Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Hope on the High Street

October 2026

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Government of the United Kingdom

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Hope on the High Street

Presented to Parliament

by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
by Command of His Majesty

October 2026

CP 1704



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Secretary of State Foreword

Saturday mornings were cold and wet more often than not. I'd follow my mam and nana down the brew to our local market, duffle coat buttoned, my warm gloves dangling from my sleeves on a string, the cobbles slick underfoot and the smell of hops from the brewery in my nostrils. My nana would have her trolley on wheels and we'd have our own rhythm, the same every week for our essentials: weigh and save broken biscuits, the butcher's, the bakery, and if I was lucky, the sweet shop as reward for helping to carry the bags back home up the steep hill. It was never just a chore. It was part of our lives, and it's where I learned what it meant to belong somewhere. Our place. Our town.

I think of those Saturdays whenever I walk down a high street now. Today's high streets have changed as our habits have but remain vital parts of our towns and cities. Our high streets are where we catch up with friends over a coffee and then bump into someone on the way home. It's those small moments of joy that can give you real hope. But at the same time, when you see boarded up shops and rogue businesses, it's hard not to be reminded of what once was. While the high streets of the past aren't coming back, we have a chance to reimagine a better future for them.

Our plan for hope on the high street is about putting them back under local control; properly managed by local leaders, who can drive the change their community wants to see. Every town and city centre is its own unique ecosystem shaped by where it is and who it's for. It's not going to work for us to try and fix everything from Westminster. Instead, we are backing councils, Mayors and communities with new powers and investment. A successful high street also depends on the people willing to invest their time, talent and ambition in it. That is why we must give independent traders and young entrepreneurs a real chance to thrive, combining affordable premises, accessible finance, practical mentoring and digital support with decisive action on the costs of doing business.

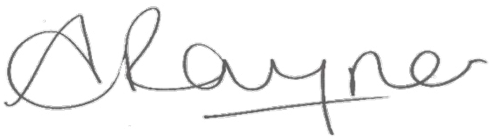
This strategy has something for every part of the country. £210 million to transform derelict buildings into the new anchors of our high streets and create resilient community-owned businesses and institutions. Further business rates support for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses. A new 'High Streets First' principle to move government buildings into town centres. Powers to stop the spread of vape and gambling shops, a crackdown on organised crime, and properly embedded neighbourhood policing. Reforms to licensing that will support al fresco dining, café culture, and make high streets vibrant after the shops have closed. Exploring the potential of more homes on the high street. Ending rough sleeping.

We believe that the job of this government is to support local leaders to build the high street their community wants. There are six pillars that must guide this partnership, and together they show what a successful high street looks like:

- Active leadership and management (reasons to have confidence)
- Strong businesses, anchors and amenities (reasons to visit)
- Vibrant culture, leisure and entertainment (reasons to get together)
- Easy access and connectivity (reasons to explore)
- Safe, clean and welcoming (reasons to return)
- A place to call home (reasons to move in).

The state of our town and city centres says so much about us, who we are as a country, and whether we are on the right path. We need to get them booming again, so that people can see that our best days are ahead of us. I know that the causes of what's gone wrong aren't straightforward, and the solutions won't be either. But I have every faith that the future can be so much brighter than anything before us, and together, we can bring back hope again.





The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP,

Secretary of State for the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

Introduction

What is the high street?



1. **High streets take many different forms. They range from traditional parades of independent shops, pubs and cafés to busy town-centre shopping districts, markets and department stores. Despite these differences, they share an important role as places where people shop, meet, work and access services in person.**
2. This strategy recognises that high streets encapsulate a range of conditions that will vary from place to place. Using an experimental Ordnance Survey geography, the ONS identified almost 7,000 high streets across Great Britain in 2019, defined as clusters of at least 15 retail addresses within 150 metres of each other.[1,2] More recent ONS analysis uses the newer and broader Ordnance Survey Retail Areas geography[3] – also adopted as the main definition in the Strategy.* The number of high streets is unevenly distributed across English local authorities with greater concentration in urban areas.[4]

* In this Strategy, a 'high street' is predominantly defined using the Ordnance Survey (OS) Retail Areas geography. Specifically, high streets are based on OS Retail Area Aggregated features, which group clusters of retail-classified addresses that meet a threshold determined by local address density. For the underlying High street typologies analysis we have used the Green Street definition of a high street which covers only high streets with more than 50 units. Where required by data availability, other definitions are used, reflecting the lack of a single universally accepted definition of a high street.

3. High streets are found in every part of the country, but they are far from uniform. High streets perform different roles depending on their scale, location and catchment. **Larger city and regional centres** act as economic, employment and cultural hubs, extending far beyond local authority boundaries. **Town and district centres** combine retail with services and civic functions, acting as focal points for the communities and settlements they serve. **Local centres** primarily meet everyday community needs; while **out-of-town retail** performs a more distinct retail function. Not all of these types of places operate in the same way. Places of a similar scale can have very different economic models. Some are busy shopping destinations throughout the week, others see a lunchtime rush driven by nearby office workers, while some rely heavily on seasonal visitors.

4. This is why the strategy also uses a high street typology. Centres may not always fit neatly into one category or another and may fill many of these purposes at the same time. Further detail on each typology and the methodology used to develop the framework is provided in the Annex.

   - **Office hubs (15% of all large high streets with over 50 units)** are driven primarily by office workers and commuters and experience strong weekday demand. Usually found in city centres and large towns.
   - **Major shopping destinations (15%)** attract visitors from large catchments and across the region, and depend upon comparison retail, leisure (including sports and other physical fitness facilities) and visitor spending.
   - **Tourism destinations (13%)** rely more heavily on seasonal visitor demand and the distinctiveness of their cultural, heritage and hospitality offer.
   - **Everyday high streets (57%)** serve local residents and the everyday economy, with performance closely linked to local population, spending power and access to services. They can be found in urban and rural locations, blending retail, hospitality, culture, leisure and personal care services to meet the needs of residents.

Different places. Different roles. A stronger ecosystem.

This strategy recognises that high streets encapsulate a range of conditions that will vary from place to place. High streets are found in every part of the country, but they are far from uniform. High streets perform different roles depending on their scale, location and catchment.

1. Different types of places

High streets perform different roles depending on their scale, location and catchment.

City centres (and regional centres)



Major employment, shopping, culture, services and transport hubs. Attract people from across the region and beyond.

Regional / national catchment

Town centres



Wide range of shops, services, leisure and community facilities. Serve the town and surrounding area.

Town and wider hinterland

District centres



Smaller centres with a mix of shops and services, often serving several neighbourhoods.

District catchment

Neighbourhood centres



Local convenience shopping and key services for nearby residents.

Local catchment

High streets (within other centres)



Named streets with a high concentration of shops, services and other uses. Can sit withincity, town, district or neighbourhood centres.

Varies by location

Out-of-town retail



Large-format retail, often focused on comparison goods and convenience. Usually accessedby car and typically does not provide the same mix of civic, social and public services.

Wider catchment (often car-based)

Each type of place can be made up of different high street types...

2. The high street typology

Within each type of place, high streets can function in different ways depending on how demand is generated and who they serve.

Office Hubs

15% of high streets

Large high streets with a high concentration of retail and leisure that serve workers in surrounding commercial space and passing commuters.

Typically found in city centres and large towns.

Main challenges:
- Remote working
- Weak evening and weekend demand

Main policy needs:
- Diversify demand
- Increase dwell time
- Grow leisure and residential uses

Major shopping destinations

15% of high streets

The largest high streets, characterised by large floor spaces and national brands. Draw customers from a wide catchment area.

Typically found in city and regional centres, and larger towns.

Main challenges:
- Retail restructuring
- Chain store decline
- Large vacant units

Main policy needs:
- Reinvention and repurposing
- Culture and leisure offer
- Destination-led growth

Tourism destinations

13% of high streets

High streets reliant on visitor footfall, often seasonal. Tend to have a higher proportion of independent retailers.

Common in coastal, historic and visitor locations.

Main challenges:
- Seasonality
- Dependence on visitor economy

Main policy needs:
- Extend visitor season
- Broaden local economy
- Improve visitor experience

Everyday high streets

57% of high streets

The most common form of high street and home to the 'everyday economy'. Blend retail, leisure and services to meet the needs of local residents.

Found in urban and rural locations.

Main challenges:
- Weak local demand
- Loss of services and anchors
- Lower spending power

Main policy needs:
- Protect everyday services
- Strengthen local anchors
- Improve safety and convenience

5. These typologies provide a fuller understanding of high streets, explaining the role a centre performs within a wider place network and its likely catchment as well as explaining how demand is generated and the variety of purposes different high streets serve. This allows us to recognise that there is no single model of success. The interventions that help a regional office hub attract workers may be very different from those needed in a coastal tourism destination or a local neighbourhood high street.

6. Equally, measures of success will differ: footfall and visitor spend may be particularly important in city centres and tourism destinations, while access to services, occupancy, safety and community confidence may matter more in everyday local centres. The policy offer that follows reflects this diversity, providing a range of interventions that can be tailored to the needs, challenges and opportunities of different high streets. These typologies describe the dominant drivers of demand, but every high street must also serve the people who live locally. Visitor, shopping and employment destinations should retain access to everyday services, affordable provision and community facilities, ensuring that their success benefits residents as well as workers and visitors.

7. The government recognises that 'the high street' is shorthand for a variety of experiences shaped by local conditions. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to high streets. Rather, each is its own ecosystem and any interventions must be chosen carefully to suit their specific circumstances. At the same time, national, regional and local government must work together to create the underlying conditions needed to attract and retain investment.

Why are high streets important?

8. **For centuries high streets have been the focal points of our communities, common spaces at the heart of economic and civic life. They are living testament to our history, to commercial, architectural, and civic traditions, and a bellwether as to whether an area is doing well or not.**

9. High streets are fundamental to pride in place. Nearly 3 in 4 people say they have an emotional attachment to their high street,[5] and judge a place on whether the high street is in good condition.[6]

10. High streets are economically important too. Over 4.4 million people are employed in businesses on British high streets,[7] and in many towns the high street is the local economy. Retail and hospitality, two sectors at the heart of many high streets, together generate around 7% of UK economic output. In 2025, retail generated approximately £115 billion in gross value added (GVA) or 4.3%, while hospitality contributed £75 billion, equivalent to 2.8%.[8] The high street is where people work, spend, access services and experience conditions that influence their health, wellbeing and quality of life. For young people in particular, the high street is where many will gain their first experience of working life, learn the skills and work ethic as well as build the confidence they need to succeed.

11. Many of the entrepreneurs that drive our economy were forged on the high street and we expect high streets to remain an important place for businesses to start, grow and innovate. As consumer habits continue to evolve, successful businesses are combining physical and digital channels in ways that best suit them and their customers. Whether operating online, from high street premises, running a market stall or a combination of these, businesses should be able to access the support and opportunities to help them become more profitable and sustainable. Supporting businesses to adapt and grow will help maintain a diverse and competitive high street, including for retail, that continues to offer choice and value for consumers.

12. Thriving high streets strengthen community cohesion. Beyond providing access to affordable goods and services, they are places where people come together. Markets, cafés, libraries, pubs, cultural venues and other "third spaces" create opportunities for social connection, civic participation and shared experiences. High streets provide common ground where people from different backgrounds can meet, build relationships, celebrate local identity and culture, and develop a stronger sense of belonging to place.

13. High streets are more than centres of economic activity. They influence and support health and wellbeing by enabling access to healthy food, gyms, swimming pools, and other physical activity facilities, hair and beauty services, employment, social connection, green space and opportunities for walking and physical activity. Well-designed, vibrant high streets can help people live healthier lives, strengthen community resilience and reduce health inequalities.

14. Yet many people feel unease about the state of their high street, with 4 in 5 concerned about local high street decline.[9] While high streets remain important places for shopping, work, leisure and community life, they have been shaped by profound economic and social change over the past two decades. Consumer demand has shifted as online retail has grown from around 4% of retail spending in 2008 to more than a quarter today, reducing demand for many forms of traditional bricks-and-mortar retail.[10] At the same time, footfall remains below pre-pandemic levels, vacancy rates remain persistently elevated and many towns have experienced the loss of long-established anchor businesses and services. High streets have also faced rising competition from out-of-town retail, changing patterns of work following the pandemic, and sustained pressure on household budgets which has constrained discretionary spending.

15. The rejuvenation of high streets is key to pride, community cohesion, health and wellbeing, economic resilience and entrepreneurialism, not just shopping. The Government's growth mission seeks to ensure that growth is felt across places, supports opportunities in towns and smaller cities and strengthens local economic resilience. While the Modern Industrial Strategy focuses on tradeable sectors that will drive future national growth, it must also be complemented by policies that support the places where people live and work. Creating the conditions for high streets and town centres to succeed is therefore essential to delivering growth that is both nationally strong and locally felt.

What a successful high street looks like

- **Active leadership and management — reasons to have confidence.** Clear accountability, strong local partnerships and a coordinated long-term strategy for delivery and investment. The high street is managed as a single ecosystem, with effective use of data, active stewardship of property and commercial viability, and a clear route through council services.
- **Strong businesses, anchors and amenities — reasons to visit.** A diverse and resilient mix of national and independent businesses, everyday services, public facilities, community infrastructure and town-centre office users, supported to start, survive, adapt and grow.
- **Vibrant culture, leisure, hospitality and entertainment — reasons to get together.** A distinctive and inclusive cultural, heritage, visitor, hospitality and leisure offer that draws people to the high street, fosters social connection, and sustains daytime, evening, night-time and weekend activity for different ages and interests.

- **Easy access and connectivity — reasons to explore.** Well connected, convenient, safe, affordable and inclusive end-to-end journeys that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport and offers genuine choice in how people move. Where people need to use the car, supporting their journeys by improved servicing and parking options and better modal interchange. Delivering good digital connectivity and employing better street design principles to improve wayfinding, seating, toilets and green routes that connect high streets to parks and nature.
- **Safe, clean and welcoming — reasons to return.** Well-designed and maintained streets and spaces where people feel safe and want to spend time, with improved access to green spaces, backed by effective crime prevention, neighbourhood policing, enforcement, maintenance and support for vulnerable people.
- **A place to call home — reasons to move in.** Good-quality housing of different types and tenures, with the services, infrastructure and careful management needed to sustain an active, mixed and inclusive centre throughout the day and evening.

How these six pillars work together

16. **The six pillars are interdependent and mutually reinforcing.** Leadership provides the coordination needed to make high streets successful places; anchors and amenities create reasons to visit; culture, leisure and entertainment extend activity; connectivity widens the catchment; safe, well-managed environments build confidence; and more residents sustain year-round demand. Together, they can create a virtuous cycle of higher footfall and spend, lower vacancy, stronger businesses, greater investment and improved wellbeing. The reverse can also be true: persistent vacancy, weak footfall and poorly managed premises can create opportunities for crime and anti-social behaviour, further deterring customers and investment. Enforcement is essential to disrupt offending, but lasting change requires crime reduction and regeneration to go hand in hand, restoring active uses, improving the public realm and rebuilding confidence so that legitimate businesses and communities can reclaim the high street.

An action plan led by places

17. **This strategy recognises that high streets cannot be saved with one-size-fits-all policies designed from Whitehall.** It must also confront the costs and wider economic pressures affecting high street businesses, while giving local leaders effective levers to respond to the challenges facing their places. People who understand the ecosystem of their local high street must take the lead. They know where opportunities can be seized and where risks must be mitigated. This leadership does not rest with one institution or office holder. It is the responsibility of local and regional governments, public bodies, communities, businesses and citizens. They should work together to become stewards of their high streets.

18. This Government will assist them by ensuring they have the right toolkit of powers and the resources to deploy them. Effective national support must go beyond providing information and guidance, helping places to diagnose their challenges, build strong partnerships and turn plans into delivery. We recognise that while success is ultimately built locally, many of the conditions that shape high streets are set nationally. Our role is therefore twofold: to devolve power and decision-making wherever possible, and to act decisively where only national government can remove barriers and create the conditions for success.

19. Consumer behaviour and demand have changed significantly, while many high streets have been slow to adapt. Revitalising them means supporting their evolution to better reflect how people want to shop, work, live and spend their time today. High streets must provide what people want and need much more than they do now. They must provide experiences, services and goods that people cannot access online. They must become places to live as well as places to shop. They must become places of experience, community, and culture, of food and drink, of shopping, of sport, and of learning, during the day as well as at night. They must be accessible, attractive, and greener. They must be safe.

20. This strategy is focused on how we support local, national, and regional actors, businesses, and communities to make high streets vibrant again. The strategy sets out a national vision that can apply across the UK, but many of the policy levers are devolved, so measures listed apply to England only unless stated otherwise. We will look for opportunities to share learning with Devolved Governments.

Pillar 1: Active leadership and management — reasons to have confidence

21. **High streets are their own ecosystems. Networks of relationships, flows of investment and commerce, the symbiosis of enterprise, people, and policy. Changes at one end of the high street can have knock-on effects at the other end.**
22. No single business or organisation can address every challenge facing a high street. Individual property owners may not have the incentive or resources to bring difficult sites back into use, while businesses cannot tackle problems such as poor public spaces, crime, or the loss of essential services on their own. Without coordinated action, challenges can persist, even where improvements would benefit the wider community. Effective stewardship therefore requires clear leadership, shared priorities and coordinated action.
23. This pillar sets out the core role in active management of the high street by local authorities, strategic authorities, and place partnerships drawing on businesses, landlords, and communities.
24. Effective high street leadership will look different in different places, but the roles of different tiers should be complementary. Strategic authorities can provide strategic leadership across a wider geography, aligning investment, transport, spatial planning and economic development. Councils will remain vital democratic place leaders, using their local knowledge, powers and services to support individual towns and high streets.

Place partnership

25. **Local place partnerships can bring together councils, businesses, landlords, communities and other partners to identify local priorities and turn them into action. This is especially important for high streets which often consist of a fragmented landscape of owners, occupiers, and public authorities.**
26. Evidence consistently shows that places with clear leadership, dedicated place management and collaboration between councils, businesses and communities deliver stronger outcomes. Yet around 40% of high streets studied by the High Streets Task Force, which ran from 2019

to 2024, lacked effective partnership arrangements,[11] suggesting governance and local capacity remain significant constraints on regeneration. Where leadership, accountability and partnership are weak, structural challenges can persist even when solutions are available.

27. As devolution and local government reorganisation change the institutions through which decisions are made, it will be important that this strengthens rather than weakens the connection with individual places. Strategic and local decision-making should build on existing neighbourhood and place-based partnerships, ensuring that the voices of residents, businesses and communities continue to shape the future of their high streets.

Local authorities

28. **Local authorities are crucial, democratic place leaders and the bridge between strategic priorities and individual towns and neighbourhoods, retaining important local planning, regulatory, and service responsibilities that shape the future of their high streets.**

29. Many councils face significant challenges in fulfilling this role, including financial pressures, competing statutory responsibilities, capacity constraints, fragmented property ownership and changing patterns of consumer demand. These pressures can make it harder to take the long-term, coordinated action needed to support thriving high streets.

30. Our aim is to support councils to become effective high street stewards. Through this strategy, we are strengthening the powers, resources and support available to local authorities to shape development, support businesses, bring vacant properties back into use, protect community assets, improve public safety and create attractive, healthy and accessible places.

31. We are also backing councils with wider reforms that will help them succeed, including devolution, local government funding reform, greater fiscal stability, improved access to data and ownership information, and targeted investment to build local capacity. Together, these changes will help councils take a more strategic and sustainable approach to high street regeneration.

32. Councils have a broad range of powers that can help support thriving high streets, including powers relating to planning and development, business support, vacant property, community ownership, heritage, public realm, public health, environmental enforcement, community safety, licensing, culture and partnership working. Throughout this strategy, we set out how government is strengthening these powers and supporting councils to use them effectively.

Local Authority High Street Levers

- **Planning and development:** Councils can use local plans, planning decisions, Article 4 directions, design codes and compulsory purchase powers to shape development, manage changes of use and secure high-quality places. We are going further through the new National Planning Policy Framework, additional planning controls for specified shop types, a model design code for mixed-use town centres and support to deliver well-designed homes on and around high streets.

- **Business support:** Councils can provide locally tailored advice, grants and business rates relief, convene local business networks and connect firms to finance and skills provision. The strategy goes further through additional business-rates support for qualifying small high street businesses, an expanded Business Growth Service offer for high streets, improved access to finance and targeted support for digital adoption and productivity.
- **Vacant and neglected property:** Councils can use High Street Rental Auctions, compulsory purchase, land assembly, planning and enforcement powers, to tackle long-term vacancy, disrepair and dereliction and bring premises back into productive use. We are investing £10 million to accelerate take up of High Street Rental Auctions, providing practical support to help councils deploy them, promoting meanwhile use, and creating a new £125 million Derelict Buildings Fund.
- **Community ownership and control:** Councils can list Assets of Community Value, work with community organisations to protect valued land and buildings, and support community-led ownership and management. As part of the new Community Right to Buy powers, we are broadening the definition of an Asset of Community Value to help protect a wider range of assets, and providing £65m of funding to support community ownership.
- **Heritage and conservation:** Councils can designate conservation areas, determine applications for works affecting heritage assets and use planning and enforcement powers to protect historic buildings and support their appropriate reuse. We have launched the latest round of the Heritage Revival Fund supporting community-owned heritage assets with £46 million by 2030, and up to £75 million for the Heritage at Risk Capital Fund supporting the conservation of at-risk heritage buildings. We have expanded community ownership protections for heritage buildings and updated the National Planning Policy Framework and our statutory consultees to improve the speed and consistency of decisions.
- **Public realm, streets and transport:** Councils and local transport authorities can manage streets and parking, improve walking, wheeling and cycling routes, license outdoor trading and invest in accessible public spaces. Councils can look at ways to increase green space in or close to high streets as well as enabling connectivity between high streets and parks, rivers, canals, recreation and nature. Through the Better Connected strategy, use of the Manual for Streets, bus safety measures and parking codes, we are promoting well-connected and accessible town centres.
- **Public health:** Councils have a statutory responsibility for improving the health of their local populations, to improve health outcomes and reduce health inequalities.[12] Through the 10 Year Health Plan, we are shifting the focus from sickness to prevention, recognising that improving the environment we live, work and spend time in is critical to supporting people to live longer healthier lives and local authorities have a key role to play in shaping healthy places and high streets.
- **Environmental enforcement:** Councils already have powers to issue fixed penalties and take enforcement action against littering, fly-tipping, graffiti, fly-posting and land whose condition harms local amenity. We are promoting more effective use of these powers, updating guidance for councils and businesses, and strengthening action to improve shopfronts and the overall appearance of high streets.

- **Community safety and anti-social behaviour:** Councils, police and transport authorities can use dispersal powers, public-space protections, closure powers, CCTV, bus byelaws and partnership arrangements to prevent and respond to persistent antisocial behaviour, nuisance and disorder. The Tackling Retail Crime Together Strategy, the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, targeted and coordinated action against prolific offenders and stronger action against premises linked to organised crime will support the creation of safer and more secure town centres.
- **Licensing and regulation:** Councils can use alcohol, entertainment, late-night refreshment, gambling and pavement licensing to manage local impacts and support safe, well-run centres as well as a vibrant evening and night-time economy. We will explore how the licensing system can better support economic growth, investment and vibrant high streets, while upholding the licensing objectives and appropriate safeguards including considering putting the National Licensing Policy Framework on a statutory footing.
- **Arts and culture:** Local authorities are the biggest public funder of culture, and their continued support for the sector can drive an increase in footfall on high streets and in town centres. They are responsible for libraries which can be a key cultural asset. Their convening powers and understanding of their local area can support place-based interventions to support the local economy and increase opportunities for cross-community engagement.

Strategic authorities

33. **Strategic authorities play a unique role in aligning investment, transport, planning and economic development across a wider area. Working alongside councils and local partners, they can convene stakeholders, coordinate action and ensure high streets are embedded in regional growth and regeneration strategies.**

34. Strategic authorities have a growing set of powers to support high streets. These include powers under the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act, Mayoral Development Corporations, the new visitor levy power and, in London, a strategic licensing role for the Mayor. Together, these powers strengthen the ability of mayors to drive regeneration and support culture, tourism and local growth.

35. We are supporting strategic authorities to deliver targeted support for high streets through integrated settlements, Growth Hub funding and the £30 million High Street and Growth Incubator programme in Greater Manchester, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

36. Several other strategic authorities have brought forward their own high street funds including York and North Yorkshire's Vibrant and Sustainable High Streets Fund, and the Greater London Authority's High Streets for All Challenge. The £150 million Creative Places Growth Fund is also enabling strategic authorities to repurpose underused spaces for cultural and creative use, such as through the West of England Creative Workspace Fund. We are working closely with strategic authorities to learn from their programmes and use their strategic work with stakeholders to identify barriers to growth on the high street.

37. Through the Government's programme of devolution and the forthcoming Rewiring the State Delivery Plan, strategic and local authorities will gain additional powers and responsibilities, strengthening their ability to support thriving high streets and town centres.

Case study: West Midlands Combined Authority



West Midlands Combined Authority is taking a region-wide approach to high street renewal, combining locally led investment with business support and shared regional capacity. Working with local authorities through monthly engagement meetings, West Midlands Combined Authority co-designed nine schemes covering Dudley, Solihull, West Bromwich and Walsall town centres; Coventry and Wolverhampton city centres; and Erdington, Northfield and Soho Road in Birmingham.

The nine local authority-led schemes will share £8.5 million of High Street Growth and Incubator funding equally. The approach aligns closely with the West Midlands Growth Plan and invests in strategically significant city, town and local centres.

Alongside this place-based investment, West Midlands Combined Authority will support regional capacity and capability, including programme delivery, data, policy and evidence, events and engagement, while the West Midlands Growth Company will be providing intensive support for high-growth potential high street-based businesses as part of a cohesive service to businesses on high streets, including any locally led enterprise support and social enterprise support.

This regional offer includes an annual Growing the High Street event focused on unlocking floorspace and improving public realm amenity, a new high street data service, training delivered with Design Midlands, research into converting upper floors to residential use, and dedicated surveying expertise to help local authorities deploy High Street Rental Auctions. Together, these measures show how a strategic authority can coordinate local delivery, build shared expertise and support a network of high streets across a polycentric region.

Businesses and landlords

38. **Businesses, landlords and communities all have a shared interest in the success of their high streets. Collective action can help create places that are more attractive, resilient and prosperous for everyone.**

39. Businesses can play an important stewardship role through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), which allow firms to pool resources, improve the public realm, support local initiatives, enhance safety and provide a stronger collective voice. We have committed to strengthening the BID model by exploring reforms to improve voting procedures, transparency and accountability, and by extending the property-owner BID model beyond London so landlords can play a greater role in supporting thriving high streets.

Case study: Birmingham Colmore

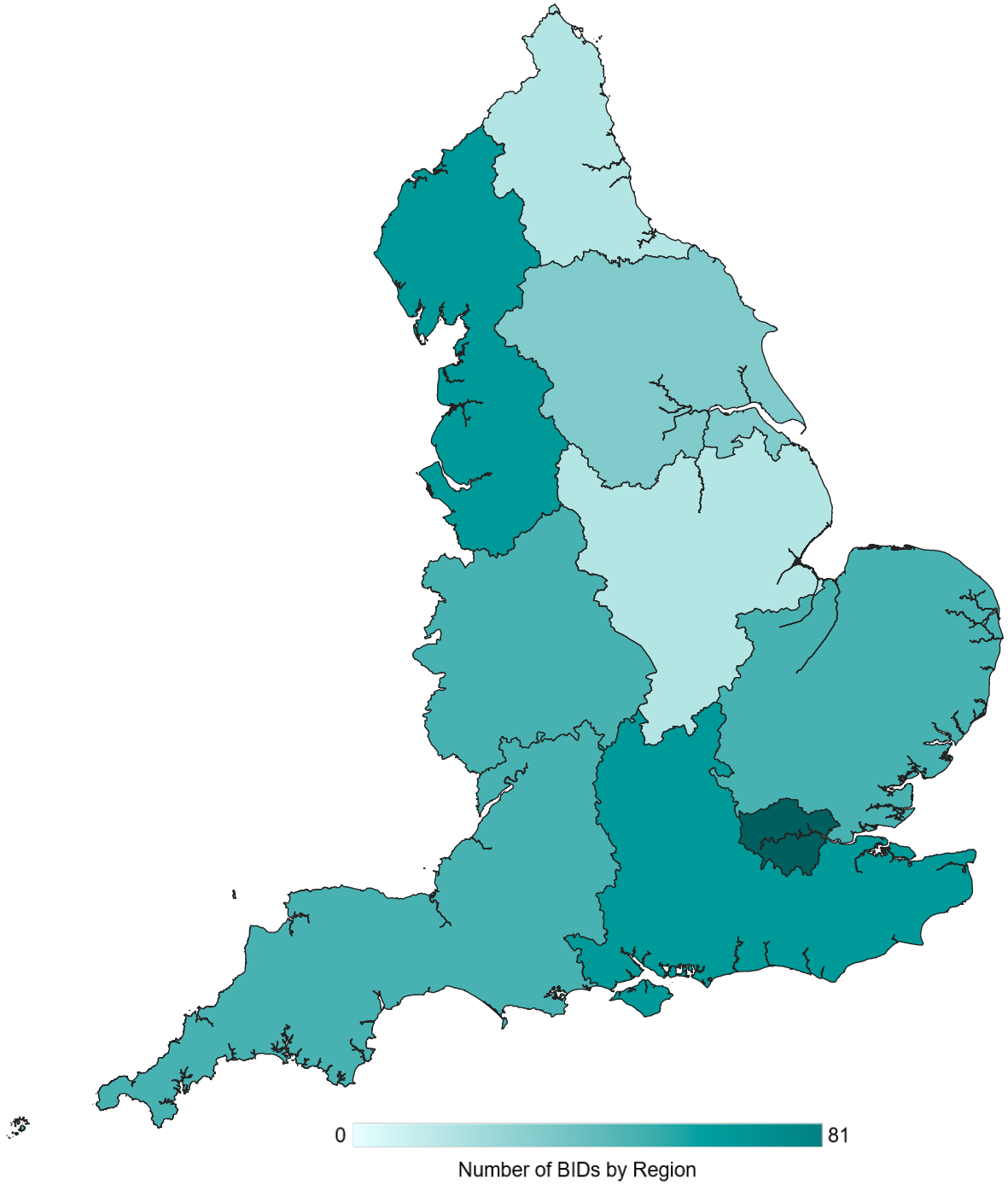


Established in 2009, Birmingham Colmore has been central to positioning the area as a leading destination for high-quality food and drink, boosting the nighttime economy, as well as supporting a significant professional services cluster; the largest outside of London. This has increased footfall throughout the day and evening, benefiting both hospitality operators and the wider local business base.

The BID's investment in placemaking and promotion has helped attract customers, improve the area's commercial identity, and create a vibrant trading environment. As a result, businesses report stronger visitor engagement and improved commercial opportunities linked to the district's expanding leisure offer.

Figure 1: The number of BIDs is highest in London and the South, and lower across the North East, Yorkshire and the Midlands[13]

Number of Business Improvement Districts in England by Region, April 2026



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40. High street businesses are also vital employers, offering millions of people opportunities to enter work, build skills and progress in their careers. Through initiatives such as Opening Shift and the hospitality sector's commitment to create over 100,000 opportunities for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET), businesses are helping more people access the opportunities that thriving high streets can provide.

41. Government will support this through our plan to Make Work Pay, the Youth Guarantee and reforms to skills and employment support, helping businesses recruit, retain and develop the workforce they need to succeed.

Impact Economy

42. **Purpose-driven businesses, impact investors and philanthropists can bring capital, innovation and expertise to high street regeneration.** With support from the Office for the Impact Economy, government and local leaders are exploring new partnerships with the impact economy, including to bring vacant properties back into use, support distinctive local businesses and strengthen social connection. Emerging initiatives, including work with Heineken UK and other partners, demonstrate how the impact economy is helping to drive good growth in every postcode.

Communities and civil society

43. **Communities and civil society organisations have a vital role in shaping, improving and safeguarding high streets. Lasting regeneration depends on giving local people a stronger voice and the tools to help shape the future of their town centres.**

44. We are backing community action with our landmark investment of £5.8 billion through the Pride in Place programme. Each of 284 neighbourhoods selected for high deprivation and low social infrastructure will form a neighbourhood board and agree priorities for spending £20m on locally agreed projects over the next decade. 79% of places in the first phase of the programme are planning to fund improvements to town centres and high streets.

45. We are strengthening community ownership through new Community Right to Buy powers and by expanding the definition of Assets of Community Value. These reforms – backed by a new £65m fund to support community ownership – will make it easier for communities to protect, purchase and steward the places and assets that matter most to them. Organisations such as the Architectural Heritage Fund are supporting communities to bring historic buildings back into productive use.

46. We are also increasing transparency around property ownership and making it easier for communities and public bodies to access information about who owns land and buildings on their high streets.

47. Through the Civil Society Covenant and £11.59 million for 15 local places through the Local Covenant Partnerships Programme, we are strengthening collaboration between local authorities, communities and civil society organisations to help deliver local priorities and support thriving places.

Arm's Length Bodies

48. **Arm's Length Bodies have established relationships with Strategic Authorities, local authorities and communities.** They provide sector-specific insight into regional priorities to support partnership working. For example, Arts Council England's Cultural Compacts are partnerships designed to support the local cultural sector, utilising cross-sector engagement with local leaders in local government, higher education, business, and health.

Case study: Villette Road, Sunderland

Villette Road in Sunderland, classified as an Everyday high street within the high street typology, provides a strong example of how community ownership and grassroots leadership can drive high street renewal in areas facing long-term decline. Through the work of local organisations — particularly Back on the Map (BoTM), a resident-led housing and regeneration charity — the area has combined asset acquisition, community-led enterprise and social infrastructure investment to stabilise the high street and rebuild local economic activity.

Rather than relying solely on external investment, the model centres on community control of assets and decision-making, enabling locally tailored, long-term interventions that respond directly to resident needs.

Villette Road demonstrates that community ownership can be a powerful model for high street regeneration, particularly in areas where market-led investment is limited. By placing assets and decision-making in local hands, this approach enables more inclusive, resilient and locally rooted high streets, while also creating a foundation for wider public and private investment over time.

Case study: Spennymoor Pride in Place



In Spennymoor, the Pride in Place Programme will build on regeneration already under way to strengthen the town centre and create a better environment for businesses to thrive. Local businesses have been brought together to help shape priorities, identifying opportunities to improve the trading environment, strengthen coordination and increase activity on the high street.

This approach is already reflected in the relocation of the post office into a previously vacant high street unit, safeguarding local jobs, retaining an important local service and bringing an empty property back into productive use. Through the Pride in Place Programme, Spennymoor intends to build on this progress by improving public spaces and accessibility, creating a more welcoming town centre and supporting the long-term regeneration of the high street.

Pillar 2: Strong businesses, anchors and amenities — reasons to visit

49. **High streets create jobs, attract footfall, build community and give people reasons to visit throughout the day and into the evening, with over 4.4 million people employed in businesses on the high street in 202414.**

50. Over the past decades, the loss of structural anchors has depleted footfall for businesses and contributed to the deterioration of some high streets which has fostered the conditions for crime and anti-social behaviour. In 2024 there were 6,870 banks and building society branches remaining in the UK, compared to 21,643 in 1986[15]. Valuable civic spaces like markets and in-person public services were also lost in this period, due to harsh cuts on local authority funding and government estates rationalisation. This has shifted the mix of services available in many places, with access to vape shops and gambling venues now almost as widespread as access to essential services. Outside London, 76% of households can reach a vape shop or gambling shop within 20 minutes, compared with 83% who can reach a GP within the same time[16].

Footfall in England is around 13% below pre-pandemic levels.[17] Comparatively, e-commerce retail sales continue to grow, accounting for around 28% of total UK retail sales in the second quarter of 2026, up from 18% in the second quarter of 2019 and 4% in 2008.[18] National vacancy rates stand at around 13%,[19] but have reached over 30% in some parts of the country.[20] Persistent vacancy has increased over the past decade, with the share of premises unused for more than three years rising from 3.7% in 2015 to more than 5.2% in 2023. This varies drastically by and within regions. For example, persistent vacancy rates remain below 3% in London but exceed 8% in the North East.[21] These differences matter. A national story of decline masks considerable local variation and highlights the importance of understanding the economic conditions of individual places.

51. To ensure high streets are sustainable and fit for the future, they must deliver a range of businesses, anchors and amenities that cater to all corners of society. As traditional anchors have declined, high streets need a new generation of uses that generate dependable footfall. What constitutes a successful anchor varies by place: offices and major employment centres often underpin office hubs; retailers and hospitality businesses create compelling shopping and dining destinations; gyms, fitness studios and other physical activity facilities provide

new spaces to exercise; culture, heritage and visitor attractions, such as museums and galleries, sustain tourism destinations; and public services such as health centres, libraries and community facilities provide the regular footfall that keeps many everyday high streets viable.

52. Music venues, theatres, museums, libraries, cinemas, gyms and sports venues all play a vital role as high street anchors. They are places of connection and sources of civic pride, supporting creative jobs and providing access to entertainment and culture across the country. Independent businesses are central to the distinctiveness of high streets, offering goods, services and experiences that reflect local character and give people a reason to visit.

53. The Government continues to work closely with businesses, representative bodies and forums including the Retail and Hospitality Sector Councils to understand the key challenges and opportunities facing high streets. This helps ensure policies are shaped by real-world business experience and evidence.

54. However, this Government recognises that businesses also thrive in an ecosystem that is considered and well-managed, informed by people who know their places best with the right tools and resources to implement a clear vision.

Pressures affecting high street business performance

55. **High street success depends on a range of factors, but consumer demand is the leading force.** The size of the local consumer base, visitor numbers and local spending power all shape a high street's ability to support businesses and attract investment, making high streets a reflection and a consequence of the state of the local economy. The presence of strong tradeable sectors can support local wages and spending power, helping to sustain high street demand even where those businesses are not located on the high street itself. Demand is also shaped by the national economic conditions. Employment growth, wages, inflation, interest rates, productivity and consumer confidence all influence spending decisions. These factors sit largely outside the high street itself but have profound effects on local economic performance.

56. Businesses have faced rising operating costs, following Covid-19 and subsequent energy price shocks, squeezing businesses on both sides and placing further pressure on profitability. High street businesses have been particularly exposed to energy price increases, while many small businesses have struggled to absorb rising costs.

57. Cultural institutions on high streets remain vulnerable to financial shocks. In 2025, 30 grassroots music venues closed permanently,[22] and nearly half of independent cinemas say they require financial assistance to remain operational.[23]

58. The result has been more closures, higher vacancy rates and a visible decline in many town centres, making them less attractive to visitors. This in turn has become a self-reinforcing cycle of lower footfall, weaker demand, and even more empty shops.

59. In recent years there has also been a proliferation of shops that detract from the character of places, harm health and wellbeing. For example, many councils, MPs and residents have raised concerns about the disproportionate clustering of gambling premises, particularly adult gaming centres, and vape shops on high streets, especially in areas already facing economic and social challenges. This can lead to worsening health outcomes and widening inequalities.

Restoring local control over the mix of businesses on the high street

60. **This Government is restoring control to local authorities so they can better shape their high streets.** Subject to consultation, we will remove the 'aim to permit' principle that has constrained councils' ability to refuse new gambling premises, giving greater weight to local concerns when decisions are made.

61. This builds on the introduction of Gambling Impact Assessments, which will come into force in November. This new power will allow licensing authorities to consider local evidence such as crime, deprivation, antisocial behaviour, public health data and the concentration of existing premises when assessing the risks associated with new gambling businesses, and designate areas where the 'aim to permit' will no longer apply. We will also consult on planning changes to ensure new adult gaming centres require planning permission and cannot become concentrated in communities without local consent.

62. We are taking a similar approach to vape shops. Subject to consultation, new vape shops will require planning permission, giving councils and communities a greater say over where they are located. We have also consulted on restricting the display of tobacco, vape and nicotine products and will consult on a retail licensing scheme to strengthen enforcement, support responsible retailers and better protect young people.

63. We will also remove business rates reliefs for businesses that do not make a positive contribution to communities, so that these businesses do not receive preferential treatment through the business rates system: from April 2027, vape shops and adult gaming centres in England will no longer be eligible for the RHL multipliers, and vape shops will also lose eligibility for Small Business Rates Relief.

Taking on the rising cost of doing business

64. **High street businesses continue to face significant cost pressures.** While many of these are driven by global economic conditions, Government can take action to reduce unnecessary burdens, support investment, and help businesses grow.

65. The government has already started to give breathing space to those businesses that bring people together. The government is providing an extra 20% relief for pubs, social clubs and all but the very largest live music venues in England from 1 April 2027. This is in addition to the support introduced earlier this year, bringing the total relief to 35%.

66. At Budget 2026 (published today), the government is going further to support high streets, backing retail, hospitality and leisure (RHL) businesses of all sizes, many of which had been facing significant business rates bill increases. The decisions set out in the Budget provide certainty over business rates for the next two years and mean that RHL businesses in England will see their business rates either frozen in real terms, reduced, or cut to zero.

67. The government will deliver this by:

    a) Taking around 70,000 more high street businesses out of business rates through an increase of the Small Business Rates Relief (SBRR) thresholds to £18,000 for 100% relief (from £12,000) and £21,000 for tapered relief (from £15,000) for qualifying RHL properties in England from April 2027.

    b) Delivering a real-terms freeze of business rates bills for qualifying RHL properties in England in 2027-28 and 2028-29.

68. As a result of this package, half of all RHL properties in England will not pay business rates at all.

69. The Government will also empower local authorities to better take on avoidance by expanding the funding provided for the costs of challenging avoidance in courts; and introducing a General Anti-Avoidance Rule, giving local authorities the powers they need to better take on non-compliance.

70. This builds on wider reforms to lower the cost of doing business, including banning upwards-only rent reviews, in commercial leases and a wider review into the leasehold framework through scheduled Law Commission projects, removing fees for valuation appeals and reducing unnecessary licensing burdens. We are also undertaking an independent review into how pubs and hotels are valued for business rates in England and Wales to ensure the system is fair and transparent. Finally we will also explore community enterprise zones to provide a vehicle for high street renewal and support new businesses to establish and grow on high streets.

Supporting business growth

71. **We also need to help businesses navigate the support currently on offer to them.** The Business Growth Service can contribute to this by making it easier for high street businesses to identify and access relevant support. Local Growth Hubs, integrated into the Business Growth Service, are already required to provide targeted support to high street businesses. We will build on this delivery by developing new content aimed at retail and hospitality sectors through existing channels such as Business Academy webinars and Backing Your Business Roadshows. We are also working with industry to co-develop a programme of support for SMEs to help them adopt productivity-enhancing digital technologies, in line with the key barriers they face, particularly lack of skills, resources, and information. More detail on this will be announced shortly.

72. We are also improving access to finance by increasing the British Business Bank's financial capacity by two-thirds to £30.6 billion. The Government's Start Up Loans Programme is providing £1 billion in lending over the next five years and in July we announced a £6.5 billion uplift to the Growth Guarantee Scheme over the next four years, helping businesses across the UK secure the finance they need to invest and grow.

73. Alongside retail, hospitality and leisure, the professional and business services sector plays a huge role on our high streets. We have now published the Professional and Business Services Sector Plan, through which we will strengthen PBS regional clusters, helping high street businesses such as legal and accountancy firms raise productivity, adapt and scale.

Case study: Skate Sanctuary



Skate Sanctuary, a Leeds-based roller skate business, provides an example of how business support programmes can help high street businesses grow and become more sustainable.

Following participation in the Help to Grow: Management programme, the business strengthened its management and has since expanded into its own permanent studio and a shop ten times larger than its previous premises. The move has enabled it to grow its community-based activities and roller-skating sessions alongside its retail business, developing a more sustainable model that combines products, services and community activity.

The business credits the programme with providing the management tools, networks and confidence needed to make important decisions about its growth, helping it establish a permanent base and strengthen its role in the local community.

Supporting co-operatives and mutuals

74. **The Government is committed to doubling the size of the co-operative and mutual sector. Co-operative and member-owned businesses can play an important role in supporting resilient, locally rooted growth, helping to keep wealth, ownership and decision-making in the communities they serve.** These models have a strong track record, with new co-operatives more than twice as likely to survive their first five years than UK businesses overall.[24]

75. The government response to the call for evidence on business support for co-operatives and non-financial mutuals will set out action to support the sector grow.

76. We will also invest £10m in a **new Co-operative Development Programme,** to help mayors and strategic authorities support the creation of more co-operative businesses, owned and run by the staff, customers and communities who use them, so local people share directly in the success of their high streets.

77. Finally, the Government has announced the appointment of Andrew Pakes MP as the Co-operatives and Mutuals Champion. The Champion will liaise with the sector to identify opportunities for, and barriers to, growth, raise the profile of the co-operative and mutual model across government and in Parliament, and represent the interests of the sector in relevant government forums.

Case Study: Dewsbury Arcade



The historic Dewsbury Arcade officially reopened on September 5, 2026, following a £10 million multi-year renovation, as the UK's first community-run co-operative arcade. The project has been supported by funding from Kirklees Council, the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, the Architectural Heritage Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The restored Victorian shopfronts and ironwork now house 20 retail units for independent traders, alongside six studios for artists and wellbeing practitioners plus community space and three event spaces, creating new opportunities for local entrepreneurs and community activity while protecting an important part of the town's heritage.

A new generation of high street anchors

78. **Traditionally, many high streets were underpinned by department stores that acted as anchors, drawing in customers.** However, due to a variety of factors including shifting consumer habits, these department stores have struggled to compete. Since 2016, around 80% of department stores of the UK's largest chains have closed down.[25] High streets therefore need to find new anchors, be they hospitality, cultural spaces, public services, leisure or education settings.

79. To support the development of new anchors, we are investing **£125 million through the Derelict Buildings Fund**, supporting local authorities to transform these buildings into what their communities need, from health centres to civic spaces.

Public services

80. **Public services and workplaces can play an important role in successful high streets, bringing people into town centres, supporting local businesses and making essential services easier to access.** We want to make better use of the public estate as a strategic asset that enables placemaking and regeneration.

81. We are establishing a **'high streets first' principle** which will encourage public bodies to consider the wider benefits their estate decisions can bring to high streets and local growth.

82. The Government will work with Mayors to deploy the public estate strategically. We are co-designing trailblazing **Local Asset Management Plans (LAMPs)** with Mayoral Strategic Authorities: these provide a practical framework for helping public bodies align decisions about land, property and investment around the ambitions of places. This will allow a more place-led, systematic and strategic approach to decision making, including how it can support high street regeneration. The first two Pathfinder areas will be Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

83. We are publishing guidance on **Place Based Business Cases**, a new type of business case that puts local objectives at the heart of the appraisal process. They are a tool for stakeholders in local, regional, devolved and UK governments to build a shared, evidence-based understanding of a place, agree place-based objectives and identify a package of interventions to achieve them. Coordinating public and private investment offers the opportunity to revitalise our high streets.

84. We aim to go further to empower local leaders, including by:

- **Giving Mayors a greater say.** We will work with public bodies to explore a mechanism for consulting Mayors on significant decisions affecting their areas, to ensure local priorities, including Local Growth Plans and Spatial Development Strategies, are factored in. This will be backed by the rollout of Local Asset Management Plans that facilitate greater cooperation between central and regional government.
- **Reviewing leases coming up for renewal.** Public bodies will be encouraged to work with local and regional authorities to identify opportunities to locate assets in town centre locations.
- **Refreshing the Government Property Strategy.** We will explore incentives for developing public estates to support high streets. This will include setting a clear expectation for public bodies to proactively engage with Local Asset Management Plans and Place Based Business Cases.

Healthy high streets

85. **Healthy high streets support healthy lives. Well-designed town centres can promote social connection, access to services, employment, healthy living and opportunities for physical activity, helping to improve wellbeing and reduce health inequalities.** The National Planning Policy Framework and Healthy Streets approach provide a framework for local areas to create places that support health and wellbeing.

86. Health and prosperity are closely linked. Places with struggling high streets often experience poorer health outcomes, while accessible health, care and community services can increase footfall, strengthen local centres and improve access to support. Rather than treating these issues separately, this Government wants high streets to play a greater role in creating healthier, more connected and economically resilient communities.

87. High streets have long been home to services such as pharmacies, dentists and opticians. Through Pharmacy First, expanded dental access and wider NHS reforms, more people will be able to access care closer to where they live, work and shop.

88. This approach sits at the heart of our commitment to Neighbourhood Health and strengthening the integration of local services around families. High streets can provide the physical and civic infrastructure for more preventative, community-based care, including new Neighbourhood Health Centres and Best Start Family Hubs. Working with local authorities and the NHS, we will support the use of accessible town-centre locations to bring services closer to communities while strengthening high streets as local anchors.

89. Health should also be an important consideration in placemaking, recognising that the built and natural environment plays a fundamental role in shaping health and inequalities. Sport England has produced Active Design guidance with ten principles for creating active environments that encourage people to be active throughout their everyday lives. Local planners can also refer to the Manual for Streets and the Design Code for Health and Wellbeing for guidance on how to create high-quality places that support everyone's health.

Case study: Barnsley Community Diagnostic Centre



'Health on the High Street' in Barnsley is a large-scale partnership between the council, NHS and other health partners to relocate diagnostic and outpatient healthcare services – along with a range of wellbeing services, such as a gym and prevention hub – into the town centre. This approach is a system change in delivering health and wellbeing services in Barnsley drawing on the work that is being carried out as part of the Barnsley Tech Town programme.

Health on the High Street began in 2022 with the development of a Community Diagnostic Centre (CDC) within the new Glass Works retail, leisure and community development as part of the comprehensive regeneration of the town centre.

The CDC is already delivering improved outcomes for public health and the town centre:

- Reduced waiting times and a 24% drop in 'did not attends', leading to improved diagnostics and prevention.
- 22% increase in breast screening attendance.
- 55,000+ additional town centre visits, boosting the local economy.
- Estimated £1.5 million+ annual visitor spend.

The following phase has seen Barnsley Hospital relocate outpatient services into the Alhambra Centre in early 2026, creating the UK's largest relocation of outpatient care from a hospital to a high-street setting. The facility is already supporting around 140,000 annual appointments, with services including ophthalmology, optometry, retinal screening, dermatology, rheumatology and orthotics, improving access for residents while bringing additional footfall into the town centre.

Essential services and community life

90. **High streets are not just places to shop. They are places where people access essential services, connect with others and participate in community life.** As more services move online, in-person provision remains vital for many people and can play an important role in sustaining footfall, inclusion and local identity.

91. Libraries, youth centres, post offices, banks and other civic services help make high streets useful destinations throughout the day. They provide access to services, trusted spaces for social connection and support for people who may struggle with digital access. Similarly, museums typically host daily school visits, delivering the largest national Learning programme outside of formal educational settings.

92. Markets are important engines of social connection, entrepreneurship and local identity. They provide access to affordable goods, support independent traders and help create lively, distinctive high streets. From traditional stalls to street food markets, they give people reasons to visit and come together, providing spaces for cultural exchange alongside opportunities to start a business or access employment, including for young people and those seeking part-time work. As high streets diversify, markets can help shape their future while continuing to meet everyday local needs. We will work with local government and the sector to understand whether there are barriers preventing councils from using markets and street trading flexibly to activate high streets, and consider whether further action is needed.

93. We are working with partners to maintain access to essential services on the high street. Through a £100 million Post Office transformation programme and the Post Office Plus pilot, co-funded by Government, we are modernising branches and exploring how they can host a wider range of public, private and voluntary sector services. With around 10 million visits each week and more than £3 billion of annual spending generated in nearby businesses,[26] the Post Office network can play an important role in supporting wider high street activity. We are also supporting the rollout of 350 banking hubs by the end of the Parliament, while taking powers to protect access to banking services where this is needed.

94. Libraries are among the most important civic assets on our high streets. They provide access to learning, employment support, public services, digital access and support and community activity, while offering trusted and inclusive public spaces. Through the £27.5 million Libraries Improvement Fund, we are investing in library buildings and technology so they can continue to meet the changing needs of communities. Around two-thirds of library branches (i.e. 1,625 branches) are located on or close to a high street. They are also well placed to support placemaking and service co-location.

95. Young people deserve safe, welcoming places to spend time, build relationships and access support. Through the Youth Matters strategy and over £500 million of investment in youth services, facilities and activities, including a £450 million programme to improve youth facilities in underserved areas, we are helping create more opportunities for young people in communities across England.

Case study: Kent



Kent County Council has pursued opportunities to integrate a range of council services within libraries through shared spaces, time-sharing, and drop-in provision. This initiative focuses on making the best use of buildings, improving the customer journey, and enabling teams to collaborate to deliver a seamless service for Kent's residents and communities. Current services co-located with libraries include Best Start Family Hubs, Community Learning and Skills, learning disability services, and family and health services, with sites across the very large geographical county that is Kent – both in urban and rural settings.

Libraries are ideal partners for co-location, offering welcoming and accessible spaces at the heart of their communities. This approach delivers better value for money by reducing the running costs previously associated with maintaining multiple sites, while enabling services to work more closely together and reach new audiences. Investment in refreshed layouts and furniture has improved library buildings and supported partner services. For residents, co-location provides easier access to multiple services in one place, supporting discovery, self-help, and prevention for improved life outcomes. This strengthens libraries as community hubs and anchors of the high streets.

Case study: Post Office Plus



Post Office Plus is a new concept from Post Office which is bringing a wider range of trusted, face-to-face services into high street branches. Customers can currently book appointments with specialist providers for support with important and sometimes complex needs, including employment support, household bills and connectivity, wills and estate planning, bereavement and digital skills. By offering these services in familiar local settings, Post Office Plus can help people access practical support closer to home, while creating new reasons to visit their high streets. It also makes flexible use of existing branch space, enabling different organisations to establish a local presence without each needing to operate separate permanent premises.

“People often need personal guidance when making important decisions about later life or dealing with the loss of someone close to them. Our partnership with Post Office Plus combines Octopus Legacy’s specialist expertise with the accessibility and familiarity of local post offices, making it easier for people to get support face to face in the heart of their community. It is an exciting example of how new partnerships can bring valuable services back onto high streets and ensure they continue to meet people’s changing needs.” Sam Grice, Founder and CEO of Octopus Legacy

The first two Post Office Plus locations are open in Barnsley and Derby. A further eight locations are planned by the end of 2026, including Bishop’s Stortford, Chesham, Loughborough, Palmers Green, Plymouth, Sheffield, Wellingborough and Sevenoaks. Most of these branches will be operated by independent postmasters, supporting them to diversify their businesses, respond to local needs and bring additional services and activity onto the high street. Post Office intends to open up to a further 20 locations by the end of March 2027.

Following a successful trial and subject to the right partnerships, Post Office has an ambition to expand Post Office Plus to hundreds of locations by the end of this Parliament. Expansion on this scale could widen access to essential services, support the long-term sustainability of local branches and generate additional high street activity, contributing to more diverse, resilient and service-led town centres.

Pillar 3: Vibrant culture, leisure, hospitality and entertainment — reasons to get together

96. **Successful high streets are more than places to shop or access services. They are destinations that reflect local identity and give people compelling reasons to visit, spend time and return. Hospitality, culture, leisure, hair and beauty services and entertainment create opportunities for social connection, support local jobs and businesses, and help sustain activity throughout the day, evening and weekend.**

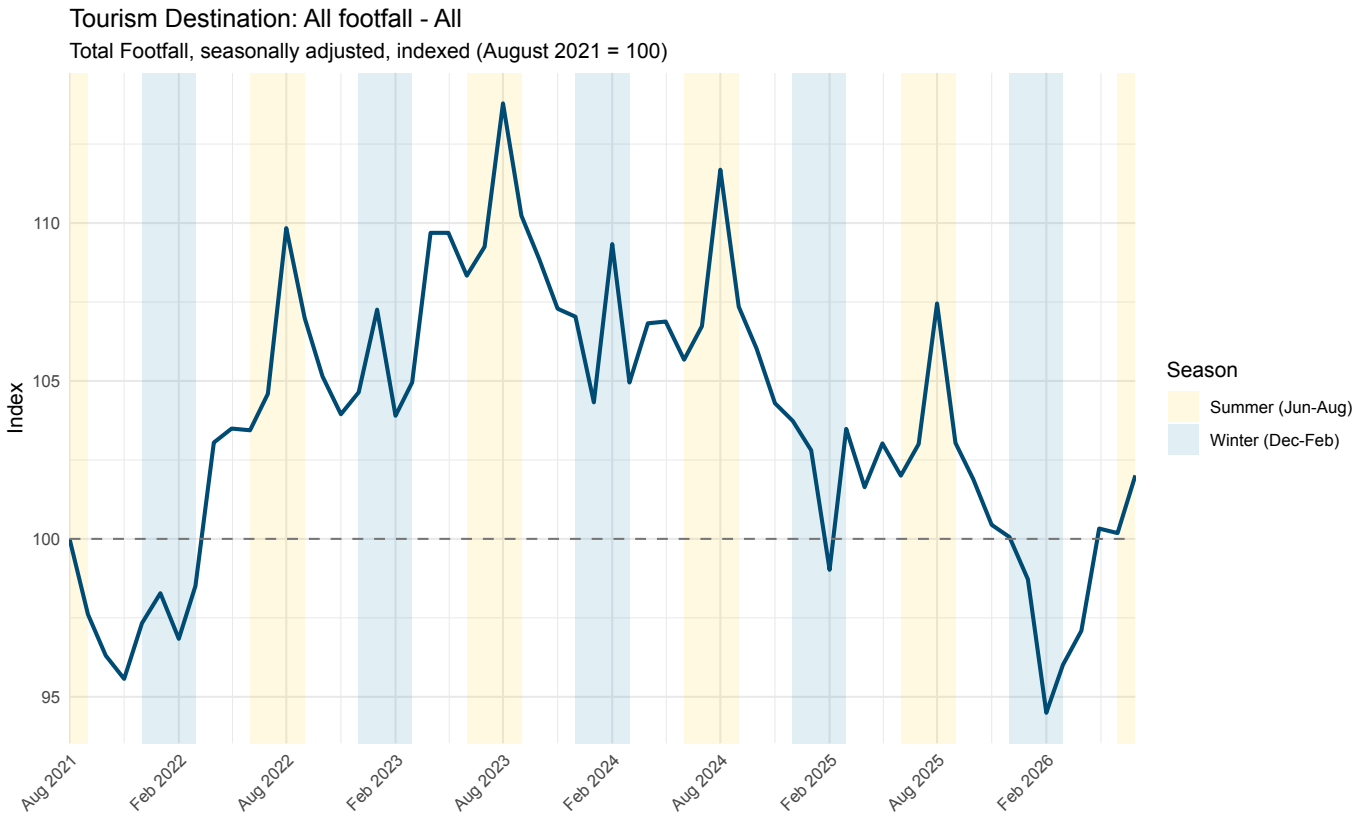
97. Consumer behaviour has changed significantly. Online shopping now accounts for more than 28% of retail spending, compared with just 4% in 2008,[27] reducing demand for many forms of physical retail. At the same time, consumers increasingly value experiences, with around 31% of people now reporting that they visit high streets primarily for social purposes rather than shopping.[28]

98. As a result, successful high streets are becoming more diverse. Retail remains important, but it increasingly sits alongside hospitality, culture, leisure, health services, workspaces and community activity. Hairdressers, health and beauty businesses, cafés and restaurants are now among the largest occupier categories,[29] reflecting growing demand for experiences, services and social interaction.

99. The most resilient high streets are those that build on their distinctive local character and assets to create activity throughout the day, evening and year. Places with a broader mix of uses are generally better able to adapt to changing consumer behaviour, while local leaders should take account of challenges such as seasonality, fluctuating visitor demand and changing work patterns.

100. Government will support this transition. The National Planning Policy Framework maintains and strengthens the role of town centres at the heart of communities while supporting them to diversify and adapt to changing patterns of retail and leisure demand. Local plans should promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres, while the town-centre-first approach, sequential test and impact assessment continue to direct development towards existing centres.

Figure 2: Footfall in tourism destinations is highly seasonal[30]



Total monthly footfall in tourism destinations, seasonally adjusted[31] and indexed August 2021 = 100, 2021-26

Case study: Thanet District Council unlocks vacancy using High Street Rental Auctions



Thanet District Council is providing early evidence of the transformative impact that High Street Rental Auctions can have in struggling coastal communities. Following the designation of high streets in Margate, Ramsgate and Cliftonville, all classified as Tourism destinations within the high street typology, the council achieved early success seeing a reduction of 10 long-term vacant commercial units compared with 2025 levels, despite not yet taking a single property to auction. The prospect of intervention alone prompted landlords to market vacant premises, engage with the council and bring properties back into use.

The powers have also driven direct re-engagement from previously inactive landlords in Cliftonville, unblocking stalled negotiations across prominent town centre sites and accelerating premises back into productive use. Thanet's experience demonstrates that High Street Rental Auctions are already acting as a powerful catalyst for regeneration, helping councils tackle persistent vacancy, strengthen town centres and restore confidence in coastal high streets.

Supporting culture, leisure, and a thriving visitor economy

101. **Culture, leisure, hospitality and markets help turn high streets into destinations. Alongside retail and services, they create reasons to visit, stay longer and return, supporting local jobs, spending and investment.**

102. The forthcoming Visitor Economy Growth Strategy will set out how government will work with mayors, Local Visitor Economy Partnerships and the sector to grow tourism in every part of the country. The two strategies are designed to work together to support high streets as destinations for visitors as well as residents.

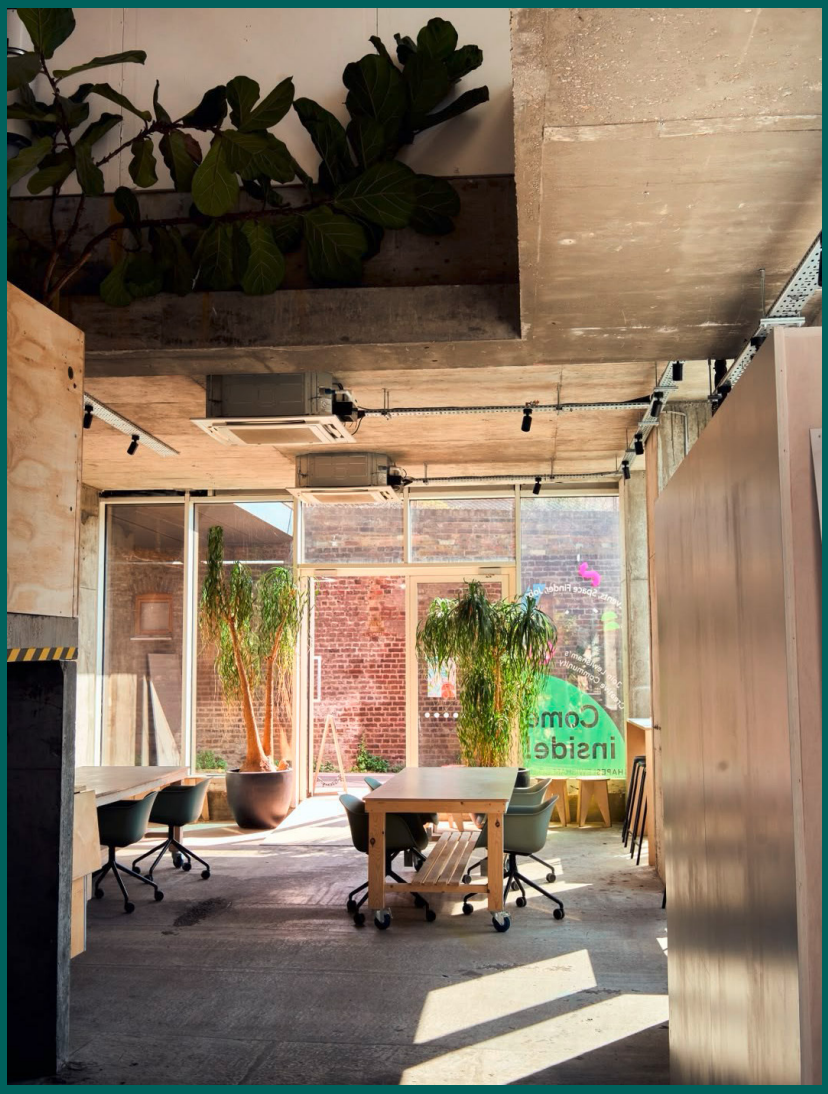
103. Their contribution extends beyond economics: cultural and leisure assets foster social connection, strengthen local identity and help attract and retain residents, visitors and businesses. The impact can be significant. Large live music events generate over £100 of additional local spending per attendee,[32] more than 98% of cinemagoers undertake other activities as part of their visit,[33] and markets can increase footfall by between 15% and 27%.[34] Cultural institutions already have a strong presence on high streets, with 75% of Arts Council-funded buildings located on or within a five-minute walk of one,[35] while 62% of adults say cultural experiences on the high street give them a sense of pride in their local area.[36]

104. A strong cultural, leisure and hospitality offer also contributes to wider economic growth by making places attractive locations in which to live, work, invest and start a business.

105. Place-based cultural programmes can strengthen local identity, generate footfall and create new economic opportunities. The UK Town of Culture and UK City of Culture competitions are supporting places to use culture as a driver of regeneration, building on examples such as Bradford 2025. Museums, galleries, libraries and heritage assets also act as important anchors for high streets, generating visitor spend, preserving local identity and bringing historic assets back into productive use.

106. We are supporting this through **£1.5 billion of investment in arts, culture, heritage and creative industries through Arts Everywhere,** alongside a **£45 million Music Growth Package** to support grassroots music venues, rehearsal spaces and recording studios.

London's Creative Enterprise Zones



The Mayor of London's Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZs) help artists, freelancers and creative SMEs to put down roots and thrive. By providing affordable workspace, business support and opportunities for enterprise growth, the zones strengthen London's creative industries, which generate more than £60 billion annually. Developed by the Mayor and delivered in partnership with boroughs, the programme is expected to deliver 71,000 sqm of affordable creative workspace by 2026 and support more than 1,000 creative businesses, including a significant proportion of diverse-led enterprises.

The CEZ programme demonstrates how planning, regeneration and local economic development policies, cross-sector partnerships and community engagement can support creative clusters, stimulate investment, provide affordable workspace, create jobs and strengthen local high streets. Boroughs have embedded creative industries within local growth strategies, place-based regeneration programmes and skills initiatives, enabling the development of tailored interventions that respond to the needs of local creatives and increasing opportunities for residents.

In the New Cross and Deptford Creative Enterprise Zone, SHAPESLewisham provides a free community space for creative collaboration near Deptford High Street. Run by Studio Raw and Arts Network, the space supports events, business networking and cultural activity, helping to increase footfall on the high street and strengthen connections between local communities and independent businesses. The initiative demonstrates how a thriving creative ecosystem can contribute to high street revitalisation, community cohesion and inclusive local economic growth. The space had previously been empty since being built 11 years ago, and Studio Raw worked with the Council to access UK Shared Prosperity Funding to undertake minimal capital works to support the opening of the site on a two-year meanwhile use from Landsec (previously U&I).

Supporting hospitality and a vibrant evening economy

107. **Hospitality and leisure businesses are central to vibrant high streets.** We are providing £10 million through the Hospitality Grant Scheme to support innovation, productivity, skills and regeneration. Leisure uses are also major footfall generators, with gyms, pools and leisure centres attracting more than 600 million visits annually,[37] creating regular opportunities for spending elsewhere on the high street. To support these facilities, we are investing at least £400 million in grassroots sports and leisure infrastructure.

108. We also want to help businesses make better use of public space. We will increase the maximum term for pavement licences, explore a statutory minimum term and give greater recognition to outdoor hospitality within the licensing framework, helping to support al fresco dining and café culture while protecting accessibility.

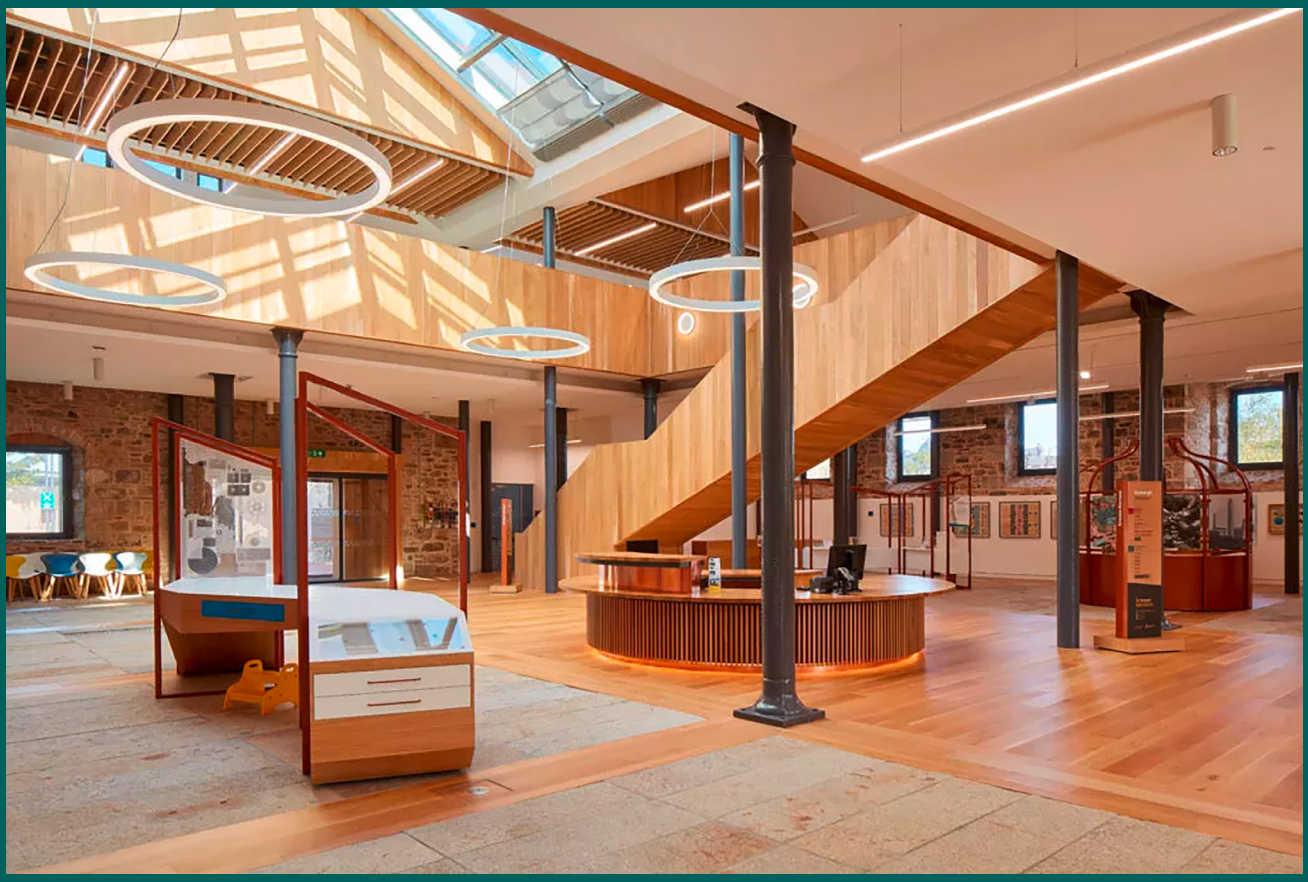
109. A thriving evening and night-time economy can extend activity beyond traditional retail hours, increase spending and make better use of town-centre assets.

110. Last year, the industry-led Licensing Policy Taskforce, co-chaired by government, made a number of recommendations on delivering effective change in the licensing system that fosters vibrant hospitality, night-time economy, creative and cultural industries. Building on the work of this taskforce, we will explore how licensing can better support economic growth and vibrant high streets while maintaining appropriate safeguards. This includes considering putting the National Licensing Policy Framework for the hospitality and leisure sectors on a statutory footing, so that the system can operate more proportionately and consistently for businesses, particularly in the hospitality sector.

111. Further measures, including enabling digital proof of age, simplifying licensing processes through wider regulatory reform and exploring proportionate changes that support the hospitality sector, are helping strengthen the role of high streets as destinations for culture, hospitality and entertainment.

112. Alongside licensing reform, we will take forward recommendations from the Small Business Regulatory Taskforce to reduce burdens on hospitality and other small businesses. Measures include digitising and standardising licence applications, improving access to local regulatory advice through Growth Hubs and supporting businesses to comply with regulatory requirements more easily. These reforms form part of our commitment to reduce administrative burdens on business by 25% by the end of this Parliament.

Case study: Redruth



Redruth, a Tourism Destination, provides a strong example of long-term, culture-led regeneration, using heritage, creative industries and community-led activity to reposition a declining post-industrial town. Once one of the most deprived areas in England, Redruth has used its mining heritage and creative sector growth to drive town centre renewal and rebuild civic identity.

Heritage sites have been transformed. Kresen Kernow archive centre was once a derelict brewery but is now home to the world's largest collection of documents, books, maps and photographs related to Cornwall's history.

The town's evolution has been enabled by civic organisations like Redruth Revival, a Heritage Development Trust. They brought the historic Buttermarket back to life with extensive restoration and repurposing, funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund, Architectural Heritage Fund and Historic England. Its courtyard now bustles with independent street food kitchens, an art gallery, retail space, offices, events and community activities.

Case Study: Greater Manchester Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) programme



Greater Manchester continues to lead one of the most established Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) programmes in the UK, with three established MDCs and four emerging MDCs that will focus on accelerating town centre and high street regeneration and growth. The programme brings together local authorities, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), government and private sector partners through dedicated delivery vehicles, supported by specialist capacity, regional funding and alignment with the Good Growth Fund. The programme is underpinned by over £10m of GMCA revenue investment, helping to bolster expertise, unlock complex sites, coordinate infrastructure and attract private sector capital.

The success of Stockport MDC, the first established MDC, demonstrates the value of this approach. Since 2019, it has helped deliver around 1,200 new homes, secured over £600m of private investment, delivered 170,000 sq ft of Grade A office space, and progressed transformational projects including the Stockport Interchange, Weir Mill and new affordable housing. It has also contributed to revitalising the high street retail economy, including Underbanks which is now a thriving cluster of independent shops, cafes and restaurants. These investments have strengthened the town centre by increasing employment activity, supporting footfall and spending, bringing underused sites back into productive use, and enhancing Stockport's attractiveness as a place to live, work, visit and invest.

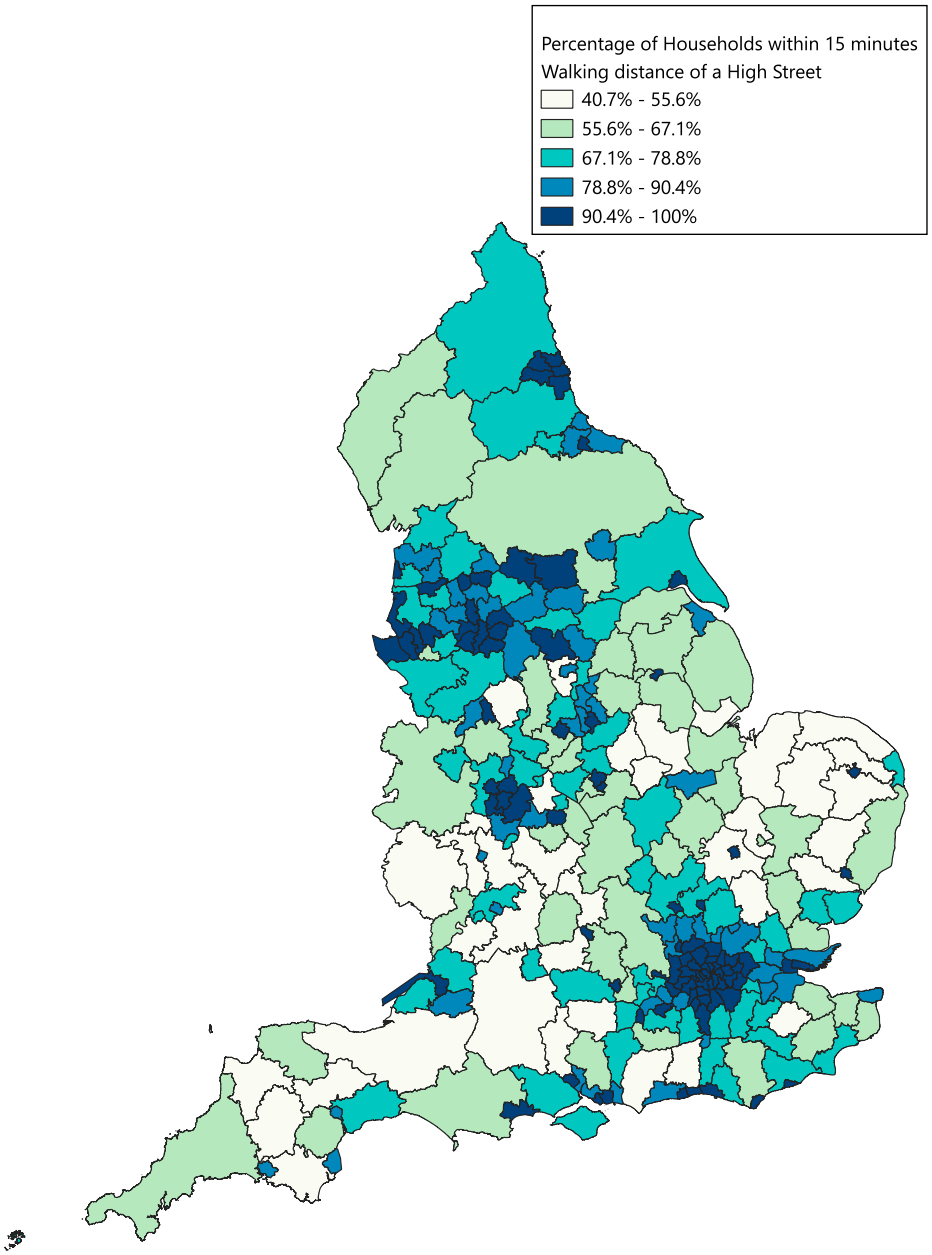
Pillar 4: Easy access and connectivity — reasons to explore

113. **High street success is highly dependent on their catchment size, and therefore their connectivity to the people and communities that use them. High streets should be easy to reach, navigate and enjoy, whether people travel by walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport or driving.**

114. Routes into and around them should be integrated, safe, accessible, attractive and clearly signposted. Well-designed streets and public realm, pedestrianisation, prioritisation of sustainable transport and proportionate traffic management can make centres more attractive, increase footfall, improve health and wellbeing, and create space for businesses, events and social activity to create sustainable, inclusive and popular places that drive growth.

Figure 3: Urban areas have much stronger walking access to high streets[38]

Share of households within a 15-minute walk of a high street across local authorities in England, 2026

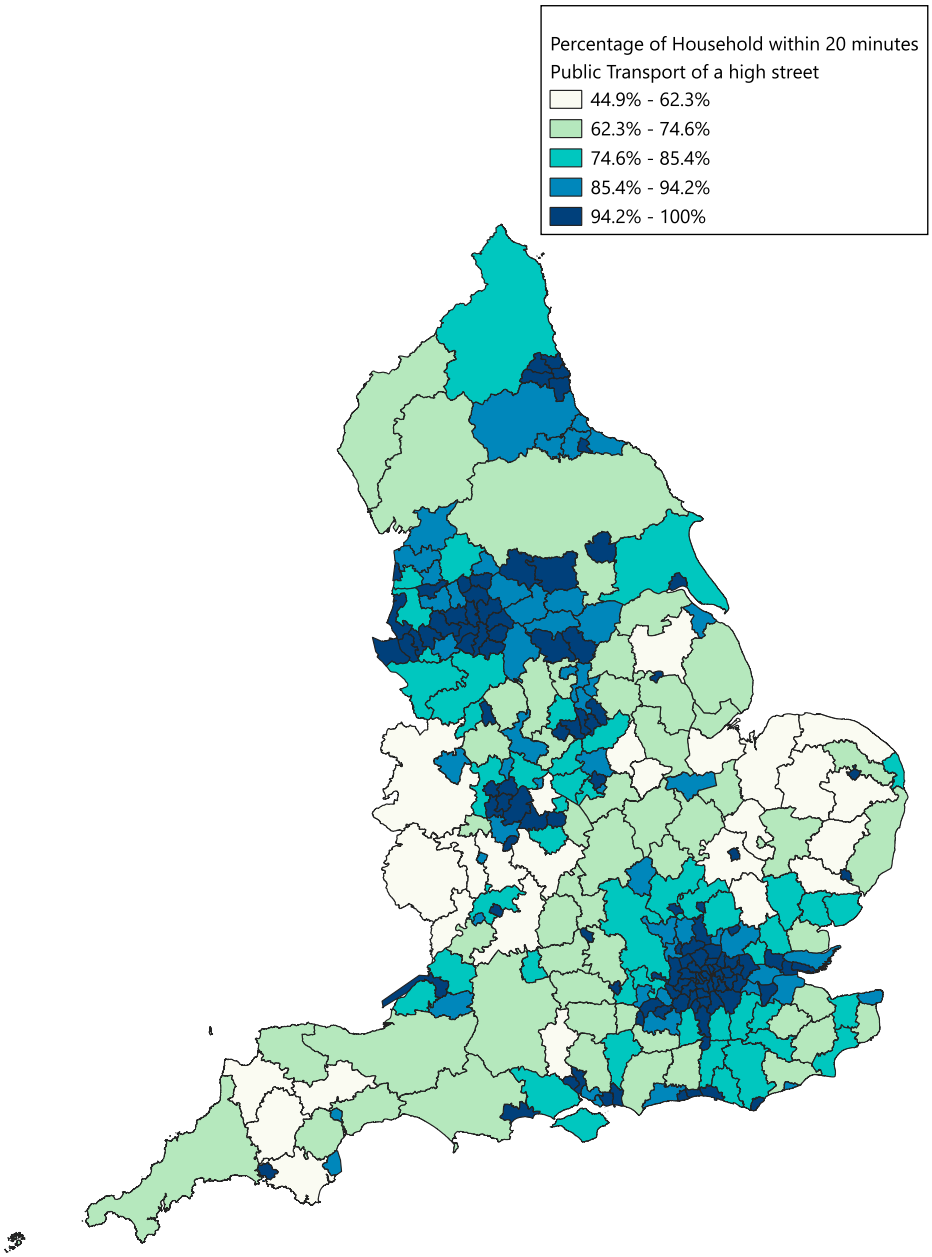


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115. Access to high streets varies significantly across the country. While many households live within easy reach of a high street, connectivity is generally highest in urban areas and lower in rural and more sparsely populated parts of England. 87% of the households in England can access a high street by public transport within 20 minutes.[39] But this varies significantly across the country from 45% in Mid Devon, to 100% in parts of London. These differences matter because they influence who can access jobs, services, culture and everyday amenities without relying on a car. Improving connectivity can help widen catchment areas, increase footfall and ensure that more people can benefit from thriving local centres.

Figure 4: Rural areas face the greatest gaps in public transport access to high streets[40]

Share of households within 20 minutes of a high street by public transport across local authorities in England, 2026



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116. Good street design improves connectivity and helps people explore the whole town centre. Clear maps, lighting, signage and wayfinding should be accessible and legible, linking shops, services, transport hubs, cultural venues and public spaces and helping people navigate safely and confidently during the day and after dark. Seating, accessible toilets, heritage interpretation, points of interest and green routes can encourage visitors to stay longer and support more businesses.

117. Interventions must reflect local circumstances, prioritise sustainable transport modes, but also ensure that the full movement needs of the centre are met, including, but not limited to the needs of pedestrians, disabled access, cyclists, public transport shared mobility

flexible transport options, deliveries and servicing, through traffic and links with surrounding communities. The Manual for Streets should be used to inform design decisions to facilitate this.

118. Access to green space is recognised to improve people's health and well-being and connecting people with nature should be an integrated aspect of high street planning. The Nature Towns and Cities programme provides examples of improvements in and around high-streets with examples of street trees, community growing spaces, urban woods, historic public parks, river and canal sides and recreation grounds.

119. The built and natural environment plays a critical role in healthy ageing and maintaining independence. The Chief Medical Officer's 2023 report on health in an ageing society highlights the importance of adapting places to help people remain independent, connected and active as they age.[41] High-quality public spaces, accessible transport, access to green spaces and opportunities for social connection and physical activity can help people live healthier lives for longer.

Case study: Pedestrianisation in Shrewsbury



Shrewsbury has used pedestrianisation to test a different approach to its town centre, restricting general traffic on key streets during the day and creating more space for walking and town-centre activity. The initiative has been used to support the longer-term ambitions of the Shrewsbury Big Town Plan, with the approach refined to balance pedestrian priority with disabled access, public transport and servicing.

The experience shows how pedestrianisation can be introduced through trials and adapted in response to local needs. Evidence reported by Living Streets found that weekend pedestrianisation in Shrewsbury was associated with 25% higher sales, demonstrating the potential for well-designed pedestrian schemes to support town-centre businesses as well as improve the public realm.

Active travel

120. **Active travel plays a key role in supporting thriving high streets and local economic growth.** By prioritising active modes and making journeys easier and safer for people to walk, wheel or cycle to shops and services, it increases footfall and helps create more attractive and vibrant places. Research shows that people who walk to the high street typically visit twice as frequently and spend up to 40% more compared to those who drive.

121. Active travel supports our health and wellbeing. Making walking, wheeling and cycling part of everyday journeys can increase physical activity, improve physical and mental health, improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. Safe and accessible routes are important, particularly for children, older adults and disabled people, helping to increase access to education, employment, services and social connections. This supports the Government's 10 Year Health Plan's shift from sickness to prevention by enabling healthier lives and healthier local environments.

122. Our ambitious third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (CWIS3), alongside a projected £4.5 billion of funding across government including the Pride in Place programme, sets ambitious targets to enable more people to walk, wheel and cycle. CWIS3 recognises the contribution that active travel makes to health and wellbeing, and reducing health inequalities. The strategy also outlines the work Active Travel England will undertake by 2030 to plan and begin delivering a national active travel network which will help connect people to high streets, schools, workplaces and public transport, maximising the value of investment and enabling more people to choose active travel. ctive travel

Public transport

123. **Our strategy for integrated transport, Better Connected, sets out our vision for a transport system that is safe, reliable, affordable and accessible, so people can get on in life and make the journeys they need to easily.** It brings together walking, wheeling and cycling, public transport and roads into a single, people-focussed plan, helping to make sure that national government, local leaders, operators and other transport partners are all working towards the same goal. This includes 40 fully funded commitments to be delivered this Parliament, including a £10m Integration Innovation Fund, live bus locations on Google Maps and the publication of an Accessible Travel Charter. National government cannot deliver transport reform alone which is why Better Connected is built on the principle of working in partnership with local leaders and experts.

124. We also know that transport needs to be safe and secure for people to feel able to use it. Government has already given powers to local transport authorities, via the Bus Services Act 2025, to put in place byelaws on their bus networks, aimed at addressing anti-social behaviour. We have published new guidance for authorities on how to make use of these powers to tackle anti-social behaviour on their networks.

Case study: Waltham Forest Mini-Holland Programme



The London Borough of Waltham Forest transformed streets and town centre areas through new walking and cycling routes, public spaces and traffic reduction measures. The programme helped create safer, more attractive local environments, encouraging people to walk and cycle more, spend time outdoors and use local high streets. Evaluation found increased walking and cycling, higher levels of physical activity and improvements in residents' perceptions of their local area, demonstrating how changes to the built environment can support health and wellbeing alongside economic regeneration.

Parking

125. **While local authorities should consider opportunities for improvements in walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport, affordable, accessible parking is important to ensuring good footfall and the needs of people who work on high streets.** This is true, particularly where public transport is limited or does not serve early, late or irregular shifts.

126. However, motorists often encounter a fragmented parking landscape, with differing payment systems, requirements and enforcement arrangements across locations. Better Connected commits to working with local authorities to roll out the National Parking Platform, a system that makes parking simpler by allowing drivers to use their preferred parking app across participating locations, rather than needing different apps in different areas. The Government is committed to raising standards across the private parking sector and has introduced a new Code of Practice, supported by a robust compliance framework for operators.

127. We would encourage local authorities to consider whether free car parking on a targeted basis could increase footfall. They will want to take account of the potential economic benefits against the lost revenue from parking fees, as well as potential unintended consequences. We welcome councils testing this on a limited basis, as West Suffolk Council is doing currently, before deciding whether to roll it out permanently or more widely. We also would encourage local authorities to work closely with electric vehicle charge point operators to ensure people have easy access to electric vehicle charging points in both public car parks and other suitable on street parking areas, modal interchanges (like stations) or mobility hubs.

Case study: Andrew Road Mobility Hub – Halesowen



Opened in August 2024, the Andrew Road Mobility Hub in Halesowen, an Office hub in the West Midlands, was delivered by Transport for West Midlands in partnership with Dudley Council and Black Country Transport. Located adjacent to Halesowen bus station, the hub includes a car club vehicle, location for public electric vehicle charging, West Midlands Cycle Hire bikes, and improved travel information. It also features covered seating, planting and public cycle storage for the community. The hub was designed to fit within existing parking bays and small public spaces, enabling flexible rollout. It is an award-winning scheme, recognised for its high standard of integration, accessibility, and sustainable transport provision.

Pillar 5: Safe, clean and welcoming — reasons to return

128. **When people are asked about the state of their high street, they often start with how it looks and feels. In 2023, 38% of people agreed their high street is "a shell of what it used to be",[42] and in 2020, the words most associated with high streets were "sad" and "bleak".[43]**

129. Too many empty units is the most commonly cited factor making high streets worse (63%), while cleanliness and improved range and quality of shops are among the main things people say make them better.[44]

130. Many people do not feel as safe as they should on their high street, and they don't feel it offers them what they need, and that puts them off from going. In February 2026, 19% of people reported that concerns about anti-social behaviour limited visits to their town or city centre, while 16% reported concerns about crime limiting visits.[45]

131. If we are going to revive high streets, we need to make sure they are well-designed, maintained and inclusive throughout the day and into the evening with the ability to support a thriving night-time economy. Spaces must be safe and secure for everyone and criminality must be tackled. Local leaders should explore ways to activate empty spaces and create attractive, welcoming environments for a range of age groups and purposes.

Tackling vacancy

132. **Vacancy, dereliction and visible neglect can undermine confidence in a high street, discourage investment and reduce footfall.** The Government is giving councils stronger powers and practical funding to intervene where properties remain empty and owners are not acting.

133. Our £210 million Community Assets Programme includes £125 million for 60 local authorities to tackle prominent vacant and derelict buildings and £10 million to expand High Street Rental Auctions.

134. High Street Rental Auctions enable councils to auction leases of up to five years for eligible commercial high street premises that have been vacant for at least 366 days within a 24-month period. More than 50 local authorities are actively engaged in implementing High Street Rental Auctions, and more than 80 vacant properties have been brought back into use or are being fitted out. The prospect of an auction can itself encourage a landlord to engage and secure a letting voluntarily.

135. Where a more fundamental intervention is required, councils can use compulsory purchase powers to acquire empty or underused properties. The Government has strengthened and streamlined the compulsory purchase process and has also reformed Empty Dwelling Management Orders to help bring vacant property back into use and support town centre renewal.

136. Heritage buildings are among the greatest assets many high streets possess. The best way to protect a historic building is to keep it in active use. We are exploring whether further changes are needed to accelerate the reuse of vacant and underused listed buildings, including whether current incentives and reliefs support productive regeneration.

137. We are also simplifying planning processes, streamlining decision-making and ensuring the planning framework supports the reuse of vacant and underused heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework now makes clear that bringing vacant or underused listed buildings back into long-term use is an important public benefit in planning decisions.

138. High street occupation does not always need to be permanent. Meanwhile uses provide a low-risk way to test new ideas, activate vacant premises and support community and cultural activity. We will explore whether refreshed guidance and template leases can encourage greater use of meanwhile space by councils and landlords.

139. Local authorities play a critical role in tackling these issues and are encouraged to maintain commercial vacancy registers so they can intervene early and target support effectively.

Shopfront design, litter, and greening

140. **On too many high streets, new shops are often poor-quality retrofits that do not fit with the local character or design, making high streets and town centres less desirable places to visit. To help local authorities combat this we will develop a Model Design Code for shopfronts in high streets and town centres.**

141. This will provide a simple design tool that councils across the country could add to and adopt locally. This will mean that, rather than Local Authorities starting from scratch, each will be able to apply and adopt a core set of design requirements, that every new shop front will need to comply with. This will save money, reduce duplication and allow more focus locally on designing for the local character.

142. Litter and environmental neglect reduce the attractiveness of high streets and undermine civic pride. We have refreshed the Code of Practice on Litter and Refuse, strengthened guidance on the use of litter enforcement powers and will review guidance for businesses on tackling litter associated with food and drink consumed on the go.

143. People consistently say they want greener high streets. Trees and green infrastructure can improve the appearance of places, provide shade and cooling, support air quality and encourage people to spend more time in town centres. Through the new £53 million Community Trees Fund, we will support the planting of up to 500,000 trees between 2027 and 2030, alongside wider action to improve access to nature close to where people live.

Tyldesley High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ)



This was a community-led scheme (led by For Tyldesley Community Interest Company) to revitalise and transform Tyldesley, delivered by Historic England and funded through the Government's Future High Streets programme. The projects undertaken have successfully regenerated and restored local historic character through physical improvements and cultural and community activities. The Tyldesley HSHAZ scheme was allocated £1,540,000 funding from Historic England for the capital strand and £100,000 from Historic England for the cultural strand. Capital works included a total of 16 building fronts. 9 historic buildings or heritage assets were repaired/conserved, 16 historic shopfronts restored, 10 sqm of public realm improvements, 329 sqm of vacant or underused commercial floor space brought back into use, 2 new residential units created and more.

The focus of the cultural programme was to encourage collaboration of all generations in Tyldesley and encourage a community that is proud of its heritage. Some of the main activities undertaken throughout the Tyldesley scheme included a festival, a community radio station and a mural created by local school children. Following the completion of the HSHAZ programme, the CIC has maintained its commitment to driving positive change in partnership with the Tyldesley community. The benefits of the scheme continue to be felt, with the community radio station and festival set to continue, complemented by new initiatives and a growing number of businesses opening along the high street.

Rooting out organised crime

144. **Legitimate businesses are the engine of successful high streets, creating jobs, services and places people want to spend time. But in some places the legitimate economy is increasingly being undermined by organised crime.** Criminally controlled businesses are used to launder illicit funds, evade tax, exploit workers and sell illegal goods. The National Crime Agency estimates that at least £12 billion of criminal cash is generated in the UK each year, with around £1 billion laundered through high street businesses including mini-marts, barber shops, vape stores and sweet shops.[46] This activity hollows out communities, undercuts honest traders and corrodes public confidence.

145. Addressing this threat is a priority for Government. In May 2026, we announced a £30 million crackdown on organised crime operating through cash-intensive businesses, including barber shops, vape stores, mini-marts and sweet shops. This includes an enhanced law enforcement response, a new multi-agency intelligence and coordination cell within the National Crime Agency, and the creation of a High Street Organised Crime Unit in the Home Office to coordinate activity across Government and strengthen our response to this threat.

146. Earlier this year, we announced that we will strengthen powers to close dodgy shops, giving local authorities and the police stronger powers to shut down premises linked to criminal activity on the high street. This will be supported by improved access to data. Criminals thrive when information is fragmented and enforcement bodies cannot see the full picture. We are tackling this head-on, improving access to key data, breaking down silos between agencies, and strengthening coordination so action against high street illegality is faster, smarter and more effective.

147. Too often dodgy shops close, just to reappear in a different guise. We are cracking down on company directors who abuse the system in this way with the Abusive Phoenixism Taskforce announced in the November 2025 Budget. The Insolvency Service, Companies House and HMRC are working in partnership to identify and act against directors who use successive companies to avoid debts and sanctions, ensuring they cannot resurface and continue trading under new entities. We are reforming Companies House, with new mandatory identity verification for directors, tighter controls on who can file company information, and enhanced data-sharing will help to identify and act on criminals including those abusing our high streets. This is alongside a national campaign to improve awareness of high street crime. HMRC is delivering more than 30,000 high street-linked compliance interventions during 2026/27, targeting a range of tax and duty risks. These range from targeted compliance activity through to investigations and enforcement action where appropriate.

148. To further strengthen protections against organised crime, we will make it harder for criminal enterprises to set up on the high street. This includes exploring approaches taken by other countries and the role of landlords, who are uniquely placed to help in the prevention and detection of crime as well as play a key role in the response.

149. It is vital that those conducting activity to tackle high street organised crime have a complete understanding of the signs of criminality and the levers they can pull in response. New training to help front-line staff in Trading Standards tackle organised crime and protect legitimate business is now being rolled out with a view to extending this to other agencies going forward. We are also looking to ensure all front-line officers receive appropriate training and support, including neighbourhood police officers who know their local high streets and are often the first to spot when something is not right.

150. Trading Standards play a vital role in tackling criminality and supporting the health of high streets. Alongside the Tobacco and Vapes Act, the government is investing up to £30 million of new funding for enforcement agencies annually until 2028/29, including Trading Standards, Border Force and HMRC, to tackle the illicit and underage sale of tobacco and vapes, supporting the implementation of the Act. This includes recruitment of 120 new apprentices to ensure Trading Standards have a sustainable workforce for the future. A further £2m per year is being made available until 2028/2029 to support Trading Standards in their efforts to combat High Street Organised crime.

151. More broadly, the Anti-Money Laundering and Asset Recovery (AMLAR) Strategy 2026-29[47] will strengthen the UK's anti-money laundering system by improving financial intelligence, enhancing information sharing, and increasing the capability of law enforcement agencies to detect, investigate and disrupt money laundering. The reforms in AMLAR will provide a stronger intelligence and enforcement response, including a new national financial intelligence service and action to tackle the professional money laundering networks that facilitate organised crime across the country. Over time, this stronger system will support more effective interventions against criminals who abuse high street businesses to launder the proceeds of crime, helping to protect legitimate businesses and strengthen confidence in local communities.

Retail crime and anti-social behaviour

152. **Crime and anti-social behaviour impose significant economic and social costs on high streets.** Around 19% of people report concerns about anti-social behaviour limiting visits to town and city centres, while 16% report concerns about crime[48]. Retail crime alone cost businesses more than £583 million in known theft and damage in 2024/25[49], and around 510,000 shop theft offences were recorded in England and Wales in the year ending March 2026[50]. While this represented a 4% decrease on the previous year, levels remain 48% higher than in 2023.

153. Through the Retail Crime Forum and the Tackling Retail Crime Together Strategy, we are working with policing and retailers to tackle retail crime more effectively. This includes a £5 million investment in OPAL, improvements to digital reporting through Single Online Home and a clearer legal framework for facial recognition and biometric technologies. We have also introduced a standalone offence of assaulting a retail worker and removed the previous £200 threshold for shop theft, sending a clear message that all retail crime will be taken seriously.

154. We are restoring confidence in local policing through the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee, ensuring every neighbourhood has named and contactable officers. From 26 October, a new package of measures in the Crime and Policing Act will give police, councils and local partners stronger powers to tackle anti-social behaviour more quickly and effectively. These include new Respect Orders, extending the maximum duration of dispersal directions from 48 to 72 hours, stronger closure powers for premises linked to persistent nuisance and disorder, and increased penalties for breaches of key anti-social behaviour powers. Together, these measures will help local agencies protect high streets, support businesses and restore public confidence in town centres.

155. A relatively small number of prolific offenders are responsible for a disproportionate amount of offending, accounting for 52% of convictions while representing only 9% of offenders.[51] **We are prioritising activity across government to take a targeted and coordinated approach to intervening with prolific offenders**, supporting policing and local partners to reduce persistent offending and improve safety on high streets and in communities.

Addressing this threat is essential so that robust policing of town centres does not simply displace anti-social behaviour and low-level crime to other parts of the community. Our approach will provide demonstrable support to policing and wider local partners, enabling them to intervene more effectively with the individuals responsible for the highest levels of offending and harm.

156. Local areas also need effective tools to address alcohol-related crime and anti-social behaviour. We will continue to explore reforms that help local areas respond to street drinking, disorder and alcohol-related harms while supporting well-run hospitality businesses and vibrant town centres.

157. **We are also backing action on tool theft**, providing £2 million to the National Business Crime Centre to support delivery of a dedicated action plan.

Case Study: Liverpool



Liverpool is delivering a city-wide, partnership-led approach to reducing alcohol-related harm. Through its new Alcohol Strategy, the city is building on positive progress by bringing together public health, healthcare, community safety, police, businesses and local communities to prevent harm, support recovery and create safer, healthier communities where people can enjoy Liverpool's vibrant social life.

Case Study: Bexleyheath



Bexleyheath town centre, an Everyday high street area within the high street typology, has reduced crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB) through a coordinated, multi-agency approach, combining targeted enforcement, visible policing, surveillance, and town centre activation.

Numerous steps to take back control:

- **Targeted neighbourhood policing:** There has been increased presence from Safer Neighbourhood Teams using intelligence-led hotspot patrols to go after violent crime and drug activity.
- **Enforcement powers:** Section 35 dispersal orders have been deployed to remove individuals causing disorder, alongside wider ASB tools such as case reviews for persistent issues.
- **CCTV:** The introduction of a data-led hybrid CCTV system (fixed and mobile cameras) targeting high-risk locations has deterred crime.
- **Partnerships:** The Community Safety Partnership has worked closely with the Business Improvement District, aligning policing, business engagement, and place management.
- **Events and markets:** Increased footfall from these events creates a safer environment on high streets.

Over the longer term, crime in Bexley has fallen by around 45%, with it remaining one of the lowest-crime boroughs in London (around 25–37% below the London average). Local improvements in Bexleyheath include year-on-year reductions in robbery and ASB, supported by targeted hotspot policing, which has been shown to reduce offences by 5–18% in comparable town centres.

Ending rough sleeping

158. **Sadly, many high streets are now also home to a population of rough sleepers.** No one in our society should have to suffer the injustice of living a life on the streets, deprived of shelter and security. As well as the human impact, this can also deter visitors and make it harder for businesses to attract footfall. The Government is launching a new national Rough Sleeping Programme, backed by £874 million, to ensure everyone has a route off the streets. This will provide immediate access to accommodation and support, while helping people move towards settled accommodation where appropriate, and funding intensive support for those with the most complex needs and experiences of long-term rough sleeping.

159. This builds on the National Plan to End Homelessness, which puts prevention at the heart of our approach. The Government is giving councils £2.7 billion in Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant funding over three years, which they can use flexibly to respond to local needs, including outreach services, Housing First, specialist mental health and addiction support, and employment opportunities. An additional £47 million is being provided for voluntary, community and faith organisations through the Ending Homelessness in Communities Fund, and £15 million for councils to test new approaches through the Long-Term Rough Sleeping Innovation Programme.

Pillar 6: A place to call home — reasons to move in

160. **If high streets are to continue being focal points of communities, they need to adapt and diversify to remain viable. High street performance is driven primarily by demand, and amid a historic, structural decline of large town centre retailers and other anchors, high streets need to find new ways to offer people what they want and need. Encouraging more town centre living where suitable is one way that we can revive high street footfall while meeting housing targets.**

161. This needs to be done in a considerate way with a focus on developing quality housing in a range of types and tenures. These need to be supported with services and infrastructure that sustain active, mixed and inclusive town centres. To succeed, we need to offer a desirable lifestyle that draws on the wider town-centre offer, including access to green space, leisure facilities, culture and heritage. This also means delivering homes in a way that protects existing businesses and communities, including through the 'agent of change principle'.

162. According to ONS, more than half of the addresses on British high streets are residential.[52] In 2020 residential accounted for between 11% of addresses on the high street in Redditch, West Midlands and around 75% in three London Boroughs.[53] Those local authorities with a notable residential element tend to feature a traditional configuration of shops at ground floor level, with flats above, or, as in the case of Portsmouth, there are purpose-built residential blocks, very near to high street locations.

163. The nature of high street living varies across the country. Small town centres tend to have more elderly residents. This is important for social connection and local planners should consider how to make these spaces as accessible as possible. This contrasts with major regional high streets that host a younger demographic, often students. Development plans should consider which housing tenures meet the needs of residents and ensure appropriate transport provision that prioritises sustainable transport modes and public service coverage.

Homes on the high street

164. **Building more homes on or adjacent to high streets and improving transport connectivity to support housing can boost footfall and vibrancy while contributing to housing targets.** To support local partners to deliver more housing in the most crucial areas, the Small Sites Aggregator programme has been established, bringing together small, publicly owned, brownfield plots, to attract private investment to build up to 10,000 new social rented homes a year.

165. Last month we announced the new ‘Your First Home’ scheme which will help tackle the deposit barrier for local first-time buyers who would be unable to afford their first home otherwise, helping open opportunities across the whole country including on high streets.

166. Our health is shaped by the places we live in. These homes should fit within public spaces and neighbourhoods designed to support the health and wellbeing of the local community.

167. There is a key role for heritage to play in unlocking more homes on and around the high street, and the government is working closely with Historic England to help realise this potential. This includes through their annual Heritage Investment Prospectus that showcases opportunities to developers, and through pilot initiatives such as Historic England’s work with Dudley Borough Council and West Midlands Combined Authority. This work seeks to encourage more housing in historic town centres, both above shops and in vacant buildings through the council’s housing-focused Heritage Action Zone. The first stage of the Dudley project included developing a toolkit to support the prioritisation of interventions and business case development. Historic England intends to make this toolkit available to support other areas in developing their own plans for high streets.

168. The government has made significant funding available to support housing, including through the Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land Fund to help unlock strategic development sites, and specifically makes provision for works to heritage assets. For example, brownfield funding is supporting Capital and Centric’s redevelopment of Gateshead’s Old Town Hall and Civic Quarter, including fully restoring the Grade II listed town hall and building 250 new homes on the site.

Case Study: Bacup Lancashire



Located within a Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zone, the former Lancashire & Yorkshire Bank is a landmark building in the town centre of Bacup. Originally opened in 1876, the building was in use as a bank until the 1970s, when it was turned into bedsits before being subject to a closure order. Considered to be one of the most beautiful buildings in the town, the community of Bacup were passionate about seeing the Grade II-listed building come back into use.

Valley Heritage, one of the Architectural Heritage Fund's (AHF) Heritage Development Trusts, acquired the building in 2019 with the support of a Heritage Impact Fund loan. The Trust drew up plans for the future of the building, and thanks to further funding from the AHF and National Lottery Heritage Fund, it now provides co-working space on the ground floor and in the basement, as well as four self-contained apartments on the upper floors for single young people who are either homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Turning underused buildings into quality homes

169. **Many places have an oversupply of retail space, that cannot be sustained by local demand leading to high vacancy rates where the market does not adjust.** Bringing underused space into residential use can be the right answer where there is high demand for homes. Increasing residential development on high streets can create more vibrant, mixed-use high streets. More people living locally provides a regular customer base for shops, cafes and services, supports activity at different times of the day and can bring underused buildings and upper floors back into productive use.

170. We want to ensure that there are high-quality conversions on high streets and avoid the proliferation of certain uses, such as Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs). We know that these can detract from the character of high streets, repel investment, and displace businesses.

171. Where these homes are delivered through permitted development rights, the new National Planning Policy Framework provides a more flexible framework for the use of Article 4 directions, allowing local planning authorities to remove relevant rights where it is necessary to protect local amenity or the wellbeing of an area. When an Article 4 direction is in place, this would mean, for example, any change of use to HMOs would require an application for planning permission, which must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area, enabling local people to comment.

172. The new National Planning Policy Framework supports town centres to grow and diversify in a way that reflects changing consumer behaviour and local need. Diversification should support vitality and viability, not replace economic activity or weaken the role and function of the centre. Well-designed housing in appropriate locations can increase footfall, support local services and help bring underused buildings back into productive use. Residential development should support, rather than undermine, the overall role and function of the town centre.

173. In considering planning applications for development in town centres, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that substantial weight should be given to the benefits of supporting the overall vitality and viability of the centre, including where this can be achieved through the diversification of uses, intensification and provision of residential accommodation (provided this would not conflict with policies in the development plan for specific locations).

174. The tax regime also supports the conversion of buildings into housing. Non-residential to residential conversions, for example converting a former mill into housing, and residential buildings that have been empty for at least two years, benefit from a 5% VAT rate.

Case study: Observer Building, Hastings



With support and funding from Historic England, Hastings Commons Community Interest Company has been able to revive and secure the future of the iconic Observer Building, which had been abandoned for 35 years. Extensive work, including a restored façade, concrete repairs and a new roof garden and terrace, has yielded a vibrant mixed-use space involving local community engagement to combat gentrification.

The Observer Building now boasts town centre capped-rent flats, affordable co-working units, events space alongside a gym and cafe and hosts numerous cultural events.

Helping homes and hospitality thrive together

175. **Whilst new development and more housing close to high streets is essential for greater sustainability, we need to ensure that the impact on existing businesses and community venues are managed correctly so that established night-time economies are protected.** The 'agent of change' principle states that the developers of new sites bear responsibility for providing suitable mitigation where there could be clashes with the operation of an existing business or community facility in the vicinity. The principle is firmly embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework which is the starting point for the preparation of development plans and a material consideration in planning decisions. We will publish new planning practice guidance on the 'agent of change' in due course, working with industry to ensure the principle is being properly and fairly applied for music venues and recording studios.

176. We also explore how to go further by giving local leaders powers to create hospitality or vibrancy zones, drawing on lessons from similar reforms in other jurisdictions, including New South Wales. This could enable a more tailored approach to managing noise and nuisance in designated areas, with regulatory decisions that better reflect local context and are applied consistently and proportionately. Our aim is to provide hospitality businesses with greater certainty and the conditions they need to succeed while protecting residents from unreasonable disturbance.

What comes next

177. **This strategy sets a clear direction of travel for high streets, but it is not the end of our work.** We will continue to work across government and with local leaders, businesses and communities to identify where further action is needed. We will use the forthcoming Rewiring the State Delivery Plan and future fiscal events to consider where additional powers, funding or reforms are needed to help places deliver lasting change. The new Place Regeneration Taskforce, part of the Office for the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, will continue to champion an ambitious approach to high street regeneration as part of its work. This High Streets Strategy reflects the Government's wider direction towards decisions being taken closer to the people and places they affect. The Rewiring the State Delivery Plan will soon set out the wider settlement of powers, funding and responsibilities across national, regional and local government, which will further support this strategy's implementation.

178. Success cannot be captured through a single national target. Different high streets serve different functions and face different challenges, meaning success will look different in different places. MHCLG will monitor a range of indicators, including persistent vacancy and public perceptions of local places and high streets, to understand whether the strategy is supporting healthier and more resilient high streets. These indicators will be considered alongside local evidence and evaluation to assess the impact of the strategy. The Government will also work with partners to improve the evidence base, definitions, and data available on the health and performance of high streets over time, including adding high street performance and/or perception questions to the community engagement survey.

179. Ultimately, the clearest test of success will be whether people have renewed confidence in their high streets and feel greater pride in the places where they live. Through the measures set out in this strategy, and fundamentally, the efforts and actions of the communities, councils, businesses and other partners, we will drive change and ultimately restore hope on the high street.

Annexes

High Street Typology Profiles

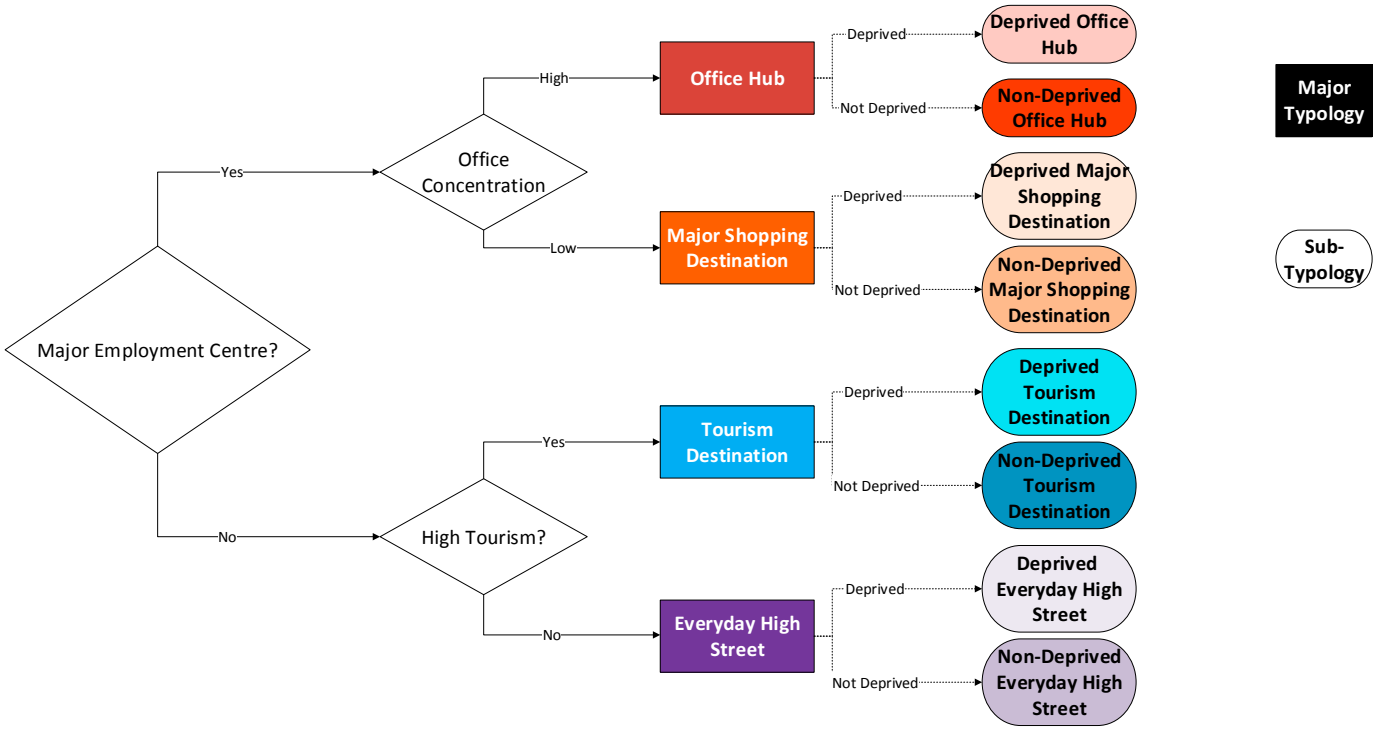
Methodology

High street typologies[54] have been developed to capture the different economic functions high streets perform and the different populations they serve. High streets are classified sequentially into four broad types: Office Hubs, Major Shopping Destinations, Tourism Destinations and Everyday High Streets. The classification uses data-driven thresholds designed to group together high streets with similar characteristics by minimising within typology differences on key identifying metrics, with each high street assigned to a single typology.

The typologies account for key characteristics:

- The local economic importance – whether the high street is located within a large employment centre, high street-related (major shopping destinations) or not (office hubs).
- Function of the high street – whether it serves workers (office hubs), visitors (tourism destinations and major shopping destinations), or local needs (everyday high streets).
- Local area deprivation[55] – an indicator of vulnerability of the high street.

The analysis combines data on the number and floorspace of commercial units on the high street, the concentration of nearby offices, tourism-related employment and local deprivation. It covers around 1,000 larger high streets with more than 50 commercial units, using Green Street Data & Analytics alongside Ordnance Survey, ONS tourism employment statistics and the English Indices of Deprivation.



The resulting groups were tested to check that high streets within each typology were sufficiently similar, and that the different typologies were meaningfully distinct. The framework is intended to identify broad patterns rather than provide a definitive classification of every individual high street. Some high streets will share characteristics with more than one type, particularly where they are close to the classification thresholds.

The spider graphs illustrate how the typologies differ across a range of characteristics relating to their socio-economic context, making it easier to see the distinctive profile of each type of high street. For the spider graphs, a lower score (closer to the centre) on a socio-economic metric, such as crime, employment, income and living environment, indicates higher deprivation. Higher latitude indicates a location further north, while higher population density indicates a denser catchment area. The graphs show how each typology compares with high streets overall using z-scores: a score of 0 represents the average across all high streets, while scores of 1 and –1 are one standard deviation above or below that average.

Office Hub High Streets

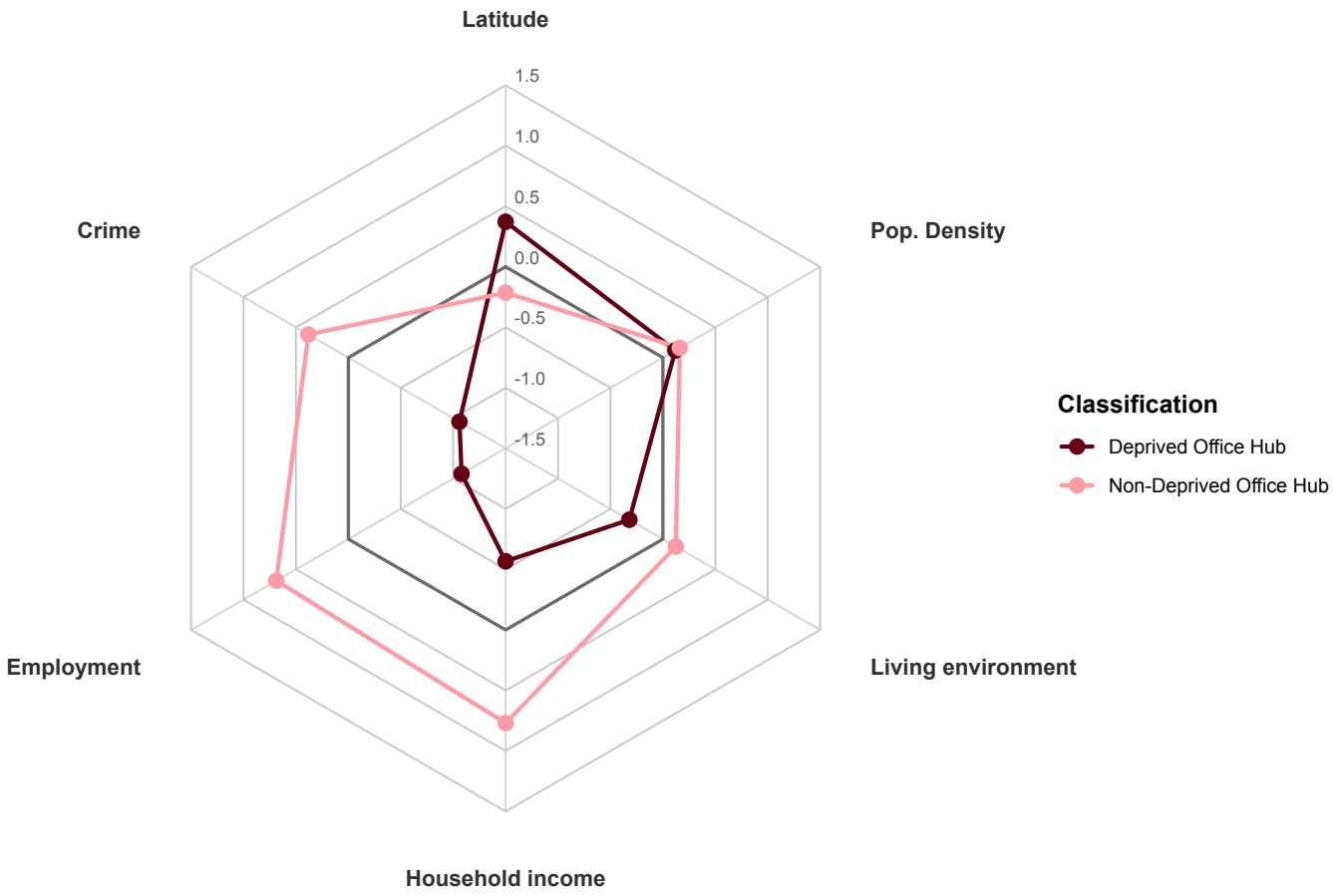
Employment-focused centers serving office workers, with strong weekday demand but underused capacity outside working hours.



Farringdon, with shops, café's and offices

Socio-economic profile

Lower scores indicate greater socio-economic challenge; higher latitude is further north



Relative profile – Office Hubs

CHARACTERISTICS & KEY STATISTICS

- Large centres with a dense concentration of shops and offices.
- Characterised by higher vacancy rate, lower retail share and lower presence of independents.
- They are significantly impacted by seasonality and have higher footfall on weekdays vs weekends.
- Play a supporting role in the local economy by shaping place attractiveness – for offices and for workers, can support agglomeration.
- Primarily located in city/town centres. 53% are in London, the South East or the North West.
- Office hubs located in high deprivation areas face higher levels of crime.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Remote working has weakened demand in centres heavily reliant on office workers.
- The dual role of serving workers and nearby residents creates uneven footfall across the week.
- High vacancy and fewer independents indicate that adaptation may need active facilitation.
- Improving residential attractiveness can strengthen agglomeration benefits.

INTERVENTIONS / TARGETING: Diversify and smooth demand

- Improve the quality of stay so the centre works for pass-through as well as destination visits.
- Diversify from office and retail reliance through complementary leisure and food uses.
- Use cultural, evening and weekend programming to broaden footfall.
- Support mixed uses and a stronger residential role where viable.

Major Shopping Destinations

Large, well-connected destinations serving wide catchments, combining shopping with leisure and city – or town centre experiences.



Liverpool city centre

Socio-economic profile

Lower scores indicate greater socio-economic challenge; higher latitude is further north



Relative profile – Major Shopping Destinations

CHARACTERISTICS & KEY STATISTICS

- Located in city and big town centres, so catchment population density is around twice the high-street average.
- They are large – with more than 2.5 times the average number of units and individual units larger than average. Often home to large, flagship stores.
- Characterised by attracting visitors from wide catchment areas – with national or regional significance. They have over twice the daily footfall of the average high street.
- Catchment income is above average, but crime and living-environment deprivation are high.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Online and out-of-town competition reinforces the need for a broader town-centre proposition.
- Reliance on good connectivity for size of the catchment area.
- Large vacant units and rent pressures make reconfiguration difficult.
- Crime and the living environment reduce attractiveness to visitors and residents.

INTERVENTIONS / TARGETING: Maintain competitiveness

- Compete through experience, accessibility and a distinctive offer, not retail volume alone.
- Improve the public realm to broaden city – and town-centre use and increase dwell time.
- Develop a regular programme of markets, culture and events.
- Combine connectivity, safety and business support rather than relying on retail recovery alone.

Tourism Destinations

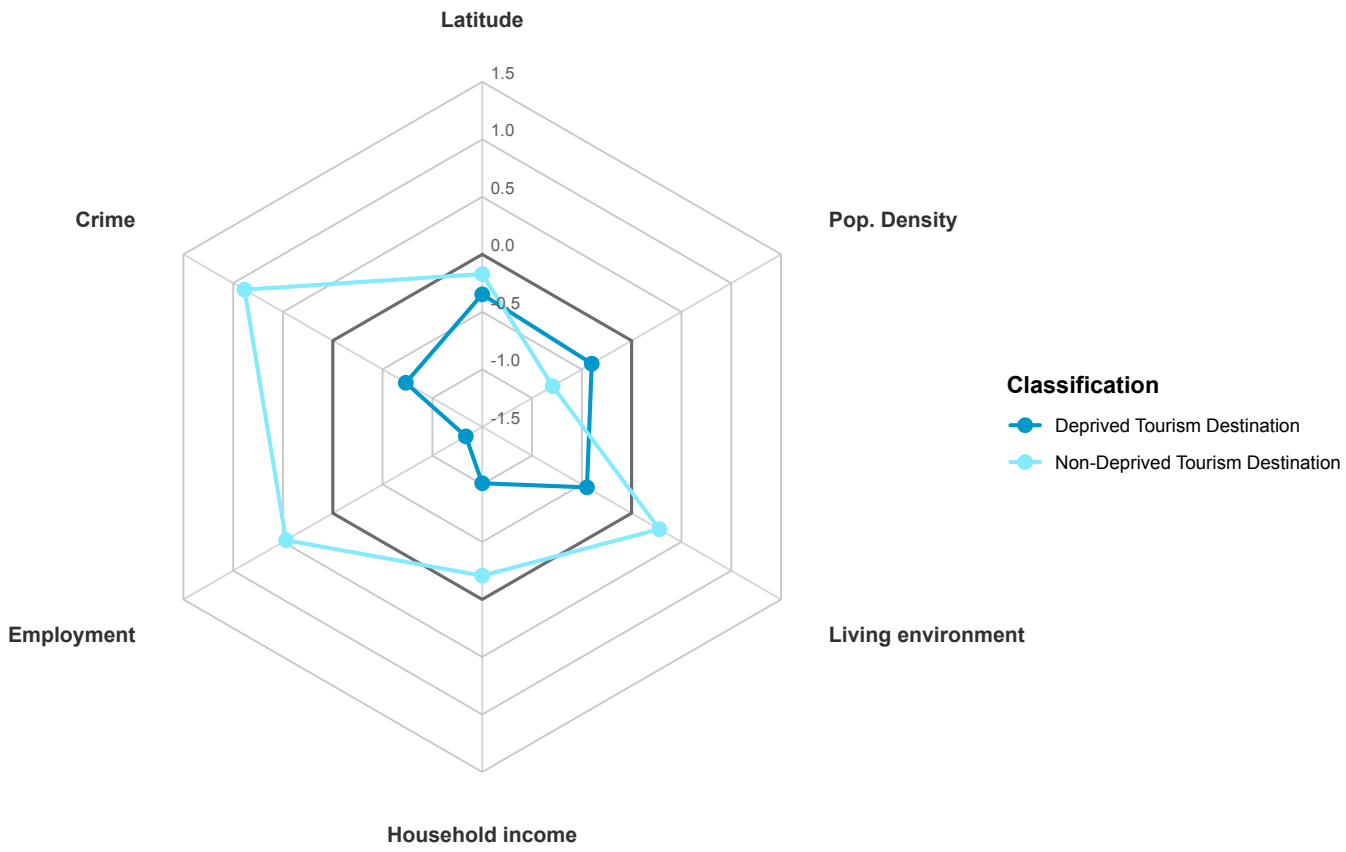
Visitor-led centres where tourism supports local income and employment, often in coastal, historic or rural gateway towns.



The Shambles, York, with overhanging buildings and fudge shop

Socio-economic profile

Lower scores indicate greater socio-economic challenge; higher latitude is further north



Relative profile – Tourism Destinations

CHARACTERISTICS & KEY STATISTICS

- Primarily located in coastal and historic towns in the South East or South West.
- Often in low-income areas but due to high visitor numbers, vacancies are lower than the national average.
- Economic anchors for local employment and income.
- Characterised by high independent share and reliance on a traditional retail-led model.
- Footfall is very seasonal in nature, with peaks usually in the summer months.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Seasonality creates deep troughs in demand outside peak visitor periods.
- Small and micro retail businesses are central to vitality but vulnerable to volatility.
- Small catchments and weaker connectivity can limit year-round demand.
- Deprived tourism destinations also require action on crime, vacant space and wider deprivation.

INTERVENTIONS / TARGETING: Maximise visitors and smooth demand

- Combine public-realm improvements with a leisure anchor that extends the day and evening economy.
- Diversify offer to ensure steadier year-round activity, including more events, markets and cultural activities.
- Support independents and improve connectivity links.

Everyday High Streets

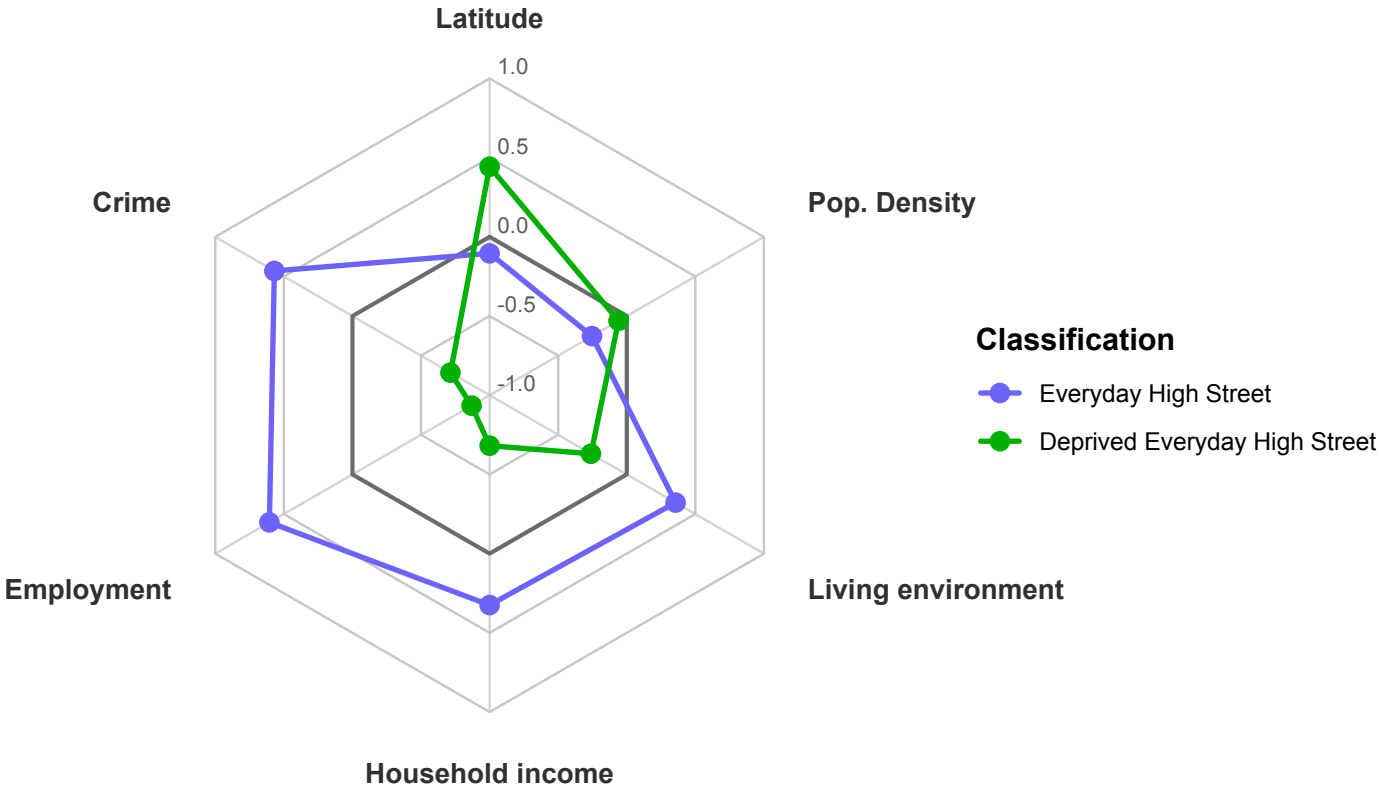
Small centres serving the needs of their local communities with performance and renewal capacity highly dependent on their local context.



Woodbridge, Suffolk with curved shopping streets and shoppers

Socio-economic profile

Everyday High Street vs Deprived Everyday High Street, 0 is the average for all high streets



Relative profile – Everyday high streets

CHARACTERISTICS & KEY STATISTICS

- Small local centres serving the routine needs of the local residents, with fewer units than commercial destinations. Groceries constitute almost two thirds of the spend on these high streets.
- Vacancy rates and performance vary widely depending on the catchment income.
- Those in wealthier areas show very low vacancy and strongest capacity for renewal and reuse.
- High streets located in high deprivation areas are characterised by low catchment income, high vacancies and higher crime rates.

KEY CHALLENGES

- Low spending power constrains both business profitability and viable reuse of surplus space.
- Oversupply and high vacancies are a persistent challenge in some areas.
- Crime, nuisance businesses and a poor living environment weaken attractiveness.
- Long-term success depends on improving outcomes for the surrounding population, not the high street alone.

INTERVENTIONS / TARGETING: Revitalise and regenerate

- Use public service anchors to generate reliable footfall.
- Use markets and local events to sustain regular footfall and community use.
- Support local partnerships and active place management.
- Repurpose large vacant units for smaller businesses, workspace and community uses.
- Combine safety, public realm, business support and demand-generation measures in struggling areas.
- Enable proportionate commercial-to-residential conversion in high residential demand areas while protecting a viable local core.

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Page 76: Woodbridge, Suffolk / Getty Images

Annex Policy Table

1. Active leadership and management

Summary	Responsible department
A new National Planning Policy Framework with clearer policies around high street adaptation.	MHCLG
£10 million fund for delivery of High Street Rental Auctions.	MHCLG
£125 million Derelict Buildings Fund.	MHCLG
A new Community Right to Buy and broadened definition of Assets of Community Value.	MHCLG
£65 million fund to help communities acquire local assets.	MHCLG
Launched the UK Town of Culture 2028 and the UK City of Culture 2029 competitions which will see the winning places receiving £3m and £10m respectively to deliver high quality cultural programmes.	DCMS
Planned BID reforms, including extending the property-owner BID model beyond London.	MHCLG
New strategic licensing role for the Mayor of London, including a power to call in licence applications of potential strategic importance.	MHCLG
£30 million funding for High Street and Growth Incubators in Greater Manchester, West Midlands and West Yorkshire Combined Authorities.	BIST
New work experience, training, and job opportunities in retail and hospitality for young people not in employment, education or training (NEET).	DWP
Explore a new business-led partnership focused on strengthening social connection across UK high streets.	Office for the Impact Economy
Increased accessibility and transparency of information about land and property ownership.	MHCLG / HM Land Registry
Implement the Civil Society Covenant through 15 Local Covenant Partnerships backed by £11.59 million.	DCMS

Summary	Responsible department
Implement the Civil Society Covenant through 15 Local Covenant Partnerships backed by £11.59 million.	DCMS

2. Strong businesses, anchors and amenities

Summary	Responsible department
Implement Gambling Impact Assessments and revoke the rule that councils should "aim to permit" gambling licences, subject to consultation.	DCMS
Consult on requiring planning applications for new vape shops and adult gaming centres.	MHCLG
Restrict displays of tobacco, vape and nicotine products.	DHSC
Introduce licensing scheme for tobacco, vape and nicotine-product retailers.	DHSC
Review reliefs for businesses that do not make a positive contribution to local communities.	HMT
Further business rates support for retail, hospitality and leisure businesses.	HMT
Support local authorities to take action against business rates avoidance.	HMT
Remove fees for lodging a Valuation Tribunal appeal.	HMT / MHCLG
Explore community enterprise zones to provide a vehicle for high street renewal and support businesses to set up and grow on high streets.	Cross-government
Ban upwards-only rent reviews.	MHCLG
Undertake an independent review into how pubs and hotels are valued for business rates in England and Wales.	HMT
Expand the Business Growth Service offer for high-street businesses, including Business Academy webinars and Backing Your Business Roadshows.	BIST
Co-develop support with industry to help SMEs adopt productivity-enhancing digital technologies.	BIST
Increase the British Business Bank's financial capacity by a fifth to £30.6 billion, providing £1 billion of Start Up Loans over five years and a £6.5 billion uplift to the Growth Guarantee Scheme over four years.	BIST

Summary	Responsible department
Implement the Professional and Business Services Sector Plan to strengthen regional clusters and help firms raise productivity, adapt and scale.	BIST
Improve support, finance, procurement opportunities and wider business support for co-operatives and mutuals.	BIST
£10 million fund for a Regional Co-operative Development Programme delivered by Strategic Authorities.	MHCLG
Establish a “high streets first” principle for managing the public estate.	Cross-government
Co-design Local Asset Management Plans with Mayoral Strategic Authorities, beginning with Liverpool City Region and South Yorkshire pathfinders.	OPMC
Publish guidance on Place Based Business Cases.	HMT
Explore a mechanism for consulting mayors on significant public-estate decisions.	OPMC
Encourage public bodies to identify opportunities to locate assets in town centres when leases are renewed.	OPMC
Refresh the Government Property Strategy and explore incentives for public estates to support high streets.	OPMC
Support access to care closer to where people live, work and shop through Pharmacy First, expanded dental access and wider NHS reforms.	DHSC
Support the use of accessible town-centre locations for Neighbourhood Health Centres and Best Start Family Hubs.	DHSC / DfE
Support a £100 million Post Office transformation programme and the Post Office Plus pilot.	BIST
Support rollout of 350 banking hubs by the end of Parliament and take powers to protect access to banking services where needed.	HMT
£27.5 million Libraries Improvement Fund, as part of the £1.5 billion Arts Everywhere investment.	DCMS
£500 million for youth services, facilities and activities, including £450 million for youth facilities in underserved areas.	DCMS

3. Vibrant culture, leisure, hospitality and entertainment

Summary	Responsible department
£10 million Hospitality Grant Scheme.	BIST
£1.5 billion investment in arts, culture, heritage and creative industries through Arts Everywhere.	DCMS
£45 million Music Growth Package.	DCMS
£400 million investment in grassroots sports and leisure infrastructure.	DCMS
Launched the UK Town of Culture competition with £3 million available for the winning town and relaunched the UK City of Culture competition with £10 million for the winning place.	DCMS
Increase the maximum term for pavement licences, explore a statutory minimum term, and give greater recognition to outdoor hospitality within the licensing framework.	MHCLG
Enabled digital proof of age and simplified licensing processes through wider regulatory reform.	Home Office
Explore how licensing can better support economic growth and vibrant high streets while maintaining appropriate safeguards including considering putting the National Licensing Policy Framework on a statutory footing.	Cross-government
Refresh guidance and template leases to encourage greater use of meanwhile space.	MHCLG
Take forward recommendations from the Small Business Regulatory Taskforce to reduce burdens on small businesses.	BIST
Work with local government and the sector to understand barriers to flexible use of markets and street trading and consider further action.	MHCLG

4. Easy access and connectivity

Summary	Responsible department
Deliver Better Connected, including 40 funded commitments, a £10 million Integration Innovation Fund, live bus locations on Google Maps and an Accessible Travel Charter.	DfT
Published guidance for local transport authorities on using bus byelaw powers to tackle anti-social behaviour.	DfT

Deliver the third Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy, alongside projected £4.5 billion cross-government funding, and plan a national active-travel network by 2030.	DfT
Work with local authorities to roll out the National Parking Platform.	DfT
Introduce a new private-parking Code of Practice supported by a compliance framework.	MHCLG

5. Safe, clean and welcoming

Summary	Responsible department
Strengthened Compulsory Purchase Order powers.	MHCLG
Reformed Empty Dwelling Management Orders to help councils return long-term empty homes to use.	MHCLG
Explore further changes to accelerate reuse of vacant and underused listed buildings.	HMT / MHCLG
Model Design Code for shopfronts in high streets and town centres.	MHCLG
Review guidance for businesses on litter associated with food and drink consumed on the go.	Defra
£53 million to plant up to 500,000 trees between 2027 and 2030.	Defra
£30 million for an enhanced response to organised crime operating through cash-intensive high-street businesses.	Home Office
Create a multi-agency intelligence and coordination cell within the National Crime Agency and a High Street Organised Crime Unit in the Home Office.	Home Office
Strengthen powers for councils and police to close premises linked to criminal activity.	Home Office
Introduce mandatory identity verification for directors, tighter filing controls and enhanced data sharing.	BIST
Roll out organised crime training for Trading Standards staff and consider extension to other agencies.	Home Office
Invest £5 million in OPAL and improve digital reporting through Single Online Home.	Home Office
Implement Respect Orders, longer dispersal directions, stronger closure powers and increased penalties for breaches of anti-social behaviour powers.	Home Office

Summary	Responsible department
Provide every neighbourhood with named, contactable officers through the Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee.	Home Office
Introduced a standalone offence of assaulting a retail worker and removed the previous £200 threshold for shop theft.	Home Office
Provide £2 million to the National Business Crime Centre for an action plan on tool theft.	Home Office
Launch a £874 million national Rough Sleeping Programme.	MHCLG
Provide councils £2.7 billion over three years, plus £47 million for voluntary, community and faith organisations and £15 million for local innovation to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping.	MHCLG

6. A place to call home

Summary	Responsible department
Use the Small Sites Aggregator programme to bring together publicly owned brownfield plots and attract investment, aiming for up to 10,000 new social-rented homes a year.	MHCLG
Support local first-time buyers facing a deposit barrier through the “Your First Home” scheme.	MHCLG
Introduced a more flexible framework for use of Article 4 directions in the National Planning Policy Framework to protect amenity or wellbeing, including control of HMOs.	MHCLG
New planning practice guidance on the “agent of change” principle for music venues and recording studios.	MHCLG
Explore powers for local leaders to create hospitality or vibrancy zones with a tailored approach to noise and nuisance regulation.	MHCLG / Defra

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