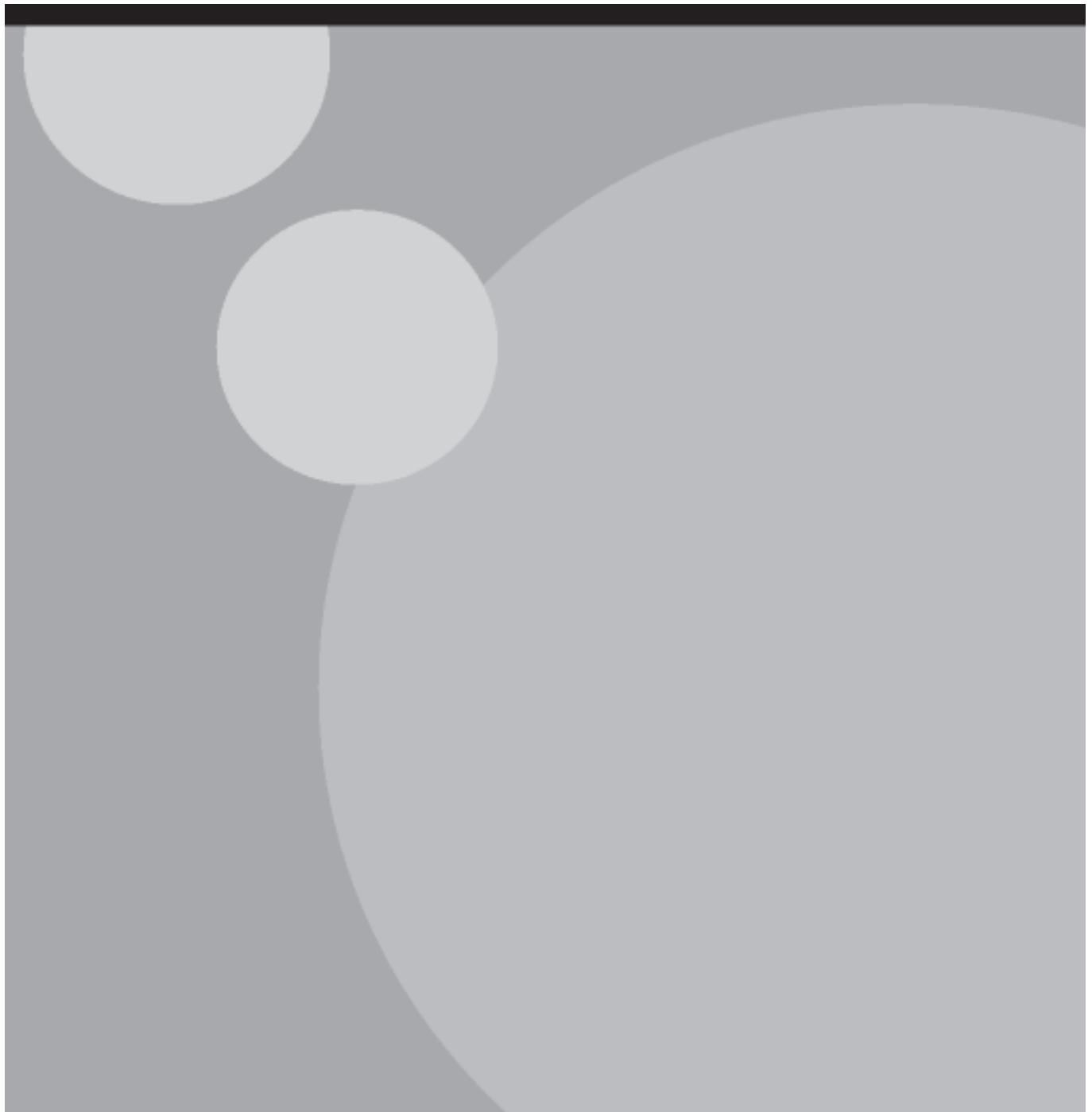




Parades to be Proud of:

Strategies to support local shops





Parades to be Proud of: Strategies to support local shops

June 2012

Department for Communities and Local Government

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Ministerial foreword

Britain has been famously described as a “nation of shopkeepers”. I personally take that as a compliment. I am a shopkeeper’s son. Small businesses and people who work in local firms have a tremendous work ethic that sustains local neighbourhood economies up and down the country. They also give market towns, villages or suburbs their own tremendously important unique character and identity.



Local shops of all shapes and sizes offer something different than the discount prices of megastores. They know their customers’ names and needs. They work hard to make sure their business successfully serves the local clientele in a way that bigger out-of-town stores cannot. They have a personal touch and regularly stock a range of goods and offer services that you can’t get anywhere else. They also work together, and we have seen great examples of cooperation between independent retailers and well-known chains on local parades.

The economic downturn has brought new challenges to our local shops and although the research we had carried out suggests that parades are largely holding their own, all too often these smaller parades go relatively unnoticed.

Mary Portas has helped us find a way to support our high streets. Now this document gives parades of shops the recognition they deserve. It highlights some of the excellent things that go on in these wonderful suburban parades or village high streets. It also showcases some of the tools and strategies available to local authorities, business owners, landlords or the community itself that can help to make their own local parade even better. Things like small business rate relief, local discretionary discounts or our community right to bid are already at their disposal.

There is lots of good work already going on in many local shops. This document should help stimulate new ideas and innovation in your area. I’m pleased to get the ball rolling and I want to make sure these local treasures have the support they need to continue to be a part of everyday neighbourhood life long into the future.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Pickles".

Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Why local parades of shops matter

Our local parades of shops are key parts of our local areas. They affect what our local communities look and feel like, how we interact as communities and how our local economies are performing.

Choice: As outlined in our responses to the Portas Review of the High Street, choice of different places to shop is important for us all as consumers. Local parades of shops are a key part of that choice. This work is not about saying one type of shopping experience is better than another. We will all need different shopping offers for different purposes. Supporting parades of shops ensures that degree of choice remains available to us all.

Local economy & entrepreneurship: Parades of shops have a direct impact on their local economy, with businesses often owned by and employing local people. They contain a high number of small and new businesses. We have seen a great degree of flexibility, innovation and entrepreneurship on local parades, including innovative ways for small independent shops and national chain stores to work together.

Community: Parades of shops provide important local services to local communities, particularly to those who are less mobile. Local shops do this through local service businesses such as hairdressers, and as sites for community services such as clinics and community centres. We have seen parades of shops act as important sites of community activity and events, becoming true centres of their neighbourhoods.

Local shops have not received a lot of attention in terms of research or policy initiatives. We wanted to get a sense of the extent of the challenges currently faced or anticipated by local parades of shops over the coming years.

Therefore, the Government has commissioned new research and produced this document to shine a light on these important parts of our communities. From our discussions with business owners, local authorities and interested parties, we have brought together strategies that people have used to improve parades of shops in their own areas that might be useful in other locations.

This work aims to:

- set out the latest data on about how parades of shops are faring;
- identify strategies that might help parades of shops; and
- signpost businesses, landlords, local authorities, communities and other interested parties to useful tools.

This document has been written for anyone who wants to support and improve their local parade of shops. This will include people who work in or own businesses in parades, landlords, local authorities and community groups. We hope you will use this document as a tool to develop your own ideas and find the right solutions for your own local area.

Our definition of a parade of shops

Local shops are found in all sorts of different locations, and can vary quite a lot. Our broad definition is as follows.

Parades of shops:

- are largely defined by how people use them and their relation to other centres: this means that the number of shops in a parade can vary from 5 up to as many as 70 shops;
- have a mainly local customer base, with strong local links and local visibility, rather than being somewhere people would travel significant distance to shop at;
- have a high number of independent small or micro-businesses with some multiples (such as Tesco Metro, Sainsbury's Local, Boots) and symbol affiliates (including Spar, Londis, Budgens etc.); and
- have a mixture of retail based shops (convenience stores, newsagents, greengrocers, bakers etc) and some local service businesses (hairdressers, café etc).

This definition covers a wide range of areas, from urban to rural and small to reasonably large parades. The research we commissioned has identified four different types of neighbourhood parades. In terms of developing your strategy for your area, it might be helpful to think about what type of parade you think yours currently is and what you might like it to become.

Types of Neighbourhood Parades	
Local neighbourhood parade	Typically located in the heart of a residential community, urban and rural, often with around 5-10 units, providing walk-in convenience shopping and limited local services.
Local neighbourhood hub	Larger in scale than the neighbourhood parade, with a wider range of retail and service outlets but with other public services clustered in the vicinity, typically including health, education and leisure services with a catchment beyond the immediate neighbourhood.
Radial parade	Cluster of small retail and service outlets in linear form along radial routes into urban centres, with high visibility to passing traffic. Typically serving as a secondary shopping area to a main town centre and attracting trade from a residential hinterland as well as passing trade.
Radial destination	As per Radial Parade but with a wider catchment based on distinctive market factors or visitor appeal creating a recognised destination (but not a town centre) for specialised goods/services or shopping experience.

Adapted from GenEcon, Parades of Shops - Towards an understanding of performance & prospects, DCLG, April 2012, p. 31.

How are parades of shops doing?

We have been told repeatedly by local people how important their local shops are to them. Yet, possibly because of the high number and wide variety of parades of shops, there has been little national research on their character, performance or prospects. Where research and data does exist, it tends to focus on town or district centres rather than local centres or parades of shops.

Therefore, the Government has commissioned new research to give an introductory picture of how local parades of shops are faring. This is initial research and is not meant to provide the definitive picture of parades of shops. Instead this aims to identify current trends and examine several case studies to understand how local parades connect to their local areas. We hope that this will generate further interest in examining the role of local parades of shops and their role in our lives and our communities.

Parades of shops are of course about more than retail: they provide vital community services and are key parts of local areas. However, retail remains a key part of their character and performance. The retail sector is an important part of both local and national growth, with 599,000 people employed in retail micro-businesses (less than 10 employees) across England, many of which will be in parades of shops¹. Therefore, this research examined national data from Verdict, a retail data company, on neighbourhood retailing². Verdict defines neighbourhood retailing as those locations catering almost exclusively for the local population.

The overall picture in comparison to other areas from Verdict's national data appears to be that parades of shops are experiencing relative stability through economic hard times.

¹ Source: *Business Population Estimates for UK and regions 2011-* ONS

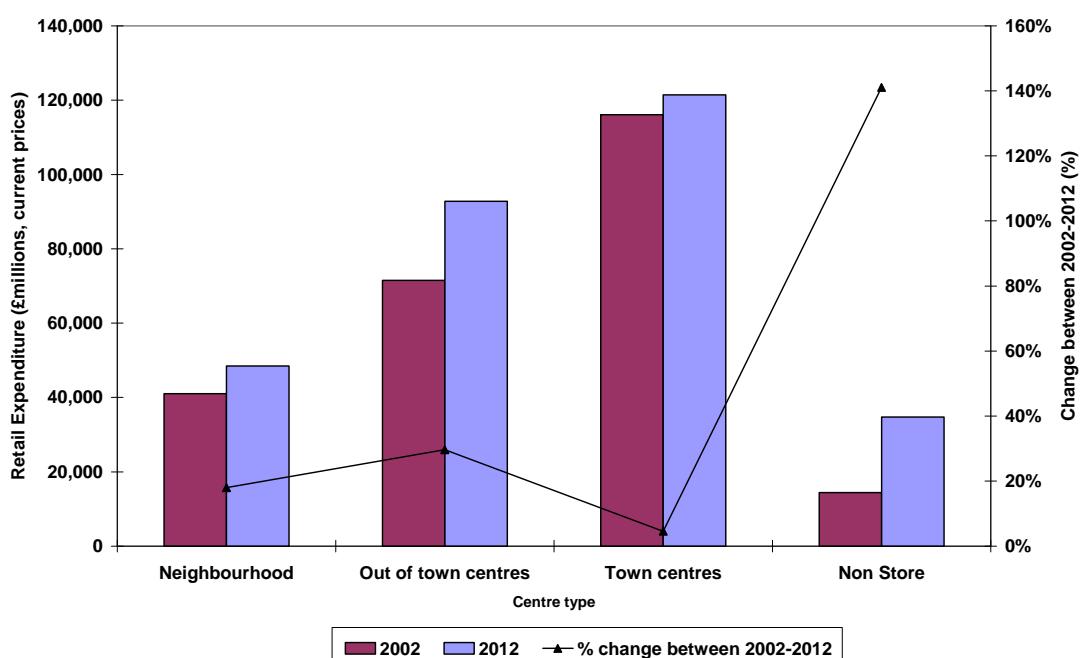
² See the GenEcon research report available on our website for a description of Verdict's methodology.

Current trends

It is hard to talk about the sector as a whole as parades of shops appear to have very diverse performance trajectories and are often driven by highly localised factors. However, there are some headlines that we can pull out which give an indication of how neighbourhood retailing is doing.

Increase in retail expenditure over and above inflation: The retail spend for Neighbourhood stores has increased from 2002 to 2012 by 18per cent in real terms. Over that same time, town centres have seen an increase of 4.6 per cent, out-of town 29.7 per cent and non-store 141per cent.

Chart 1: Comparison of Retail Expenditure between Neighbourhood retailing and other outlets (2002-2012)

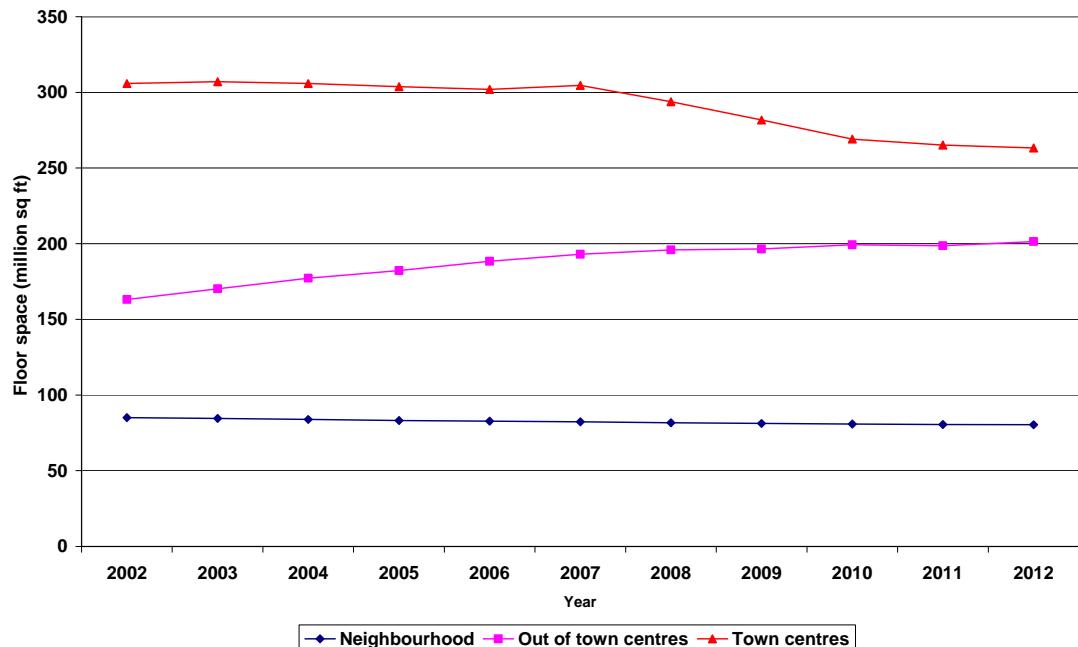


Source: Verdict

Steady share of retail market: Verdict research shows that the share of retail spend in neighbourhood locations has held steady at around 16 per cent. Given this and the strong local connection of parades of shops, it appears that neighbourhood retail might be more insulated from macro-economic shocks than other locations.

Fewer but slightly bigger stores: The number of stores in neighbourhood locations has fallen by about 16 per cent in the last 10 years. Over the same time, total retail floorspace in neighbourhood locations has reduced, but only slightly. This means that the average floorspace of neighbourhood shops has actually increased from 755 to 849 sq ft. This is thought to be partly as a result of the expansion of local format multiple convenience stores in parades.

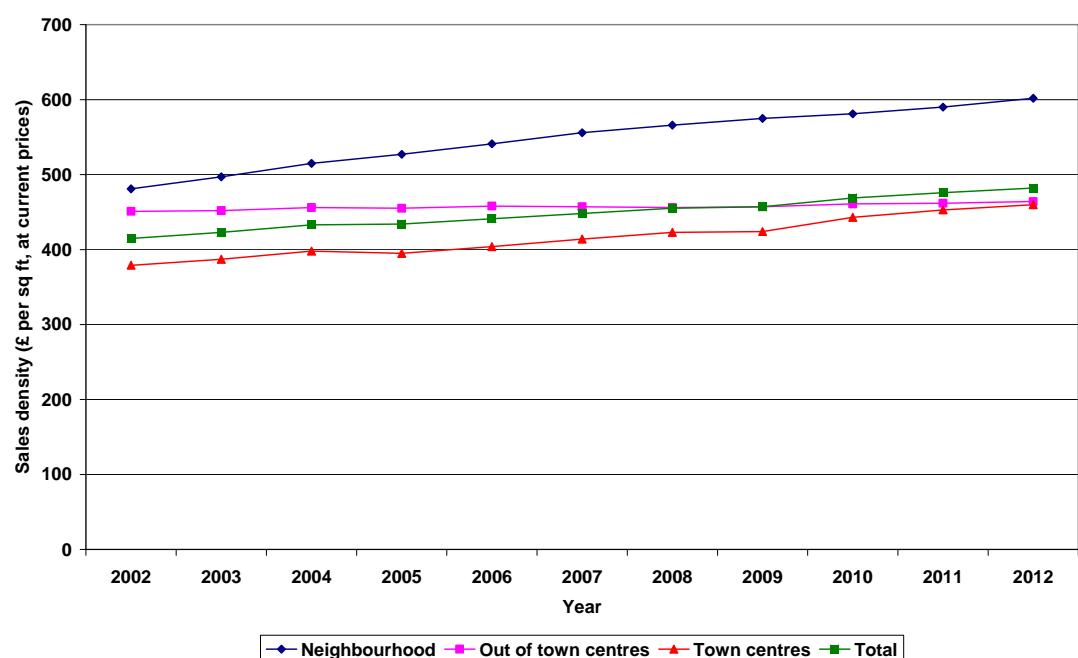
Chart 2: Retail Floorspace by location (2002-2012)



Source: Verdict

Very efficient use of space: Verdict research reports that sales densities in neighbourhood retail facilities have increased significantly in the last 10 years, by over 25 per cent. At over £600 per sq ft neighbourhood retail facilities would appear to be very efficient in their use of space, and markedly more so than other locations.

Chart 3: Sales density by location (£ per sq ft, at current prices)

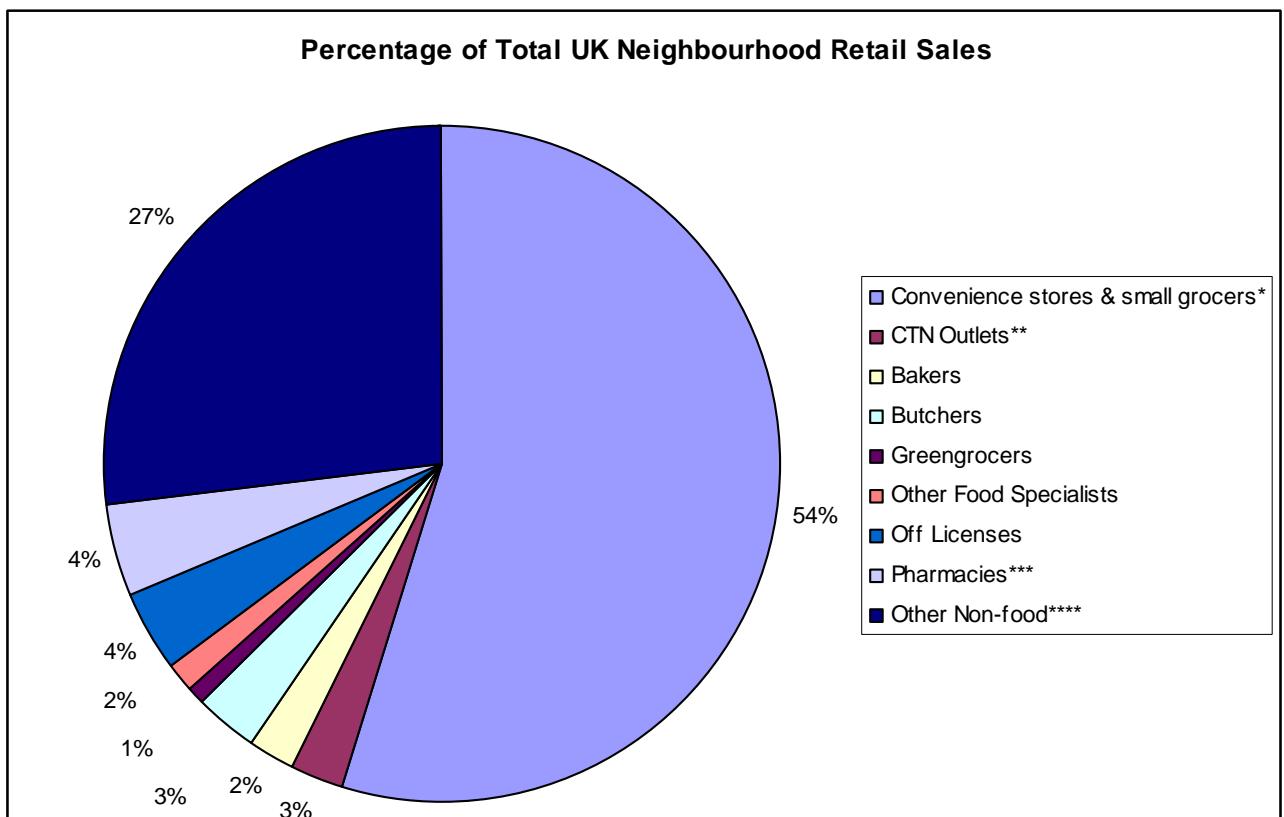


Source: Verdict

Rise of multiple stores: A key feature in parades over the last 10 years has been the increase of local format multiple convenience stores (e.g. Tesco Metro & Sainsbury's Local) in local parades of shops. GenEcon estimate that there are approximately 5,000 of these stores, and Verdict predicts that their numbers will increase. Other multiple retailers such as Morrisons and Waitrose have announced new local formats. This can provide opportunities as well as challenges, but it has changed the nature of parades and how they function. As raised in our response to the Portas Review on the High Street, how local areas evolve and adapt to changing circumstances will be key to their success.

Key role of convenience stores: Convenience stores have the highest number of stores in neighbourhood locations as shown in the graph below. Verdict estimate that almost 55 per cent of neighbourhood level retail expenditure is in convenience stores. Food-based outlets, including convenience stores are estimated to account for 70 per cent of expenditure.

Chart 4: Neighbourhood retailing store composition (2012)



Source: Verdict 'UK Neighbourhood Retailing 2012'

(*includes small supermarkets; **includes book specialists; ***includes health & beauty specialists, but excludes NHS prescription income; ****other non-food retailers include those selling DIY, clothing & footwear, furniture & floor coverings, electricals, second hand goods, photographic & optical goods)

Acting as a Neighbourhood Hub: This research and other academic research has identified the possibility for local parades of shops to become a ‘hub’ for communities, through a combination of retail, services and social provision, including health centres, community centres and libraries. It would appear that a critical mass of number and variety of shops is important for achieving this.

Increased service and social role of parades: Academic research has tended to focus on the food provision role of local shops rather than the social or service provision functions that they also now fulfil. The Association of Convenience Stores (2011)³ has identified three distinct roles for local shops as: social hubs, personalised service providers, and community ambassadors.

Prospects: Verdict forecast that neighbourhood shopping will be supported by an increased demand for top-up shopping and demographic changes to more single households. They forecast a rise in the numbers of multiples with new players entering the market, and that symbol affiliates will concentrate on keeping membership. Neighbourhood retailing as a whole is predicted to grow but it is expected that there will remain considerable pressure on independent shops.

On the ground

Whilst the national trends are useful to set a context, local parades of shops are very much influenced by local factors. Because of this, we felt it was important to get a deeper, more localised understanding of how parades are working in their local area. The research therefore included six case studies in three different local authority areas. Some of the key findings are as follows.

Local performance will be dictated by local factors: The case studies all showed how each local parade of shops was highly affected by local factors. This included the efforts of the shop owners and the influence of landlords, but also the wider local environment such as new development, changes in demographics and accessibility.

Low vacancy levels, but considerable churn: In the case studies only one reported any significant level of vacancies. However, all reported a degree of churn in some of the shops. No data is available on this at a national level so it is difficult to say if this fits into a wider picture, although it is in keeping with anecdotal evidence from our conversations with business owners and representative bodies.

Importance of service and social role: The case studies generated interesting examples of the service and social role filled by these parades of shops. This is in keeping with the academic literature at a national level. Face to face contact and personalised interaction appear to be an essential characteristic of neighbourhood provision.

³ Hastings, T (2011) ‘Re-asserting a sense of place: the community role of small shops’, on behalf of the Association of Convenience Stores

A direct influence on sense of place: Parades of shops have a strong link to their communities and form an integral element of local ‘place’. This is shown both in positive ways (acting as a community hub) and negative ways (general run down appearance) in the case studies.

Strong community links: The case studies show how direct and vital the links to customers and therefore the local communities are for many of these parades of shops. There also appears to be willingness from local communities to reciprocate where they feel they are receiving good service. Local people will make reference to ‘supporting’ local stores that they value not just ‘shopping’ at them.

Importance for less mobile members of the community: Academic literature has pointed to the role of local parades of shops for less mobile and vulnerable communities⁴. The case studies confirm that traders in these parades feel they have a key role to play for these people.

Room for flexibility: The case studies have shown how local parades of shops can offer flexibility to welcome businesses that might not be part of the traditional make-up of a parade. This can include specialist shops with a wider or online customer base who still want or need a physical shop. It can also mean room for community organisations.

Although the case studies are based on a small number of parades, we approached them in the hope of covering different situations, economies and areas. Whilst these cannot be deemed to be wholly representative of all parades of shops, they do show the emergence of the themes highlighted above. We believe these provide a useful insight into how parades of shops connect to their local areas and economies.

⁴ Clarke, I and Banga, S (2010) ‘The economic and social role of small stores: a review of UK evidence’, The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, Vol 20, No. 2

Strategies to consider to build successful parades

Throughout this work we saw many great examples of businesses, communities and local authorities working to invest in and support their local parades of shops. Yet as indicated by the research there are both some significant challenges facing local shops, and opportunities to invest and improve. Therefore we have drawn together a list of strategies that have been used by parades of shops, which might be of help to other local areas. These are based on the research and our conversations with business owners, local authorities, community groups, representative bodies and others.

Local communities themselves are best placed to work out what they need, and this document aims to support you to do that. There is no point in us taking a ‘one size fits all’ approach when parades have such local diversity. So we are not trying to tell landlords, business owners, councils, communities or others the things they should be doing for their particular parades.

The purpose of this section is to identify some strategies to consider that local areas can pick and choose as they see fit, that will match local circumstances.

In keeping with localist principles, Government policy needs to enable and facilitate local action. The Government has done this in a number of ways.

- The Localism Act has enabled local authorities to give local discretionary business rates discounts, and given greater community say through neighbourhood plans.
- The National Planning Policy Framework makes clear that the Local Plan, which should be developed with strong community input, is key for setting out the vision for individual areas.
- The Portas Review of the High Street and our response, including Portas pilots, the High Street Innovator Fund, and the Future High Street X-Fund, will support local communities to address the needs of their High Streets and town centres.
- Support for Small Business such as Business Link and the Mentorsme scheme.
- Giving local authorities greater freedoms in how they spend money through removing restrictions on funds from central government.

Shop owners, businesses, landlords, local residents and local authorities all have an interest in local parades performing well. We would encourage you to work together within your local communities and use these strategies as a starting point for working out what is needed in your area.

Throughout this section, we’ve included examples that we have come across where local businesses, communities and local authorities have taken the initiative and made a positive change to the local parade in their area. These examples are from across the country and from a variety of settings and are not necessarily related to the case study areas from the research.

Building a collective identity

Local parades of shops are a key part of local neighbourhoods. However, some seem to have a stronger collective identity than others, which seems to aid their reputation in the area and affects how the community engages with them. If this is an issue you have identified in your area, here are some strategies you may want to consider.

- Consider what your collective identity currently is. Some parades thrive for instance from being seen as a location for quality, innovation, mix (or combinations thereof). You could use tools like the BIS Healthy High Street check to start thinking about this (see toolkit).
- Engage with your community! Work out what the value of your local shops and services are to your customers. This is not just about products or price. It might be a focus on the quality of products, range of products, the level of service, or being able to meet customers' requests. One shop owner interviewed in the research talked about "good old fashioned service...if they want 2 eggs, they will get 2 eggs!".⁵
- Build your identity on positive examples from your local parade of shops. Find out what it is that customers like about the area and celebrate these successes. This can build a buzz and sense of pride about the area. Totally Locally have done this with great success in various locations in Yorkshire, Scotland and beyond (see box).

Encouraging local shopping

Totally Locally – Currently in thirteen towns nationwide

Totally Locally is a social enterprise that provides a free marketing and branding campaign to towns nationwide. The campaign encourages consumers to spend a proportion of their income in local shops with locally-sourced products and on local services. Totally Locally seeks to change the mind-set of shoppers, highlighting the link between supporting local businesses and the wider economic well-being of their town.

Participating areas take part in co-ordinated events and initiatives designed to stimulate, retain and grow interest in local shopping. These include "Fiver Fests", during which local retailers provide special £5 offers; "Totally Locally Trails"; "Hidden Gems", where shoppers profile their favourite retailer online; and "Totally Locally offers", an email subscription service to market the offers available in local shops.

Importantly, Totally Locally is a free and volunteer-led campaign. Towns report increased community engagement as businesses, retail groups and diverse individuals act together on the focus that Totally Locally provides. As an example, in Brighouse, West Yorkshire a three-times-a-year market has been set up. The Brighouse Totally Locally Market includes stalls from a number of shops in the town alongside other local businesses, and was recently awarded the National Market Award for Best Small Specialty Market in the UK.

⁵ GenEcon, *Parades of Shops - Towards an understanding of performance & prospects*, DCLG, April 2012, p. 19

- Consider who or what is the ‘anchor’ of your parade – the shop that provides stability and draws people to the parade. This can often be a convenience store but could be a greengrocers or a community organisation. Take this into account when thinking about what you would like the identity of your parade to be.
- Think about what services people use in your local parades of shops, not just what people buy. The research showed how local parades of shops are taking on an increasing service function to local communities. How does this affect the collective identity of your local parade?
- Consider how shops within the parade complement each other, and what your overall ‘offer’ to the local community is. For example pharmacies can be supported by a nearby clinic. Are there a number of food stores or just one?
- Local shops are not just there to service local communities, they are very much part of the community. Shops that really engage with local customers and the community will be seen and treated differently. Consider how you can build up relationships with local organisations in the community. This appears to be a key part of parades of shops that act as neighbourhood hubs.
- Some areas have found it useful to market themselves collectively in local press and through websites, such as Pitshanger Lane in Ealing, who have a website, and Chatsworth Road Traders and Residents Association who have an active facebook page and twitter account. This not only reduces marketing costs but develops the identity of your area and provides local people a new way to engage with their local shops.

Community use in a parade

LS14, Leeds

LS14 Trust is a community based organisation steered by a board of seven Trustees, the majority of whom live in the Seacroft area of Leeds. The Trust employs one local resident as a membership development officer and a former resident in the role of Development Manager. The Trust launched its community membership scheme at the start of January 2011 and now has 337 local members who are finding various ways of getting involved in local activity.

The Trust operates from what was a disused housing office on a neighbourhood parade of shops. Much of the work needed to renovate the space was carried out by local tradesmen at no cost. It offers free internet access and use of computers to residents, provides free space for small meetings and hosts group activities such as a family history research group, a job club and Seacroft-Urban-Art.

The physical presence of LS14 on the parade has influenced how the community and the businesses on the parade interact with each other, and how the parade is seen and used. In 2012, for the first time in the history of the parade, all the tenants are working together to create a street party for the Queens Jubilee.

Flexibility and responsiveness

There is scope for a great degree of flexibility and entrepreneurship in parades as shown in the research. Local parades of shops offer the space for ‘thinking outside the box’ and using space innovatively, for example meanwhile use and specialist shops. Parades of shops can also benefit from their close relationships with their local community. Successful parades of shops know their markets well and respond to changing local need.

- The research highlighted the close relationship that local shops have with their local communities. This provides local shops and businesses (independents and chains) with great opportunities to get to know customers and what they want from your shop – exploit these chances!

Community Events

Pitshanger Lane, Ealing, West London

The Pitshanger Lane area is a community of around 3,000 households in the London Borough of Ealing. It has a strong and very active Community Association (the PCA) which works closely with local traders and other local partners, such as the council and the police. Originally instigated by Pitshanger Traders but now run by the PCA, an annual “light up the lane” event has been held in the run-up to Christmas, with most shops open during the event, and traffic in the road diverted to allow stalls and entertainment to take up the space. Many thousands of tree lights are lit every evening during the Christmas period, to cheer up the local area and encourage people to use local facilities. In addition, Party in the Park takes place each summer in a local green space, with a variety of events designed to raise money for PCA projects and other local causes.

The involvement of the local traders with these significant community events emphasises their integration with the local community and further builds customer loyalty.

- Go the extra mile on service. Local parades of shops sometimes have a great reputation for this, and it results in loyal and happy customers. Local shops can show more flexibility in sourcing products they usually don’t stock for their customers.
- Local parades of shops are often able to adapt quicker to changes in local community demographics and customer demands, for example if a new office or new student accommodation is built in the area. Think about what changes there have been in your local area and whether your parade has adapted to meet this. This may mean changing use or consolidation. Local development orders can help you change use – see the toolkit for more information on how to use these.
- Many businesses we have seen make innovative use of social media and websites, despite their small size. In this way they offer customers another way to engage and interact with their local shops.

- Local parades of shops offer good opportunities for entrepreneurs and new businesses, such as Jellyjus, a sweet and cake shop on the Isle of Sheppey (see box). Several tools are available to support new and growing businesses, including StartUp Britain and Business Link (see toolkit).
- Parades of shops can be home to more than just “typical” shops. There may be opportunities for other businesses to locate in parades that might normally be expected to be elsewhere, but are drawn to local parades for the convenience, the sense of a business community and attractive rents, such as the television repair shop discussed in the research case studies.
- Local parades are great places to try interesting and innovative use of empty shops, such as the example of Bristol below. There are many organisations who can help you do this such as Meanwhile Space and there is even an empty shop workbook that will walk you through the entire process (see toolkit). You can also consider community right to bid if it is a community asset (see toolkit).

Entrepreneurship

Jellyjus, Isle of Sheppey, Kent

Jellyjus was set up in 2009 as a home-based business. Since then, owner Julie realised that she needed more space and was keen to set up a shop near to where she lives so that she could have more face-to-face contact with customers and increase the opportunities to display her product range. She became aware of an opportunity to lease a former doctor's surgery (where she'd previously worked) and has now established her sweet shop in a local parade in Halfway Houses on the Isle of Sheppey. Julie has a varied client base, with a significant local client base but regular custom from further afield for her sweet-cakes. She has also set up a website for her business and has recently established a loyalty card.

Creative use of a vacant local authority owned property

Bristol City Council owns several parades of shops in the city. One of their properties had fallen into significant disrepair following a number of alterations by a tenant who subsequently went bankrupt. After failing to find a tenant on the open market due to the condition of the building, a Council Arts Officer proposed that the property was let to local artists as part of the Council's capacity scheme to promote the Arts across Bristol. An artist led project called ArtSpace LifeSpace agreed to take on the property and carry out the necessary renovation works in return for a 3 year lease and peppercorn rent.

The building is now used by a group of experienced artists with workshops dedicated for wood, metal, painting and fabric, as well as office spaces for meeting, design and research. As a result of this partnership, the Council has a repaired and well used property and are actively supporting community arts; the artists have new premises on a secure lease; and the parade as a whole has been given a new lease of life.

Planning together for the future

The shops in local parades, whilst still individual businesses, are very much affected by the prospects of the parade as a whole. Working together on common issues, and building good working relationships is therefore very important. It is also key to work together to plan for the future of the parade as a whole.

- Think about how you can work together through informal networks, builds relationships and referrals. These relationships can be vital in hard times as shown by some great cooperation in Croydon (see box).
- You can also investigate formal networks to build relationships with other businesses in your local area. Some larger areas might have a Business Improvement District (BID) who you can talk to and work with. Local traders associations and chambers of commerce are also very important and can be great ways to produce collective action and good working relationships (see toolkit).
- Developing good working relationships with other local business owners, the local authority and the local community can mean you can respond quickly to opportunities and initiatives. For example the Portas Pilots scheme (see toolkit) requires partnerships to bid for ways to improve their local high street, town centre or parade of shops.
- Working collectively can make it easier to get your voice heard and represent the issues of your local area. Business owners and local community groups can investigate and build relationships with local council officers, councillors and your local MP.

Businesses working together to get through hard times

Butchers, Bakers and Greengrocers in Addiscombe, Croydon, South London

In spring 2011, a greengrocer's shop suffered severe damage following an accidental fire. A neighbouring butcher's had a separate shop front which they had been operating as a delicatessen but had recently arranged to sell to a local baker's firm. The baker agreed to wait until the greengrocer's had been repaired, enabling the butcher to rent the premises to the greengrocer in the meantime. The butcher was concerned to ensure that the local offer to customers continued to include the products offered by the greengrocer, as well as to support another local business; all of the traders involved are well aware of the strength of the collective offer to shoppers that a collection of businesses can bring. The greengrocer's used the premises for around ten months while their own shop was repaired, with the baker refitting the new shop as soon as possible afterwards.

- Consider how friendly competition can be useful to the parade. This can give customers more choice through complementary services/products but still allow for working together. We saw examples of two florists in the same street working together to source extra stock when required – even referring to each other as ‘the stock cupboard’!
- Neighbourhood planning offers a great opportunity to make sure that local shopping provision is considered as part of planning for the area as a whole. There is a formal process for this (see toolkit) or you can start your own informal community process like the Chatsworth Road Traders and Residents Association in Hackney (see box) who have used the process to really engage their local community, and make sure the local shops act and feel like a key part of the community.
- Parking availability is also a key issue in terms of planning for your future. Discussions between local authorities and business owners are essential to ensure that parking policies and provision takes into account, where possible, the needs of and impact upon local business. The Department for Transport has produced a good practice guide on parking policy and enforcement for local authorities, which may be helpful in these discussions (see toolkit).
- Is crime and security a big issue in your area? Are there ways you can work together to find solutions? Building relationships with your local police is important. There may also be Community Safety Partnerships and/or Crime Reduction Partnerships working in your area that you can get involved with or may be able to offer support or advice. There are also guides available to help retailers reduce crime available from the Association of Business Crime Partnerships (see toolkit).

Planning for the future

Chatsworth Road Traders and Residents Association (CRTRA), Clapton, Hackney, East London

CRTRA is very much an association for residents and local traders along Chatsworth Road, who all want to improve the local area.

As well as reviving the Chatsworth Road market, the CRTRA has worked very hard in the local area to develop their own neighbourhood plan for the entire area, of which the shops are a key part. This has not been done as part of the Neighbourhood Plan Front Runner process, but has been something that they have been doing with the community in order to identify what the entire community would like to see happen with the area. The plan is not yet finished, but has been a key way to engage both business owners and local residents in thinking about what they want their area to be and to really highlight the role of the local shops.

- The condition of the public realm is another key issue for parades of shops in terms of planning for the future, and can benefit from joint working. For example, in the case studies, local businesses on an urban parade with no formal traders' association got together to work with the local authority on re-positioning a bus stop to better serve the needs of the parade. There may be funds available for some of this work, and local authorities can work with businesses and the local community to make this happen. This can be a lot of work but can provide real tangible benefits which the community can see and appreciate, as in the case of West Earlham in Norfolk (see box).

Getting funds to improve your area

Nigel Dowdney & the West Earlham Traders Association (WETA), West Earlham, Norwich

West Earlham is an estate 4.5 miles outside of Norwich city centre. The local parades of shops had seen some trouble with gangs of kids and shoplifting. The local traders wanted to address this issue and improve the local area. Local business owner Nigel Dowdney is the chair and founder of WETA, who have a long history of working with the community through events such as Christmas fairs and actively trying to improve the area. Over several years, Nigel and WETA have worked with the council to raise £35,000 for 24 hour monitored CCTV, £48,000 for electronic awnings and £32,000 for new shop fronts and shutters. This has involved a lot of work, but has visibly improved the area and made the community feel proud of their local parade and what it has achieved.

Useful tools

There are many tools that can help local parades of shops. We've outlined some that you may find useful and set out how each tool can be used or facilitated by business owners, local authorities and community groups.

We've divided these into:

- planning and place tools;
- business support tools;
- partnership and innovative ways of working tools; and
- general tools.

As we have seen from across the country, the success of local parades of shops is often achieved through the energy, hard work and the dedication of local people. We would encourage you to use the strategies to identify what your area needs and these tools to help you achieve that. We want to be able to facilitate and support your efforts and hope that these tools will help you to proactively support your local shops.

If you are looking at how to support your local parades of shops as part of a wider improvement programme, you may be interested to look at our regeneration toolkit *Regeneration to enable growth: A toolkit supporting community-led regeneration*. You can download a copy here: www.communities.gov.uk/publications/regeneration/communityledregenerationtoolkit

Planning and place tools

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Neighbourhood plans	The Localism Act, has given communities the power to develop neighbourhood plans or neighbourhood development orders. They are developed either by parish councils or neighbourhood forums rather than the local authority. Over 230 front runners are leading the way in undertaking neighbourhood plans.	Neighbourhood planning gives communities greater influence over how their areas develop. Local shops can be a key issue covered by a neighbourhood plan, and retail is featuring in several 'front runners'. Neighbourhood planning should contribute to the delivery of sustainable economic growth.	Find out if there is interest in your local area, and talk to your local authority, customers and local community groups about this. If it is already happening get involved with the local parish council or neighbourhood forum.	Raise the issue with local neighbourhoods. Discuss the local plan with interested groups and explain how it works with neighbourhood plans. Under the Localism Act Local Authorities have a duty to support communities undertaking neighbourhood planning.	Find out if there is interest in your local area, and talk to your local authority and local community groups about this. If it is already happening get involved with the local parish council or neighbourhood forum.	More information is available at: www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/neighbourhoodplanningvanguards
Planning Aid	Free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees.	The Planning Aid Advice Line offers fifteen minutes of free and objective planning advice to all callers from qualified Planning Advisors.	Call the advice line number for free planning advice.	Make sure communities and businesses in your areas are aware of the service.	Call the advice line number for free planning advice.	www.rtpi.org.uk/planningaid Advice line: 0330 123 9244 Email: advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Meanwhile use	Meanwhile Use is the temporary use of empty properties, through special meanwhile leases. These were developed in response to DCLG's 2009 report <i>Looking After our Town Centres</i> .	Meanwhile use can stop areas looking shut and rundown and instead make a place feel vibrant and dynamic. They can provide a way for entrepreneurs to test new business ideas for a short time. They can also be used by community groups.	Landlords who have vacant properties can contact organisations such as Meanwhile Space to express interest in having a Meanwhile tenant.	Local Authorities can invite meanwhile use of their own vacant properties, can make landlords aware of the possibilities of meanwhile use when shops become vacant, and support potential tenants.	Refer local people who might be interested in meanwhile use to the guides on the left. Get in touch directly with landlords or with organisations like Meanwhile Space	www.meanwhilespace.com Empty Shops Workbook: www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/manuals/shop-manual The benefits of Meanwhile Use: www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/manuals/Benefits_StakeholdersMeanwhile_Future.pdf
Empty Shops Workbook	Produced by the Empty Shops Network and the Meanwhile Project, this is a look at the when why and how of empty shops, with practical advice and suggested websites for further support.	This provides a step by step guide for people who are interested in re-using an empty shop but don't know how to go about it.	Give this to landlords who have empty properties who might be interested in finding an alternative use.	Promote this with landlords, business and community groups in your area. Support them to go through the steps.	Promote this with groups who may be looking for space such as entrepreneurs, artists and community groups.	www.meanwhile.org.uk/useful-info/manuals/shop-manual

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Use Classes & Local Development Orders	<p>Use Classes specify what uses a building can be used for without the need for a planning application. There is a list of use classes, and permitted changes of use available here:</p> <p>http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/permission/commonprojects/changeofuse/</p> <p>Currently, Local Authorities can relax these through a LDO or tighten them through an Article 4 direction. These both require consultation. LDOs remove the requirement to apply for planning permission for specified changes on a site-by-site basis.</p>	<p>An LDO could be used to change use classes of a vacant premises to something more suited to the area as it is now (e.g. changing a retail shop into a café).</p> <p>This can improve the overall image of an area, and potentially attract further investment.</p> <p>This allows areas to respond more flexibly to changing needs.</p>	<p>Talk to your council. Explain why you want a particular LDO and what benefits it would bring.</p>	<p>Local Authorities have the power to set LDOs, or issue Article 4 directions, though need to consult with local communities.</p>	<p>Talk to your council. Explain why you want a particular LDO and what benefits it would bring.</p>	<p>From your local council or www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagId=114302</p> <p>The Government undertook a wider review of how change of use is handled in the planning system and published an issues paper last year.</p> <p>We are currently considering views and suggestions put forward and any firm proposals will be the subject of a public consultation in the future.</p>

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	The CIL enables local authorities (in England and Wales) to choose to charge a levy on new development in their area. Councils are then required to allocate a meaningful share of levy revenues raised in each area back to that neighbourhood.	The funds received can be used to support development by funding infrastructure to support the development and growth of their area.		CIL gives councils flexibility and freedom to set their own priorities for what the additional funding should be spent on to support growth and benefit the local community		www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningsystem/communityinfrastructurelevy/
Community Right to Bid	The right to nominate a community asset, which enhances the communities social well being and interests, as an asset of community value and, if it comes up for disposal on the open market, give communities time to prepare a bid to buy the asset.	This could help local communities save local facilities in their parades and neighbourhoods that are threatened with closure – perhaps the local shop, pub or library – in order to promote community benefit.	Work out how your business can work with and support local community bids help them develop their bid. If your building is listed, understand the requirements and exemptions, such as where the business will continue.	Help community groups to engage with this process and administer the assets of community value list.	Work together to identify assets important to your social well-being; with the council to get them on the community asset list; and with businesses and groups to identify funding and develop a strong bid.	www.locality.org.uk/movement/policy/community-rights/community-bid/

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
The Code for Leasing Business Premises 2007	The Code captures fair and open leasing terms used by many large landlords, provides guidance and model heads of terms to landlords and gives advice to tenants to help them negotiate appropriate leasing terms.	Allows business tenants to have a better idea of what they should expect and avoid bad deals; for landlords it gives a better indication of industry standards and expectations.	See the website. There is a useful occupier guide to support tenants in lease negotiations: www.leasingbusinesspremises.co.uk/occupier-guide	See the website. The code is a useful support to councils acting as landlords.	See the website. The code can be useful guidance for voluntary organisations etc interested in leasing premises.	Please see the website www.leasingbusinesspremises.co.uk Look out for events over summer 2012
Operational guidance to local authorities: parking policy and enforcement	Good practice guidance to English Local Authorities on how they should be setting their parking policies, and if appropriate, enforcing those policies.	If parking is an issue for your parade, this can be a tool for understanding how local authorities may be able to review local parking policies.	See how local authorities need to plan and enforce their parking policies and think how your parking needs may fit into this.	Advises English enforcement authorities of the legislative changes affecting parking policies and enforcement and of the statutory and recommended procedures they must follow.	See how local authorities need to plan and enforce their parking policies and think how your parking needs may fit into this.	assets.dft.gov.uk/publications/tma-part-6-cpe-guidance/parkingenforcement.pdf

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Big Tree Plant	This is a grant scheme to encourage people and communities to plant more trees in England's towns, cities and neighbourhoods.	Helps to green urban and residential areas, particularly focused on deprived areas lacking greenery. This can help to address health inequalities and spur investment.	Talk to people in your local area, and other businesses about this. If interested, get together and fill in the application form.	Highlight this to local communities. Support them to make applications.	Talk to people in your local area, and other businesses about this. If interested, get together and fill in the application form.	See www.defra.gov.uk/bigtreeplant/ for more information and the application form

Business support tools

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Business Rates: (i) Small Business rate relief, (ii) Discretionary discounts and (iii) local retention	(i) provides relief – the rate of which has been temporarily been doubled – to eligible small businesses. (ii) The Localism Act enables councils to give discretionary discount to business on the rates paid. (iii) The Government has published proposals which will enable councils to retain business rates locally rather than remitting them to central government.	(i) Small Business Rate Relief reduces the bills of eligible ratepayers. (ii) The power to give discretionary discounts enables councils to respond to changing local circumstances. (iii) Local retention of business rates gives councils a greater stake in wanting local business to be successful.	Investigate if you qualify for small business rate relief and apply to your local authority if you do. Talk to your local authority about the possibility of using discounts and explain why and for how long.	Consider how you can use discretionary discounts to support local businesses, and publicise small business rate relief to local businesses.		Information on business rates: www.businesslink.gov.uk/ bdotg/action/layer?topicId =1073859221

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Business Link	Business Link is government's online resource for businesses. It has guidance on regulations, a number of useful online tools, calculators, and best practice case studies and provides access to funding options, as well as wider support.	Business Link contains essential information, support and services for both new and established businesses. It is all freely available online at www.businesslink.gov.uk	Go online! Sections of the website are clearly marked and there is also a search function if you are looking for something in particular – e.g. PAYE	Let businesses in your area know about this resource.		www.businesslink.gov.uk
StartUp Britain	StartUp Britain is a national campaign by entrepreneurs for entrepreneurs, to celebrate, inspire and accelerate enterprise in the UK. It is supported by the Government but funded by private sponsors.	The campaign highlights the variety of resources available to those who are planning to, starting or growing a new business. It also acts as a voice for small business to Government.	Have a look at the website. There are a number of tools, events and resources which may help you plan, start or grow your business.	Let businesses in your area know about this resource.	Highlight this to people in your community who are thinking of starting a business or people who have just opened.	www.startupbritain.org

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Mentoring (Mentorsme & Get Mentoring)	<p>Mentorsme is the national web portal that provides a single point of access to mentoring services. Mentors are from quality-assured business mentoring organisations from across the UK.</p> <p>Get Mentoring aims to recruit and train thousands of business mentors in the UK from the small, medium and micro business community, and to build the evidence base for and share ideas on effective mentoring. Mentors will be able to be accessed through the Mentorsme website.</p>	<p>Mentoring can be a valuable source of support, advice and guidance for small businesses, and a great way for more established businesses to help improve other businesses in the area.</p> <p>This can be done informally or formally, and on a specific or general basis, depending on the needs of the business being mentored.</p>	<p>If you are interested in having a mentor, access the Mentorsme website, which allows you to search according to the life stage and location of your business.</p> <p>If you think you could be a mentor, look up the Get Mentoring website.</p> <p>You can also explore informal opportunities for mentoring in your local area.</p>	<p>Let businesses in your area know about these resources, and the benefits of mentoring.</p>	<p>If you think you could be a mentor, look up the Get Mentoring website.</p> <p>You can also explore informal opportunities for mentoring in your local area.</p>	www.mentorsme.co.uk www.getmentoring.org

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Government rural broadband delivery programme	The £530m national rural broadband programme will help bring standard broadband to all and superfast broadband to 90 per cent of premises by 2015. Allocations from the £530m were made to County Project areas in August 2011.	Aims to ensure that businesses and homes across the UK can access a decent level of connectivity, even in remote areas. Broadband helps residents and businesses access public services. It also provides a way to market yourself, and work together.	Local Enterprise Partnerships could partner with the local authorities that have submitted local broadband plans and local communities to drive demand.	County and Unitary Councils that have submitted Local Broadband Plans should engage with their communities to drive demand.	Communities should drive the process, work with local authorities and drive demand in their local area.	www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/telecommunications_and_online/7781.aspx
Rural Community Broadband Fund (RCBF)	The £20m Fund complements the national investment programme. Jointly funded by Defra and Broadband Delivery UK, it provides grants to communities to establish superfast broadband in the final 10% hard-to-reach areas which would not otherwise receive superfast broadband.	As above	Private Businesses (non-Communications Providers), Social enterprises, Community Interest Companies and Community trusts are amongst those that can apply for grant under the RCBF in eligible 10% areas.	Local Authorities – including Parish and District Councils – can apply for grant on behalf of their communities under the RCBF in eligible 10% hard to reach areas, as identified in Local Broadband Plans.	Communities can apply for grant under the RCBF in eligible 10% areas. Communities interested in applying should work their council to see if they fall within an eligible hard to reach area.	rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/funding-sources/rural-community-broadband-fund

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
National Skills Academy for Retail	This is a network of retail skills shops delivering training and business support across the UK via a web portal. Retail skills shops are one-stop walk-in centres offering free advice and suggesting opportunities for those interested in the retail sector.	The scheme can help increase skills and capacity in the retail sector, attract talent and allow those with interests to get a better idea of what challenges and opportunities there are to help them decide if retail is the field for them.	Retailers of any size can use various tools, including assessing numeracy and literacy of staff and attend courses to help with business growth.	Local Authorities could help to find locations for skills shops.	Potential employees can learn skills, get qualifications and make a more accurate self-assessment on whether this is the right career choice for them.	www.nsaforretail.com/NSAR
National Skills Academy for Food & Drink	This is a single source of training for the food and drink sector through a series of sector specific networks (e.g. bakery & confectionery, meat & poultry). All training is delivered by approved food and drink training specialists.	The right training can increase production, improve productivity and help you retain staff.	Retailers of any size can use various tools, and attend courses to help with business growth.	Local authorities can publicise this to both businesses and training providers.	Potential employees can learn skills, get qualifications and support business growth.	www.foodanddrink.nsacemy.co.uk/how-we-can-help-you

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
National Skills Academy for Hospitality	Hosted by People 1 st , they are working to transform skills in the sector, particularly in the areas of management and leadership, customer service and craft/technical skills.	The right training can increase production, improve productivity and help you retain staff.	Retailers of any size can use various tools, and attend courses to help with business growth.	Local authorities can publicise this to both businesses and training providers.	Potential employees can learn skills, get qualifications and support business growth.	www.people1st.co.uk/national-skills-academy-for-hospitality

Partnership and innovative ways of working tools

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Existing Traders Associations, local chambers of Commerce & other community organisations	There may be many existing partnerships in your local area such as Traders Associations, local Chambers of Commerce and Community Organisations.	These are existing networks you can tap into and can be used as a basis for joint working and building working relationships.	Consider creating associations where they don't exist and forging any links you might want to make to existing organisations.	Highlight existing schemes where they are in place. Support traders and communities in setting up new organisations if requested.	Consider creating community organisations where they don't exist and forging any links you might want to make to existing organisations.	Ask in your local area! Your council may well know of local groups too. For Chambers of Commerce contact the British Chambers of Commerce: www.britishchambers.org.uk
Portas pilots	Local areas have been invited to form Town Teams to implement the findings from the Portas Review on their local high street. The deadline for the second round of funding is 30 June 2012.	Successful bids will receive a share of £1 million to develop their ideas for their area.	Gauge interest in your local area and consider who you would want to be on your town team. Engage customers and local community.	Bids need the support of local authorities, though they do not necessarily need to be led by them. Work with local businesses and communities to gauge interest.	If there is interest in your area, investigate ways to contribute to your town team, engage with any proposals and support the bid.	More information and the prospectus and application form are available at: www.communities.gov.uk/regeneration/economicgrowth/townteams/

General tools

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
BIS 'Healthy High Street' guide	A Health Check you can perform on your High Street to see how it is doing, with next steps identified to help people improve their High Streets and Town Centres.	Whilst designed for Town Centres, there are still some strategies in there that might be useful for parades of shops. The checklist may be a good way to start thinking about your area.	Get together with others and go through the checklist. Explore what issues have come up for your parade and think what you might want to do to redress these.	Publicise this guide with local parades and support those areas that want to undertake the checklist.	Get together with others and go through the checklist. Explore what issues have come up for your parade and think what you might want to do to redress these.	www.bis.gov.uk/assets/bis/core/business-sectors/docs/h/10-1224-healthy-high-street
ATCM – '100 ways to help the High Street'	The Association of Town Centre Management (ATCM) published an online guide called <i>100 ways to help the High Street</i> in 2010. ATCM hope to refresh this document later this year.	Whilst designed for Town Centres, there are some strategies in there that might be useful for parades of shops.	Get together with others and go through the suggestions. Discuss what is relevant for your area and how you might implement these.	Publicise this guide with local parades, particularly after it has been updated, and support those areas that want to use it.	Get together with others and go through the suggestions. Discuss what is relevant for your area and how you might implement these.	http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagId=20125065

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
Green Deal (energy efficient businesses)	The Green Deal eliminates the need to pay upfront for energy efficiency measures and instead provides a mechanism that should allow for the cost of the measures to be covered by savings on the electricity bill.	Will reduce energy consumption for businesses, without the need for an upfront cost. Landlords or tenants can take out a Green Deal.	Find a Green Deal Assessor and ask for an assessment.	Encourage use of this amongst local parades.	Demonstrate to your local businesses why this would make a difference for you. Give businesses your support to do this process.	More information for businesses can be found here: www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/tackling/green_deal/green_deal.aspx
Barrier busting & Red Tape Challenge	This is a barrier busting portal to help communities overcome problems which are the result of legislation, national policy or the way central government work and which get in the way of delivering local priorities and promoting local action. The Red Tape Challenge aims to do a similar process by looking systematically at particular sectors.	Removal of central government barriers and bureaucratic log jams that are getting in the way of improving local area, if the issue is a result of legislation or the way central government works.	Talk to your neighbours, community groups and your local authority to try and resolve the issue first. If that does not work, use the barrier busting or red tape challenge websites to tell us what the barrier is and what you want to achieve.	Local authorities can use the barrier busting and red tape challenge websites to tell us about any central government barriers or unnecessary bureaucracy, in exactly the same way as individuals and community groups.	Talk to your neighbours, community groups and your local authority to try and resolve the issue first. If that does not work, use the barrier busting or red tape challenge websites to tell us what the barrier is and what you want to achieve.	http://barrierbusting.communities.gov.uk www.redtaapechallenge.ca/binetoffice.gov.uk

Tool	What is it?	How it can help	How to use/facilitate it			More info
			Businesses	Local Authorities	Community	
ABCP Crime good practice guides for retailers	<p>A series of guides provided by the Association of Business Crime Partnerships on how to deal with a variety of crime.</p> <p>These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing Customer Theft • Preventing Robbery • Preventing Burglary • Making Arrests • Preventing Violence Against Staff 	<p>These guides provide clear and practical advice to retailers and their staff. They can also be used to complement other training and advice provided locally.</p>	<p>Download the guides from the website. Discuss with other businesses what would be appropriate for your area. Find out if you have a Business Crime Partnership in your area and how it could help.</p>	<p>Publicise these guides with local businesses in your area.</p>		<p>The guides can be downloaded free from: www.businesscrime.org.uk/retailers_good_practice_guides.htm</p>