



Growth and Development Scrutiny Group

Tuesday, 7 January 2020

Supporting and Promoting Economic Vibrancy in Towns and Villages

Report of the Executive Manager – Transformation

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. Pressure on our high streets, and particularly the retail sector, has been increasing over recent years and it is, therefore, timely to review the health of high streets in Rushcliffe to ensure that they continue to thrive.
- 1.2. This report and accompanying appendices set out data relating to high streets in Rushcliffe, including occupancy rates, uses (from Planning Policy), retail reviews and information from national studies. This will provide Councillors with an overview of the current offer on Rushcliffe's high streets and the support provided.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group:

- a) Notes and considers the data and information provided by the Economic Growth and Planning Policy teams on town and village centres in Rushcliffe
- b) Discusses the contents of the report and considers any future items for further scrutiny.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. To provide an overview to the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group of the current offer and challenges being faced by town and village centres in Rushcliffe. The recommendations are reflective of the early stage of these discussions with the Group.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. City, town and village centres across the country are coming under increasing pressure with the rise of online shopping being the main contributing factor along with things such as business rates and accessibility e.g. car parking. This report and the accompanying appendices are a review of the data available on how high streets are changing nationally as well as information on the town and village centres in Rushcliffe.

- 4.2. From the information included in the appendices, it is clear that town and village centres in Rushcliffe are performing well despite the challenging environment. However, we cannot be complacent and, therefore, this report picks out some emerging themes from the data to support an informed discussion about the support required from the Council, within the resources available to it.
- 4.3. As can be seen in Appendix 1, the information from the Kerching report highlights key facts about the town and village centres reviewed (West Bridgford, Bingham, Radcliffe on Trent and East Leake):
- The provision of services e.g. hairdressers, estate agents etc. is higher than the national average.
 - Comparison shopping (non-essential items) is lower than the national average.
 - Only units that were vacant were rated as red by Kerching – there were none in the areas reviewed, something which they describe as unprecedented.
 - Leakage rates for Rushcliffe as a whole is high, the main cause of this being the lack of comparison shopping as well as its proximity to cities e.g. Nottingham.
- 4.4. A number of national reviews of the high street have been commissioned over the last few years and four of these have been reviewed to create a summary note which is included as Appendix 2. The reviews concluded that what people want from the high street is:
- Accessibility, including: wifi, parking, cycle storage and regular public transport.
 - A mixed offer that includes good service provision of cafes, public work space etc. The reason for a visit to the high street is increasingly about something such as getting a haircut.
 - Regular activities and events.
 - The provision of community services e.g. library, Council contact point, doctors' surgery to take the place of anchor stores e.g. banks, post offices etc.
- 4.5. A comparison table (Appendix 2) has been developed which reviews the larger town and village centres in Rushcliffe against some of the indicators identified in the national reviews and the Kerching reports e.g. presence of community services, anchors and accessibility.
- 4.6. The comparison table shows that on the majority of the indicators, the town and village centres perform well:
- All have a high street retailer, in every case (except Boots) these are food retailers. In addition, each area has a Coop store, in most cases along with something else, the loss of a business like this would create a gap in all the centres.

- Only two of the seven have a bank or building society.
 - All have car parking provision.
 - All areas are delivering events, although this is generally ad hoc and limited to events such as Christmas light switch on and summer fair.
 - All areas have a social media presence, although not necessarily town centre focussed.
- 4.7. The Planning Policy Team has recorded the use class of buildings on the primary and secondary frontage in the local and district centres in 2016 and 2019. Due to comments received during the consultation process of Local Plan Part 2 some of the frontages have been amended, however the percentages of different uses included in the tables at Appendix 3 provide a useful indicator for a town centre's health.
- 4.8. Local planning policy guidance states that planning applications will be permitted in the primary frontage, provided:
- It does not result in A1 use forming less than 60% of the total units;
 - It does not result in non-retail uses exceeding 20% of the total units; and
 - It does not result in A5 (hot food and takeaway) uses exceeding 20% of the total units.
- 4.9. As the tables show, the dominant use class in all of the town centres is A1 (shops, hairdressers, post offices, sandwich bar etc). This covers a wide range of uses but is an indicator that the town centres are performing well with this as the dominant use, as opposed to A5 (hot food takeaways) or Other (non-traditional town centres use).
- 4.10. There may be a need to review these planning policy expectations in future in line with the national trend of more leisure/community uses in town centres.
- 4.11. The data highlights how well the town and village centres in Rushcliffe are performing. There are no significant areas of concern when benchmarking the areas against some of the national indicators. The feedback received in the Retail Reviews by Kerching, to further enhance the existing offer, was the need for more locally led activity, such as events and promotion to attract people into the town/village centre.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

- 5.1. There are no direct risks associated with this report.

6. Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with this report.

6.2. Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

6.3. Equalities Implications

There are no equalities implications associated with this report.

6.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	Town and village centres provide many vital community facilities as well a place for the community to gather for events. A thriving town centre will help to improve the quality of life for local residents.
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	Ensuring our town centres continue to thrive is critical to ensuring sustainable growth both in the town centre as well as the wider economy as other businesses are attracted to places people want to live and work.
The Environment	By encouraging people to shop locally there will be less need for people to travel to city centres, supermarkets or out of town shopping centres.

8. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED that the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group:

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- b) Discusses the contents of the report and considers any future items for further scrutiny.

For more information contact:	Leanne Ashmore Executive Manager - Transformation Lashmore@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	None.
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Summary of Kerching review Appendix 2 – Comparison of town centres Appendix 3 – Planning use classes