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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**



# 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?**



# 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

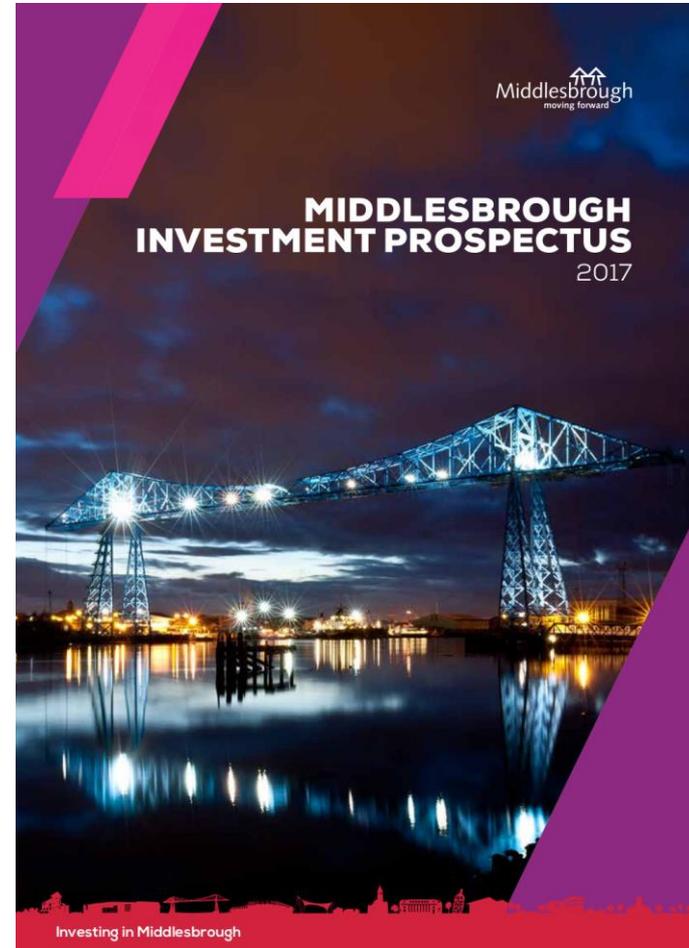
- **Mixed success for BID**s
- **Many businesses don't engage**
- **Town Centre Management can be effective but rare in practice**
- **Very limited business support for retailers**



# 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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# Contact

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