

Town Centre Task & Finish Group

Summary of Stakeholder Workshops

A series of three Town Centre stakeholder workshops were held throughout June and July 2019, and chaired by the Town Centre Task & Finish Group. Town Centre businesses and traders were invited to attend and participate. The workshops were structured around a set of questions to ensure consistency across each session.

The findings from each of the sessions has been brought together and is summarised below.

1. What makes you as individuals, use the town centre?

- Accessing services (Banking, Post Office, Council Offices)
- Use of the museum, art gallery and library
- Shopping locally to support local businesses (ie: the Yards / Independents)
- Accessing restaurants, cafes and coffee shops
- Meeting Friends & Family & Business meetings
- Convenience
- To go out somewhere at lunchtimes
- To visit church
- To go out with children/grandchildren
- Place of work and business

2. Separating the town centre economy into day time and night time, how would you rate each for its vitality including business confidence and why?

Day	Night
Shops and retail are facing massive challenges	There are more people out for specific purposes
Lack of footfall is a major issue	The drink and food offer in the town centre is sustainable
The day time town centre is definitely struggling	There are negative perceptions of safety in the NTE with reduced footfall
Town centre environment is unappealing – “grey and grim”. There is a need to carry the look and quality of the Market Square through to the rest of the town centre	Footfall has declined significantly over the last 2/3 years

Appendix A

Landlords and unit owners need to lower their aspirations	The town centre at night is more vibrant than the day time
Rents and Business Rates are too high	The NTE is well run
Parking charges definitely impact footfall and dwell time and offers a lack of Value for Money	Lack of Entertainment/Arts within the town centre (Cinema, theatre)
The market offer is lacking	No retail offer at night, no footfall in town throughout NTE
Division between high street town centre and shopping centre areas (Newlands)	The younger clientele turn off the older generation from going out at night
Town Centre is too spread out – needs to be condensed/focused	Lack of offer for older generation, NTE is young person orientated.
Shrinking demand for high street shopping	
No diverse retail offer	
Smaller, more cost effective retail units are required.	

3. What do you believe are the unique selling points of the town centre?

- There is a development opportunity in the town centre for more residential properties, but this has to be balanced against the impact of the NTE
- There is a distinct Cultural Quarter with good accessibility to the station and the A14, however it is not well sign-posted
- Kettering has a rich history that no-one knows about. William Knibb is an example – why are we not advertising this history?
- Kettering has a lot of heritage with key significant historical figures and movements but these are not widely known or promoted.
- The Arts/Culture offer is significant including the Art Gallery and Museum
- Cultural Quarter fantastically kept and the best part of the town

Appendix A

- Local talented people given the opportunity to do their thing
- There are no brown signs along the A14 referencing Kettering's history to attract passing traffic
- Fuller Church has its own museum. Again this is not well known.
- There is a need to define what makes Kettering, there needs to be a brand
- Wicksteed Park is nationally known, but little is made of Kettering as the home of the park.
- Close proximity of the Train Station to the Town Centre – greater links and promotions needed.
- Up-lighting to draw attention to buildings

4. What do you perceive are barriers to increasing footfall and spend in the town centre

- Car parking charges
- A defined vision and a lack of draw. Kettering needs to play to its strengths
- The general environment of the town centre and the lack of visual appeal
- The town needs a main venue that can provide a community, multi-use hub within the town centre, such as the former Gala Bingo building or the former Dixons unit
- There needs to be Council support for any plan
- There is a lack of an experiential offer in the town centre
- Lack of signage and awareness of the town centre on major road networks surrounding the town
- Lack of promotion to draw residents and visitors in
- There is a gap between the retail offer and the cultural quarter/market place.
- Footfall dropped in March/April
- Piccadilly buildings not included as part of advertising literature and events

5. What do you think are the perceptions of the town centre locally, how can these perceptions be improved or maximised?

- There is a lack of public toilet facilities
- The town centre needs to cater more for non-car users/cyclists

Appendix A

- Free parking should be looked at and the money saved put towards town centre events
 - Public realms works should all be undertaken to a high standard, including planters
 - “Seats on Streets” could improve the look and atmosphere of the town
 - More needs to be done to advertise good news stories associated with the town centre
 - More needed to be done to create a feel-good factor. A positive promotional video to promote the NTE could be created between PubWatch and Kettfest
 - Increased offer of services to visitors
 - There needs to be a key/significant USP to draw people in to the town centre and keep them there
 - Increase in retro/vintage culture
 - Empty shop units
 - Lack of offer
 - People miss the market being on Market Square
 - Increased and improved signage
 - Perception of distance from one end of town to the other
 - Events are good, more communication around these
 - Attract shops that people want to go to
 - Increase the pull to the Town Centre
 - Shopfront aesthetics need improving
- 6. From your perspective, what do you think are the key opportunities for the future of the town centre?**
- Focus on returning Gala Bingo back into use. Creation of a community-owned space as a multi-use venue.
 - Make use of the Market Place by holding more events there
 - Improvement of the town centre street scene
 - Recognise the need to have partner organisations working alongside KBC

Appendix A

- Focus on getting people/businesses into vacant shops (Volunteer organisations etc.)
- Engage Landlords and tenants to develop shop frontage on all levels
- Restoration of building and signage that is out of date
- Bring amenities/entertainment facilities such as cinema back into the town cinema
- Make use of wide pavements in the Cultural Quarter
- Food markets/local produce
- Link in with other retailers trading hours

7. How do you think the Council can maximise these opportunities?

- Create an online directory of goods and services available in the town centre, make it easier for people to shop
- Put more emphasis on the Digital High Street, is there room for a touch screen in town? Make it easier for people to shop
- Alter parking charges so people can park for longer to increase dwell time.
- Markets – capitalise on the trend for plastic reduction with sales of loose goods, plus more foreign/farmers markets
- Increased fitness offer in the town centre itself, a gym
- Bring culture and arts into the Town Centre through an expanded arts offering authentic to Kettering
- Increase in family friendly facilities – Public toilets, open spaces
- Protect and develop Key architecture in Kettering Town Centre – Authentic to Kettering
- Small scale developments and units to create a purpose built centre
- Make the town IT friendly – Free Wifi, social media presence/awareness

8. Any other comments?

- Is pedestrianisation still a good thing?
- Look at disabled facilities available in town, e.g. toilet provision
- Look to replicate the Northants Food Festival somewhere in the town centre

Appendix A

- We need to redefine the quarter concept as there are restaurants, heritage and culture all across the town and town centre
- There needs to be engagement with the town centre hotels

Summary Market Trader Feedback

Key factors that came out from the consultation process with Market Traders were:-

- 11 responses received, traders want to stay where they are and not move to the Market Place. Suggestions on stall layout to be made back to back so stalls did not have backs to the shops
- Trading time changes, longer in summer, shorter in winter
- Traders were not supportive of indoor markets
- Parking for themselves and customers, responders felt this should be free or discounted.
- Good comments had been received regarding KBC market staffing, as being helpful and interactive
- More advertising around market, social media
- Thefts from stalls during set up and pack down, looking at how wardens can be around those times
- Commercial bookings (charity and energy suppliers) putting off customers.