Appendix F – Future High Street Research

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- Making Sense of Mixed-Use Town Centres (2019) – Turley
- The Rise of Clicks and Mortar (2019) – Claire Coleman
- Summary of Future High Street Fund: inspiration for success (February 2019) – Half day conference Urban Design Group

Making Sense of Mixed-Use Town Centres (2019) – Turley

This document was published by Turley, a national planning and development consultancy, and considers the future role of the high street given concerns of its decline. It cites that the Government has introduced rate reforms for smaller retailers, grant funding streams and suggested widening permitted development rights (PDR) to help reverse decline. Though it does raise concern about the potential haphazard approach and risk to design quality with widening PDR.

Using their experience and perspective, Turley sets out a series of sense checks to ensure sustainable, attractive and functioning mixed-use centres. Key to this will be to support what is special and continue to attract people into town centres, while integrating new uses successfully.

The key town centre stakeholders are communities, investors and businesses and Turley considers whether more mixed-use town centres can be achieved by a looser planning framework. Can core retail uses be sustained and does the planning framework contain the policy provisions for placemaking.

The report sets out a five point approach to making sense of mixed-use town centres. These are:

- *See the bigger picture – profile the demand and needs that town centres can help to meet in the future*
- *Understand the whole place – discover what is unique, what works and what could be improved*
- *Put people at the heart – create an opportunity for interested parties to help shape the future*
- *Complete a commercial sense-check – ensure proposals are viable and deliverable*
- *Establish principles for mixed-use town centres – positively encourage and guide investment in town centres*

The approach is applicable to owners, operators and local authorities looking to positively guide development and create investor confidence.

The Rise of Clicks and Mortar (2019) – Claire Coleman

This article considers how online brands are complementing their offer with real life retail spaces and it offers advice to traditional retailers wanting to compete.

Analyst Andrew Busby of Retail Reflections considers that traditional retailers have business models that are pre-internet, with structures, systems and space no longer fit for purpose. Mark Shickle, a branding consultant, considers that in 2019 customers prefer to narrow their search for products online at home but want a space where they can get to know the product or brand. Whereas retail operations used to be run centrally, with head office telling what customers should be buying, the rise of the 'smart' phone has enabled consumers to take control of their purchasing decisions.

The owner of parent-and-child clothing brand Scamp and Dude started selling online in November 2016 and two years later took a lease for a shop in North London. Prior to opening the shop the owner initiated 'pop-ups' and realised that purchasers liked seeing and touching the clothes. The shop became a destination, with customers travelling from all over the country to visit. Customers liked to talk to the people behind the brand and the personal touch. Scamp and Dude think the future of shops is events, activities and talks that bring people together.

Busby echoes the approach taken by Scamp and Dude and says that in the future, performance metrics such as sales per square foot will be redundant, with store success based on how engaged customers are. He cites the cycling label Rapha with shops in the UK, Europe and north America. Shops are referred to as Clubhouses where the focus is on meeting fellow enthusiasts and benefitting from the expertise of the staff in the shop. Clubhouses are a hub for all sorts of events from cyclists meeting over coffee, talks with experts and product launches. The central Manchester store extends across three floors, with a maintenance workshop and bike showroom on the ground floor, a café and clothing showroom on the first floor and a gym space on the second floor.
https://www.rapha.cc/gb/en/shop

The rise of pop-up shops has helped facilitate startups' move offline as digital stores can 'test drive' physical shops before committing. Appear Here is a company that offers leases from one day to several months and founder Ross Bailey points out that selling online is inexpensive is a myth. 'Research suggests that the cost for acquiring a customer is about the same online as offline. Research by CBRE and Appear Here's own data suggests that brands that take on bricks and mortar premises see an increase in 20-50% online sales.

Busby considers that staff should be valued as brand ambassadors that can help drive sales. He cites John Lewis who expanded its personal shopping service recruiting more stylists and opening style studios. Bailey believes shops should be more visually appealing and about creating experiences that can be shared on social media. Busby forecasts that there may be fewer stores but that they will be better.

IKEA has recently opened its first planning studio on Tottenham Court Road in London. At 550 sq ft, the floorplate is very modest compared with the it's out of town stores. The shop specialises in kitchens and bedrooms, displaying a very small portion of IKEA's range but allows shoppers to discuss with the IKEA consultant. The intention is that the store makes the brand more visible in a city centre location and drive more people to its website.

The planning studio follows 'Order and Collection Point's where shoppers pick-up online purchases, buy a few take-home items and get some advice.

At a more local level, TEP is aware of local cycling store in Manchester called Will's Wheels. Will's Wheels lead Sunday morning rides to Cheshire and Derbyshire for interested cyclists, promote their own cycle kit and sponsor talented riders.

Future High Street Fund: inspiration for success (February 2019) – Half day conference Urban Design Group

Key observations[1]

INTRODUCTION

Recognise the different settings for high streets. From low-density car-based suburbs, to dense inner-cities; from affluent middle-class areas, to depressed industrial towns. Each will require a different approach.

Don't fixate on retail as being the sole future of the towns. Most towns started with a mix of manufacture, commerce, retail and residential and leisure.

Death of clone towns. It is the larger chains that have tended to close, small independents are proving much more resilient.

There has always been change. Over decades shops come and go, over centuries high streets and longer periods still, entire settlements

ECONOMICS

Think beyond the high street. It is part of a larger socio-economic system – not a stand-alone entity.

Retail spend is limited by the amount people earn. This makes retail a zero-sum game – a pound spent in one place is a pound not spent in another.

Local economic multiplier. Money that is spent in the town through local businesses will circulate within the town and will add to activity. Money that is spent on national or internationally owned businesses leaves the town.

Expand the non-retail side of the economy

- Promote commercial and manufacturing sector
- Skilled people – invest in schools including university technical colleges
- Enable enterprise
- Use empty shops and offices as low-cost business starter units
- Provide accommodation that matches the demand – adjust the size of units to the range of size of potential and new business
- Open markets to new traders, hold suitcase markets
- Promote leisure
- Promote quality of experience: attractive Streets; small parks; community facilities, libraries, museums, town hall

Encourage investment. Think about how the town is perceived

Get more people using the town centre. Improve Pedestrian and Cycle access

Most pounds are pedestrian pounds

- Improve the public realm
- Widen footways
- Provide safe crossings
- Reduce pedestrian crossing signal wait time

[1] Urban Design Group, March 2019

- Reduce traffic speed, weight and volume
- Create low traffic neighbourhoods adjoining the town centre
- Plant trees for beauty, shelter, shade and temperature control
- Eliminate barriers - most town centres are surrounded by a ring of heavy roads and extensive surface level car parks that are often very badly maintained. These block pedestrians and cyclists, are unpleasant to travel through, and waste space that could be used for housing and other development.

Increase the number of people within walking/cycling distance of the town centre

- Turn car parks into housing or other uses
- Increase the density of housing development
- Encourage positive use of space over shops
- Increase the distance people will be prepared to walk or cycle by improving the quality of the routes

Eliminate neglect

- Sort out the physical appearance of the town- Make sure everything is well maintained, and looks cared for.
- Use the available tools, including: Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse – Litter abatement orders; S215 Untidy land
- Tidy the public realm
- Improve shop fronts

Further reading: Broken Window Theory/Pro-social behaviour

Identify and build on the towns USP. Protect and enhance what is already there:

- Local architectural styles,
- Local materials,
- Local traditions,
- Local products
- Cluster similar types of business to create character zones

Inject life – physical works are not enough

- Festivals
- Performance art
- Markets
- Fun
- Don’t over-regulate

History – understand the past to help predict the future

- **Towns** collapse post Roman, but started again in a variety of ways: international trading centres, development round monasteries, fortified ‘towns’ in response to Viking raids
- **Markets** from Anglo-Saxon period, and many more from 12 century
- **International products**– sold at big annual fairs – such as spices, or cloths not produced locally, but declined in importance and became places of entertainment (market – something that happens regular
- **Shops** - many surviving medieval examples – earliest from 12 century
- **Shops with glazed fronts** began to emerge in the 18 and 19 centuries as the glass became more affordable
- **Living above the shop** – all traditional shops included accommodation above
- **Covered markets** Market crosses from Middle Ages, but big covered markets date back to the 18th century
- **Chain stores** emerge in the mid 19 century
- **Department stores** emerge in the mid 19 century

- **Car-based shopping centres** began to emerge in the 1950s,
- **Supermarkets** – ubiquitous from the 1960s
- **Out-of-town shopping centres** – 1970s, and then gigantic malls

LESSONS FROM HISTORY
Always has been change so decline of the chain store is natural
Never just retail centres. Historic towns and cities were always were mixed economies, mixed use, high density populations with people living in the centre
Central government has played a significant role in the development of towns.
Governance. Many towns and cities no longer have significant powers, and are little more than parish councils, and lack ability to raise own funding. They can't do the things they could in the past.
Parking. Towns are blighted by low value car parks.

Other documents for consideration:

- Flybe Inflight Magazine (2019) – Ideas for Town Centres (Antwerp, Belgium)

- Trafford Messenger (2019) – Indie Urmston