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Background

- **Town Centres are focal point for communities**
- **Play important social and economic roles**
- **But facing significant challenges:**

Growth of internet shopping

Increased emphasis on convenience

Evolution of out-of-centre retailing

Wider economic conditions



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Project Aims

- To identify the main issues affecting town centres
- To engage with stakeholders – including operators, developers, agents and the public sector
- To look at different towns in the North East and identify example of best practice
- To recommend improvements and work together to implement them



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Methodology

- **Series of roundtables with stakeholders to consider different aspects of town centres:**
 - i. Economic Characteristics
 - ii. Planning and the Physical Environment
 - iii. Business Improvement Districts and Other Regeneration Initiatives
- **Field work identifying best practice from the UK**
- **Report for the region feeding into other work on town centres locally and nationally**



Newcastle



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Middlesbrough



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Berwick



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Hexham



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Stanley



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Key Findings – Economic Characteristics

- Ageing and dwindling customer base
- Town centre workforce reducing
- Shift from retail to leisure – shopping as a leisure activity
- Too much reliance on retail
- Need for diversity and non-retail anchors
- Regular events draw people in
- Public can play a role – do they want a town centre?



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Key Findings – Planning and the Physical Environment

- **Mixed approach from local authorities**
- **Budget cuts have led to reduced expertise**
- **Importance of ‘civic pride’**
- **Need for a holistic approach**
- **Use of planning and other powers inconsistent**
- **Lack of flexibility over change of use**



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Key Findings – Business Improvement Districts and Regeneration Initiatives

- **Mixed success for BID**s
- **Many businesses don't engage**
- **Town Centre Management can be effective but rare in practice**
- **Very limited business support for retailers**



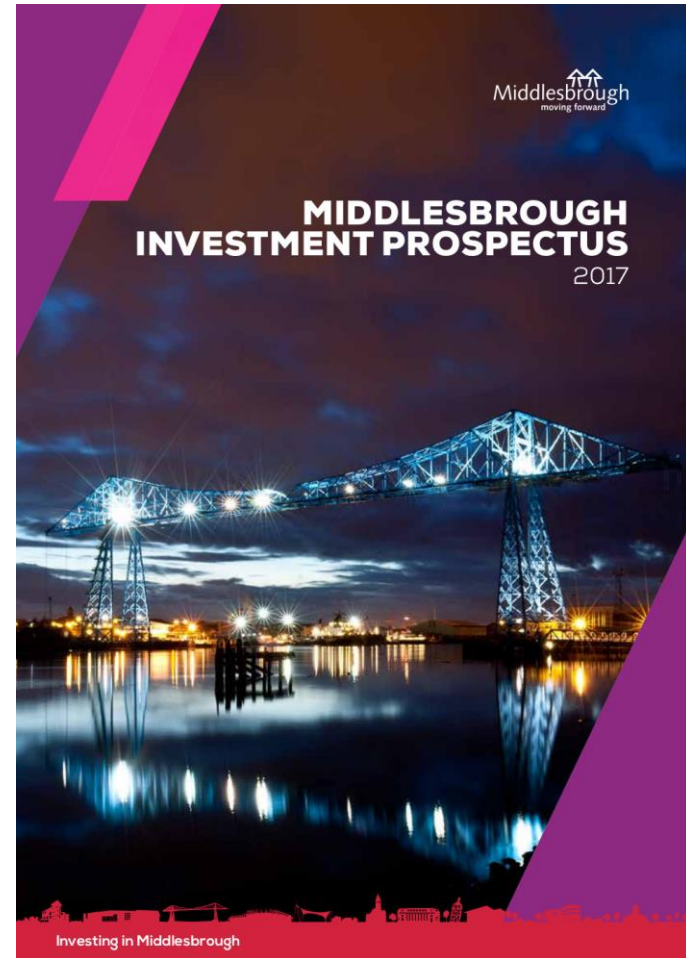
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Recommendations

Creating a Vision

- **Create a vision**
- **Develop a USP**
- **Promote the Centre**



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Recommendations

Broadening the Offer

- Expand the offer through a more flexible approach
- Make it family friendly
- Create new anchors which maintain and drive footfall



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Recommendations

A pro-active and holistic approach

- Improve the environment
- Events and activities
- Accommodate residential development



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Recommendations

Business Leading the way

- **Foster collaboration**
- **Support independents**
- **Embrace online and multi-channel retailing**



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Next Steps



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