion

- My Southwold set up 5 years ago –strong branding but hard work;
- Arts Festival a recent initiative designed for the shoulder season;
- My Southwold now run by two local traders;
- Need new website as existing moribund; My Southwold site could be redeveloped;
- Southwold needs an effective consumer-facing website;

Conclusion: Clarity is needed about the purpose, brand, benefits and impacts of existing marketing activity.

Business Premises/Food Hub

- I would like a spacious hygienic area where we could produce food products. Rebecca at Two Magpies is the same as us. If you are looking to develop the artisan food sector – people could be producing in the town.

Conclusion: There is a need to understand if this is a diversification option linked perhaps to Adnams expansion, visitor economy and Southwold brand.

Diversification

- There is a local creative/IT axis; Durrants planning to create for 2 start-up office space on top floor;
- Could attract more of Adnams' supply chain businesses; 25% of these are SMEs and 30% are from East Anglia. Adnams forecasting significant growth and its local operations will increase;
- Creative Digital Tech Hub on hospital site: Fastest growing sector; expand from 850 to 1500 square metres with new first floor areas; 2/3 community and business; 1/3 market housing;
- Need more high-level employment opportunities in Southwold e.g. the IT/knowledge based sector, not just retail and hospitality;

Conclusion: Need to understand opportunity, value and likely impact of diversifying economy in terms of employment, sustainability of existing businesses and year-around footfall.

Built Assets

- Harbour seems like a lost opportunity;
- Station Road feasibility study and architect's plans for a 2-storey business hub; Hospital site also an important opportunity with potential linkage; St Edmunds Hall provides an important community arts facility and Southwold Arts Trust is developing plans; Harbour is a potential asset though there are difficulties with various vested interests; Common and the marshes are a huge asset;
- Station Road site is likely to be at least 4 years away. Hospital project if it happens, much sooner. NB there are also empty business units on Reydon Business Park. The Harbour, incl. camp site, is opportunity. Report in 2014 recommended the formation of a charitable trust to manage the Harbour but Joint Management Committee between WDCV and STC has not progressed;
- All of the things mentioned for Hospital site would benefit but especially using it to support start-up and co-working and micro businesses. These are the businesses that need a first step up because this is the hardest situation. Moving from your back room to a something that is connected;

Conclusion: Need to understand current and potential value of community assets in terms of quality of life, year-around footfall and support for visitor and diversified economy.

Getting organised

- Chamber of Trade has a history of conflict with Town Council; has no regular contact with its members; nationals do not engage. Chamber can become all-inclusive, vibrant and fully functioning;
- Lack of joint working between Southwold and Reydon has improved recently. Need to recognise that the centre of gravity for the community is moving to Reydon.

Conclusion: Need to gauge perceptions and then investigate further with stakeholders.

Investment

- Adnams willing to invest money to support local high street if other major players, like national chains, play their part. AW willing to take a lead in approaching them.

Conclusion: Further work is needed to understand the drivers for private and public investment that that might support potential interventions

Town Manager

- Supports the idea of a Town Manager to help make things happen;
- A Town centre Manager is a vital role but needs someone with mix of talents;
- Need a Development Manager role. Someone to promote the town and the High Street and manage the visitor economy, extending the season;

Conclusion: There is some in principle sort for the concept of a manager based probably on the hope this will bring about necessary change and impacts. It will be important to focus on the added value that such a post might bring in unlocking actions with wide impacts.

CCT Economic Plan Public Consultation	
Priority Initiatives	***Votes***
PRIORITY 1. DIVERSIFY THE LOCAL ECONOMY	
• Remodel the Town Council-owned Station Road site into a business hub including small business units and space for artisans (*"but with protection for existing businesses"*)	66
• Support the Save Our Southwold initiative to create a knowledge-based business hub on the old Southwold Hospital site	62
PRIORITY 2. HELP BALANCE THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN TERMS OF AGE, LOCAL RESIDENTS AND JOBS	
• Identify and encourage development opportunities for affordable and/or social housing (such as the 22 new units at Duncan's Yard)	62
• Promotional programme to attract people to live and work in Southwold (e.g. from other parts of East Anglia, surrounding counties and London)	22
• Explore with organisations like Adnams, Suffolk County Council and Sizewell the scope to create employment opportunities, e.g. by helping to develop Station Road and Hospital sites	21
PRIORITY 3. CONSERVE AND PROMOTE OUR LOCAL HERITAGE	
• Complete and implement the Southwold Neighbourhood Plan to preserve the town's special character and limit inappropriate development	81
• Incorporate our design plans in potential developments at the entrance to the town	18
PRIORITY 4. PRESERVE OUR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT	
• Better maintenance and management of open spaces and natural areas, including the denes, the marshes, Tibby's Green, and other play areas, and seek to retain green spaces in the town for community use	77
• Support the Boating Lake in creating new lakes and wildlife havens beside the Boating Lake	35
PRIORITY 5. SECURE AND ENHANCE OUR COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL ASSETS	
• Liaise with the Save Our Southwold group to maximise the opportunity for community services such as an enhanced library and education hub at the former hospital	49
• Work with the various museums in the town to enhance their facilities, visitor offer and education programmes, developing funding bids HLF and others as appropriate	40
PRIORITY 6. MAINTAIN AND PROMOTE THE VITALITY OF THE HIGH STREET	
• Work with the local authority, local businesses and other relevant partners to explore options for reducing the negative impacts of the recent business rates revaluation ("work with central government first to try & impact formula")	203
• Build on previous work done by My Southwold and the Chamber of Trade to promote retail businesses in the town	24
• Develop a programme of events around the year which enliven the High Street and attract more shoppers and visitors	22
PRIORITY 7. SEEK TO ADDRESS ACCESS, PARKING AND TRANSPORT ISSUES	
• Support the Southwold Millennium Foundation in the creation of a new 200-space car park as part of its plans for a Visitor Centre on the site opposite Stella Peskett Millennium Hall	53
• Re-examine timed delivery of larger vehicles and ensure this and time limited parking are enforced	28
• Liaise with partners, such as Adnams and their 84-acre distribution centre site, regarding the feasibility and establishment of a park and ride	26
PRIORITY 8. MAKE THE VISITOR ECONOMY STRONGER AND MORE SUSTAINABLE	
• Promote the Harbour as a key part of the visitor offer for Southwold and as a port of call for visiting cruise ships	27
• Put in place a marketing plan for extending the season including the promotion of events and initiatives to attract visitors outside the peak tourist season, especially those related to physical and mental well-being	18

Analysis and Conclusions

Review Analysis

This review reveals the complexity of the inter-related issues that impact on the future development of Southwold as a multi-purpose town centre. These issues need to be further understood in terms of:

- How they are perceived and valued by stakeholders including businesses and town centre users.
- The inter-relationship between different issues and how these can be recognised in multiple objectives for town centre development
- The range and ability of interventions to influence and impact on issues.

The diagram overleaf summarises the different issues referenced in the Coastal Communities Economic Plan, the Town Council's Strategy for Southwold and Neighbourhood Plan papers. From the desk-top review of previous reports and consultations, the array of issues impacting on the town centre and that which need to be assessed and addressed can be summarised as:

Changing housing and population trends: These impact on seasonality of spend and recruitment of staff. Realism is needed about the ability to 'turn this tide' and this seems largely dependent on influencing the format of new house building proposed in Reydon.

Rising retail property costs: Affects mix of retail between multiples and independent; balance between hospitality, convenience, comparison and retail services; profitability and survival of businesses; appeal of town centre to different customers. More needs to be known about preferred business mix for both visitors and locals. Ownership of property and the limited size of units seem to be main ways to restrict change whilst greater visitor and local spend plus rates discounts will help sustain existing businesses.

Seasonality and over-dependence on visitor economy: Skews mix and profitability of businesses; re-enforces temporary nature of High Street jobs. Future marketing needs a clear and consistent focus on product and desired local impacts; events and activities to extend the visitor season offer obvious potential to increase the local benefits from tourism; cultural activities and diverse mix of businesses can add to local quality of life.

Fluctuating parking and traffic: This issue provides a real/perceived barrier that may limit the use of the town centre at peak times and therefore restrict business profitability and reduce the quality of the experience and Southwold 'brand'. The issues need to be properly assessed and then practical solutions can be devised that reduce any problems and improve perceptions as part of the overall town centre experience.

Sustainable community assets and services: Maintains quality of life for local residents; opportunities for re-use and income generation from redundant property; offers potential for limited new, affordable housing and businesses premises for diversification. Current opportunities to develop and sustain community-owned assets on Station Road, the old hospital site, Harbour and the Reydon Business Park potentially can seek to deliver multiple benefits.

Diversifying the economy: The prospects of modest economic diversification offers the opportunity to ease the dependence and impacts of tourism to a limited extent by offering year-around employment, modest extra footfall and expanding/sustaining existing businesses. The main opportunities seem to focus on potential new premises with an initial focus perhaps to build on existing strengths such as local food and drink production; progress will though will influenced by availability of suitably affordable local housing and staff too.

Drivers for funding and investment: As work progresses it will be important to better understand the drivers for private investment to sustain and diversify local businesses as well as the potential public funding that can underpin necessary interventions. Currently the expansion of Adnams' business activities and proposals for developing community assets appear potential prospects for shaping change. More needs to be understood about the economics of potential housing development in Reydon.

Taking a whole community approach: Not only is it necessary to link an understanding of the town centre to wider issues but it is necessary to treat the "wider Southwold/Reydon area" together for the purposes of this work. Reydon residents, including potentially those in new housing, are an important part of the year-around economy and the village increasingly provides an important balance of community facilities.

Review Conclusions

From the desk-top review of existing strategies and consultations the following conclusions were reached in designing further stakeholder engagement:

- There was a need to check-back on issues with all town centre businesses using suitably tweaked questions to identify types of retailer (comparison, convenience) and add issues such as seasonality, availability of premises to the list of determining factors.
- Survey work needed from the outset to lead towards engagement and involvement of businesses by pointing to suggested solutions and asking to indicate level of interest.
- It was important to get survey responses from a suitable selection of local and visitor customers. Questions were tweaked to cover perceptions about desired mix of retailers including comparison/convenience and multiple/independent; and distinguish where spend is made (e.g. hospitality, convenience, comparison)
- There are already some innovative interventions in the pipeline around assets and will be important to work with these as part of the strategy development
- There was a need to understand options for housing growth especially in terms of affordable homes and an ability to contribute 'planning gain' funds for infrastructural development between Reydon and Southwold
- Some key issues are market driven and will need major intervention to address them, e.g. business premises costs and affordable housing

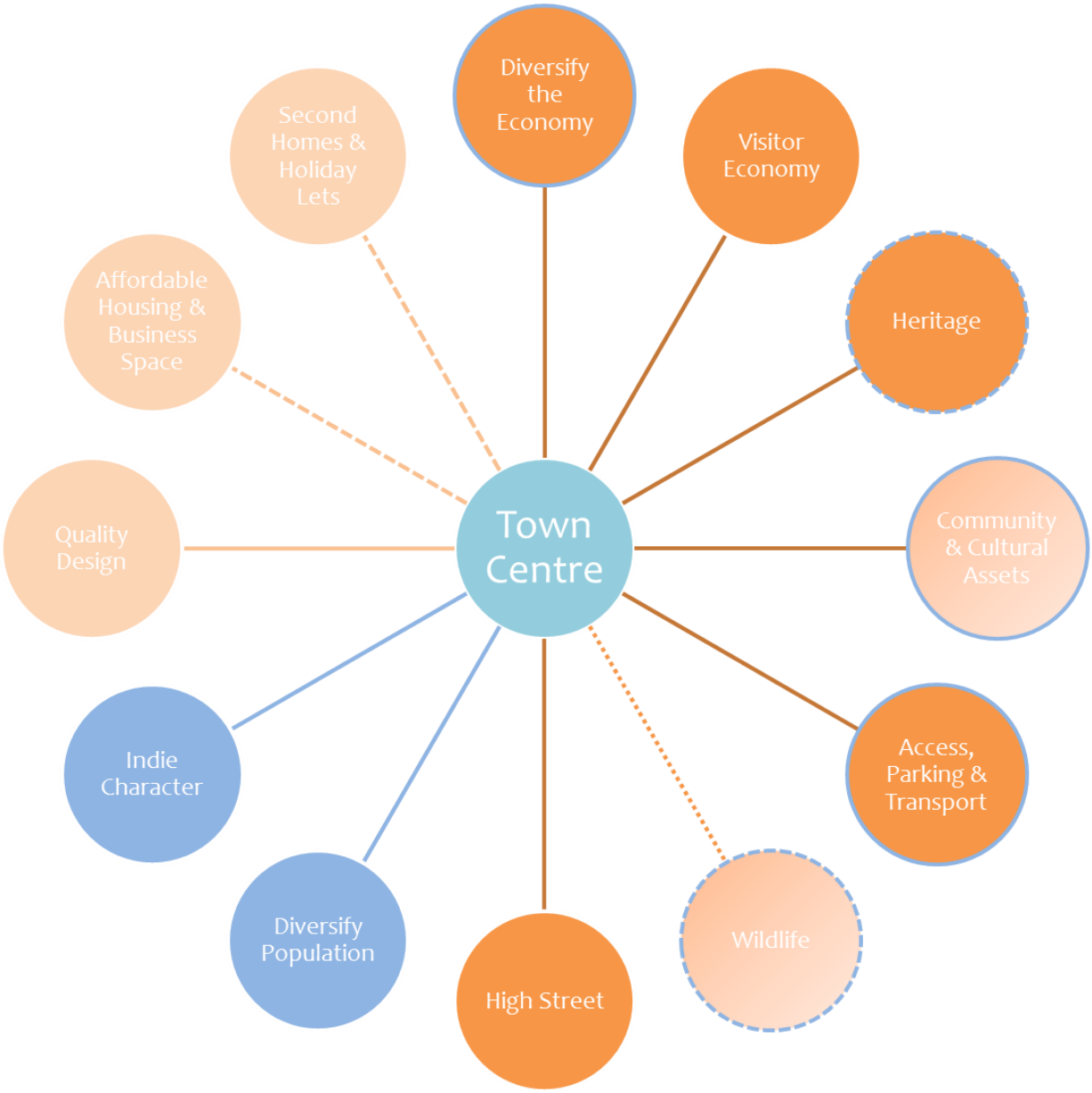


Figure 1: Illustration of overlapping issues from Economic Plan, Strategy for Southwold and Neighbourhood Plan and inter-relationship with multi-purpose town centre.

Foundations: Evidence, Analysis & Business Confidence

Introduction

The People and Places Town Centre Benchmarking System has been developed to address the real issues of how to understand measure, evaluate and improve town centres. The approach offers a simple way of capturing data on 12 Key Performance Indicators selected by those involved in town centre management. By having the tools to measure performance, strategic decision making is both encouraged and improved. By considering performance, forward strategies and action planning can be more focused and effective.

The Approach

People and Places Town Benchmarking licenses allow users to collect data on the 12 Key Performance Indicators from 1st January to 31st December in a systematic manner. All license holders are provided with a Town Benchmarking Handbook and associated data collection sheets to ensure standardization. Once the data has been collected it is sent to People and Places for analysis and report production.

The Benchmarking system is divided into two sections:

- Large Towns; consisting of those localities with more than 250 units
- Small Towns; consisting of those localities with less than 250 units

Towns, depending on their size, contribute to either the Large or Small Town analysis. The analysis provides data on each KPI for the Benchmarked town individually and in a national context for comparison. The National figure is the average for all the towns which participated in Benchmarking during 2016.

Applications

The Benchmarking report provides statistical analysis of each of the KPI's. Individual towns are encouraged to add their own commentary using local knowledge to provide specific explanations. The reports are used by a variety of key stakeholders such as local authorities, town and parish councils, local partnerships, Town Teams, Chambers of Trade, BIDs, Neighbourhood Plan groups to help:

- provide baseline data to understand individual town centres issues
- identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement
- assist in preparing local action plans to address identified issues
- monitor impact of local town centre regeneration over several years
- benchmark towns clusters and share good practice
- act as an evidence base for funding applications

Methodology

Each KPI is collected in a standardized way as highlighted in the table below. Here is a summary of KPIs collected as part of the core economic benchmarking process as well as an outline of benchmarks charting the wider social and economic value of town centres:

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR	*METHODOLOGY*
Core Economic Indicators	
The Place: Commercial Units	
KPI 1: Use Class	Visual Survey
KPI 2: Comparison/Convenience	Visual Survey
KPI 3: Trader Type	Visual Survey
KPI 4: Vacancy Rates	Visual Survey
The Place: Cross-town Trends	
KPI 5: Markets	Visual Survey
KPI 6 & 7: Zone A Retail Rents	Valuation Office Agency/ Local Agents
KPI 7: Prime Retail Property Yields	Valuation Office Agency/ Local Agents
KPI 8: Footfall	Survey on a Market & Quiet Day
KPI 9: Car Parking	Audit on Busy and Quiet Day
The People: Stakeholder Surveys	
KPI 10: Business Confidence Surveys	Postal Survey
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys	Face to Face Surveys/ Online Survey
KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Shoppers Origin Survey
Added Social and Economic Value (not included for this survey)	
Cultural And Community Function	
KPI A: Cultural Facilities	Online and Local Research
KPIB: Community Services	Online and Local Research
KPI C: Cultural and Community Events	Online and Local Research
Built Environment	
KPI D: Impressions Score	Visual Survey
KPI E: Number of Listed Buildings	Online Research
KPI F: Development Land	Online Research
Economic Diversity	
KPI G: Evening Economy	Visual Survey
KPI H: Local Food and Drink	Visual Survey
KPI I: Accommodation	Online Research
KPI J: Self-reliance	Online Research
Local Leadership and Delivery	
KPI K: Partnership Progression	Telephone Interview
KPI L: Planning and Delivery	Telephone Interview

Before any KPI data is collected the core commercial area of the town centre is defined. The town centre area thus includes the core shopping streets and car parks attached or adjacent to these streets.

Key Findings: The Place

KPI 1: Commercial Units; Use Class

It is important to understand the scale and variety of the "commercial offer" throughout the town. A variety of shops and a wide range of services in a town are important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. Sustaining a balance between the different aspects of buying and selling goods and services ensures that the local population (and visitors from outside) can spend time and money there, keeping the generated wealth of the town within the local economy. Importantly, it forms the employment base for a substantial proportion of the community too, helping to retain the population rather than lose it to nearby towns and cities.

The table overleaf provides a detailed breakdown of each of the Use Classes.

Findings

The table overleaf provides a detailed analysis of the commercial offering in the town centre by Use Class. The figures are presented as a percentage of the 154 occupied units recorded.

Class	Type of Use	Class Includes
A1	Shops	Shops, retail warehouses, hairdressers, travel and ticket agencies, post offices (but not sorting offices), pet shops, sandwich bars, showrooms, domestic hire shops, dry cleaners, funeral directors and internet cafes
A2	Financial and Professional Services	Financial services such as banks and building societies, professional services (other than health and medical services) including estate and employment agencies and betting offices
A3	Restaurants and Cafes	Food and drink for consumption on the premises- restaurants, snack bars and cafes
A4	Drinking Establishments	Public houses, wine bars or other drinking establishments (but not nightclubs)
A5	Hot Food Takeaways	Sale of hot food for consumption off the premises
B1	Businesses	Offices (other than those that fall within A2) research and development of products and processes, light industry appropriate in a residential area
B2	General Industrial	General Industrial
B8	Storage and Distribution	Warehouses, includes open air storage
C1	Hotels	Hotels, boarding and guest houses where no significant element of care is provided (excludes hostels)
C2	Residential Institutions	Residential care homes, hospitals, nursing homes, boarding schools, residential colleges and training centres.
C2A	Secure Residential Institution	Use for a provision of secure residential accommodation, including use as a prison, young offenders institution, detention centre, secure training centre, custody centre, secure hospital, secure local authority accommodation or use as a military barracks.
D1	Non Residential Institutions	Clinics, health centres, crèches, day centres, schools, art galleries (other than for sale or hire), museums, libraries, halls, places of worship, law court, non-residential education and training centres.
D2	Assembly and Leisure	Cinemas, music and concert halls, bingo and dance halls (not nightclubs), swimming baths, skating rinks, gymnasiums or areas for indoor /outdoor sports/ recreation (except motor sports/ firearms).
SG	Sui Generis ("unique" establishments)	Theatres, hostels providing no significant element of care, scrap yards. Petrol filling stations and shops selling and/ or displaying motor vehicles. Retail warehouse clubs, nightclubs, launderettes, taxi business, amusement centres, casinos, haulage yards, transport depots, veterinary clinics, dog parlours, tanning and beauty salons and tattoo studios.

	National Small Towns %	Southwold 2017 Number	Southwold 2017 %
A1	52%	68	57%
A2	14%	8	7%
A3	8%	15	13%
A4	4%	7	6%
A5	4%	6	5%
B1	3%	7	6%
B2	1%	3	3%
B8	0	0	0
C1	1%	0	0
C2	0	0	0
C2A	0	0	0
D1	6%	2	2%
D2	1%	0	0
SG	5%	4	3%
Not Recorded	0	0	0
			100%

The business data for Southwold in 2017 indicates that over half (57%) of businesses in the town centre are shops and that this is slightly higher than in other benchmarked towns nationally. Of other businesses, compared to similar towns, there are a significant number of restaurants and cafes (13%) in particular.

KPI 2: Commercial Units; Comparison versus Convenience

A1 Retail units selling goods can be split into two different types Comparison and Convenience.

Convenience goods – low-cost, everyday items that consumers are unlikely to travel far to purchase. Defined as;

- Food and non-alcoholic drinks
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Newspapers and magazines
- Non-durable household goods.

Comparison goods – all other retail goods.

- Books
- Clothing and Footwear
- Furniture, floor coverings and household textiles

- Audio-visual equipment and other durable goods
- Hardware and DIY supplies
- Chemists goods
- Jewelry, watches and clocks
- Bicycles
- Recreational and miscellaneous goods
- Hairdressing

The presence of a variety of shops in a town centre is important to its ability to remain competitive and continue to attract customers. A balance of both comparison and convenience retail units is therefore ideal in terms of encouraging visitors / potential customers.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which sell mainly comparison or convenience goods. One consideration specific to the way the benchmarking methodology has been applied to Southwold are that it includes the indoor Retail Market including unusually the market traders that do not normally form part of the audit process.

	National Small Towns %	**Southwold (number)**	**Southwold 2017 %**
Comparison	82	52	76%
Convenience	18	16	24%

The table indicates that the majority of shops in Southwold town centre are comparison retailers (76%). This is slightly lower than comparable small towns nationally. Whilst this percentage of comparison retailers indicates Southwold is an established local shopping centre, it also suggests a continued vulnerability to competition from neighbouring centres and on-line. It will be important for these shops to have a distinctive offer pitched at local customers and visitors.

KPI3: Commercial Units; Trader Types

The vitality of a town centre depends highly on the quality and variety of retailers represented. Certain national retail businesses are considered key attractors and are particularly important in terms of attracting visitors and shoppers to a town. The character and profile of a town often also depends on the variety and mix of independent shops that can give a town a "unique selling point". A sustainable balance of key attractors and multiple names alongside local independent shops is therefore likely to have the greatest positive impact on the vitality and viability of a town. The following shops are considered Key attractors by Experian Goad.

Department Stores	**Clothing**
BHS	Burton
Debenhams	Dorothy Perkins
House of Fraser	H & M
John Lewis	New Look
Marks and Spencer	Primark
Mixed Goods Retailers	River Island
Argos	Topman
Boots	Topshop
TK Maxx	**Other Retailers**
WH Smith	Carphone Warehouse
Wilkinson	Clarks
Supermarkets	Clintons
Sainsbury's	HMV
Tesco	O2
Waitrose	Superdrug
	Phones 4 U
	Vodafone
	Waterstones

Multiple traders have a countrywide presence and are well known household names. Regional shops are identified as those with stores / units in several towns throughout one geographical region only and Independent shops are identified as those that are specific to a particular town.

The following table provides a percentage of the A1 Shops which are Key Attractors, Multiples, Regional and Independent to the locality.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold 2017 %
Key attractor	7%	2	3%
Multiple	19%	15	22%
Regional	10%	5	7%
Independent	64%	46	68%

The data for Southwold indicates that the proportion of key attractors (3%) is very low and is accounted for by two small-format stores. There is a slightly higher than normal number of national multiples (22%) compared to other benchmarked towns and comparable proportion (68%) of businesses that are independently owned. This data indicates that Southwold now only has an averagely independent retail offer compared mixed with some well-known household names.

KPI4: Commercial Units Vacancy Rates

Vacant units are an important indicator of the vitality and viability of a town centre. The presence of vacant units over a period of time can identify potential weaknesses in a town centre, whether due to locational criteria, high rent levels or strong competition from other centres.

The following table provides the percentage figure of vacant units from the total number of commercial units.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold 2017 %
Vacancy %	9%	3	2%

The vacancy data for Southwold indicates a very low average level of 2% across the town compared to a much higher than the level for small towns nationally (9%). This percentage indicates a high demand for premises in the town which ensures a buoyant town centre but with high rental costs.

KPI5: Markets

Good quality markets provide competition and choice for consumers. A busy and well-used street market can therefore be a good indicator of the vitality of a town centre. Conversely, if a market is in decline (e.g. empty pitches reducing numbers), it can be an indication of potential weaknesses in the town centre e.g. a lack of footfall customers due to an inappropriate retail mix or increased competitor activity. Street markets can also generate substantial benefits for the local economy. Markets can also provide a local mechanism for a diverse range of local enterprises to start, flourish and grow, adding to the sustainable mix of shops services on offer throughout the town.

The following table reveals that Southwold has a very small market compared to small towns nationally, which adds modestly to the character of the town.

	National Small Towns	Southwold
Average number of traders	15	5

KPI 6 and 7: Retail Rents and Prime Retail Property Yields

The values for prime retail property yield and Zone A rentals are the "industry" benchmarks for the relative appeal of a location with its users and with the owners or investors in property. In particular retail rents can provide a useful indication of a town's performance and highlight how attractive it is to businesses. This data was not available from commercial agents for Southwold.

	National Small Towns	Southwold
Zone A	29	n/a
Yield	8	n/a

KPI 8: Footfall

The arrival and movement of people, whether as residents, workers, visitors or a shopper is vital to the success of the majority of businesses within the town centre. The more people that are attracted to the town, the better it trades and the more prosperous the businesses in it become, provided there is ample available disposable income in that population. Measuring passing people in a consistent manner in the same place, at the same time builds up a picture of the town, its traders and their relative success over the weeks and months.

The following table provides the average number of people per 10 minutes at 1pm on the week of the Christmas Fair on Thursday December 8th and at 1pm and 5pm on Saturday 9th (on High Street opposite Coop).

	Nat. Small Towns	Southwold 2017
Market Day	*98*	*110*
Saturday		*228*
Christmas Fair		*508*

This indicative data shows that Southwold was slightly busier than similarly-sized benchmarked towns nationally on this market day with 110 passers-by per 10. As the higher footfall for a Saturday and very large footfall for the time of the Christmas Fair

indicate, the measurement of footfall in Southwold is likely to show big fluctuations between seasons and between mid-week and weekends.

KPI 9: Car Parking

Usually, a large proportion of spending customers in a town centre come by car. In the rural setting, the car tends to be an essential tool, used by both those who come to spend and those who come to work. The provision of adequate and convenient car parking facilities is therefore a key element of town centre vitality. An acceptable number of available spaces with a regular, quick turn-over for shoppers are the ideal while adequate longer stay, less convenient spaces for local owners/ workers and visitors must be considered too.

The table overleaf provide a summary of the car parking offer in the town. The data is broken down into the following categories:

- Percentage number of spaces in designated car parks
- Percentage number of short stay, long stay and disabled spaces in designated car parks
- Percentage of vacant spaces in designated car parks on a Market Day and Saturday

Data for Southwold was collected for the following car parks and observation was made of on-street parking in and around the High Street:

- Pier Car Park
- Godyll Road
- Church Street
- Market Place
- The Common (counted as unregistered)

	Nat. Small Towns %	**Southwold (number)**	**Southwold %**
Car park:			
Short stay spaces: (4 hours and under)	*29%*	*36*	6%
Long stay spaces: (over 4 hours)	*61%*	*391*	66%
Disabled spaces:	*7%*	*14*	2%
Not registered	*4%*	*150*	25%
Vacant spaces on a busy day:	*35%*	*292*	49%
Vacant spaces on a quiet day:	*40%*	*452*	76%

Observation of on-street parking on the High Street, Queen Street, Victoria Street and the North Promenade showed very low levels of vacancies on the Saturday, in particular. This simple analysis of car parking in Southwold underlines how vacancy rates are subject

to great variations within weeks and seasonally between different times of the year. There is also currently a relatively small amount of short-term only car parking suitable for 'pop-and-shop visits' and on-street town centre parking appears under considerable pressure at busy times. Much more detailed analysis of parking levels throughout the year will be necessary to develop solutions aimed at better managing the supply and demand for parking.

Key Findings: The People

KPI 10: Business Confidence Survey

Survey forms were distributed to all the town centre businesses in Southwold, as well as businesses on the North Promenade and Harbour areas. The following percentage figures in the tables overleaf are based on the 40 returned Business Confidence Surveys from a total of town centre 121 businesses.

The data indicates that there was a good response to the survey from long-established (74%) and independent businesses (82%) that will have a good knowledge of the town and any changes in trading conditions. There was also a good response from different types of business usage with 58% from retail being reflective of the proportion across the town as a whole.

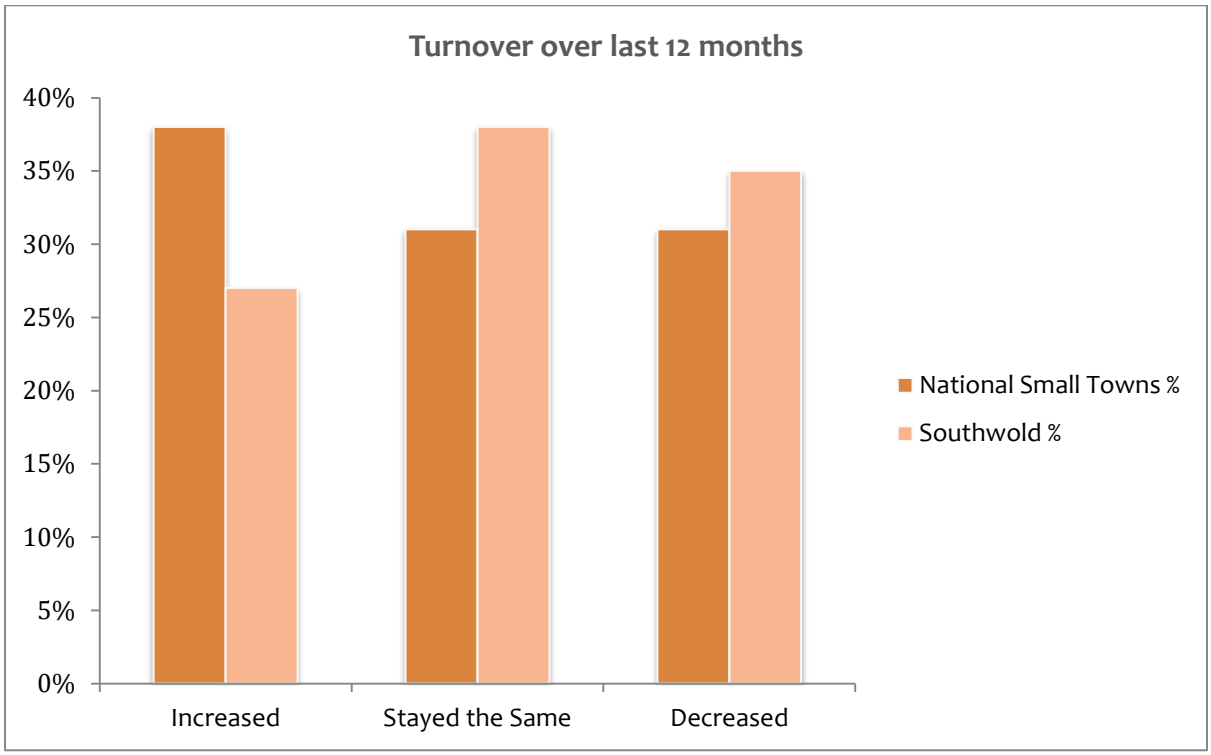
The data indicates the importance of town centre businesses as employers, with 325 people employed in the 39 businesses that responded to this question. For these businesses there was a fairly even split between part-tine (53%) and full-time (47%) employees.

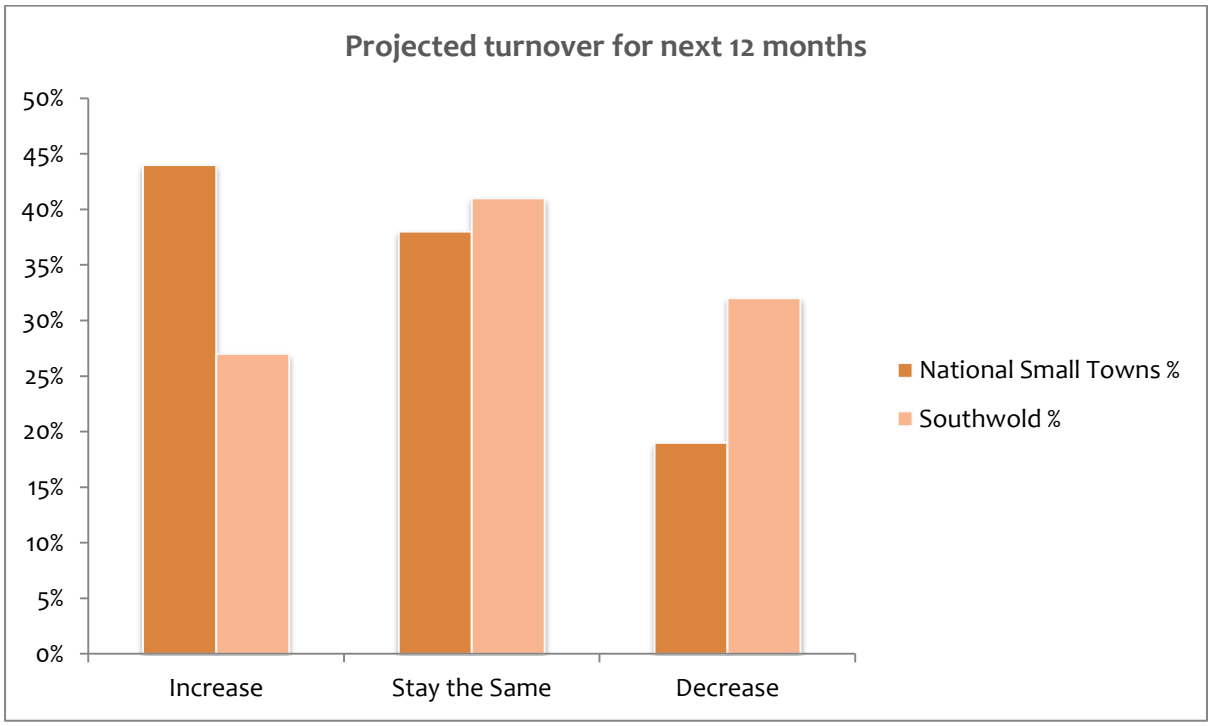
	National Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold %
Nature of Business			
Retail (comparison)	63%	6	16%
Retail (convenience)		14	37%
Retail (services)		2	5%
Financial/ Professional	12%	3	8%
Public Sector	2%	1	3%
Food and Drink	13%	5	13%
Accommodation	1%	1	3%
Other	9%	6	16%
Type of business			
Multiple	n/a	3	8%
Regional chain	n/a	4	10%
Independent	n/a	32	82%
Employees (93 responses)			
Full-time	n/a	154	47%
Number of businesses		31	
Average full-time		5	
Part-time	n/a	171	53%
Number of businesses		34	
Average part-time		5	
How long has your business been in the town			
Less than a year	6%	2	5%
One to Five Years	22%	8	21%
Six to Ten Years	13%	4	10%
More than Ten Years	58%	25	64%

	National Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold %
Compared to last year has your turnover			
Increased	38%	9	27%
Stayed the Same	31%	13	38%
Decreased	31%	12	35%
Compared to last year has your profitability			
Increased	31%	6	18%
Stayed the Same	35%	16	47%
Decreased	34%	12	35%
Over the next 12 months do you think your turnover will…			
Increase	44%	10	27%
Stay the Same	38%	15	41%
Decrease	19%	12	32%

Despite apparent prosperity in the town, it was striking that a high proportion of businesses reported a negative performance over the last year: 35% said that turnover had decreased compared to 31% nationally; 35% said profit had similarly declined compared to 34% in other small towns nationally.

Looking to the future, businesses in Southwold are markedly more pessimistic than in comparable towns nationally with nearly a third of them (32%) projected a further decline in turnover compared to just 19% nationally. Such seemingly year-on-year declines in performance suggest that this proportion of businesses may be particularly vulnerable to increasing costs and competition from elsewhere.


Turnover over last 12 months
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
Increased
Stayed the Same
Decreased
National Small Towns %
Southwold %


Projected turnover for next 12 months
50%
45%
40%
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
Increase
Stay the Same
Decrease
National Small Towns %
Southwold %

What are the positive aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold %
Physical appearance	44%	32	84%
Prosperity of the town	39%	28	74%
Environment	10%	6	16%
Geographical location	39%	23	61%
Mix of Retail Offer	40%	22	58%
Potential tourist customers	36%	31	82%
Potential local customers	77%	22	58%
Seasonal economy		18	47%
Affordable Housing	15%	7	18%
Road links	34%	8	21%
Traffic		5	13%
Public transport		8	21%
Footfall	26%	19	50%
Car Parking	32%	6	16%
Rental Value/ Property Costs	16%	2	5%
Availability of premises		8	21%
Market(s)	14%	13	34%
Events/ Activities	22%	6	16%
Marketing/Promotions	10%	12	32%
Local Partnerships/ Organisations	17%	11	29%
Other		3	3%

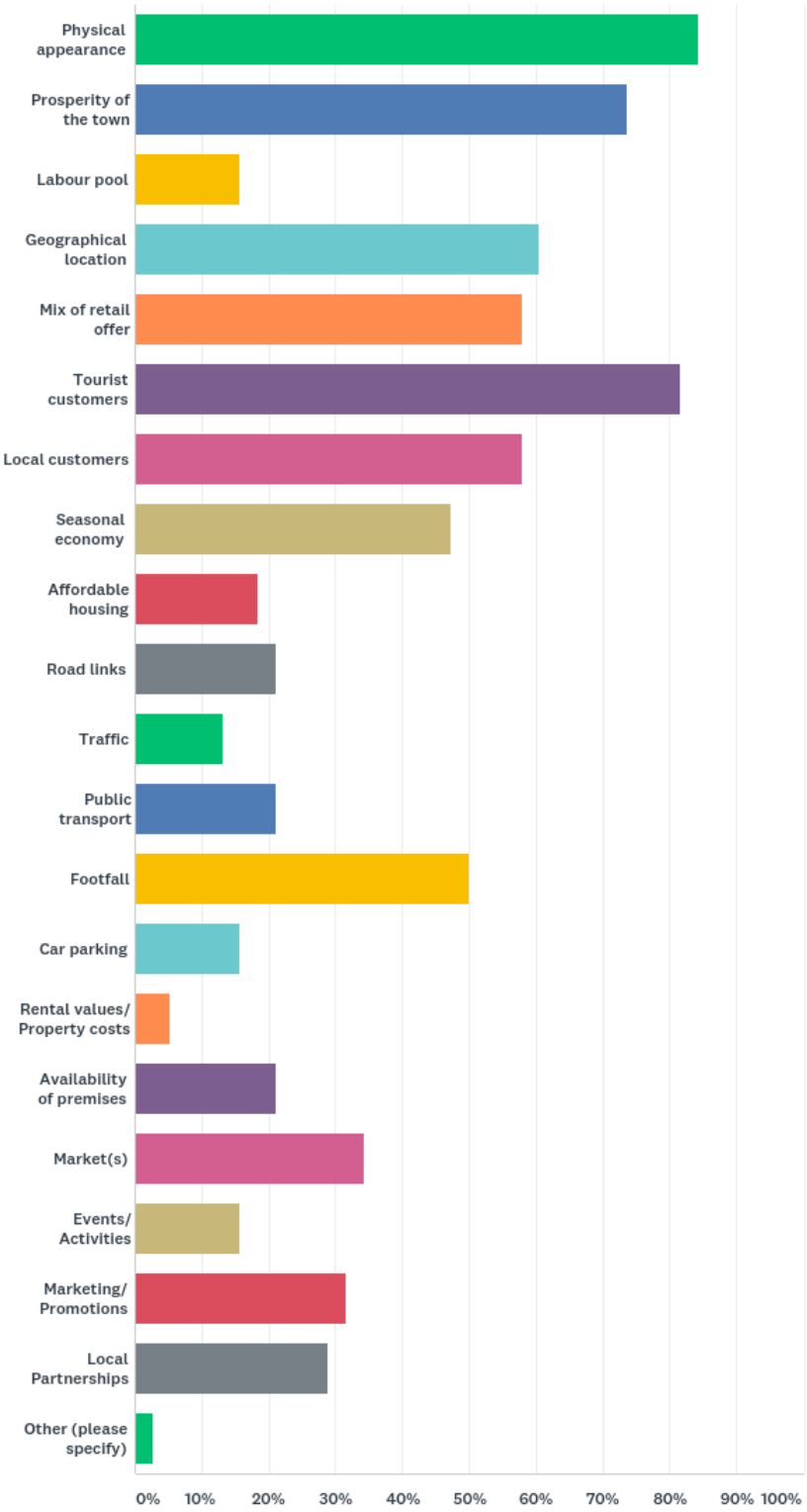


Figure 2: Positive aspects of being located in Southwold town centre

What are the negative aspects of the Town Centre?	National Small Towns %	Southwold (number)	Southwold %
Physical appearance	22%	1	3%
Prosperity of the town	29%	1	3%
Labour pool	14%	20	54%
Geographical location	7%	4	11%
Mix of Retail Offer	21%	8	22%
Vacant premises		2	5%
Potential tourist customers	11%	1	3%
Potential local customers	3%	13	35%
Seasonal economy		17	46%
Affordable housing	10%	22	59%
Road links	14%	15	41%
Traffic		20	54%
Public transport		18	49%
Footfall		10	27%
Car parking	50%	28	76%
Rental Value/ Property costs	29%	33	89%
Availability of premises		19	51%
Market(s)	10%	7	19%
Local business competition	17%	9	24%
Competition from other localities	25%	14	38%
Competition from out of town shopping	40%	19	51%
Competition from the internet	37%	18	49%
Events/ activities	7%	8	22%
Marketing/ promotions	5%	10	27%
Local partnerships/ organisations	2%	9	24%
Other		1	3%

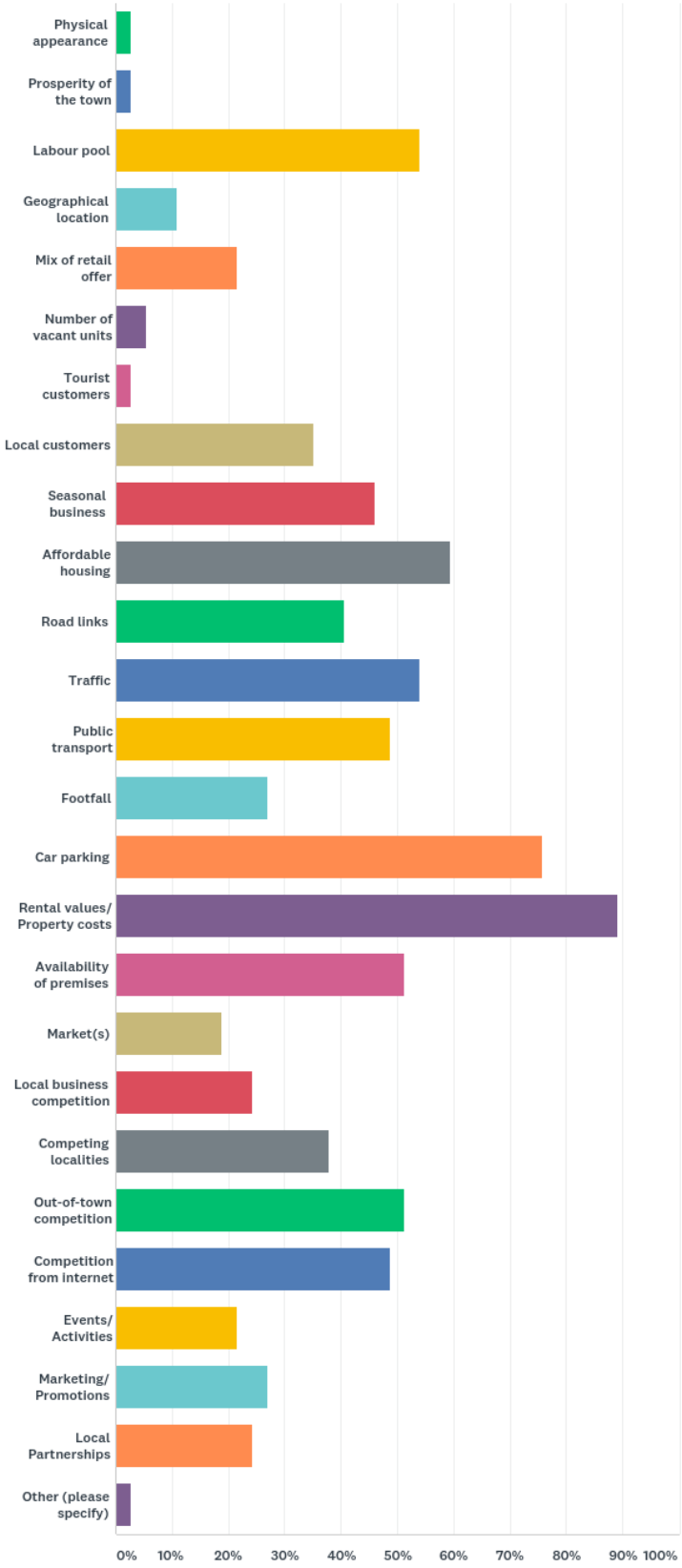


Figure 3: Negative aspects of being located in Southwold town centre

Two suggestions to improve the town centre

When businesses in Southwold were asked what two things would improve the town centre, the main set of responses related to high Business Rates and rent as well as parking quantity, quality and cost. There was also some recognition that the increasing number of multiple retailers whilst independents are closing plus modest calls for varied traffic restrictions.

PARKING

Quality/quantity of parking

1. 1 hour car parking in centre instead of 30mins
2. Better car parking
3. Better car parking
4. Better parking
5. Better parking
6. Car parking at the entrance to town so the out of town shops got more trade
7. Improve parking
8. Improve parking in town
9. Increase in car parking at weekends and peak trading season. Seasonal staff and customers struggle to park

10. Car parking for all
11. Parking
12. Parking
13. More parking

Parking charges

1. Charging for existing parking will not help. Southwold needs more parking
2. Do not introduce car parking charges. Currently under consultation - looking to happen next spring
3. Don't introduce paid parking
4. Free parking
5. Introduce charging for 2nd home owners who bring cars, to reduce traffic and encourage car sharing or arrival by public transport
6. Keep car parking free
7. Keep parking free
8. Leave the car parking free
9. More parking that's free
10. More free car parking; could part of the Common be used as parking in the busy months?
11. Please keep the parking free; the proposal to charge for parking after huge rate increase is very worrying
12. More free parking

BUSINESS RATES/RENT

1. Business rate
2. Business rates reduction
3. Business rates, unless owner/trader like ourselves are helped the proposed rates encourage will finish us off. Independents need to be treated differently to large multiple site retailers
4. Cut rent. Cut rates
5. Limit rates increase
6. Lower rents
7. Drop business rates - less independent shops now in Southwold. Shops stand empty. May decrease football come summer season
8. Help small business by reducing rates. Let corporates pay
9. Look at business rate rises and how to make system more fair
10. Lower business rates
11. Making rents fairer. Making rates fairer.
12. Planning control: restrict expansion of small premises which are extended to be attractive to chains

13. Reduce rates
14. Reduce rents & rates to encourage more private enterprise
15. Outlaw exorbitant rent increases

RETAIL & LEISURE MIX

Multiples v independents

1. Affordable" retail outlets that are aimed at independent shops, rather than chains
2. More independent shops
3. More support for independent businesses. Stop Southwold being overtaken by chain stores.
4. No more chains to preserve independent character of Southwold
5. Too many chain stores
6. Retail mix - more independent shops to create more of a 'unique' shopping experience, rather than a 'generic one'

Miscellaneous retail

1. Too many charity shops
2. Fill empty shops quickly, i.e. pop-up shops

Hospitality

1. Larger diversity of high end restaurants

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Traffic restrictions

1. Improve traffic flow
2. Improve transport links
3. No cars through the high street (except deliveries)
4. Permanent pedestrianisation of the Market Place; would like to discuss further.
5. Reduce the amount of vehicles through the high street. Better still pedestrianise the entire High St.

Public transport

1. Better public transport, bus stop nearer Market Place
2. More public transport

HOUSING

More/affordable housing

1. Actual (real) affordable housing
2. Affordable housing needed

3. Increase permanent residential housing slightly. Out of season there is hardly any local people within town

Second homes

1. Second home owners could contribute more to economic performance with a local tax to pay for parking, weekly refuse collection.
2. Tax holiday homes, so the income can help the town. Local people are being priced out. If there are no locals then there is no labour
3. Second home owners could contribute more to economic performance with a local tax to pay for parking

EMPLOYMENT

1. Labour pool
2. Employment creation

EVENTS

1. Better organised events such as Christmas lights

ENVIRONMENT

1. No gravel pit

KPI 11: Town Centre Users' Survey

The aim of the Town Centre Users Survey is to establish how your town is seen by those people who use it. By asking visitors, of all types, a more detailed picture can be obtained as what matters to regular visitors can be very different to someone who has never been to the place before. The following percentage figures are based upon a sample of 83 respondents.

	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold Number	Southwold %
Gender			
Male	37%	65	46%
Female	63%	75	54%
Prefer not to answer	n/a	0	0
Age			
16-25	7%	2	1%
26-35	11%	4	3%
36-45	20%	11	8%
46-55	20%	26	19%
56-65	18%	42	31%
Over 65	23%	51	38%
Prefer not to answer	n/a	0	0
What do you generally visit the Town Centre for?			
Work	10%	6	4%
Convenience Shopping	40%	39	28%
Comparison Shopping	6%	26	19%
Access Services	22%	7	5%
Leisure	12%	61	44%
Other	9%	1	1%

How often do you visit the Town Centre	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold Number	Southwold %
Daily	20%	36	26%
More than once a week	38%	23	16%
Weekly	21%	6	4%
Fortnightly	7%	4	3%
More than once a month	4%	9	6%
Once a month or less	10%	40	29%
First visit	n/a	3	3%
Other	n/a	19	19%
How do you normally travel into the Town Centre?			
On Foot	34%	74	53%
Bicycle	2%	2	1%
Motorbike	1%	0	0
Car	57%	61	44%
Bus	4%	2	1%
Train	1%	0	0
Other	1%	1	1%
On average, on your normal visit to the Town Centre how much do you normally spend?			
Nothing	3%	5	4%
£0.01-£5.00	13%	17	12%
£5.01-£10.00	25%	14	10%
£10.01-£20.00	32%	21	15%
£20.01-£50.00	21%	38	28%
More than £50.00	6%	42	31%
How long do you stay in the Town Centre?			
Less than an hour	42%	22	16%
1-2 Hours	38%	42	31%
2-4 Hours	12%	41	30%
4-6 Hours	2%	19	14%
All Day	5%	13	10%
Other	1%	0	0
Would you recommend a visit to the Town Centre?			
Yes	65		99%
No	35		1%

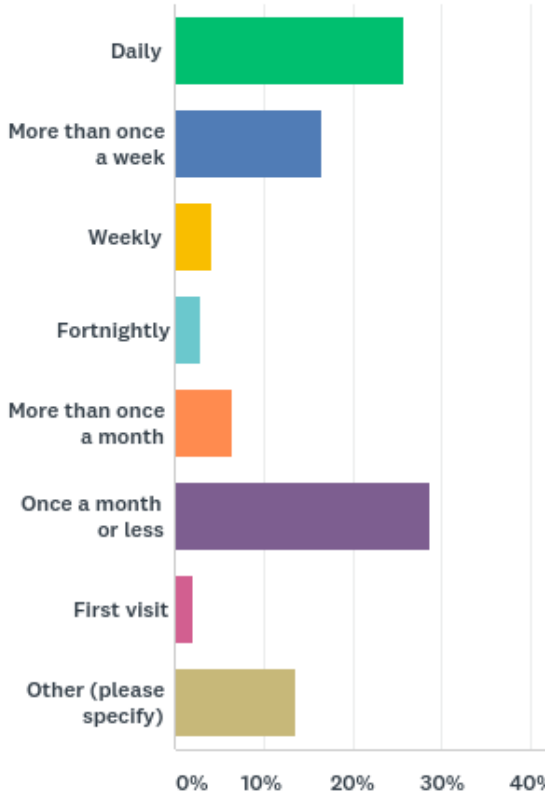


Figure 4: Frequency of customer visits to Southwold town centre.

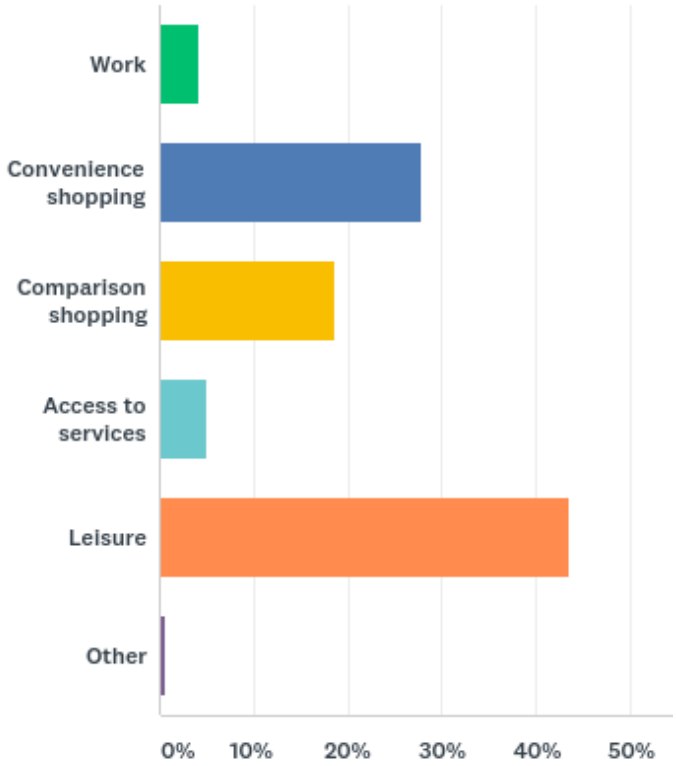


Figure 5: Purpose of customer visits to Southwold town centre

What are the positive aspects of the town centre?	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold	Southwold %
Physical appearance	45	126	91%
Cleanliness	52	129	93%
Retail offer (groceries)	27	103	74%
Retail offer (clothes etc.)		96	69%
Independent shops		107	77%
National chains		48	35%
Value for money		75	54%
Customer service	43	128	92%
Cafes/ restaurants	52	108	78%
Access to services	63	88	63%
Leisure facilities	20	50	36%
Cultural activities/events	23	82	59%
Pubs/ bars/ nightclubs	35	103	74%
Road links	28	114	82%
Traffic		91	65%
Public transport		35	25%
Ease of walking around the town centre	67	129	93%
Convenience e.g. Near where you live	71	129	93%
Safety	43	125	90%
Car parking	39	52	37%
Markets	27	85	61%
Other	5	1	1%

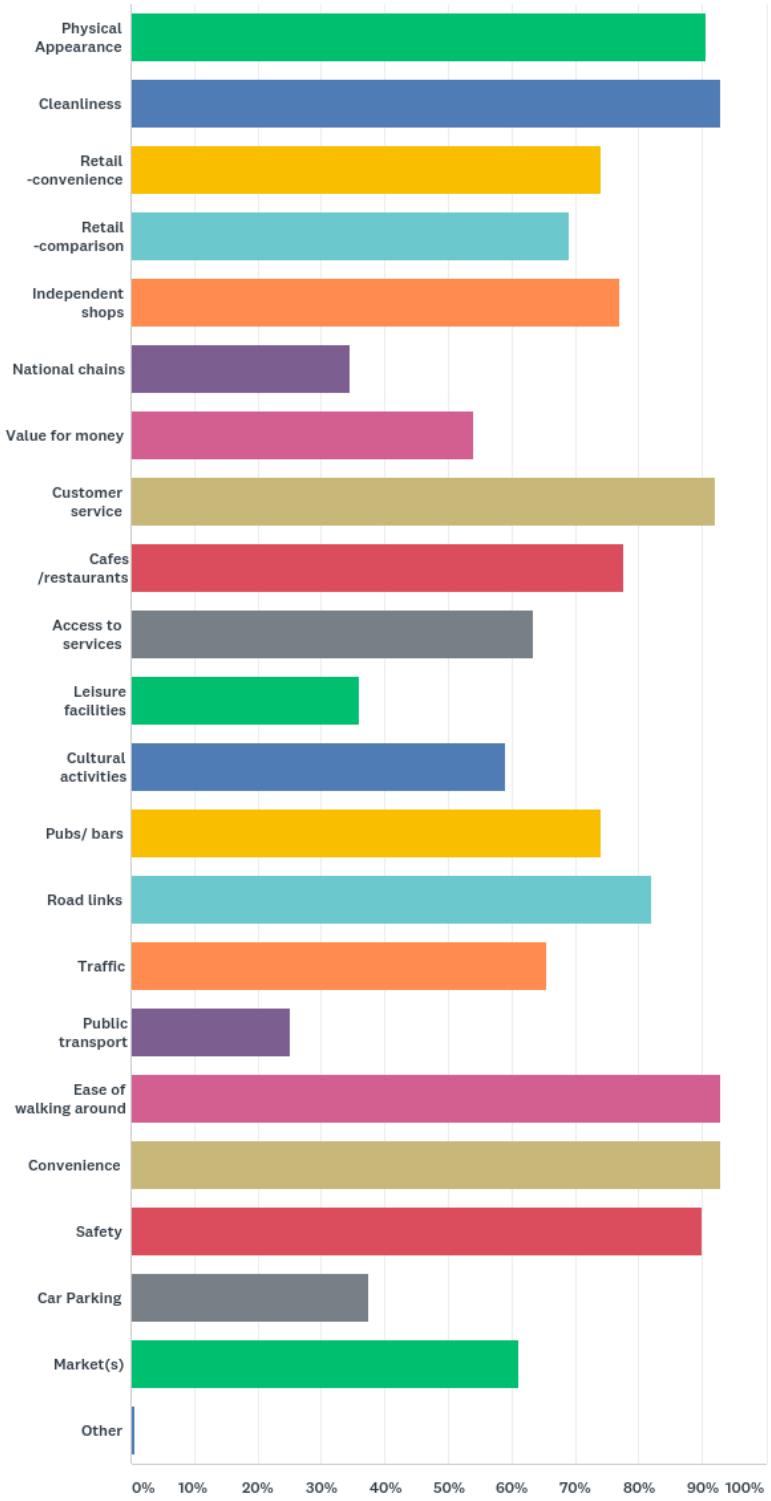


Figure 6: Customers' positive perceptions about Southwold town centre

What are the negative aspects of the town centre?	Nat. Small Towns %	Southwold Number	Southwold %
Physical appearance	34%	12	9%
Cleanliness	19%	11	8%
Retail offer (groceries)	54%	32	25%
Retail offer (clothes etc.)		39	30%
Independent shops		29	22%
National Chains		75	58%
Value for money		53	41%
Customer service	9%	7	5%
Cafes/ restaurants	15%	25	19%
Access to services	13%	36	28%
Leisure facilities	30%	62	48%
Cultural activities/events	28%	35	27%
Pubs/ bars	18%	21	16%
Road links	23%	24	18%
Traffic		44	34%
Public transport		69	53%
Ease of walking around the town centre	7%	9	7%
Convenience e.g. Near where you live	6%	9	7%
Safety	9%	12	9%
Car parking	43%	75	58%
Markets	25%	42	32%
Other	10%	2	2%

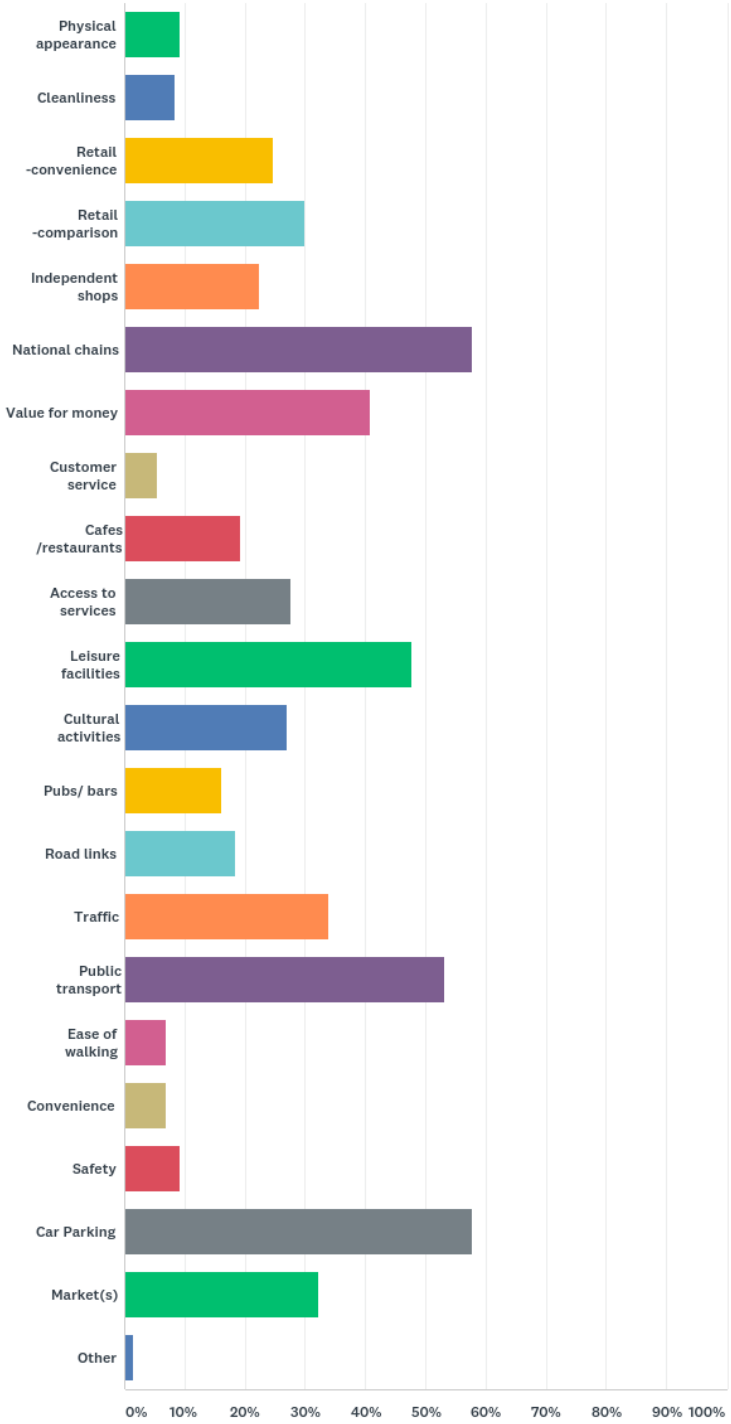


Figure 7: Customers' negative perceptions about Southwold town centre

How Southwold is changing

When customers were asked how they thought Southwold is changing, it is concerning that a significant number (24%) thought it had worsened and over a third (35%) considered that the town had changed in both good and bad ways. Only 9% thought Southwold had improved in recent years.

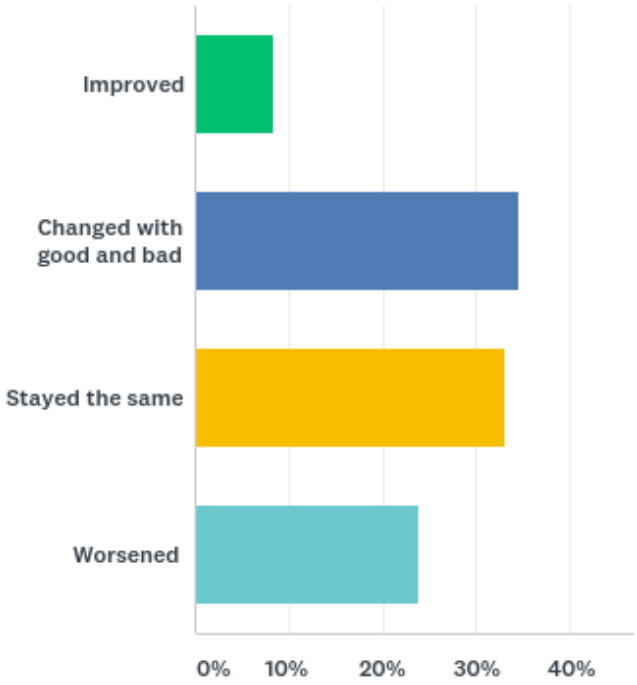


Figure 8: Customers' perspectives on how Southwold is changing

A recommended place to visit

When asked if they would recommend a visit to Southwold town centre, 99% of customers said 'yes'.

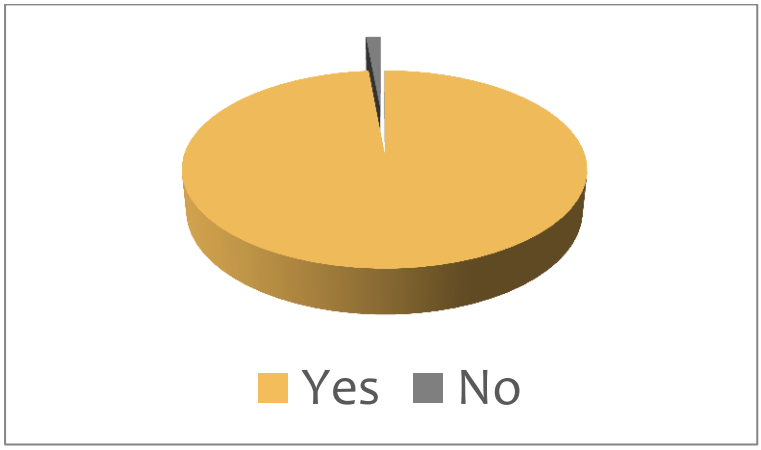


Figure 9: The proportion of customers who would recommend a visit to Southwold town centre

What Customers like about Southwold Town Centre

When customers were asked to give a word that summed-up Southwold town centre they responded with words that reflect its distinctiveness, attractive environment and heritage.

Figure 10: Word cloud representing customers' overall perspective of Southwold town centre

Analysis

The responses from the town centre users indicate a sample from this mid-week survey that comprises a modest majority of females (55%). There was a good spread of age categories which are broadly comparable with national benchmarks except for a markedly higher percentage of 16-25 year-olds. Most people are in town for convenience shopping (26%), work (25%) and leisure (25%). Despite the high number of comparison shops, only 9% of users are in town for comparison shopping mid-week.

A high proportion (31%) visit Southwold (31%) daily or more than once a week (39%) suggesting a core of loyal town centre users that is higher than typically found in small towns nationally (58%).

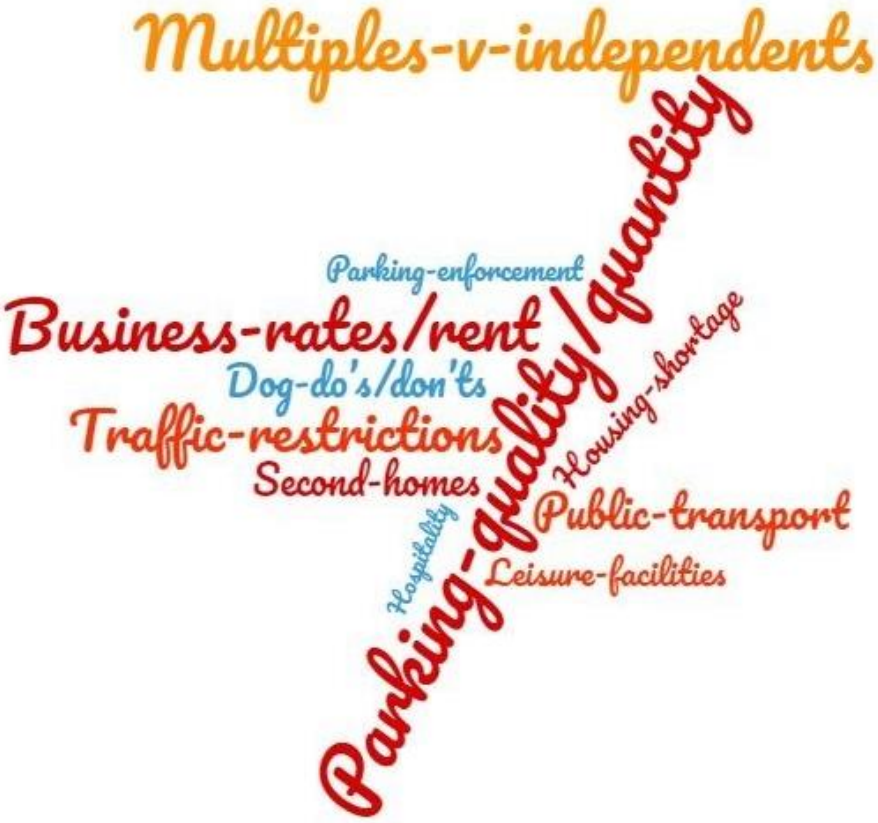
A relatively high proportion (30%) of users came in to town on foot whilst slightly less than average for small towns (42%) travelled by car. Just over a third of town centre users (34%) spend more than £20 on a visit to the town centre and this is higher than national averages (27%).

When asked if they would recommend a visit to Southwold town centre, a very high proportion (95%) said yes compared to small towns nationally.

When asked about the positive aspects of Southwold town centre, ease of walking around (65%), physical appearance (64%), cleanliness (63%), cafes/restaurants (63%), customer service and safety (60%) were all valued by three out of five users. All of these levels of response compare favourably with other towns nationally.

In terms of negatives, there were much fewer responses than positives, with only parking (31%), retail offer (31%) and cultural activities/events being rated negatively by more than one in four town centre users.

Two suggestions to improve the town centre?



When customers were asked to give two suggestions that would improve their experience of Southwold town centre, the main responses focused on quality and quantity of parking provision and the increase in multiple retailers and decrease in independents. Customers showed an awareness of high business premises costs through rents and rates and, to a lesser extent the balance between the large numbers of second homes/holiday lets and a lack of affordable homes. There were also varied comments about a need for traffic restrictions and improved public transport.

PARKING

Quality/quantity of parking

1. Better parking solutions
2. Better parking solutions
3. More parking
4. More parking
5. More parking needed
6. More parking needed
7. More parking needed
8. More parking needed

9. More parking needed
10. More parking needed
11. Need more parking
12. Need more parking
13. Need more parking
14. Needs improvement
15. More parking
16. Parking needs to improve

Parking enforcement

1. Enforce parking restrictions, builders trucks are an issue
2. More police as illegal parking is an issue
3. Parking for residents
4. Stop the illegal parking
5. Stop the illegal parking on the high street
6. More residents parking

Parking charges

1. Beach car park should be free
2. Free parking should remain
3. Free parking should remain, negative step
4. Ferry road car park charge is a negative

Bluebadge parking

1. More O.A.P parking

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORT

Traffic restrictions

1. Ban traffic on high street
2. Ban traffic
3. Pedestrian crossing on the high street
4. Traffic too fast
5. Stop traffic on High St on weekends
6. 10mph in the high street
7. Cars driving up to Gun Hill
8. Pedestrianisation of Market Place
9. Pedestrianise the town centre
10. Pedestrian crossings needed on main road
11. Traffic flow needs to improve

Public transport

1. Better bus rate
2. Better bus rates
3. Buses to connect with train station
4. Later buses during the summer
5. More frequent buses

6. Need hospital bus
7. Railway service
8. Train link
9. Park and ride

Access

1. Wider pavements
2. More benches for older and disabled people

RETAIL & LEISURE MIX

Multiples v independents

1. High St is worse due to chain stores
2. Too many chain shops
3. Too many chain stores
4. Less chain stores
5. Less chain stores
6. Less chains and more independent shops
7. Less chains and more independent shops
8. Less chains and more independent shops
9. More unique shops
10. No more chain shops
11. Mountain warehouse
12. More independent shops
13. More independent shops
14. More independent shops

Specialist retailers

1. Need more men's clothing shops
2. More clothing shops
3. Bigger food shops

Value

1. Less expensive shops
2. Shops need to be more affordable

LEISURE

Leisure facilities

1. More leisure facilities e.g. gym
2. More sport and leisure
3. More facilities for local young people
4. Swimming pool needed
5. Swimming pool, gym etc. needed
6. Community events/centre
7. Badminton court required

Hospitality

1. More eating choice in the evening
2. More restaurants and more beer choice
3. Leave pubs and restaurants as they are
4. Family friendly restaurant required
5. Better restaurants

Dogs

1. Less/no dogs
2. Why can't dogs go on beaches out of season
3. Dog friendly hotels
4. Dog poo is an issue on the beach
5. Dog poo issues
6. Dogs to be allowed on the beach
7. Too dog friendly

HOUSING

More/affordable housing

1. Cheap housing to encourage young families
2. More affordable housing
3. More affordable housing
4. More housing needed
5. More housing needed
6. More affordable housing
7. Need more affordable housing

Second homes

1. Empty second homes is an issue
2. Get rid of second homes
3. Second home owners are a problem
4. Second home owners are a problem
5. Second homes are a problem
6. Too many second homes
7. Less second home ownership
8. Less second home ownership

BUSINESS RATES/RENT

1. Better rates for independent shops
2. Cut business rates, fear of shops closing down
3. Lower business rates
4. Lower rates
5. Rates are too high
6. Rates are too high
7. Rates need to be better
8. Reduce rates for shops

9. Reduce rates for shops
10. Reduce rates for shops
11. Sort out rent rates
12. Rent issues
13. Lower rent rates

SERVICES

Toilets

1. Better access to public W.C.
2. Improve the toilets
3. Toilets should be free

Banks

1. Stop bank closures.

Petrol station

1. Petrol station
2. Petrol station needed

NO CHANGE

1. Keep it as it is
2. Leave it as it is
3. Lost its value as a destination
4. Too commercial

OTHER

1. Make it easier for small businesses to start up
2. Regenerate the boating lake near Backshore

KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Survey

The Shoppers Origin Survey tracks the general area that your town centre visitors originate from. The data can be used to target local marketing or promotional literature. It can also be used as evidence of the success of such campaigns by gauging the penetration into the population.

The postcodes gathered from businesses are split into 3 categories to be able to compare with other towns. The categories are:

- Locals; those who live within a Post Code covering the town
- Visitors; those who live within a Post Code less than a 30 minute drive away
- Tourists; those who live within a Post Code further than a 30 minute drive away

	National Small Towns %	Southwold Number	Southwold %
Locals	66	47	35%
Visitors	27	18	13%
Tourists	7	69	52%

The figures for shoppers' origin for Southwold from this survey indicate a balance between different groups during the times of the surveys. Within this figure, a very high percentage (52%) are tourists whilst a similar proportion (48%) are local and live either within Southwold or within a 30 minute drive.

Analysis and Conclusions

The Place

The business data for Southwold in 2017 indicates that over half (57%) of businesses in the town centre are shops and that this is slightly higher than in other benchmarked towns nationally. Of other businesses, compared to similar towns, there are a significant number of restaurants and cafes (13%) in particular.

The data indicates that the majority of shops in Southwold town centre are comparison retailers (76%). This is slightly lower than comparable small towns nationally. Whilst this percentage of comparison retailers indicates Southwold is an established local shopping centre, it also suggests a continued vulnerability to competition from neighbouring centres and on-line. It will be important for these shops to have a distinctive offer pitched at local customers and visitors.

The data for Southwold indicates that the proportion of key attractors (3%) is very low and is accounted for by two small-format stores. There is a slightly higher than normal number

of national multiples (22%) compared to other benchmarked towns and comparable proportion (68%) of businesses that are independently owned. This data indicates that Southwold now only has an averagely independent retail offer compared mixed with some well-known household names.

The vacancy data for Southwold indicates a very low average level of 2% across the town compared to a much higher than the level for small towns nationally (9%). This percentage indicates a high demand for premises in the town which ensures a buoyant town centre but with high rental costs.

Southwold has a very small market compared to small towns nationally, which adds modestly to its character and retail offer.
This indicative footfall data gathered here shows that Southwold was slightly busier than similarly-sized benchmarked towns nationally on the sample market day with 110 passers-by per 10 minutes. As the higher footfall for a Saturday and very large footfall for the time of the Christmas Fair reinforce, the measurement of footfall in Southwold is likely to show big fluctuations between seasons and between mid-week and weekends.

The simple analysis of car parking in Southwold undertaken here, underlines how vacancy rates are subject to great variations within weeks and seasonally between different times of the year. There is also currently a relatively small amount of short-term only car parking suitable for 'pop-and-shop visits' and on-street town centre parking appears under considerable pressure at busy times. Much more detailed analysis of parking levels throughout the year will be necessary to develop solutions aimed at better managing the supply and demand for parking.

The People

There was a good response to the survey from long-established (74%) and independent businesses (82%) that will have a good knowledge of the town and any changes in trading conditions.

The data indicates the importance of town centre businesses as employers, with 325 people employed in the 39 businesses that responded to this question. For these businesses there was a fairly even split between part-tine (53%) and full-time (47%) employees.

Despite the apparent prosperity in the town, it was striking that a high proportion of businesses reported a negative performance over the last year: 35% said that turnover had decreased compared to 31% nationally; 35% said profit had similarly declined compared to 34% in other small towns nationally.

Looking to the future, businesses in Southwold are markedly more pessimistic than in comparable towns nationally with nearly a third of them (32%) projecting a further decline in turnover compared to just 19% nationally. Such seemingly year-on-year declines in performance suggest that this proportion of businesses may be particularly vulnerable to increasing costs and competition from elsewhere.

The responses from a sample of 140 town centre users over three days indicate a sample that comprises a modest majority of females (54%) with a mature age profile (69% over 55).

The data also indicates a good mix in the survey sample between regular visitors who are in town at least weekly (46%) and people who are in town less than once per month (51%). There was also a good balance between people who are in town for different types of shopping (47%) and leisure (44%). Most people are in town for convenience shopping (26%), work (25%) and leisure (25%).

A high proportion (53%) of users came in to town on foot whilst slightly less than average for small towns (44%) travelled by car. There is a good spread of spending patterns, although a high proportion (31%) spend more than £50 on a visit.

The figures for shoppers' origin for Southwold from this survey indicate a balance between different groups during the times of the surveys. Within this figure, a very high percentage (52%) are tourists whilst a similar proportion (48%) are local and live either within Southwold or within a 30 minute drive.

The Positives and Negatives

Businesses in Southwold appear to be appreciative of the customer base and appearance of the town. From the responses to the survey, physical appearance (84%), potential tourist customers (82%), prosperity of the town (74%), geographical location (61%), potential local customers (58%), mix of retail offer (58%) and footfall (50%) are considered as key positives of being located in Southwold by at half of businesses. All of these positives are rated as significantly higher than national averages.

When asked about the positive aspects of Southwold town centre, customers were more positive than businesses and valued the quality of the environment and quality of shops and services. Ease of walking around (93%), cleanliness (93%), convenience (93%), physical appearance (91%), safety (90%), customer service (92%), road links (82%), cafes/restaurants (78%), independent shops (77%), pubs/bars (74%), convenience shopping (74%) and comparison shopping (69%) were all valued by at least two-thirds of users. All of these levels of response compare favourably with other towns nationally, where similar indicators have been measured.

When asked if they would recommend a visit to Southwold town centre, a very high proportion of customers (99%) said 'yes' compared to small towns nationally. Similarly, when customers were asked to give a word that summed-up Southwold town centre they responded with words that reflect its distinctiveness, attractive environment and heritage.

Despite such seeming satisfaction from customers, when asked how they thought Southwold is changing, it is concerning that a significant number (24%) thought it had worsened in recent years and over a third (35%) considered that the town had changed in both good and bad ways. Only 9% of respondents thought Southwold had improved recently.

In terms of negative perceptions about being located in Southwold town centre, two factors are rated markedly more negatively by businesses. 89% of businesses that responded considered property costs from Business Rates and rent to be a negative factor and this compares to only 29% nationally. Parking was considered to be a key issue by three-quarters (76%) of respondents and this compares to 50% for small towns nationally.

Demographic factors including the lack of affordable housing (59%) and a limited labour pool (54%); travel issues including traffic (54%) and poor public transport (49%); and the threat of competition from out-of-town shopping (51%) and the internet (49%) were the other significant negative perceptions held by businesses. All of these factors were also considered more negatively than by businesses in comparable small towns.

In terms of negative perception by users, there were much fewer responses than positives and less than from businesses, with only national chains (58%), parking (58%) and public transport (53%) being rated negatively by more than one in four town centre users.

The Priorities for Southwold

When businesses in Southwold were asked what two things would improve the town centre, the main set of responses related to high Business Rates and rent as well as parking quantity, quality and cost. There was also some recognition that the increasing number of multiple retailers whilst independents are closing plus modest calls for varied traffic restrictions.

When customers were asked to give two suggestions that would improve their experience of Southwold town centre, the main responses focused on quality and quantity of parking provision and the increase in multiple retailers and decrease in independents. Customers showed an awareness of high business premises costs through rents and rates and, to a lesser extent the balance between the large numbers of second homes/holiday lets and a lack of affordable homes. There were also varied comments about a need for traffic restrictions and improved public transport.

Function, Form & Folk: Delivering Change

Overview & Criteria

This section focuses on successful delivery through action planning and the necessary organisational structures and people necessary to deliver success. In determining the appropriate delivery focus and support, the following criteria are used in designing and assessing the most appropriate mechanisms:

- Proposed actions must respond to the priority town centre issues identified from the desk-top review and survey work; namely business diversification, marketing and parking.
- The proposed organisational structure for supporting town centre delivery must be compatible with topic areas identified for the wider town as part of the ongoing Coastal Community Fund application to ensure integrated work
- The proposed scope of necessary actions will combine short-term realism about resources with necessary long-term ambition that can extend beyond current Coastal

Community Fund eligibility and will require the identification of other funding opportunities

- The membership of the proposed action-orientated 'working groups' will provisionally identify appropriate stakeholder groups
- The existing Coastal Communities Team will continue to have a key coordinating role with clearly defined responsibilities
- The outline structure will provisionally identify mentoring, training and staffing needs
- The suggested scope of actions will be evidence-based and include performance indicators for monitoring success

Coastal Community Team Role

The existing Coastal Community Team should continue to serve a key coordinating role. Key tasks should be:

- Gathering area-wide research and impact monitoring
- Strategy development and coordinated action planning
- Fund raising and financial accountability
- Communications and community engagement

In addition it is proposed to extend the remit to cover the whole of Southwold and Reydon parishes whilst accepting that Coastal Community Funding has specific geographical criteria. This will help provide a whole community focus in strategy development covering the distribution of community services; the impacts of projected housing growth and the opportunities for additional funding.

Enterprise and Innovation Working Group

Town Centre Focus: Business Mix

Counter the impact of rising retail property costs and other pressures on business confidence and the High Street's retail distinctiveness.

Working Group members: Waveney District Council Planning, Economic Development and Property sections; Southwold Town Council; Southwold & Reydon Chamber of Trade; Harbour Trust; a town centre-based commercial property surveyor/letting agent; members of the Coastal Community Team; a selection of high street and seafront businesses.

Support needs: Delivery should be supported by the proposed Visitor Economy Development Manager as part of the proposed role to help create a more positive visitor experience.

Evidence	*Outcomes & indicators*
Rising retail property costs documented in CCT Economic Plan. Relatively high number of multiples in business audit compared to similar towns. Business Rates/rents recognised as top issues in both business and customer survey responses. Low business confidence amongst independents compared to similar towns Positive perceptions of independents as part of town's appeal and concern about imbalance caused if too many multiples. Distinctiveness of town highly valued though significant concerns about negative changes.	Maintain or increase the proportion of independent traders shown in audit. Improved business performance and confidence amongst independents recorded in follow-up survey. Distinctiveness of town and independents still valued with reduced concerns about balance of multiples or negative changes in customer survey.

Potential actions
Existing & new premises: Seek to maintain an appropriate and appealing retail and business mix through locating suitable businesses as tenants in existing Council-owned and newly available premises at Station Road and in former Hospital, e.g. independent retailers, creative and food/drink sectors
Business Rates subsidy & re-investment: Seek to positively influence discretionary Business Rates Relief and local re-investment in business support and marketing including initially as part of the 2018-19 Suffolk Business Rates Retention pilot
Business support & diversification: Provide business networking to facilitate collective marketing; mentoring in appropriate skills such as visual merchandising and digital promotion; awareness and involvement in events. Greater visitor and local spend will help sustain existing businesses.
Business diversification: Undertake more research in to the preferred business mix for both visitors and encourage appropriate diversification opportunities for start-ups including opportunities provided by Adnam's desire to have more suppliers located locally linked to new premises and the Southwold 'brand'.
Visitor economy benefits: Future marketing needs a clear and consistent focus on product and desired local impacts; events and activities to extend the visitor season and increase the local benefits from tourism such as businesses profitability; businesses diversity; year-around employment prospects; and cultural activities that can add to the local quality of life.
Markets, pop-up shops and events: Showcase local businesses and products through participation in events that extend the season as well as regular 'artisan' outdoor and indoor markets or short-term tenancies for selected start-up businesses.
Links to Pier and Harbour areas: Include the Pier and Harbour areas in all activities as an important part of maintaining Southwold's distinctiveness and pursue short and long-term prospects for new, complementary premises and facilities.

Culture & Heritage Working Group

Town Centre Focus: Marketing

Promoting and re-enforcing Southwold's distinctiveness through new activities and innovative marketing that extends the visitor season and local increases spend.

Working Group members: Southwold & Reydon Chamber of Trade; My Southwold; Waveney District Council Economic Development section; Southwold Town Centre; The Suffolk Coast Destination Management Group; Southwold Museums; Southwold Arts Centre; town centre-based graphic design or digital marketing businesses; Southwold Town Council, members of the Coastal Community Team and a selection of high street and seafront businesses

Support needs: Delivery will be supported by the proposed Visitor Economy Development Manager as part of proposed role help create a more sustainable visitor destination.

Evidence	*Outcomes & indicators*
Strongly positive perceptions of Southwold 'brand' linked to culture, heritage and quality of the local environment though significant concerns about negative changes. Positive perceptions of physical appearance, cleanliness, independent retailers, pubs/bars and cafes/restaurants as part of town's wider appeal Increased footfall and anecdotal positive business perceptions after Christmas Fair weekend	Improved business performance and confidence recorded in follow-up business survey. Continued positive perceptions of Southwold 'brand' in follow-up customer survey. Increase in footfall during events, out-of-season and monitored repeat visits

Events: Support the development of existing and new events that re-enforce the town's brand and help extend the visitor season
Community and cultural assets: Support the development and collective promotion of the town's considerable built assets and public spaces including the Pier, Arts Centre, Cinema, Boating Lake, Camp Site, Harbour, former hospital and Station Road development
Local produce: Support the development and collective promotion of local products and businesses including notable Arts, crafts, food and drink in a way that re-enforces the town's distinctive offer.
Collective marketing: Build on the existing successes of the 'My Southwold' initiative to create a strong and sustainable collective brand for promoting the distinctiveness of Southwold's local businesses, produce and heritage.

A Balanced & Sustainable Southwold

Town Centre Focus: Parking

Ensure that town centre parking provision best serves customers in terms of quantity, quality and cost.

Working Group members: Southwold Town Council; Waveney District Council parking Management/ Waveney Norse; Suffolk County Council Highways

Support needs: Delivery will be led locally by Southwold Town Council as part of its town parking strategy with external specialist guidance as necessary.

Evidence	***Outcomes & indicators***
Recognition in the CCT Economic Plan that parking may limit the use of the town centre at peak times High car park occupancy levels recording by Benchmarking survey during peak periods. Parking availability and cost recognised as top issue in the business survey and perceived as 2nd most negative impact on businesses. Parking availability recognised as top issues in the customer survey and perceived as jointly the most negative aspect of the town centre for users.	Achieve parking availability of 15% at peak times. Improved business, local customer and visitor perceptions about parking provision recorded in follow-up business and customer surveys. Creation of a 'data dashboard' to monitor parking quality, quantity and costs.

Potential actions
Parking journey audits: Undertake systematic audits of parking journey and experience to determine potential improvements in quality of provision.
Understand users' needs: Survey usage and requirements of different customers including workers; residents (permanent & short-term); pop-and-shop; and day visitors.
Parking tariffs: Reviewing and revising the parking tariff (price and duration) to manage supply and demand, optimise revenues and ensure footfall is not deterred.
Parking technology: Review the potential introduction of parking technology to offer flexible payment and potentially monitor occupancy.
Alternative transport provision: Pursue alternatives to dependency on car through potential car share scheme for workers; park and ride feasibility study including for special events; and extension of shuttle bus service.
Positively promote parking progress: Town marketing needs to include an understanding of improved provision for peak times and target times of day and year when there is good availability as the issue provides a real/perceived barrier that restricts business profitability and damages the Southwold 'brand'.

Changing housing and population trends: Understanding of the opportunities to influence the format of new house building proposed in Reydon; likely changing demographics/spending patterns and any planning gain funding opportunities will be pursued through liaison with Neighbourhood Planning Group and Waveney District Council planners.