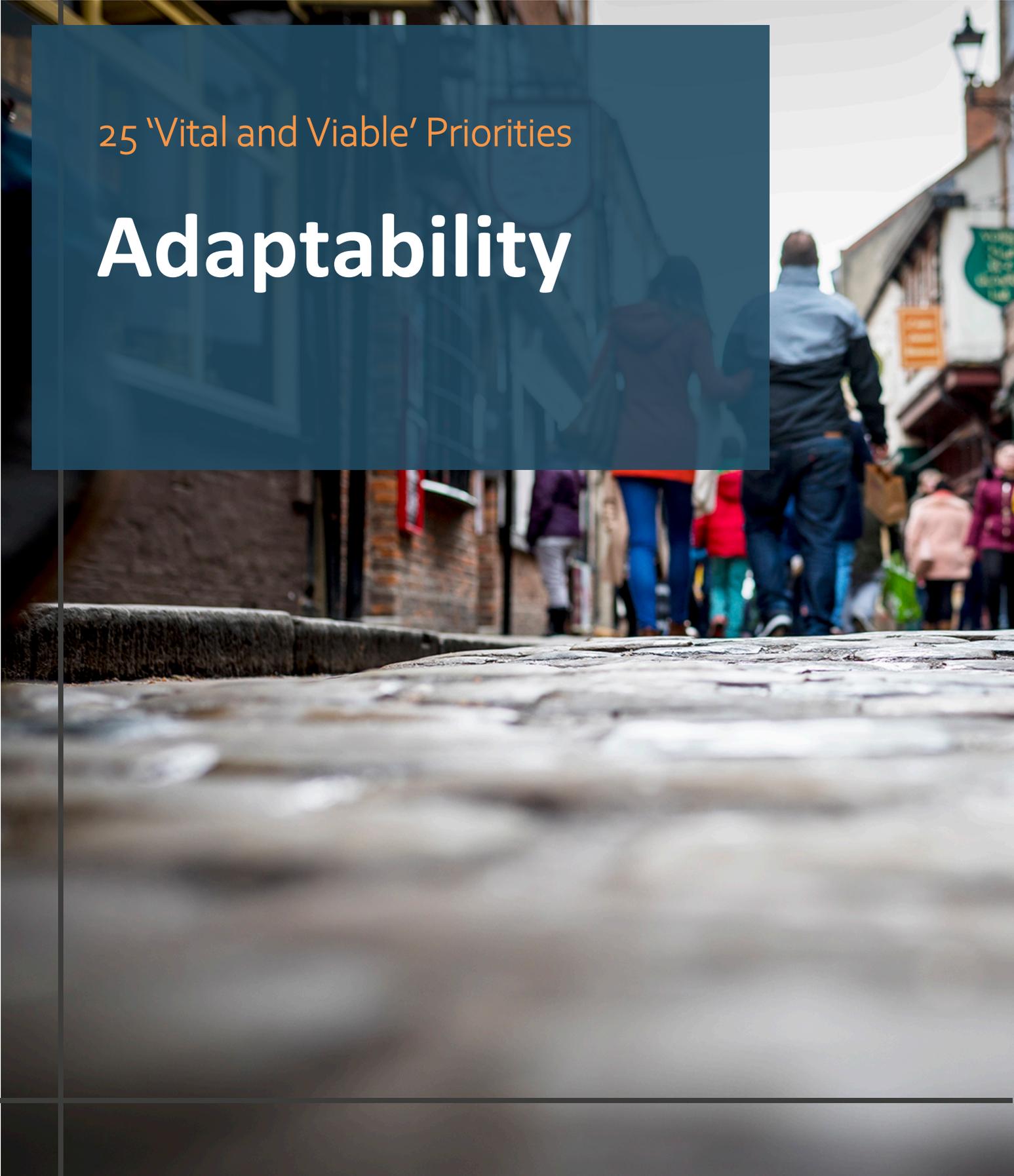


25 'Vital and Viable' Priorities

Adaptability



What are the 25 vital and viable priorities?

Research from the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University has identified the Top 25 priorities that can influence high street vitality and viability.

The framework was created by experts from a range of disciplines and other stakeholders to foster cross-disciplinary knowledge and broadening real-world understanding of the changing nature of the high street.

The 25 priorities are practically orientated and, given their ability to be controlled or influenced at a town level, are fairly internally focussed. For each of the priorities you will find an introduction to evidence that describes the priority, suggests what it covers, discusses how it might be implemented and the level of control associated with it.

Additionally, you will find suggestions of what the priority could mean for implementation during the COVID-19 recovery stage.

Adaptability

Factors included in Adaptability

Retail flexibility; retail fragmentation; flexibility; store/centre design; retail unit size; store development; rents turnover; store/centre design

Ranking

Adaptability	Rank	Score	Descriptor
Influence	18 th out of 25	3.73 out of 5	Influential
Control	18 th out of 25	3.25 out of 4	Potentially controllable
25 Priorities	21 st out of 25	12.16	High priority

Description/Definition

Adaptability refers to the flexibility of the space, property and operators in a centre. It is about the flexibility of the planning system and how units can be re-let or re-purposed. It also involves how adaptable retailers are to change their type or style of retail activities in relation to potential shifting consumer behaviour and catchment needs.

Why does it matter? (Influence)

The adaptability of a centre can significantly influence its vitality and viability, both socially and economically. By facilitating flexibility, the centre can increase employment and business opportunities and potentially attract investment. This, in turn, can result in a reduction in vacant spaces, influencing other factors such as retail offer and diversity. By meeting the needs of the

consumers and catchment area the centre will improve public satisfaction and, possibly, see an increase in footfall as more people use the various functions of the place. Being adaptable also significantly impacts on the centre's resilience (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2015), making the centre more resilient to change and unforeseen circumstances.

What can you do about it? (Control)

To facilitate adaptability, there needs to be formal engagement of property owners, retailers and council into organisations that take collective action. Collaboration is key. You should strive to be creative in terms of adapting to change, for example, it is possible to convert retail to service businesses such as gyms and sports clubs, health facilities or recreation. Others may be converted to housing/employment. Or knocked down. Also, support developments which are adaptable and can include future retail and non-retail uses and the potential for accommodation and living above shops. Another recommendation would be to concentrate attractions in order to reduce fragmentation.

Adaptability and COVID-19

Everywhere will have to adapt to the changed environment brought by COVID-19. It is uncertain how long the social distancing will need to be retained, whether there will be new outbreaks, but the economic impact will be very significant. You need to plan for flexibility, for action and to be innovative. Flexibility in unit provision and store and/or centre design is important in managing the flow of customers in social distancing environments. While many stores have not considered the potential for reconfiguration, they will need to think about safe opening, capacity, entry and exits, collection points etc. Ensure that retail adaptability is coordinated externally – retailers may expect to use outside space for queuing, signage etc – but you will need to ensure that this does not impact on the walkability and safe social distancing in the town. Consider developing guidance so that this can be coordinated at town level. Work with retailers and others to identify how the use of internal and external space can be optimised in the longer term, according to changing government advice.

Past plans for physical regeneration may well now be irrelevant. Encourage wide discussion amongst your core team about how you can be ready for change. Put into motion plans which accommodate high street adaptability such as planning and licensing policy changes, development plans and highways schemes. Any adaptation to public or indoor space necessary as a result of COVID-19 should be fully bedded in. Ensure that spaces are adaptable to suit a range of uses (e.g. at different times of day). The use of units should be much less rigid, with retailers, service providers, leisure and hospitality businesses and offices delivering much more entrepreneurial, flexible offers, meeting the demands of a discerning local market and catchment area.

See also

Diversity; Functionality; Innovation; Merchandise; Place Management

References

Wrigley, N. and Lambiri, D. (2015). British High Streets: from Crisis to Recovery? A Comprehensive Review of the Evidence. Southampton; 2015. Available from: <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/30341672.pdf>