EDGELEY

VITAL AND VIABLE STOCKPORT DISTRICT CENTRES

Dr Steve Millington, Dr Nikos Ntounis, Gareth Roberts, Dr Regine Sønderland Saga, & Dr Chloe Steadman

October 2022

Placemanagement.org

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

Authors
This report has been written by an interdisciplinary team of academics and practitioners from the IPM, including:

Dr Steve Millington, a Reader in Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University, with over 20 years of research experience. He is currently a Director of the IPM, where he leads on several projects including the IPM's Vital and Viable programme and coordinating research for the High Streets Task Force for England.

Dr Regine Sønderland Saga is a Research Associate at the IPM where she works across projects. Her background is in urban geography, and her PhD examined socio-technical challenges to the smart city from a citizen-centric perspective. Her research interests include citizen participation, stakeholder collaboration, and the implications of smart technology use and digitalisation in cities.

Dr Nikos Ntounis is a Senior Research Associate at the IPM and Lecturer in Marketing at Manchester Metropolitan University. He joined IPM in 2014 and has worked and contributed to numerous IPM projects such as *High Street UK 2020 (HSUK2020)* and *Bringing Big Data to Small Users (BDSU)*. He is the Editor of the Journal of Place Management and Development.

Dr Chloe Steadman is a Lecturer in Marketing at Manchester Metropolitan University and Research Associate at the IPM. Her research focuses on consumer culture and people's lived and atmospheric experiences of places, as well as lecturing in consumer behaviour and methods for researching places. She has worked on the IPM's Vital and Viable Manchester and Stockport projects.

Gareth Roberts is Projects and Operations Manchester at the IPM and the High Streets Task Force. As well as overseeing IPM operations and activity, Gareth is responsible for managing the research projects running at any given time. He is Associate Editor of the Journal of Place Management & Development and is currently studying for a PhD in the analysis of cultural events.

Foreword

This report has been prepared following a workshop held on the 17th March 2022, attended key local stakeholders from Edgeley. Facilitated by the Institute of Place Management at the invitation of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, the event formed part a wider programme of work Stockport is undertaking to revitalise district centres in terms of post-pandemic recovery and long-term viability. This report builds, therefore, on findings collated by IPM to inform the council's approach to supporting Stockport's district centres.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Many factors affect the vitality and viability of high streets and town centres. Some of the changes we see today are long-term processes, some stretching back decades. The global pandemic brought new and additional challenges, but also provided the spur to reimagine and redefine the high street, not only to manage recovery, but to also prepare and adapt for a more resilient future. To help local communities gain insight into these trends please see the High Street Change report[1]. Drawing on the IPM's extensive research and engagement with places across the UK and beyond in relation to the vitality and viability of high streets, this report presents findings from Edgeley, before outlining an adaptable action plan based on the IPM's 4Rs Framework – Restructuring, Rebranding, Repositioning and Reinventing, which includes recommendations for quick wins and longer-term priorities[2].

The findings are based on several research and data methods. These include:

1. Updates on the independent Place Quality Audits first undertaken in Edgeley in 2019.
2. Insights from the automated footfall counter located in the district centre installed by Springboard, which collected daily data over a 12-month cycle from the end of January 21 to January 22[3].
3. Local stakeholder workshop which took place in March 2022. During this 3-hour session, participants were tasked with identifying factors which they believed attracted people to the district centre, and barriers to change.
4. Insights from Local Data Company (LDC) data.
5. Application of IPM tools – including Activity Hierarchy, Diversity measure, and Viability Assessment.
6. Application of local evidence using the 4Rs frameworks.

---

[1] Available on request – contact the IPM
[2] For more detail see: https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/4rs-regeneration-framework/
[3] This measures high street footfall at specific locations, to provide rapid access to anonymised data. The counter measures the physical presence of people and is not dependent upon any form of technology used by an individual (e.g., mobile data, WiFi data). The data can only provide a snapshot of activity in each location but nevertheless provides a robust indicator of activity.

2. Edgeley Place Quality Update and Assessment

In 2019, the IPM team conducted an audit for all Stockport district centres, categorising the collected information based on the Top 25 Priorities that impact upon the performance of district centres, to inform interventions which local place leaders should focus on. The outcomes of this audit can be seen in the Phase 1 report of the project[4].

Since we last visited Edgeley in 2019[5], overall, other than the normal turnover of businesses, the centre remains largely the same, although the continuing absence of any strong digital footprint and lack of online promotion has spurred us to add place marketing to one of the Edgeley's weaknesses. Another area of concern is the relative lack of diversity of comparison goods (0.06 compared to the GB average of 0.15)[6]. 40 of the 50 units in Edgeley are retail, which potentially exposes the centre to the restructuring affecting the sector nationally. According to LDC[7] data, Edgeley has lost one convenience store and one comparison store. Given the impact of the pandemic Edgeley has a low vacancy rate figure (4% compared to 14.1% GB average in Q1 2022)[8], suggesting the centre proved to be quite resilient.

Activity hours remain largely the same as in 2019, with most businesses closed by 5:00pm. There is a time in the late afternoon when most shops are closed and cafés are not open, making the centre less vibrant after traditional activity hours. That said, there are a reasonable number of traditional pubs and takeaways, but the evening hospitality offers few other options. Despite being a small and compact centre, the overall experience is still compromised by the appearance of the centre and the poor perceptions of safety that continue to dominate. However, the centre does have ample parking and seating with a good range of services for the local catchment. Table 1 below summarises the strengths and weaknesses, with key changes highlighted in bold.

---

[4] See: https://democracy.stockport.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=168756
[5] See Appendix 2 for an explanation of the updated 25 Priorities
[6] Based on OXIRM measure on the LDC data
[7] See Appendix 3 for a summary of the LDC Data
[8] See BRC https://brc.org.uk/news/corporate-affairs/fewer-empty-shops-but-uncertainty-ahead/

Edgeley District Centre Strengths and Weaknesses	
Key Strengths	**Key Weaknesses**
7. Necessities - Ample parking - Ample benches - Cash machines	3, 6 & 13. Vision & Strategy/Place Management/ Networks and Partnerships with Council - No vision or strategy for the district centre - Limited mechanism for stakeholders to collaborate. - Traders Association no longer active
22. Liveability - Good range of services e.g. health - Two community centres in the district centre - Local schools in walking distance.	8 & 16. Anchors/Attractiveness - Other than the Co-Op and Home Bargains, few other major anchors located in the district centre
23. Adaptability - Space within and around the centre to provide opportunities for new development and densification	9. Non-retail offer - Little evidence of evening economy - Lack of diversity - Centre lacks leisure and recreational services
	5. Appearance - The centre in general feels a bit dated and run-down, with an unkempt appearance of many of the shop frontages. - There are also some littering issues in and around the centre, including service areas to the rear and side of several premises
	13. Place Marketing - No online social media activity could be traced, apart from sparing use of the #Edgeley hashtag. - Low digital footprint, as only one business from the centre on Trip Advisor (Olive Café), although this has very positive reviews

Table 1: Key strengths and weaknesses

Viability Assessment

The Viability Assessment is a measure of High Street Viability[9]. This is based on analysis of 5 key indicators with data derived from the Index for Multiple Deprivation and the Co-Op Well Being Index. The assessment indicates Edgeley is **highly technologically viable** which is largely driven by the proximity to frequent train services from Stockport railway station. The centre is however suffering from deprivation across multiple domains, i.e., income and employment deprivation (amongst the 10% most deprived LSOAs in the country in both domains), and therefore has limited economic viability (see Figure 1 below).
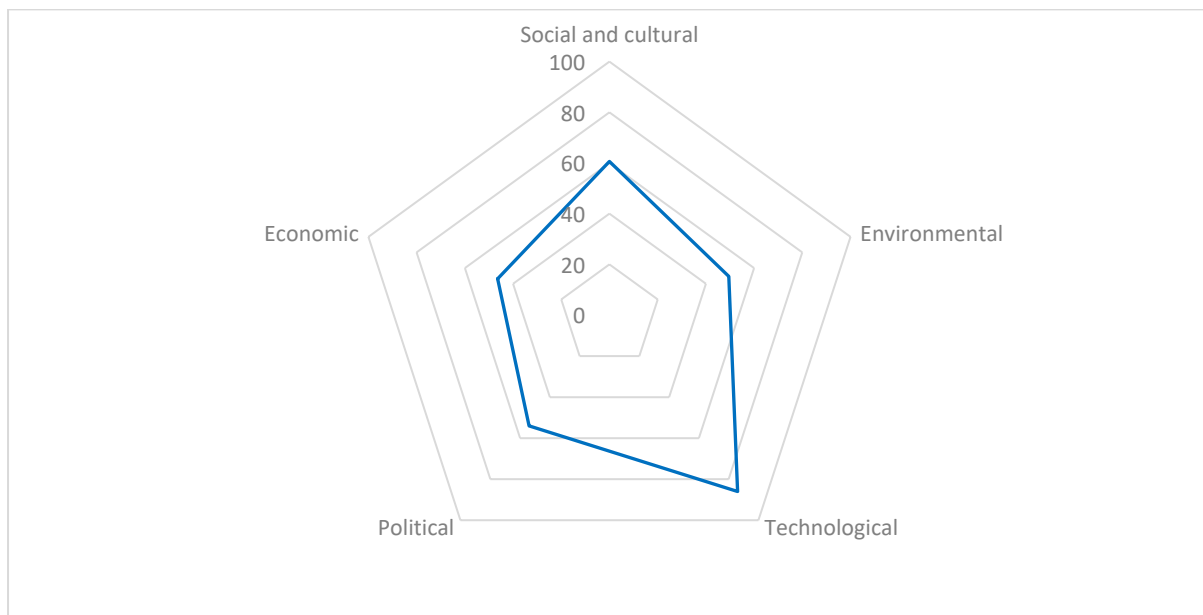
Figure 1: Viability Assessment

We posit that Edgeley fulfils the role of a residential centre, and despite its economic constraints, there is perhaps growth potential in terms of the trading environment as there is space within and around the centre to provide opportunities for new development. Whilst the centre does experience issues with anti-social behaviour, and one stakeholder referred to being victim to more serious crime, this could be partly tackled by increasing the evening economy of the centre e.g., by experimenting with activity hours to provide more presence in the high street outside traditional opening hours and as such limit the arena for anti-social behaviour. Stakeholders, however, were concerned about the lack of police presence and drew attention to some simple interventions which might help improve perceptions of safety e.g., lighting of darkened alleys.

---

[9] See Appendix for an explanation of how the Viability Assessment is calculated.

Footfall Analysis

The annual footfall figure for Edgeley for the period of January 2021-2022 for the counter location was 730,921 suggesting Edgeley is correctly defined as a **district centre** based on the estimated activity level[10].

In summary, the average daily footfall count is 2025, July is the busiest month, Fridays the busiest day, whereas Sundays are typically the quietest day. Events and matches played at the football stadium should boost footfall and generate synergies within the district centre, but this relationship seems under-exploited. Although other events in and around the district centre are under-mediated and do not appear to have a significant impact on footfall. We would also expect commuters parking near Stockport station to drive footfall, but again there appears to be little synergy here as well.

Monthly Footfall Analysis

Monthly footfall calculated for the year 2021 suggests Edgeley has the profile of a **multifunctional centre,** offering a convenient mix of goods and services[11]. The relatively flat footfall profile suggests the centre mainly serves a local catchment (Figure 2 and Table 2). Although Edgeley has a relatively low volume of footfall through the year, Edgeley showcases a summer/autumn peak followed by a December drop, which can probably be attributed to the surge of the Omicron variant during that time.
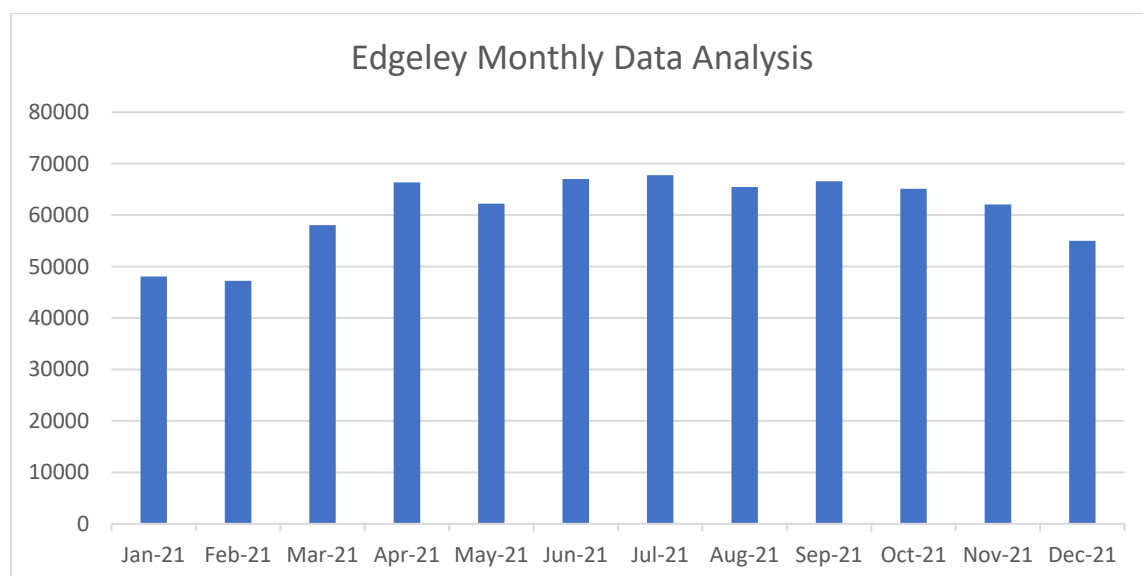
Figure 2: Monthly Footfall Data

Although COVID-19 clearly impacted all centres from March 2020 to late 2021, recent analysis of over 180 high streets suggests the lifting of restrictions contributed to a significant bounce-back in the number of people visiting high streets, boosted further throughout 2021 with the rollout of the vaccination programme. The Annual Review of Footfall produced by the High Street Streets Task

---

[10] See Appendix 1 for an explanation of the hierarchy is derived.
[11] See Appendix 5 for an explanation of the different signature types.

Force (2021)[12] suggests smaller local high streets across England recovered more quickly than larger cities and regional centres. With footfall recovery associated with settlement size, we can reasonably suggest that in a district centre such as Edgeley footfall should have recovered both to its pre-pandemic levels of footfall and footfall signature.

Table 2 provides a monthly footfall count for Edgeley. It is estimated footfall during the first months of 2021 may have been hindered by the third COVID-19 national lockdown (which started 6th January). There is a slight increase in footfall after April, which coincided with the re-opening of non-essential shops and outdoor venues such as pubs and restaurants. From June 2021 onwards, Edgeley's footfall appears to be stable, apart from the December drop mentioned above. Edgeley has one of the smallest footfall counts of all Stockport district centres.

Month	Edgeley Monthly Data	Monthly Data as Percentage
Jan-21	48057	6.6%
Feb-21	47219	6.5%
Mar-21	58055	7.9%
Apr-21	66362	9.1%
May-21	62222	8.5%
Jun-21	67020	9.2%
Jul-21	67766	9.3%
Aug-21	65451	9.0%
Sep-21	66581	9.1%
Oct-21	65112	8.9%
Nov-21	62070	8.5%
Dec-21	55006	7.5%
Annual Footfall	730921	100%

Table 2: Monthly footfall count and percentage

Events and footfall

It is unclear if any Christmas-related events may have taken place in Edgeley during the period of observation. Most events seem to take place in Edgeley Park, and bigger games appear to influence footfall positively. For example, the FA Cup match between Stockport County and Bolton Wanderers was held on November 17th, and footfall was highly increased (3998 counts) compared to an average November Wednesday (2116 counts). However more data need to be collected (e.g., sales data, dwell time, visitors' perceptions) to identify the full matchday effect, together with other events at the footfall ground or taking place in and around the district centre.

Weekly Footfall Analysis

Finally, the weekly footfall pattern for Edgeley was calculated (Figure 3). Previous research (Mumford et al, 2017) has shown that two distinct weekly patterns (a distinct Saturday peak and a Monday through Saturday peak) are evident in footfall profiles. Edgeley exhibits a Monday through Saturday peak, with a noticeable drop on Sunday that is consistent with smaller neighbourhood-like

---

[12] See https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/media/hr5jbfev/footfall-report-2021-exec-summary-final.pdf

centres. The busy Friday pattern is unique compared to other Stockport district centres, and worth exploring further as a unique selling proposition for businesses. Edgeley's weekly signature may be heavily influenced by the effects of the pandemic (e.g., hybrid working arrangements). Nevertheless, understanding how Edgeley functions on a weekly basis can help towards the development of strategies and initiatives that fit the centre's profile and catchment.
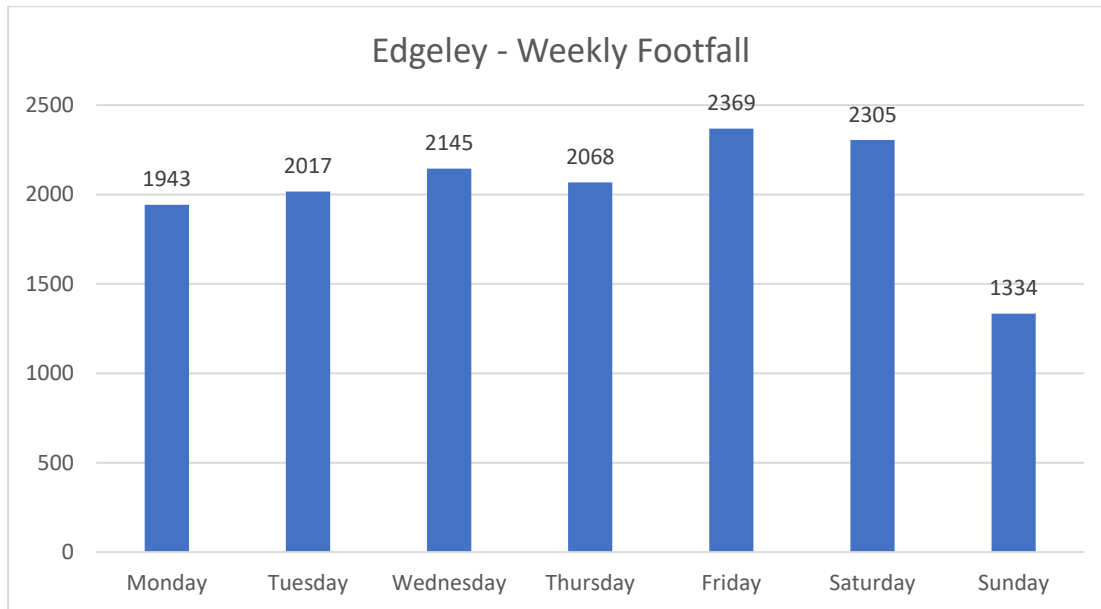

Figure 3: Weekly footfall pattern for Edgeley

Attractors and Barriers

As part of the first interactive exercise, workshop participants were asked to write down three factors they personally believed attracted people to the local high street. Figure 4 below summarizes the responses of the group.

Figure 4: Attractors word cloud

Three themes dominate the analysis: The Co-Op as **an important retail convenience anchor**, **social interaction** (community) and the **park** (recreational space). It became evident that the Co-Op in Edgeley was an important retail anchor in the centre, but not only for retail purposes but as an embedded part of the community. This leads to the other theme of social interaction. Edgeley is clearly a centre where people meet up and interact with each other alongside doing their shopping, and one participant described Edgeley as a strong community. The park is an important part of the community as many pass through the centre to get to Alexandra Park, where it was in fact highlighted by participants that experimental use of space was also occurring as a pop-up coffee shop had opened there since the last audit in 2019. Interestingly, none of the stakeholders referred to either Stockport Railway Station or the football ground as attractors, whereas normally we might expect such facilities to influence the pattern and intensity of footfall in nearby centres.

The second part of this exercise required participants to identify barriers or constraints that they believe are holding back change in their local high street. Figure 5 below summarises all the barriers identified by whole group:

Figure 5: Barriers identified by the whole group

The barriers identified by the workshop participants focused mainly on **safety/crime** and anti-social behaviour. This may present some challenges in finding tenants to occupy vacant shops and generating an evening economy; however, the latter could potentially help counter these unwanted occurrences. Additionally, following the appointment of a district centre manager by Stockport MBC, the centre can now start scoping out possibilities for partnerships such as a Crime Reduction Partnership. Participants also pointed to the lack of diversity in the centre which is backed up by the Local Data Company. However, with a low vacancy rate, it can be difficult for new entrants to contribute to a more diversified offer.

3. Applying the IPM's 4Rs Framework to Edgeley

The 4Rs Framework provides a simple approach to developing a town centre action plan to create a vibrant centre for everyone that is fit for the future.

Figure 6: 4Rs Regeneration Framework

The Framework distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (*repositioning*), effecting change (*reinventing*), communication (*rebranding*) and governance/spatial planning and development (*restructuring*). An editable version of the transformation routemap with instructions can be downloaded[13] to help create a tailored Action Plan. Depending on where you start, the routemap will take time to deliver but is a useful tool to plan out both short and long-term priorities. Actions under each R may happen simultaneously, consecutively, or repeatedly. Further detail on each of the 4Rs can be found in the supporting resources on the High Streets Task Force website.[14]

---

[13] https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/transformation-routemap-webinars/create-a-transformation-routemap-for-your-town/
[14] https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/4rs-regeneration-framework/

Repositioning

Repositioning is a strategy that relates to clearly identifying and communicating a place's market position (Millington and Ntounis, 2017). In some locations, there is a poor understanding of the catchment, the challenges and trends impacting on the place as well as a lack of data on which to base decisions. In these instances, a strategy of repositioning is sensible. This entails taking time to collect and analyse data and information, as well as develop appropriate visions and strategies that can get widespread buy-in. Repositioning can also be used to counteract decline and enable a centre to identify potential competitive advantages.

A challenge for all district centres in Stockport is availability of reliable, longer term footfall data. Much of our analysis is based on analysis of just one year of data, whereas normally we would base our conclusions on two years of data. We suspect the insights we have drawn are reasonable assertions, but further analysis is recommended. Additionally, without access to hourly data we have been unable to perform more detailed analysis regarding peak times and the impact of specific events. Specifically, this might involve analysis of footfall in relation to commuter traffic and football matches, which should drive footfall on an everyday or regular basis. Although one might imagine football fans use local facilities in the district centre and generate additional revenue for certain local traders, it is not clear whether the same could said for commuters who park in Edgeley, because the local offer and activity times make it difficult to capitalise on this potential trade. It is important, therefore, to establish an evidence base before the imposition of ad hoc measures to control parking as this may be to the detriment of the district centre.

A key challenge for Edgeley is that it still does not have clear vision or strategy, and we would advise local stakeholders start a process to collaboratively produce one. We would advise this vision reflects findings from the Place Quality Audit and workshop findings in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of the district centre. The vision does not necessarily need to involve radical change, but rather should focus on consolidating the centre's strengths, whilst tackling specific challenges through viable and measurable actions e.g., reuse of empty shops, lowering barriers to entry for new business, and widening diversity. In Edgeley's case the vision might focus on creating a safer and more welcoming district centre. However, the long-term vision might be more aspirational e.g., to link footfall from the railway station into the district centre. Whatever vision is decided, it must garner support and buy-in from all stakeholders and the broad support of the wider community.

Developing greater knowledge and understanding of each centre is valuable for all local traders on the high street. Although historically retailers have been poorly supported in terms of national and European policy, there are emerging opportunities, such as the Shop Local Initiative which can open access to business advice and support for both start-ups and established traders s e.g., guidance on marketing or digital technology, recruitment, or even rising energy costs. District centre managers, therefore, could play a vital role in linking high street businesses to this support. It is important the needs of local traders connect to a wider vision or strategy. For example, as the pandemic revealed small traders who were able to flip their businesses from instore to home delivery and online have proved to be more resilient. Raising digital skills of all local traders, such as using social media promotion to drive footfall into stores is another activity that can underpin future resilience.

Reinventing

Reinventing strategies relate to the activities undertaken to revitalise a place's identity and offer (Theodoridis, Ntounis, and Pal, 2017). Any place should understand and seek to meet the needs of its catchment and the visitors it may attract and be sensitive to these insights when making any changes within a centre. Sometimes places have the data they need and sensible plans for how the town or city needs to change to better serve its catchment communities, but nothing is happening there. A process of reinvention is needed. Transformation needs to start, and this might be through temporary interventions, events, pop-ups, or experimental place-making.

There are some activities taking place in Edgeley to activate the centre, however they appear to mostly take place at Edgeley Park. Whereas this may need some review, efforts need to be made to ensure the continuity of the existing activity as it appears to impact favourably on footfall. Local stakeholders might consider organising additional events at quieter times of the year or themed for different seasons. For example, Edgeley has a great and walkable centre with low levels of traffic where events and markets can be hosted. Future events might also introduce trials and experiments to diversify what the centre has to offer, to prepare for future adaption as the local catchment changes. We stress this is important given the centre's reliance on its immediate local catchment and changing demographic.

Local stakeholders might also consider how some quick wins could be generated to make basic improvements to the public realm. This may involve the establishment of volunteer-led litter picking, groups taking responsibility for planting and so on. The other facet of this work would be to engage property owners to make basic improvements to shop frontages and shutters. Stakeholders in Edgeley might draw inspiration from nearby Withington, where shutter-art, decorative designs on building frontages and murals have proved to be a low-cost intervention which has helped improve both the appearance and reputation of the district centre. Another example is New Brighton which has produced a more ambitious mural arts scheme with associated walking trail.

In terms of long-term adaption, the low vacancy rate makes it difficult to enact significant short-term trials and experiments with new products and services which might strengthen synergies with existing footfall, but to also help nudge the local offer towards one that will serve the catchment of the future. That said, there is ample public and under-used surface carparks to hold events and markets which could diversify the offer.

Despite local stakeholders reported concerns about ASB and vandalism, and more seriously a report from one who was a victim in an armed robbery, there seems to be a level of frustration with how the district centre is policed. Equally the local police team report the surgeries they hold are poorly attended. Reports about low police presence and perception of crime are not uncommon across the country, and other than the Safer Streets initiative and the establishment Business Crime Reduction Partnerships, there are limited resources available for communities to tackle crime in their area, and so they are dependent on the police enforcing their existing legal powers in relation to crime, disorder and ASB. In the first instance, as we suggest earlier in the report, the district manager working with the local police team needs to gather evidence as to extent of local problems and establish a baseline and clear KPIs, which need to feed into a wider regeneration strategy. The second stage would be then to build a more positive and formal relationship with local police. For example, invite a representative to sit on a potential district centre partnership where they can regularly meet with local stakeholders. As this partnership develops, a sub-group might be

established with a specific focus on targeting crime reduction initiatives, funding to cover investment in community policing and CCTV, and basic design improvements to mitigate against crime. Often community perceptions of crime do not reflect actual crime, which can suggest the issue is more to do with place reputation and image, which would involve interventions covered in the section on branding. Wider attempts to activate the centre and draw more people to it, will most likely impact positively on perceptions and make people feel safer in Edgeley.

Rebranding

Sometimes there are good plans, based on good evidence, that are being brought to life. The place is both repositioning and reinventing – but catchment perceptions have not changed. People are still negative about the town or city centre. In this case, rebranding may be needed. Strategies of rebranding focus upon the application of branding, marketing communications, and public relations techniques to deliver a consistent place identity, which relates to the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions in the minds of potential consumers of a place (Ntounis, and Kavaratzis, 2017). Rebranding also includes stakeholder communications, not just marketing and PR activities. Ultimately, a strong place brand should be positive and consistent, and the product of local co-creation. Successful place brand management can lead to positive word-of-mouth, and assist in the transformation of previously negative, or just as problematic, non-existent images. It might be appropriate to establish a local subgroup to review and develop an appropriate participatory place branding process, which engages a wide range of local stakeholders. We would emphasise, this does not necessarily require professional branding assistance, and neither does the target audience need to be an external one. Rather, low-level, and low-cost social media communication across multiple platforms designed to engage and inform existing users of the town-centre, stakeholders, and residents, about existing activities and the wider offer in the centre might prove just as effective.

Although there remain issues concerning place awareness and reputation, a key challenge is simply the lack of online activity to promote the district centre offer. The overall reputation of Edgeley online is unclear in terms of what can be found as it as has a very limited digital footprint. Multiple social media channels, which can be used to promote local events and businesses should therefore be taken into use, potentially with the use of #Edgeley. The challenge will be to build a collaborative and co-ordinated place marketing approach and to ensure any new activities and events are included in the rebranding exercise, which should be evidence based. Ideally, local traders would be driving these communications to raise awareness of the local offer within the existing catchment. Local stakeholders might aspire to emulate Bishopgate (York) where the community has developed both excellent online resources https://www.bishyroad.net together with creative maps promoting the local offer.

Discussions from the workshop suggests local stakeholders might benefit from developing a shared understanding of what Edgeley has to offer and act more as ambassadors to further promote a positive image of the high street. Existing communication channels could be used to strengthen a shared understanding of the visioning and strategies between local stakeholders. This should extend to include a wider range of local businesses to generate more frequent social media messages.

Sometimes we encounter a disparity in places between the perceptions of a place held by local stakeholders and those of customers or visitors using the centre. It would be a useful exercise to undertake place sentiment analysis on a regular basis including to review and evaluate user

experiences e.g., TripAdvisor or Google reviews. This is important to ensure marketing and branding messages are consistent and appropriate for the catchment. There are opportunities in this process to consider how better to promote synergies and linked trips within Edgeley, especially with people coming from the railway station, Alexandra Park, and Edgeley Park, to establish the high street more as a destination in which visitors might dwell for longer using local shops and services, attending events, and visiting the local hospitality offer. The Phase 1 report for example suggested to link the heritage signage that exists in certain areas (Library, St Matthew's Church) with the commercial centre and promote a heritage trail.

Restructuring

Sometimes places just seem to be stuck in a state of inertia around decision making or, when decisions are made and action taken, it does not have the impact that was expected. This can be tackled through a process of restructuring. Strengthening existing synergies perhaps involves more than simply improving communications between local stakeholders, and instead calls for greater collaboration and coordination of local stakeholders. This may involve refreshing existing networks. Sometimes wider town partnerships meet too infrequently or are simply too large to be effective. It might prove useful, therefore, to consider delegating specific tasks to sub-groups, which meet more often, who report back to a smaller executive group. It is not for the IPM, however, to determine how this operates, the various local partnerships and stakeholders, including local government, need to work out what works best. Consequently, there are not many easy wins here, but hopefully the IPM's recommendation provides a springboard to address these issues in proactive way.

Although there is an enthusiastic group of local stakeholders willing to get involved in the future of the centre, as it stands Edgeley does not have a formal place management organisation, such as a Business Improvement District, town-team, or similar partnership. The centre once had a traders association, but this appears to have ceased activity, which raises concern local business may be apathetic towards attempts to re-establish one, even though we would advise this is very important. In addition, to action many of the recommendations we outline will require an effective network of landlords and property owners. It is important the activities and recommendations made in this report are both actioned and coordinated. We would advise therefore, that Edgeley establishes a district centre partnership group or taskforce to manage both short and long-term change. This might extend to the coordination of event organisers and volunteer groups willing to get involved in supporting activity including markets, festivals to litter picking and community planting and so on.

Restructuring may also involve physical regeneration when there are spatial challenges or barriers to change. In Edgeley, the overriding spatial challenge is the lack of pedestrianised crossing possibilities and walkability from Alexandra Park and into the district centre, together with how flow of footfall from the railway station is linked to the district centre e.g., the impact of the large roundabout before entering the high street. This limits opportunities to create cycle lances and linked trips – and its likely to negatively impact on dwell time, overall experience, and place reputation. We would therefore suggest this creates a precedent on which to explore further temporary or perhaps more permanent measures to reduce the impact of traffic and improve connectivity and walking routes into the district centre from neighbouring districts.

Although Edgeley is an attractive place in terms of having a highly walkable centre and good range of necessities, there are a few examples of planning blight which need to be addressed in the long term, such as repurposing side streets to enhance the public realm and give space to new entrants. A future vision might begin to imagine how these sites could be repurposed to address the challenges identified above. For example, to create new and large retail formats, accommodate non-retail uses, civic and performance space, or simply greenery or place to hold events. Finally, the overall appearance of the centre, currently feels a bit run down and there are some buildings with usable space above the retail units. This could provide a long-term opportunity for more transformational projects e.g., mixed-use residential to ensure the future viability of the centre.

With Edgeley's proximity to Stockport railway station there appears to be a planning issue in relation parking, where regular commuters are said to take up parking spaces which might normally be used by residents or shoppers. Similarly, a common negative externality of having a football stadium located nearby again relates to use parking conflict between traders, residents, and visitors. These challenges are not uncommon in the UK. Normally, both railway stations and football grounds are major advantages to local high streets as they drive footfall on a routine basis, attracting additional visitors who would not normally come to the area. Resolution of the parking conflicts will require careful resolution.

In the long term this might be simply addressed through the construction of additional parking capacity through comprehensive redevelopment of Stockport Station. Long term solutions, however, need to consider reduction in reliance on parking through planning interventions to encourage active travel within Edgeley, including links between the district centre and redesigned station. This might include the creation of clear walking and cycling, the softening of roads to encourage nearby resident to walk into the centre. It is important to recognise parking can be considered as a necessity – a basic amenity alongside benches, public toilets and so on, but as a factor in itself – is not a key driver of what makes a place attractive. Rather, safe, clean and traffic environments are conducive to street trading and encourage visitors to dwell and linger longer in place, to the benefit of local traders. The long-term vision might better focus on improving these qualities in Edgeley rather than be side-tracked over parking conflicts. Working with local stakeholders is key, for example, to what extent do Edgeley stakeholders have a voice in plans for the redevelopment of the station? Could the football club instigate initiative to reduce car-dependency e.g., working with supporter groups to encourage public transport use. In the short term, however, more evidence is needed to inform how local stakeholders might constructively engage with both fans and commuters, which is covered above in the section on Repositioning.

4. Recommendations

Repositioning	
QUICK WINS	**LONGER TERM**
Ensure footfall data is widely available and can be accessed by local traders, event organisers and other place-based stakeholders to demonstrate success of delivery.	Continue to track effectiveness of interventions in the centre through monitoring and interpreting footfall data (volume and pattern of activity), providing impact assessment of events etc.
Evaluate the specific impact of markets and events on footfall, sales, dwell time, and visitor perceptions.	Refresh events programme to maximise trading opportunities. In particular, the potential synergies with the football ground and other nearby anchors need strengthening.
Hold a visioning workshop with local stakeholders, facilitated by the District Centre Manager.	Construct a clear vision for Edgeley based on evidence, which addresses specific challenges, and is well-defined in spatial terms.
Review synergies between Stockport station, commuter parking and the district centre.	Link local findings into plans to review parking scheme for Edgeley and long-term development plans for the railway station.
Review crime data for the centre working with local police and / or using Neighbourhood Watch online mapping tool[15]. Establish a set of clear KPIs and baseline e.g., shoplifting.	Ensure continuing monitoring and reporting of crime data, sharing with local stakeholders and use this evidence to underpin Consider potential targeted interventions e.g., training for local traders in business crime reduction measures, rapid response to graffiti removal etc.
District centre manager to develop greater awareness of business support and available to local traders through a dedicated workshop.	Actively link local traders to specific initiatives which will help them develop or sustain their business – linking to the wider vision.

Supporting resources

Repositioning: developing collaborative, inspiring visions that achieve change

E-Learn - Repositioning your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Paisley is open – A vision for Paisley Town Centre 2030 | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

---

[15] https://www.ourwatch.org.uk/crime-prevention/crime-prevention/crime-map

[Understanding Place Data | High Streets Task Force](#)

[Vision and Strategy - 25 'vital and viable' priorities | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)](#)

Reinventing

QUICK WINS	LONGER TERM
Review the range of place-based anchors (retail, employment, transport, green space, heritage, culture), everyday activity that significantly attracts footfall.	Ensure key place-based attractors are embedded in local plans and visions for the town centre and include in wider messaging.
Review funding and resources of existing activities to ensure they are sustainable and can be delivered in a predictable way, with the support of the district centre manager.	Extend and diversify the events programme to grow footfall in the high street and diversify local offer.
Work with local property owners to activate empty shops units, e.g., meanwhile use, pop-ups, community use.	Lower barriers to entry and generate more opportunities of innovation and non-retail function e.g., start-up scheme, flexible leasing, rents etc.
Again, work with local property owners to make basic improvements to shop fronts, facades, and shutters.	Longer term ambitions here might be to ensure new development meets certain design criteria to improve the appearance of the centre.
Undertake a district centre audit to compile a list of eyesores and unkempt sites, and opportunities to add greenery and floral displays e.g., planters outside traders, bunting, etc., practical measures that can be managed locally.	Develop an action plan to identify specific projects which are then assigned to appropriate stakeholder groups. This might include resourcing plans e.g., accessing small grants, crowd-sourcing, stakeholder contributions etc.
District centre manager to engage the local police team to identify potential quick wins.	Create a programme of small-scale design interventions to mitigate crime e.g., lighting, gating etc. and support for traders to tackle business crime e.g., training, awareness.

Supporting Resources

E-Learn - Reinventing your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Specific Resources to Consider

12 best ways to get cars out of cities

BID: Safe and Secure Report

Car Parking: 237 Vital and Viable Factors

Cities Alive: Rethinking the Shades of Night

Community Leadership: approach to tackling street crime

Open Doors: Pilot Programme Report | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Place investment and engaging landlords | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Temporary Use as a Participatory Placemaking Tool | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

The High Cost of Free Parking

Withington Video Case Study

Rebranding

QUICK WINS	LONGER TERM
District centre manager to facilitate discussion with local stakeholders, especially traders to establish what support is needed to create an online social media profile.	Use existing comms to extend and build a network of place ambassadors including key anchor institutions, stakeholders, and local business – to promote positive image in a sustainable way.
Undertake place sentiment analysis to build a clearer understanding of user experiences of Edgeley.	Adjust social media communications in alignment with these regular reviews.
Once the visioning workshop is complete - the district centre manager could facilitate a place branding exercise designed to activate the vision. Important this is a participatory process in which the place brand is co-produced with the local community.	Construct a place brand to assist district centre development – to counter negative place perceptions which may be detrimental to future investment.

Supporting Resources

E-Learn - Rebranding your high street (4Rs) | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Understanding Place Sentiment | High Streets Task Force

Place Marketing - 25 'vital and viable' priorities | Resources | High Street Task Force (highstreetstaskforce.org.uk)

Restructuring

QUICK WINS	LONGER TERM
District centre manager to engage and coordinate existing stakeholder groups and include others (e.g., anchors such as football club) – e.g., facilitate workshops and regular meetings to create a network and partnership. The short-term goal should be to facilitate this process.	Establish a more formal leadership group supported by subgroups with responsibility for specific areas of intervention (landlords, traders' groups, events, branding etc).
Review existing Local Plan and strategic urban regeneration framework and benchmark against IPM's 25 Priorities.	Undertake feasibility studies into specific projects which address the spatial challenges identified above and create a group to take forward. This group could create a neighbourhood plan – or regeneration framework based on the 4Rs.
Maintaining the ongoing management of the centre, acquire additional capacity through the formation of networks and partnerships.	Station redevelopment plans need to have considerations for the district centre. District centre offer needs to be aimed at commuters.
The centre needs a public realm scheme to significantly improve lighting, street furniture, hard and soft landscaping.	Public realm improvements need to be linked clearly to the Local Plan and future physical regeneration plans.

General Supporting resources

25 Vital and Viable Priorities

Diagnostic: capacity and structures for managing change (IPM)

E-Learn - Restructuring your high street (4Rs)

Principles of Town Planning in relation to High Streets and Town Centres (RTPI)

Town Centre Partnerships (URBED)

Specific resources to consider for the district centre

Multifunctional Centres: A sustainable role for town and city centres

Regeneration - 237 'Vital and Viable' Factors

Retailing, sustainability and neighbourhood regeneration

5. Bibliography

Hallsworth, A., Ntounis, N., Parker, C., Quin, S. 2015. *Markets Matter: Reviewing the evidence & detecting the market effect*. Institute of Place Management. Manchester. Available online

Millington, S, Ntounis, N, Parker, C, and Quin, S. 2015. *Multifunctional Centres: A Sustainable Role for Town and City Centres*. Institute of Place Management. Manchester.

Millington, S, Ntounis, N. 2017. Repositioning the high street: evidence and reflection from the UK. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10(4): 364-379.

Millington S, Ntounis N, Parker C, Quin S, Roberts G, Steadman C. 2018. *High Street 2030: Achieving Change*. Institute of Place Management, Manchester

Mumford, C., Parker, C., Ntounis, N., and Dargan, E. 2021. Footfall Signatures and Volumes: Towards a Classification of UK Centres. *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* 48(6): 1495-1510. https://doi.org/10.1177/2399808320911412.

Ntounis, N, and Kavaratzis, M. 2017. Re-branding the High Street: the place branding process and reflections from three UK towns. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10(4): 392-403.

Parliament. 2019. *High streets and town centres in 2030*. House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee, Westminster. Available online.

Parker, C, Ntounis, N, Millington, S, Quin, S, and Castillo-Villar, F. 2017. Improving the vitality and viability of the UK High Street by 2020: Identifying priorities and a framework for action. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10(4): 310-348.

Peel, D. and Parker, C. 2017. Planning and governance issues in the restructuring of the high Street. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10(4): 404-418.

Theodoridis, C., Ntounis, N., and Pal, J. 2017. How to reinvent the High Street: evidence from the HS2020. *Journal of Place Management and Development*. 10(4): 380-391.

Timpson, J. et al. 2018. *The High Street Report*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. Available online.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Activity Hierarchy

The activity hierarchy is a classification of settlement size based upon the annual volume of footfall. It is particularly useful for planners and decision makers, as it can enable local authorities and interested parties to monitor the evolution of their centres in a more consistent fashion (Mumford et al., 2021). The activity hierarchy uses a standard order of settlement size (Major city, Regional Centre, Town, and District), and is established by comparing a place's annual footfall volume with the mean footfall volume for each classification and the standard deviation (a measure of how much footfall volume varies across centres in these groups - see below).
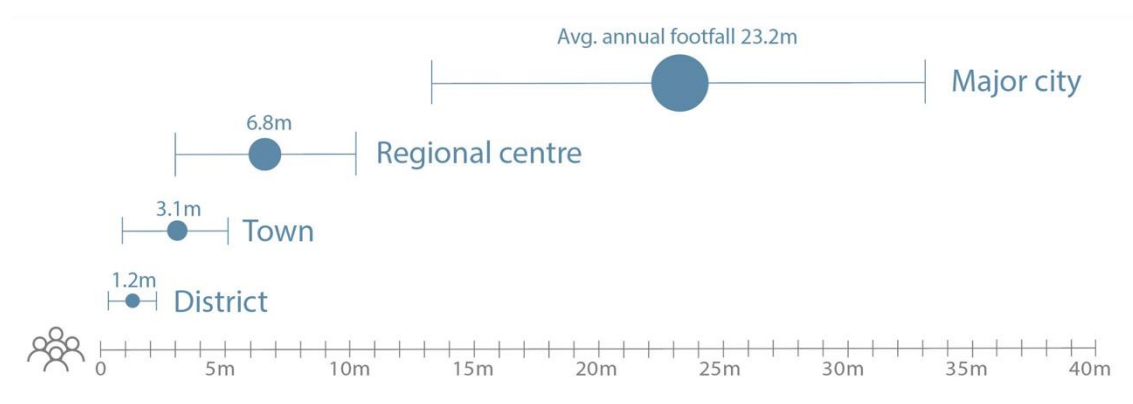
Levels of activity hierarchy and average as well as standard deviation of annual footfall in each level of activity hierarchy

Activity Hierarchy	Mean (million)	Standard Deviation (million)
District	1.2	0.9
Town	3.1	2.2
Regional Centre	6.8	3.7
Major City	23.2	9.9

Mean and standard deviation (SD) in each level of the activity hierarchy.

Appendix 2: Viability Assessment

Introduced below is an index of viability, which considers the multiple conditions that affect the overall viability of the High Street, and the interconnectedness between aspects of viability. This index - or tool to measure viability - has been shaped by academics and practitioners with an interest in the health of high streets and has been piloted with a series of towns in England. For this tool to be widely operationalised across high streets in England it uses data that is (1) pertinent to the conceptualisation of viability, (2) is easily available, and (3) enables a fine geographical granularity. The following indices and datasets are included in the tool:

1. Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2019 scores for the seven domains of deprivation.
2. Community Wellbeing Index (Co-op) for nine main areas that matter for community wellbeing.

Indices	Viability				
	Social and cultural	Environmental	Technological	Political	Economic
CDRC Geodem (IMD 2019)	IMD Crime IMD Health IMD Housing IMD Education	IMD Living Environment			IMD Income IMD Employment
Wellbeing Index People	Education and learning Health				Economy, Work and Employment
Wellbeing Index Place	Culture, heritage, and leisure	Housing, space, and environment	Transport, mobility, and connectivity		
Wellbeing Index Relationships	Relationships and trust Equality			Voice and decision-making	

Note: All five viability constructs are weighted equally - 20% each.

Appendix 3: Introduction to the updated 25 Priorities

In late 2019, the IPM team updated the list of "Top 25 Priorities" as part of the development of the High Streets Task Force, introducing new or amended priorities that correspond to the ongoing changes on the fabric of the high street. Table x provides the changes in the ranking of the 25 priorities. These amendments and new additions highlight the shift from traditional retail-oriented thinking into a more nuanced and multifunctional way of thinking about what constitutes a vital and viable centre. This is highlighted by the inclusion of "Non-retail Offer" as a separate priority in the 2019 update, the amendment of "Anchors" to include anything that is attracting a significant amount of people to a location (universities, hospitals, parks, train stations), the inclusion of "Markets" in their multiple forms (from collective retail to food halls), and the inclusion of "Redevelopment Plans", "Functionality", and "Innovation" as priorities that can influence centre transformation based on focused development, change in a centre's functions (e.g. from retail-dominant to multifunctional), and opportunities for community experimentation respectively.

Priority Rank	Priority (Original 2014 study)	Priority (2019 Update)
1	ACTIVITY HOURS (Opening hours; shopping hours; evening economy)	ACTIVITY* (Opening hours; footfall; shopping hours; evening economy)
2	APPEARANCE (Visual appearance; cleanliness)	RETAIL OFFER (Retailer offer; retailer representation)
3	RETAILERS (Retailer offer; retailer representation)	VISION & STRATEGY (Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies)
4	VISION&STRATEGY (Leadership; collaboration; area development strategies)	EXPERIENCE (Centre image; service quality; visitor satisfaction; familiarity; atmosphere)
5	EXPERIENCE (Service quality; visitor satisfaction; centre image; familiarity)	APPEARANCE (Visual appearance; cleanliness; ground floor frontages)
6	MANAGEMENT (Centre management; shopping centre management; Town Centre Management; place management)	PLACE MANAGEMENT (Centre management; shopping centre management; Town Centre Management (TCM); place management; Business Improvement Districts (BIDs))
7	MERCHANDISE (Range/quality of goods; assortments)	NECESSITIES (Car-parking; amenities; general facilities)
8	NECESSITIES (Car-parking; amenities; general facilities)	Anchors* - Presence of anchors - which give locations their basic character and signify importance
9	Anchor stores - Presence of anchor stores - which give locations their basic character and signify importance	NON-RETAIL OFFER (Attractions; entertainment; non-retail offer; leisure offer)
10	NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL (Networking; partnerships; community leadership)	MERCHANDISE (Range/Quality of goods; assortments; merchandising)
11	DIVERSITY (Attractions; range/quality of shops; non-retail offer; tenant mix; tenant variety; retail diversity; availability of alternative formats)	WALKING (Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips; connectivity)
12	WALKING (Walkability; pedestrianisation/flow; cross-shopping; linked trips)	PLACE MARKETING (Centre marketing; marketing; orientation/flow)
13	ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE (Entertainment; leisure offer)	NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS WITH COUNCIL (Networking; partnerships; community leadership;

		retail/tenant trust; tenant/manager relations; strategic alliances; centre empowerment; stakeholder power; engagement)
14	ATTRACTIVENESS (Place attractiveness; attractiveness)	ACCESSIBLE (Convenience; accessibility)
15	PLACE ASSURANCE (Atmosphere; BIDs; retail/tenant trust; store characteristics)	DIVERSITY (Range/quality of shops; tenant mix; tenant variety; availability of alternative formats; store characteristics; comparison/convenience; chain vs independent; supermarket impact; retail diversity; retail choice)
16	ACCESSIBLE (Convenience; accessibility; public transport)	ATTRACTIVENESS (Sales/turnover; place attractiveness; vacancy rates; attractiveness; retail spend; customer/catchment views; Construction of out-of-town centre)
17	PLACE MARKETING (Centre marketing; marketing; tenant/manager relations; orientation/flow; merchandising; special offers)	MARKETS* (Traditional markets; street trading)
18	Comparison/convenience - The amount of comparison-shopping opportunities compared to convenience (usually in percentage terms)	RECREATIONAL SPACE (Recreational areas; public space; open space)
19	RECREATIONAL SPACE (Recreational areas; public space; open space)	BARRIERS TO NEW ENTRANTS (Barriers to entry; landlords)
20	Barriers to Entry - Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the centre's/High Street's market	Safety/Crime - A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting
21	Chain vs independent - Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street	ADAPTABILITY (Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; store/centre design; retail unit size; store development; rents turnover)
22	Safety/crime - A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting	LIVEABLE (Multi/mono-functional; liveability; personal services; mixed use)
23	LIVEABLE (Multi/mono-functional; connectivity; liveability)	REDEVELOPMENT PLANS* (Planning blight; regeneration)
24	ADAPTABILITY (Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; mixed-use; engagement; functionality; store/centre design; retail unit size)	Functionality* - The degree to which a centre fulfils a role – e.g., service centre, employment centre, residential centre, tourist centre
25	Store development - The process of building, upgrading, remodelling or renovating retail stores	INNOVATION* (Opportunities to experiment; retail Innovation)

Appendix 4: Summary of LDC Data

Edgeley Location Report Highlights	Count	Percentage
Total Units	50	
Retail (shops)	40	80.0%
Leisure	10	20.0%
	Count	Percentage
Vacancy Rates	2	4.0%
Retail (Shops)	1	2.0%
Leisure	1	2.0%
Classification Mix	Count	Percentage
Comparison	16	31.4%
Convenience	9	17.6%
Service	15	29.4%
Leisure	9	17.6%
Net Change in Openings/Closures	Count	Difference in Classification (percentage)
Comparison	-1	-5.9%
Convenience	-1	-10%
Service	0	0.0%
Leisure	0	0.0%
Independent vs Multiple Mix	Count	Percentage
Independents	39	76.5%
Multiples	12	23.5%

Appendix 5: Footfall Signature Types

The following section presents the monthly data pattern in Edgeley. It is based on the findings of the Bringing Big Data to Small Users (BDSU) project, a collaborative research and development project funded by Innovate UK, led by retail intelligence specialists, Springboard, and involving the IPM, Manchester Metropolitan University, Cardiff University, MyKnowledgeMap, and other key partners. Through the analysis of hourly footfall data provided for more than 150 locations over 10 years, the project identified four basic patterns that have profound significance in thinking about the future of traditional retail centres.

Footfall Patterns	Typical Characteristics
Comparison	People come here predominantly to shop Busiest in the run up to Christmas People travel a considerable distance to visit Wide range of retail choice, leisure, food and beverage Strong retail anchor(s) Strong presence of multiples and international brands Depth and breadth of merchandising Large catchment area Accessible by choice of means of transport Organise themselves to compete with other comparison towns and channels
Holiday	People come here for a holiday or a 'day out' Busiest times are July and August People travel a considerable distance to visit Focus on offering a good experience to visitors during the summer peak Attractive to tourists but have a relatively weak comparison offer Organise themselves to increase and enhance their entertainment and leisure appeal
Speciality	People come here for the overall experience Footfall rises steadily from Easter to end of August - and peaks again around Christmas time. People stay longer here (increased dwell time). Anchor(s) not retail - offer something unique and special Attract visitors but serve local population Organise themselves to protect and promote identity and positioning
Multifunctional	People come for a mixture of everyday needs - shopping, accessing public transport, employment, education, services etc. Large multifunctional towns have higher footfall figures than small multifunctional towns. People travel further to access large multifunctional towns whilst small multifunctional towns just serve their local population Retail offer, opening times, events, services and other uses focused on local community and/or a well-defined hinterland Convenience anchor – work, public transport, food shopping, markets Accessible and locally connected Organise themselves to manage accessibility, concentration, reliability, and customer service