



Economic Action Plan

Responding to COVID-19 in Carlisle city centre

May 2021



Contents

1. Introduction
2. Economic and city centre baseline
3. Key economic trends affecting Carlisle
4. Stakeholder engagement
5. Review of existing policy and strategy in response to COVID-19
6. Investment framework

1. Introduction

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been unprecedented. People, communities and businesses in Carlisle have all been affected by COVID-19 in a multitude of different ways. However, as vaccines are deployed across the UK in 2021, a post-pandemic future is in view. The recovery and development of Carlisle city centre must consider the impact of COVID-19 to best support its residents and businesses.

This document sets out an Economic Action Plan (EAP) to support Carlisle city centre to recover from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document also summarises the evidence base for the EAP, which is further detailed in the Investment Framework document. The evidence base has been used to inform the themes that make up the EAP, and suggests the appropriate actions to take.

The themes encompass appropriate, sustainable and suitable actions that will ensure the city, along with its businesses, organisation and communities, can continue to thrive and is provided with the best chance possible of a strong recovery and adjustment to the ‘new normal’.

Figure 1.1: Study area, Carlisle city centre



Source: Mott MacDonald

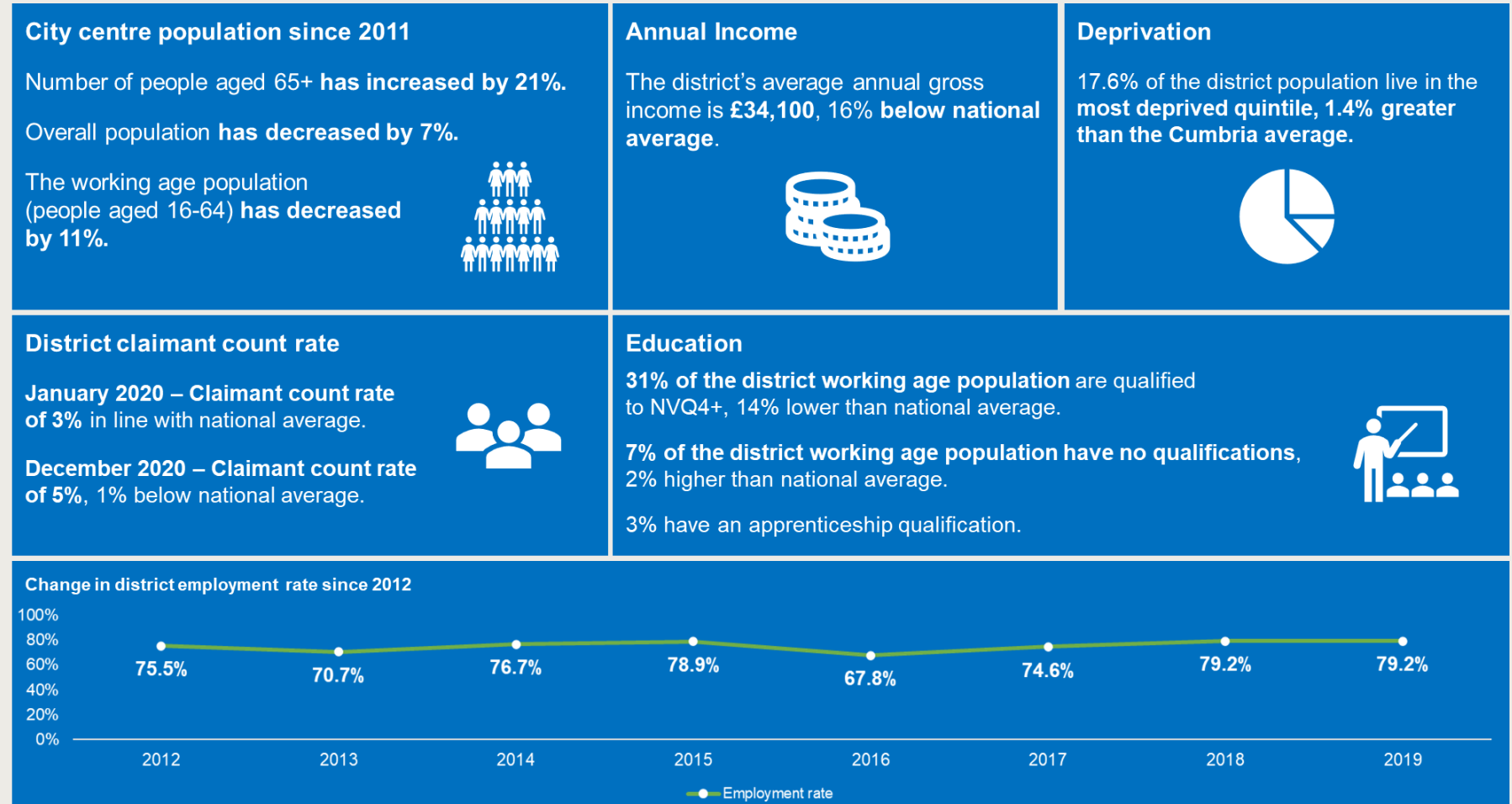
2. Economic and city centre baseline

Carlisle is located ten miles south of the Scottish border. It is an ancient cathedral city and is the largest settlement in the county of Cumbria. Carlisle is home to the main campuses of the University of Cumbria and a variety of museums and heritage centres, linked to its long history. Carlisle is the nearest city to the Lake District National Park.

This city is well served by road and rail infrastructure and has a net commuter inflow of over 7,500 individuals.

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of Carlisle district’s key socio-economic indicators, and city centre population growth pre-COVID-19.

Figure 2.1: Socio-economic overview for Carlisle



Source: Mott MacDonald

2. Economic and city centre baseline

Labour market and employment

Carlisle is a traditional **manufacturing** centre, **employment** in this sector is **50% higher** than the **national average**, with key specialisms in the manufacture of food products and fabricated metals.

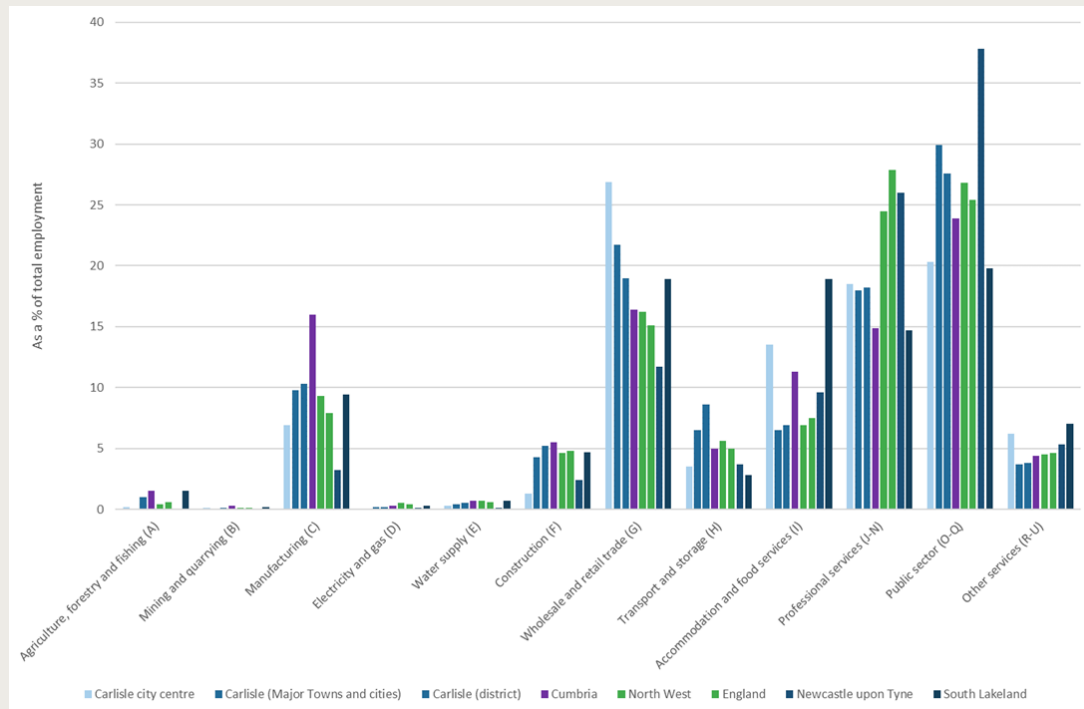
City centre employment is focused primarily in wholesale and **retail** trade (27%), the **public** sector (20%) and **professional** services (19%).

A strong public sector presence in Carlisle is driven by employment at both Carlisle City Council and Cumbria County Council, both based in the city, as well as in the law courts and at the Rural Payments Agency. The largest office-based employment in the city centre is in the headquarters of Edinburgh Woollen Mill on Castle Street.

During 2020, job postings in Carlisle fell drastically initially in April (see figure below) but rebounded strongly until the second and third lockdowns. This suggests that, generally, labour demand is very reactive to the temporary shocks of national lockdowns, in both their implementation and culmination. Carlisle's labour demand appears generally more resilient than Cumbria's and has sustained a steady level of job postings into the latest lockdown. It is expected that once restrictions ease in 2021 the demand for labour in the leisure sector will be relatively high, combined with possible labour shortages resulting from EU exit the bounce back of employment should be strong in Carlisle.

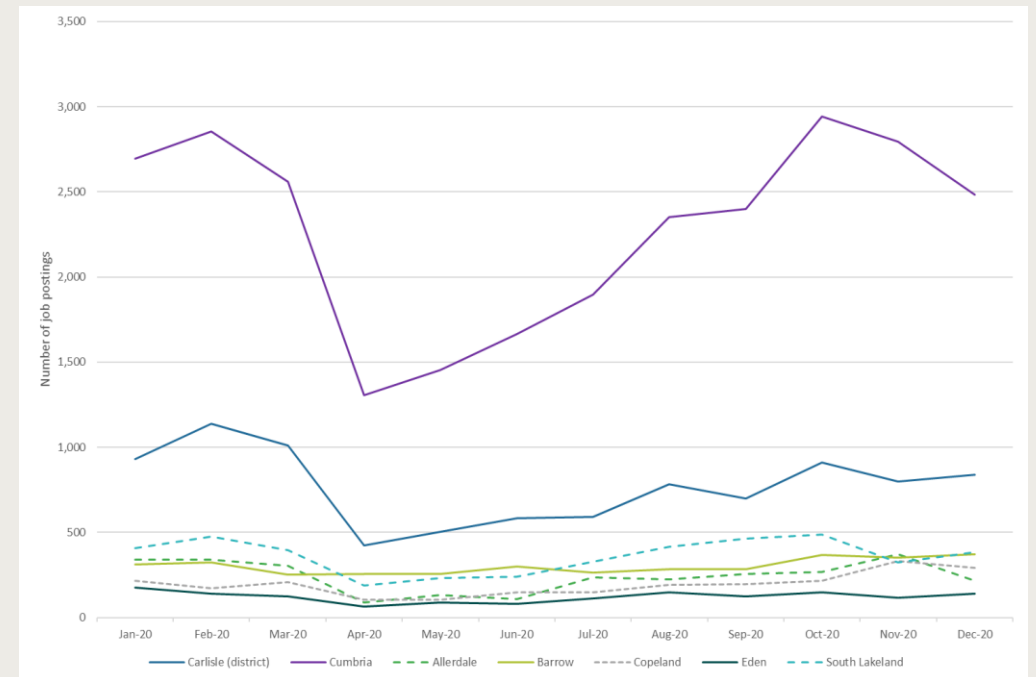
However, a **fast end to the furlough** scheme has the capacity to **increase unemployment by approximately 190%** on the assumption that, in a worst case scenario, none of the furloughed jobs can return to full employment and all furloughed individuals occupying the jobs transition into unemployment. Business support schemes go part way towards mitigating this as it ensures that businesses that were successful before the pandemic are able to survive and therefore return their workers from furlough to employment. However, further support may be necessary for the most severely affected sectors (e.g. hospitality and travel), depending on the demand response in Carlisle as the UK exits from COVID-19 restrictions in mid-2021.

Figure 2:2 Pre-pandemic employment by sector in Carlisle city centre (2019)



Source: BRES, ONS, 2019

Figure 2.3: Monthly job postings in Carlisle and Cumbria (2020)



Source: Labour market briefing, January-December 2020, Cumbria Observatory

6 May 2021
Mott MacDonald

2. Economic and city centre baseline

Built environment and digital connectivity

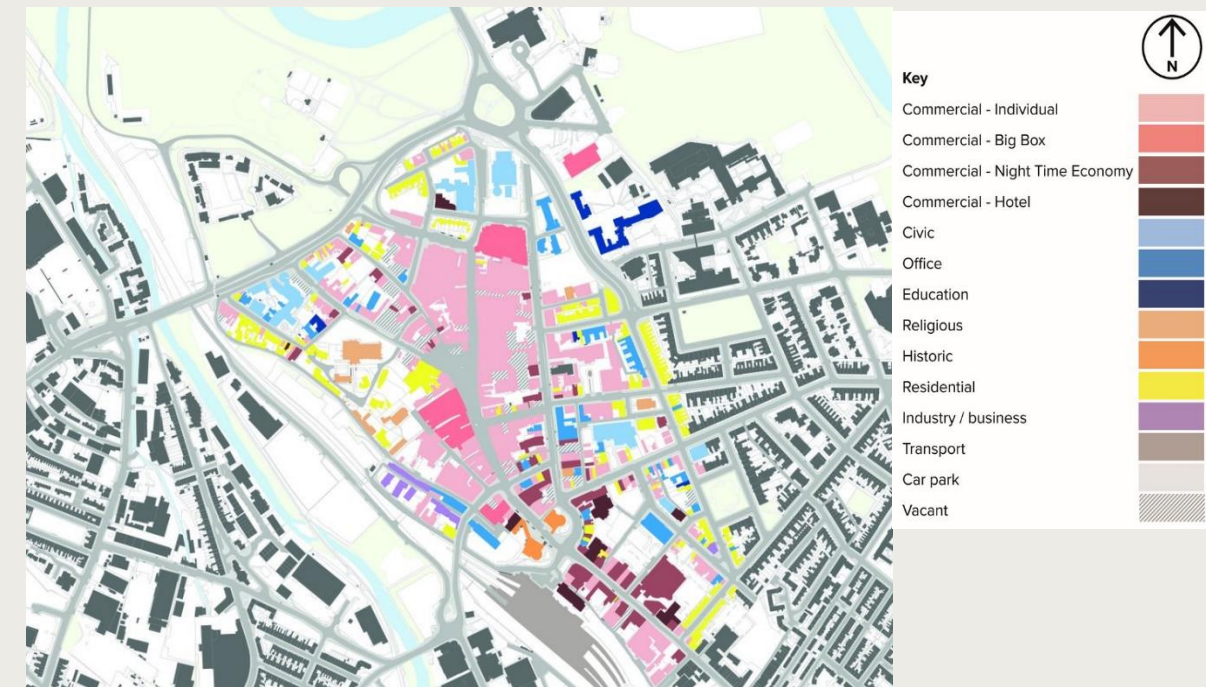
Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, engagement with city centre stakeholders had identified a lack of modern commercial premises in the city centre that provide suitable office space and infrastructure. The need for more office space (particularly flexible office space) is evidenced by a number of factors: a number of private-sector employers have chosen to relocate to out-of-town premises citing the lack of quality office space in the city centre; engagement with the University of Cumbria highlights that graduates are leaving Carlisle partly due to lack of suitable business space for the creative, digital and IT sector; and general feedback from stakeholders who cite a lack of modern premises in the city centre. This has been an underlying challenge for Carlisle for many years – the Economic Review of Carlisle (2013) found “**stock is primarily dated and increasingly unsuitable for modern office user needs**”.

Digital connectivity and digital skills have become increasingly important for accessing employment, especially given home working has become prominent in many roles during COVID-19. Exploring digital connectivity across Carlisle indicates that **the district has relatively weak broadband coverage with 3.9% of premises unable to access a download speed equivalent to the Universal Service Obligation (USO) speed**, compared to 2.0% nationally. Carlisle also struggles to support ultrafast broadband (300Mbit/s or higher) with only 46.7% of premises capable of this download speed, compared to 52.0% nationally. Similar trends can be seen in the level of access to full fibre services and full 4G mobile coverage.

As the economy returns to normal circumstances post-COVID, it is likely that higher levels of homeworking and flexible working will persist, which in turn will require good digital connectivity. In June 2020, a Cushman & Wakefield survey of 50,000 employees found that people have been as productive as they were before the crisis and have increased their teamwork due to calls, virtual meetings and collaborating on documents in real time. However, the lack of face-to-face contact is taking its toll on people’s ability to learn and train, and their connection with their company and its culture has weakened. More than half of respondents reported a challenge to working from home where poor connectivity was the main issue. Despite these issues, 73% of respondents believed their company should embrace some level of working from home in the future.

Given findings from this and other employee surveys during the pandemic homeworking experience, Carlisle may find itself better positioned in the future to act as a centre for flexible working (effectively a long distance part-time commuting hub) for employees in sectors where face-to-face activity is less important, such as many ‘Knowledge Intensive Business Services’ jobs in the public and private sectors. However, this it is likely there will be a need for support services such as flexible office space in order to offer potential high-skilled residents an enticing relocation proposition (as well as classic ‘creative class’ enticements such as the amenity, schools and leisure offering of the city and its immediate area). There will also be a need to ensure good levels of digital connectivity, both for workplaces and residential dwellings in the city centre, and the wider district.

Figure 2.4: Carlisle city centre – commercial unit map (2018)



Source: Mott MacDonald, using Carlisle City Council data

City centre

Carlisle's city centre is dominated by retail land use with minimal residential usage. The city centre had a **vacancy** rate of **12%** in **2019**, which has been relatively stable since 2012. The city centre includes mainstream department stores as well as other focus and convenience stores. The main retail centre is the Lanes Shopping Centre which accommodates over 70 stores including major retailers such as Primark, NEXT and New Look and has a 600-space car park above the shopping centre.

Towards the outskirts of the city centre, there are several office units of varying sizes, in areas such as on either side of Spring Garden Lane to the north, along Victoria Viaduct offering quick access across the River Caldew, and on Cecil Street.

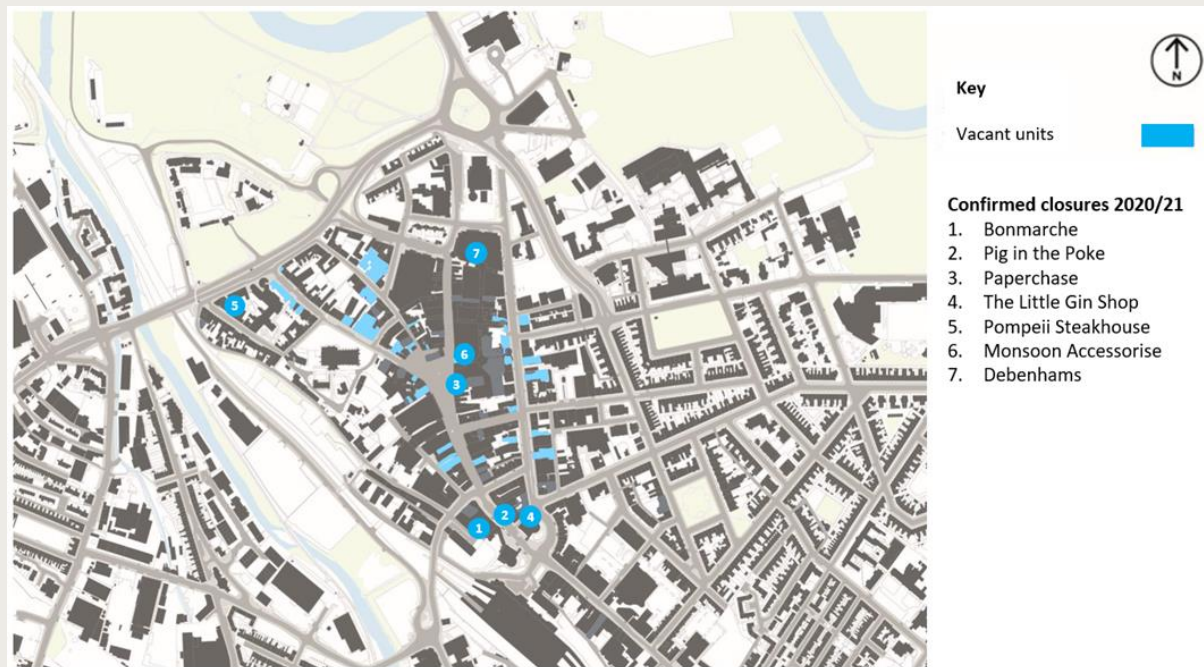
Weekend **footfall fell** all over the city centre from **2012 to 2019**. This cannot be attributed to ease of access, due to the good permeability of many walking routes in Carlisle. Weekday footfall in the Historic Quarter also fell. The weekend decline may be exacerbated by the lack of city centre residential properties, implying that working individuals often do not visit in the city at weekends.

2. Economic and city centre baseline

City centre during COVID-19

During 2020, a number of **major retailers have left** or plan to leave Carlisle, including Debenhams, Topshop, Paperchase and Monsoon. The future of House of Fraser is also uncertain. A partial vacancy survey was conducted at the beginning of 2021, with the result displayed in Figure 2.5. Widespread vacancy is still present in Carlisle. There is a pocket of newly closed units in the south of the centre and the largest unit to close is Debenhams in the north. The economic impact of the pandemic has contributed to the store closures. With socially distancing and compulsory closure for non-essential businesses continuing into 2021 it is likely that economic pressure will continue for many businesses in Carlisle.

Figure 2.5 Carlisle city centre 2020/21 – vacant unit map

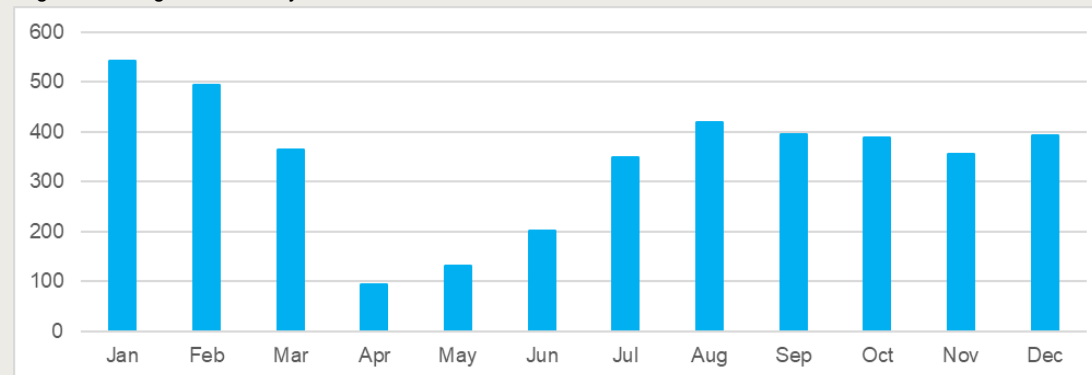


Source: Mott MacDonald, using Carlisle City Council data

The footfall data below captures the volume of movement on English Street in Carlisle city centre. The data displayed below clearly shows the reduction in footfall due to the 'stay at home' order in March 2020. This gradually increases as social distancing and travel restrictions were eased; however, it did not reach the level seen in January or February. The subsequent lockdown in November 2020 did not have such a dramatic effect, however the levels of restriction did differ to the first lockdown.

It is expected that as restrictions are hopefully again eased in 2021, that footfall will reach pre pandemic levels. However, there is concern that due to possible permanent changes in behaviour to greater online shopping, footfall may not reach pre-pandemic levels. A diversification of city centre commercial uses may be needed to draw people back.

Figure 2.6: English Street city centre footfall, 2020, '000s



Source: High Street Task Force, Footfall Dashboard

2. Economic and city centre baseline

Business environment

In Carlisle, **26%** of **enterprises** have a **turnover below £50,000** compared to Cumbria at 19% and England at 15%. Carlisle has **fewer business births**, deaths and active **businesses** as a percentage of the working age population in comparison to Cumbria. The enterprise environment is less dynamic in Carlisle than comparator areas (Cumbria, North West and England) with fewer births and active businesses in the district. Business survival rates in 2019 were also lower in Carlisle compared to Cumbria. Therefore, the economic impact of the pandemic would have hit a less forgiving business environment in the district.

During 2020, there was strong rebound for business start-up numbers after the first lockdown lifted. Business **growth in Carlisle from July-December 2020** was **above** the **Cumbria average**.

Grant and loan uptake for Local Authority Discretionary Grants Fund (LADGF), Small Business Grant Fund (SBGF) and Retail, Hospitality and Leisure Grant Fund (RHLGF) was relatively high in Carlisle (see below).

Table 2.1: COVID-19 Grant scheme uptake (as of 30 Sept 2020) – LADGF, SBGF & RHLGF

| | % of enterprise receiving LADGF | % enterprise receiving SBGF or RHLGF |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| England | 4% | 38% |
| Cumbria | 6% | 66% |
| Allerdale | 5% | 73% |
| Barrow-in-Furness | 4% | 53% |
| Carlisle | 9% | 47% |
| Copeland | 6% | 58% |
| Eden | 9% | 61% |
| South Lakeland | 2% | 84% |

Source: UK Business: Activity, Size and Location - 2020 (ONS), SME enterprises in Local Authority Districts by Broad Industry Group (ONS), Coronavirus grant funding: local authority payments to small and medium businesses (gov.uk)

Visitor economy

Prior to COVID-19, Carlisle's limited leisure and evening economy (especially during the week) had led to a perception of a lack of vibrancy. A low skilled and shrinking working age resident population in Carlisle also made investment less attractive for new businesses and start-ups in this sector. This was despite the prominence of strong historic assets in the town centre, such as Carlisle Castle, Cathedral and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery

There was a **5% reduction** in the number of **tourists** staying overnight in **2018** compared to the previous year, with total **visitor spend dropping** from £48m to £32m between 2011-15.

Comparator cities significantly outperform Carlisle, with Lincoln, for example, seeing an £8m increase during the same period. This is surprising given Cumbria's wider popularity as a visitor area. A limited number of options for overnight stays in the city centre (there are eleven hotels), a relatively small night-time economy and localised permeability issues may help to explain this.

Figure 2.7: Visitor numbers and days, Carlisle, 2020 breakdown



Source: STEAM, Global Tourism Solutions, 2009-2020



During COVID-19

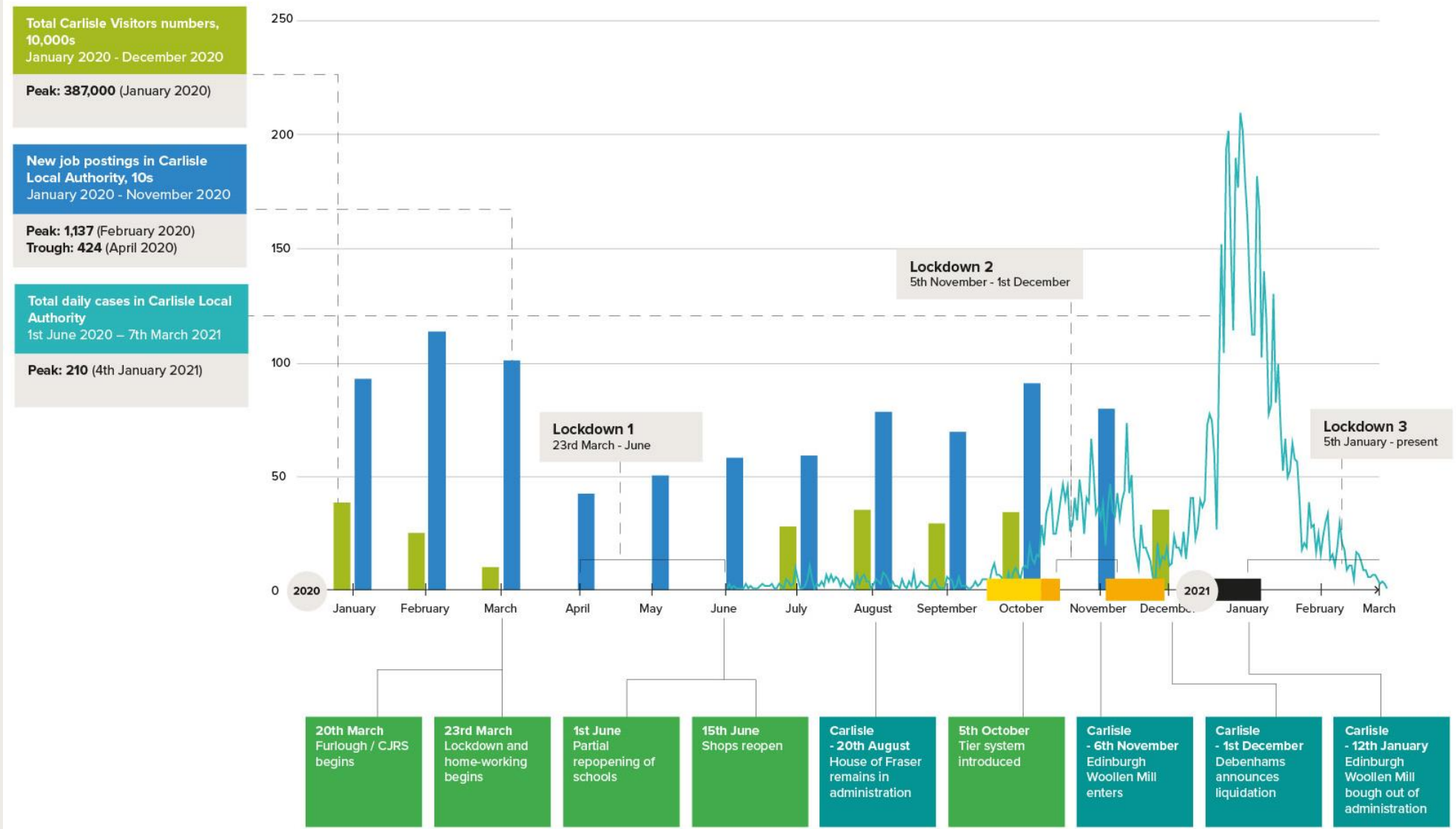
Visitor days and numbers data from the tourism industry in Carlisle indicate a substantial drop in tourism for 2020 compared to previous years. Compared to 2019, this represented a 73.8% and 73.0% fall for visitor numbers and days respectively. It is estimated that the **industry's economic impact fell by £404m (72%) from 2019, to £156m in 2020**.

Interest in staycations increased in the summer of 2020, likely due to the lack of alternative international travel. This is demonstrated by Google search data, which shows a rapid spike in Google searches for 'staycation' nearing the end of the first national lockdown in June 2020.

In addition, searches for the Lake District increased in comparison to the same time in 2019. However, Carlisle did not experience the increased interest that 'staycation', 'Hadrian's Wall' and 'Lake District' did, with the number of searches not reaching pre-COVID-19 levels. This suggests that Carlisle is currently not a popular option for UK holidays (at least in terms of searches for holidays), even with an increasing interest in the nearby Lake District and Hadrian's Wall.

2. Economic and city centre baseline

Figure 2.8: Snapshot of COVID-19 in Carlisle – timeline



3. Key economic trends affecting Carlisle city centre

For Carlisle to best respond to the pandemic it must also adapt to changing future circumstances. COVID-19 has changed our working habits, desire for rurality, demand for office space and city centre land use, at the same time the importance of a sustainable future and introduction of the UK/EU Trade Deal have further implications for the UK's towns and cities. Below we present the trends we expect to see in towns and cities in the UK due to the pandemic and therefore suggest the trends anticipated in Carlisle city centre.

Trends



Evidence suggests that individuals will continue to **work from home** for at least some of their time post-COVID-19.



Rural homes may become more desirable due to their size and closeness to natural assets, both of which have increased in importance during the pandemic.



Flexible office space is expected to continue to increase in demand, in both major cities and smaller towns.



Retail land use will continue to fall post-COVID-19 in town and city centres presenting opportunities for alternative land uses to draw people into city centres.



Sustainable growth will be a key part of recovery from the pandemic, with the net-zero goal and active travel being important aspects of this.



Securing a **UK/EU trade agreement** has reduced the concern of the impacts of Brexit for the agricultural sector, however securing seasonal worker is expected to be an issue.

Evidence

Surveys:

- University of Birmingham, 1,160 respondents, in May/June 2020, 2/3rds of all non-parents believed they would be working from home after the first national lockdown.
- YouGov, 4,933 respondents, in September 2020, 57% want to continue working from home post COVID-19.
- British Council for Office, ~2000 respondents, in September 2020, found that over the coming six months 46% of office workers intend to split their work between home and the office.

- A YouGov survey found that 20% of respondents would consider moving to an area of the country that is not within commuting distance of their company's workplace.
- Demand for greater space is reflected in the average price of detached properties climbing by twice as much as flats and maisonettes during 2020, up 10% and 5% respectively.

- Take-up of flexible office space in the UK over the last seven years has increased.
- Flexible contracts, increase collaboration and wellbeing services are in demand.
- Savills: number of requests for flexible office space was 44% higher in August 2020 compared to August 2019.

- The British Retail Consortium data found that footfall on high street fell 49.5% in 2020 compared to 2019.
- A UK commercial property market survey undertaken by RICS 93% (461) of respondents envisage businesses scaling back their office footprint to some extent over the next two years (2021 & 2022).
- The pandemic has accelerated the shift to online shopping.

- In the UK, carbon emissions in 2020 declined by an estimated 13%.
- Governments 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution': aid recovery & help achieve 2050 net zero carbon emissions goal. It includes funding for 1,000 miles of cycling and walking networks will be delivered by 2025.

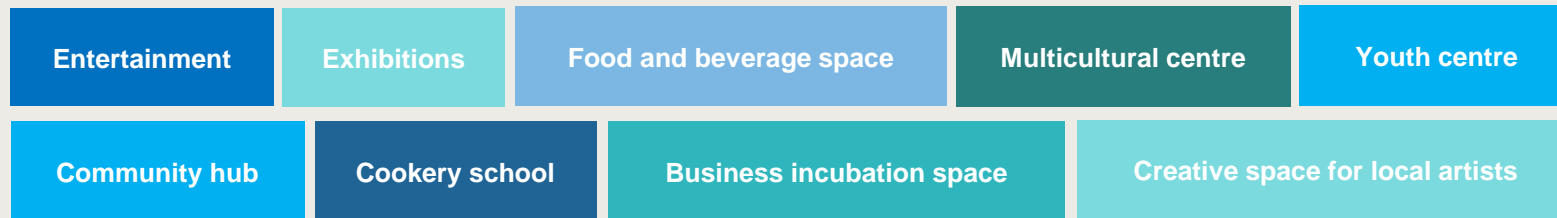
- The deal includes tariff and quota free trade in goods that meet the rule of origin.
- The deal has ended the free movement of people between the UK and the EU.

4. Stakeholder engagement

A range of individuals representing local businesses, organisations and community groups were consulted as part of the stakeholder engagement element of this study. The conditions pre and post COVID-19 were discussed and the expected challenges and opportunities that the current situation presents both in the short- and the long-term were shared. Detailed below are the main themes that arose during the discussions.

City centre land use

Declining footfall and an increase in vacant units in the centre is a concern amongst stakeholders. Improving the city centre image along with repurposing the vacant units is important for the city centre to thrive again. Flexible and affordable indoor space was noted to be of need in the city centre. Alternative uses were suggested for the vacant units, as shown below.



There is a need for further support for the change in use of city centre vacant units, with the City Council highlighted as a body who should support such action. A change in use is encouraged to increase footfall in the centre and improve city centre vibrancy and vitality. However, it has been noted that due to the historical nature of the city and it being home to many listed buildings the cost of conversion for some units will be high. Affordable units should be available to retailers that do stay in the centre, or those wishing to move into the centre, to ensure they are able to compete with online competitors and continue to draw people into the centre.

Visitor economy

Carlisle's historical offer was highlighted by many stakeholders as being the city's biggest strength. An increased marketing drive for Carlisle attraction and the city's visitor offer would be valued, especially to capture an expected increase in the number of domestic tourists in summer 2021. City centre events were popular with stakeholders who would like to see more events in the future. Insufficient advertisement, low quantity and quality of hotels, and poor night time economy in Carlisle were highlighted to be constraining further growth in the sector.

“It would be great to see more events held in Carlisle city centre, this would allow us to celebrate our culture and increase visitor numbers”

“The historical and cultural offer is a key strength and attraction for the city.”

4. Stakeholder engagement

Physical infrastructure

Transport infrastructure is an asset for Carlisle. Further pedestrianisation, meeting space at or near the station, improved public realm and increased walking and cycling infrastructure would be welcomed by stakeholders. Improvement in digital infrastructure must be made to ensure homeworkers are productive as well as enabling Carlisle to be promoted as an ideal long-distance commuter base.

Improvement in the public realm would be welcomed especially in the area surrounding the bus station where it is felt the area does not provide a good first view of the city. In addition, the poor condition of the subway at the northern boundary of the city centre does not provide a welcoming entrance to those using this route to enter the Castle. Improved cleanliness was highlighted as the main intervention required to improve both these areas. In addition, the reduction in road traffic and increase in walking and cycling prompted from the pandemic was a pleasing change for resident stakeholders. Infrastructure to encourage the continue of this trend would be welcomed.

“The access to and speed of broadband is an issue for business and residents in Carlisle”

Community

Carlisle has an ageing population, this is compounded by a lack of employment opportunities and leisure activities that push younger people, both residents and university students, away from Carlisle. Population growth is a key agenda for the City Council and a greater amount of younger people are needed to help sustain and support the city. This was identified by stakeholders who think more needs to be done to attract a younger, working age population to secure future economic growth in the area.

A wider range of entertainment, housing and community facilities for all residents, and particularly the younger population, is called for in Carlisle. This, along with suitable employment opportunities, will help retain and attract a younger population. Digital skills were also noted to be in demand.

Stakeholders cited that community space, particular for young people and those from BAME groups, is needed in the city to both connect individuals and increase their engagement with the city centre. I

“The University’s plans to bring the Citadels back into use presents a huge opportunity for the city.”

Business environment

A Business Improvement District, whilst helping to implement project in the city of particular benefit to business, would help foster a network to coordinate regeneration of the high street by the private sector - this to tie into the Council’s vision for the high street. For the benefits of future public sector investment in Carlisle (e.g. Future High Street) to be fully experienced in Carlisle, local businesses should be involved. Modern office space in Carlisle is plentiful but not fit for purpose, support to repurpose would be welcomed.

A coordinated response from businesses towards redevelopment and investment in the city centre was noted as a key factor to ensure the city’s future success. A shared vision and ambition is required for all units on a street/area so that no one property is inhibiting the success of the rest. This was cited to be a difficult task that would require Council input. A BID network may help in this endeavour.

“If local organisations are contracted and local people upskilled this provides a double benefit from investment for Carlisle.”

Figure 4.1: Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats – Stakeholder consultations



5. Review of existing policy and strategy in response to COVID-19

The relevant policy documents and plans have been analysed through the lens of the National High Street Task Force 4Rs regeneration framework (repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring). The 4Rs provide a useful framework for reviewing policy documents, with a view to understanding how they can be adapted or accelerated in order to provide the most robust policies and strategies for the area, but also to access any government funding available coming forward. The table below considers each of these documents against the 4Rs regeneration framework and recommends the elements that decision makers in Carlisle should consider keeping, rethinking or accelerating.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>Carlisle Local Plan (2015 – 2030) <i>Planning policy</i></p> | <p>Key things to keep: Carlisle needs to focus on the policy areas which seek new residential uses to create a mix of activity in the city centre. Carlisle needs to continue to focus on its heritage, culture and leisure offer and the permeability and access of the city centre.</p> <p>Key things to rethink: The expansion of retail – this should be updated to diversifying the city centre.</p> <p>Key things to accelerate: The strategic connectivity policy is likely to come to the fore if, as a result of the pandemic, daily commuting is less prominent and people seek long-distance, strategic connections. This is also an opportunity to re-visit transport infrastructure provision in the city centre – for example, there was a huge increase in cycling during the pandemic.</p> |
| <p>Carlisle Local Plan (2015 – 2030) <i>Policy relevant to recent trends</i></p> | <p>Key things to keep: The Local Plan seeks to build on its heritage, culture, green and blue infrastructure to create healthy communities and this message is likely to continue to be important post pandemic.</p> <p>Key things to accelerate: The identified policies (SP7, SP8, SP9 and EC9) could all be accelerated and form part of future plans for city centre recovery, as they all link to trends both accelerated and emerging from the pandemic.</p> |
| <p>Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan (2014 – 2024)</p> | <p>Key things to rethink: While strategic road connectivity (through the M6) remains important, a focus on strategic connectivity for rail may become more important to those moving away from urban centres still require access to major urban centres, albeit less frequently.</p> <p>Key things to accelerate: The “vibrant rural and visitor economy” priority should be accelerated in light of the rise of the rise of the staycation market.</p> |
| <p>Carlisle Economic Strategy (2021-26)</p> | <p>Key things to keep: The Strategy was produced during the pandemic and this is reflected in the document. The Action Plan in this document should be accelerated and the projects should be developed to make them “shovel ready”.</p> <p>Key things to accelerate: The plans to raise the profile and bolster the image of Carlisle should be accelerated given the rise of staycations and flexible working has put a focus on areas such as Carlisle.</p> |

5. Review of existing policy and strategy in response to COVID-19

| | |
|---|--|
| Carlisle Town Investment Plan (2020) | <p>Key things to accelerate: By its nature, and the timing of the TIP, it is aimed at accelerating the growth of Carlisle. Given that the Plan was developed during the pandemic, it is sensitive to the trends and the impact resulting from the pandemic. The projects (including) Citadels Business Infrastructure; Carlisle Market Hall; and Project Tullie) are well placed to help Carlisle rebound from the pandemic.</p> |
| Carlisle Station Strategic Outline Business Case (2020) | <p>Key things to accelerate: The improvement to the station gateway will provide a focal point to the strategic connectivity available in central Carlisle. The attractiveness and quality of the station, in a prominent position in the city centre with good access to amenities, is likely to help attract those seeking to move away from urban areas but still require connectivity to major urban centres.</p> |
| Cumbrian Local Industrial Strategy (LIS) (March 2019) | <p>Key things to accelerate: Many of the aims of this document, despite having been published before the pandemic, is cognisant of the trends the pandemic is likely to have set in motion. Improved housing offer based around strategic connectivity is something to accelerate, along with the improved digital connectivity.</p> |
| Carlisle City Centre Investment Prospectus (2019) | <p>Key things to rethink: The plan could be refreshed so that the wording of the projects reflects what is expected to arise out of the pandemic.</p> <p>Key things to keep: Several of these projects formed the basis for Carlisle’s Future High Streets Fund application.</p> <p>Key things to accelerate: The flexible modern office space and the visitor and leisure economy-focussed interventions are likely to form key pillars of post-pandemic recovery.</p> |
| St Cuthbert’s Garden Village Masterplan (2020) | <p>Key things to keep: This development will provide a mix of housing, development and active travel provision that is likely to be suited to the needs of post-pandemic Cumbria and Carlisle. The active travel provision is a key element to continue to incorporate in the plans. The Plan could underpin the reinvention of Carlisle city centre as a place to work if St Cuthbert’s has sufficiently strong transport links to the city centre (including active travel modes). This number of additional homes within easy reach of the city centre would be a significant boost.</p> |
| Carlisle Future High Street Fund (2020) | <p>Key things to keep: The fund was submitted during the pandemic and consideration had been taken for the future effects of the pandemic on Carlisle. In combination, the projects are well positioned to help areas of Carlisle reinvent itself post pandemic. The fund will enable the provision physical infrastructure to kick start development in the centre</p> |
| Borderlands Growth Deal (2021) | <p>Key things to keep: The Deal was developed and submitted during the pandemic and it has highlighted opportunities in local tourism, remote working, and green growth. The projects developed are well aligned to the impacts and trends Carlisle is facing due to the pandemic and thus should remain in place.</p> |

Summary

Many of the documents include policy that **remains appropriate** for today's economic situation. This is particularly true for the more recent documents that were produced during the pandemic e.g. **CES** (2021-26), **Future High Street Fund** (2020), **Borderlands Growth Deal** (2021), and **St Cuthbert's Garden Village Masterplan** (2020). Policies in older documents are also still relevant; the Local Plan noted the need to diversify the city centre, offering both residential and leisure uses, and leveraging its infrastructure to create healthy communities.

There are, however, some policies that should be **rethought** in light of the trends accelerated by COVID-19. The **expansion of retail space** cited in the Local Plan should be adapted to **instead increase the diversity** of the city centre offer. In addition, Cumbria's SEP highlights the importance of strategic **road connectivity**, however, a **focus** on strategic connectivity for **rail** may become **more important** to those moving away from urban centres that still require access to major urban centres, albeit less frequently.

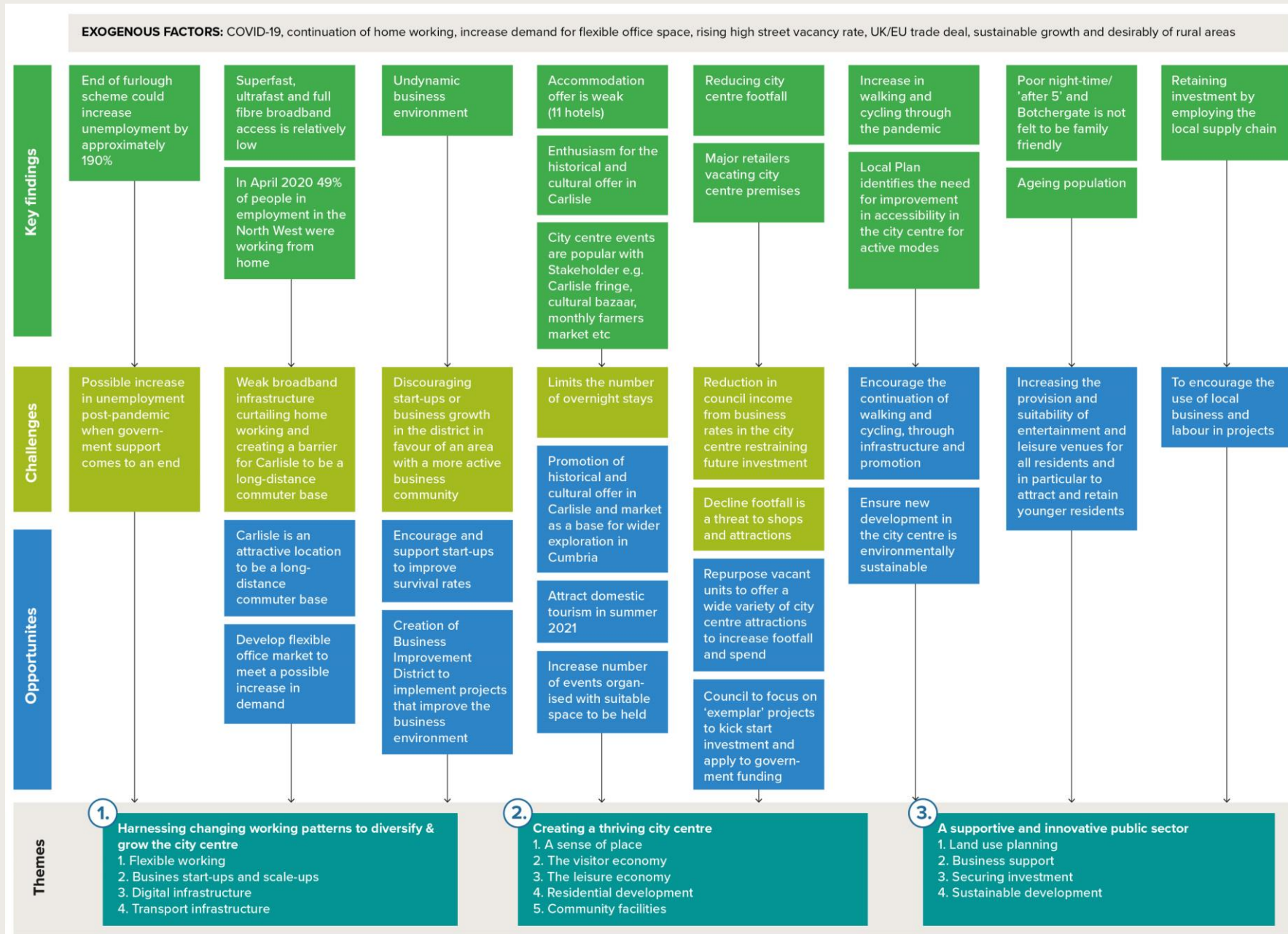
Acceleration of some policies will be key to addressing changing behaviours due to the pandemic and ensuring a strong recovery. Long-distance, strategic connections, for example through improved **rail provision**, and **active travel** provision in the city centre should be accelerated through Policy SP5 (Strategic Connectivity) within the Carlisle Local Plan and Carlisle Station SOBC. Increased provision of **flexible modern office space** and **digital connectivity**, cited in the City Centre Investment Prospectus (2019) and Cumbrian Local Industrial Strategy respectively, both address the changing working patterns emerging from the pandemic and thus should be prioritised.

In addition, **acceleration** of some of the Local Plan policies will ensure Carlisle is attractive to visitors and potential residents as they encompass developments in the **cultural, wellbeing, health, tourism and leisure offer**. The Cumbria Strategic Economic Plan (2014-24) and Carlisle Economic Strategy both include the ambition for a **vibrant rural and visitor economy**, this should be accelerated in light of the rise of domestic tourism during the pandemic.

The projects set out in the Draft Town Investment Plan are well placed to help Carlisle rebound from the pandemic, and the city's Future High Streets Fund application includes many of the projects set out in the City Centre Investment Prospectus. With additional funding schemes, such as the Levelling Up fund, being prepared stimulate economic recovery, it is ever more important for Carlisle City Council to have "shovel ready" projects to ensure these funding schemes can be capitalised on.

6. Investment framework

The evidence base summarised on the previous slides has informed the themes and suggested actions within the Investment Framework. The themes encompass appropriate and reasoned actions that will ensure the city can continue to thrive and is provided with the best chance possible of a strong recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.



Information from the baseline study, trends analysis, stakeholder engagement process and policy review has been considered collectively. The main findings have been identified and the opportunities and challenges they present for Carlisle city centre considered. The figure below sets out the themes and sub-themes.

Theme 1

Harnessing changing working patterns to diversify and grow the city centre

1. Flexible working

- supporting flexible working arrangements

2. Business start-ups and scale-ups

- strengthening Carlisle's enterprise culture

3. Digital infrastructure

- providing world-class digital infrastructure

4. Transport infrastructure

- improving network performance and journeys by non-car modes

Theme 2

Creating a thriving centre for residents and visitors

1. Flexible working

- supporting flexible working arrangements

2. Business start-ups and scale-ups

- strengthening Carlisle's enterprise culture

3. Digital infrastructure

- providing world-class digital infrastructure

4. Transport infrastructure

- improving network performance and journeys by non-car modes

Theme 3

Ensuring a supportive and innovative public sector

1. Land use planning

- diversifying land and property use in the city centre

2. Business support

- supporting business resilience, growth, and innovation

3. Securing investment

- supporting investment applications for both public and private sector

4. Sustainable development

- ensuring post-pandemic recovery is environmentally conscious

Theme 1: Harnessing changing working patterns to diversify & grow the city centre

1.1 Flexible working - supporting flexible working arrangements

A shift to flexible working patterns, accelerated by the pandemic, is likely to prove attractive to knowledge workers in Carlisle who make up a large proportion of city centre workers. Improved digital infrastructure and suitable coworking and flexible office space are key aspects for Carlisle to embrace the new way of working.

Overview and key opportunities

- In the UK, 47% of people in employment completed some work from home in April 2020. Those in higher skilled sectors were more likely to work from home. Many surveys taken since have found that home-working is a trend set to continue. Spending more time with family, completing other housework responsibilities, and improved mental health are all factors contributing to increasing desire for home working.
- 39% of Carlisle's city centre employment is in public or professional services, these sectors have the greatest capacity to work from home.
- The market for flexible office space has been growing over recent year. COVID-19 has led to people reassessing their working situation with more people considering the use of flexible office space. Savills reported that the number of requests for flexible office space was 44% higher in August 2020 compared to August 2019.
- The Guild currently provides the only flexible office and coworking space in Carlisle city centre and its desk occupation is often near capacity.
- Access to Superfast, Ultrafast and Full Fibre broadband speed is relatively low in Carlisle.
- Carlisle offers an ideal location of a long-distance commuter base with access to a commercial hub and abundant natural assets. Carlisle should market itself as an urban-rural alternative to major urban centres such as Liverpool and Manchester.
- There is an opportunity to capitalise on Carlisle's location, between major cities in Scotland and England, and offer convenient meeting space for businesses and individuals, particularly near the station.
- Provision of flexible workspace along with access to good internet speeds would be a suitable *repositioning* of strategy for Carlisle to respond to the impacts of COVID-19.

Suggested actions

1. Learn from examples of success in places with similar characteristics (see case study).
2. Explore opportunities for complementary / incubator office space in the city centre, particularly though repurposing currently vacant units.
3. Encourage local employers (including the public sector) to take advantage of flexible working opportunities where possible that improve employee wellbeing, increase labour force participation, and deliver greater resilience.
4. Support / facilitate investment in improved digital connectivity to facilitate flexible / home working (see digital infrastructure sub-theme).

Case study: Devon Work Hubs – a network of Council supported workspaces

Devon County Council have co-invested in sixteen work hubs or co-working space after research demonstrated demand for these facilities. An estimated 85,000 workers in Devon are home-based, so these hubs provide the flexibility of shared office space, business support and collaborative energy (like Cumbria, Devon is a largely rural county).

In 2019, a newly founded work hub offered a 'Try Before You Buy' scheme offering free workspace every Monday in September (pictured).



Source: <https://www.devonworkhubs.co.uk/> and https://www.adeptnet.org.uk/system/files/documents/Devon%20Work%20Hubs%20Network_0.pdf

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Concept stage: Enterprise Centre redevelopment – refurbishment of the existing centre to offer high-quality and flexible business space within the city centre.

1.2 Business start-ups and scale-ups – strengthening Carlisle's enterprise culture

The sectors that are most exposed to COVID-19 impacts (e.g. retail), are highly represented in Carlisle and the pre-COVID-19 business environment in Carlisle was relatively undynamic. Supporting start-ups and providing a suitable space for their growth will present Carlisle city centre as an attractive location for business development.

Overview and key opportunities

- In Carlisle, 26% of enterprises have a turnover below £50,000 compared to Cumbria at 19% and England at 15%. Carlisle has fewer births, deaths and active businesses as a percentage of the working age population in comparison to Cumbria. However, lifting of restrictions in 2021 may correspond to another surge in start-ups if it follows the trend of previous lockdown easing.
- Carlisle city centre, given its dominance in retail, was negatively affected. Grant and loan uptake was relatively high in Carlisle compared to the rest of England, however, further support may be required due to the uncertainty of future of the pandemic.
- 27% of city centre employment in Carlisle is in wholesale and retail trade, this is a sector particularly affected by the pandemic, due to enforced closures and social distancing.
- Carlisle has demand from residents for the provision of business incubator space.
- There is an opportunity for suitable space to encourage young people, such as students from the University, who want to start their own business to remain in Carlisle. This could be a step towards reinventing and rebranding Carlisle as an attractive location for businesses to expand and locate.

Suggested actions

1. Address immediate challenges presented for SMEs from Covid-19 pandemic, supporting them in pivoting their business model to become more resilient in light of COVID-19 and promote Carlisle Ambassadors and the Small Business Forum.
2. Learn from examples of success in places with similar characteristics e.g. Bradford University's Start-up programme to support graduates to develop successful start-ups.
3. Learn from examples of success in increasing business formation and growth in other rural areas.
4. Identify opportunities for business in Carlisle from the 'trends': developing their online presence; encouraging use of flexible work space; repurposing city centre units etc.
5. Provide support to young and new entrepreneurs through providing physical space, financial benefits/support, supporting infrastructure and advice. For example, through using empty property or vacant units in the Market Hall.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: Repurposing of 6-24 Castle street may include space for start-up businesses.

Pipeline: Improvements to the Market Hall funded through the Town Deal will improve functionality of the Market Hall which will increase its appeal to businesses. City centre business interaction and accommodation space is included within the Town Deal's 'Citadels Business Infrastructure' project.

Early stage: Redeveloping the Northern Cultural Quarter in the city centre may provide additional space for new businesses.



Case study: Start-up and Innovator Entrepreneur programmes at Bradford University

The programme provides a route by which home and international students can remain in Bradford and establish or further develop a successful start-up. The programme runs for two years and provides support, use of space and meeting rooms in the entrepreneurship centre, training and mentoring, networking events and access to fundraising opportunities.

Entrepreneurship and the creation of start-up businesses in Bradford is supported by the programme and it encourages graduate to stay in the city to pursue their goals.

Source: <https://www.bradford.ac.uk/careers/bradford-entrepreneur/bradford-entrepreneur-graduate/>

1.3 Digital infrastructure - providing world-class digital infrastructure

Availability of and demand for data intensive services such as video calls is increasing, lack of access to high speed internet in Carlisle curtails this activity. For the city to facilitate developments in business and working patterns that require this service the infrastructure must improve.

Overview and key opportunities

- Carlisle has relatively weak broadband coverage with 3.9% of premises unable to access a download speed equivalent to the Universal Service Obligation (USO) speed, compared to 2.0% nationally. Carlisle also struggles to support ultrafast broadband (300Mbit/s or higher) with only 46.7% of premises capable of this download speed, compared to 52.0% nationally.
- Surveys by YouGov, University of Birmingham, and the British Council for Office all found that nearly half of people wish to continue working from home, for at least some of the time, post-pandemic. A recent study found that 15.9% of jobs in Carlisle are expected to continue being done from home.
- Stakeholders cited that broadband speed should be improved to ensure efficient communication can be maintained when working from home. With home-working set to continue, weak broadband infrastructure presents a long-term issue for Carlisle if not addressed.
- Carlisle's Economic Strategy (2021-26) identifies that there is a lack of "good digital infrastructure" that is required for the area to be attractive to investors.
- There is an opportunity for Carlisle to capitalise on its suitable location for home working (close to a commercial hub and natural assets) by repositioning its policy to focus on delivering access to high speed internet.

Suggested actions

1. Undertake audit of Carlisle City Council assets as part of assessing options for leveraging asset base to reducing telecoms supplier costs and increasing ease of deployment.
2. Work with Cumbria LEP and Cumbria County Council to secure grant funding (e.g. 'Outside-In' element of National Infrastructure Strategy (timeline to be determined in 2021)).

Case study: Local authorities leveraging asset base to support digital infrastructure provision

Colchester Borough Council identified a need to improve broadband speeds and digital infrastructure in the centre - a Centre for Cities survey in January 2015, ranked Colchester 57th of the 65 largest towns and cities benchmarked for town centre broadband speeds.

Colchester Borough Council decided to commercialise their town centre CCTV infrastructure to accelerate delivery of broadband services. An initial investment of £340,000 was funded by South East LEP and developer contributions to install 5km of ducting and 126 cameras. This allowed for a repurposing of the CCTV infrastructure and avoided a sunk cost in the region of £1m for a completely new broadband network.

Through a competitive tender, a broadband provider won the contract to provide full fibre services to businesses and residents of Colchester. The council does not provide the broadband services but receives rental income from the service provider and a revenue share on the income they receive from customers.



Key measures of success are:

- 850 SMEs and 1,100 residents can access gigabit broadband.
- Businesses in the town centre now experience speeds higher than 99% of the UK.
- Project cost was <10% of installing full-fibre from scratch.

Source: <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/economic-growth/capitalising-council-assets-how-colchester-competing-ultrafast-broadband>

1.4 Transport infrastructure - improving network performance and journeys by non-car modes

Carlisle has great national road and rail connections, but local and regional non-car modes, particularly active travel, could be improved.

Overview and key opportunities

- Over 500,000 people live within one hour of the city and the city's retail catchment, with few alternatives, totals over 180,000 people. Carlisle has a net commuter inflow (i.e. more people travel into Carlisle to work, than travel out of Carlisle to work) of 7,522 individuals.
- Stakeholders highlighted transport infrastructure being a key strength for the city. The development of Carlisle Station will further improve the transport infrastructure by increasing journey quality.
- The Government has announced that as part of 'The Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' over 1,000 miles of safe and direct cycling and walking networks will be delivered by 2025 with network plans developed and being built out in every town and city in England.
- Carlisle Local Plan (2015-30) identifies the need for improvement in accessibility and permeability for the city centre for active modes and public transport.
- The reduction in road traffic and increase in walking and cycling prompted from the pandemic was a pleasing change for resident stakeholders, there is a desire for this to continue. There is an opportunity for policy to reposition to respond to this demand.

Suggested actions

1. Work with Cumbria County Council on the development of its Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan to bring forward active travel investments (e.g. improve pathways around popular residential and employment areas and improvements to cycle infrastructure and cycle lanes).
2. Identify the need for supporting infrastructure to facilitate increased walking and cycling e.g. cycling storage and bike racks in key locations
3. Rebrand Carlisle to highlight its position in the Borderlands and its accessibility from the Isle of Man and Northern Ireland, due to the presence of the airport. Carlisle Lake District Airport has recently been purchased by Ettl Ltd, a company based on the Isle of Man. The opportunity to develop a stronger trading relationship with the Isle of Man should be taken.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: The Borderland Inclusive Growth Deal is contributing to the development of Carlisle Station Gateway. Reconfiguring Devonshire Street (part of the Council's Future High Streets Fund submission) has a focus on pedestrian and cycling facilities.

Pipeline: Green and active travel routes are included with the both the Start with the Park and Southern Gateway projects in the Town Investment Plan. The Transport and Movement Plan includes many schemes to improve connectivity within Carlisle, the Local cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan details the active travel schemes

Concept stage: Concept project to reconfigure Lowther Street to make the area safer and more accessible to pedestrians and cyclists.

Case study: Over 20,000 people walking and cycling in Stockton



Stockton Active Travel Hub offers bicycle parking and guided rides and walks in Stockton-on-Tees. The active travel project began in 2009 in partnership with Stockton Borough Council to tackle traffic congestion, health challenges and unemployment.

One initiative at the centre led to collaboration with 200 GPs, where patients would be referred to the hub to improve physical activity levels. Since 2010, the Active Travel Project has inspired over 20,000 people to get more active through everyday walking and cycling. Over 400 bike rides and 500 community walks each year have attracted people outside, improving their health, fitness and wellbeing levels.

Theme 2: Creating a thriving city centre for residents and visitors

2.1 A sense of place - repurposing and revitalising the city centre

The city centre has been hugely impacted by COVID-19. Visitor numbers have fallen due retail outlets and heritage assets being closed and no events taking place. Creating a sense of place will help draw people back into the city centre improving vitality and viability.

Overview and key opportunities:

- The city centre had a vacancy rate of 12% in 2019, which has been relatively stable since 2012. However, once restrictions allow a full survey should be undertaken.
- Analysis by KMPG has estimated that high streets could lose between 20-40% of their retail offering as a result of the accelerated shift to online commerce due to COVID-19. In Carlisle this is expected to cause 1,826 jobs to be lost, equating to 32% of retail jobs and 3.8% of total employment.
- There is a need for further support for the change in use of city centre vacant units, with the City Council highlighted as a body who should support such action. However, it has been noted that due to the historical nature of the city and it being home to many listed buildings the cost of conversion for some units will be high.
- There is a concern amongst stakeholders with a physical presence in the city centre that the reduction in retail units will permanently reduce footfall. Moving away from a reliance on retail in the city centre is a aspiration shared by many stakeholders, they have witnessed the increasing vacancy of retail units (even before COVID-19).
- Prior to COVID-19, Carlisle's limited leisure and evening economy (especially during the week) had led to a perception of a lack of vibrancy. Reinvention and rebranding are required to increase visitors number and improve perception of the city centre.

Suggested actions

1. Leverage council-owned property in towns to 'kick start' development.
2. Undertake an audit of derelict and empty properties in the city centre and liaise with property owners to identify plans and appetite for redevelopment; establish potential exemplar development projects aimed at repurposing the city centre.
3. Identify potential leisure and cultural activities and investments (including for the night-time economy).

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: Public realm improvements to Market Square and Devonshire Street.

Pipeline: Public realm improvements English Street, The Crescent and Botchergate through the Southern Gateway project.

Concept stage: Potential to re-locate/develop a cinema on the northern side of the city centre. Botchergate Heritage Townscape Project enacting public realm improvements in the area.

Case study: Grant funding for Telford's entrepreneurial residents

In 2018 Telford and Wrekin Council set up an Empty Unit Incentive Grant to encourage entrepreneurs to set up business in units currently empty in Wellington, Oakengates and Dawley.

Grant funding of between £2,000 and £10,000 was available to be used for the refurbishment and fit out of premises, with the highest grants being awarded to business ideas that will have the greatest impact on the high street and contribute to local employment.

Source: <http://newsroom.telford.gov.uk/News/Details/14116?fbclid=IwAR2yRiyrVESAFNJ2GEUZq4GYVRoby-7xpSfVFQhnXMEzOkEH6M8qCWKI9s>

2.2 The visitor economy – expanding and marketing Carlisle's visitor offer

Carlisle's visitor offer is a key strength for the city. Carlisle should capitalise on the growing trend of the staycation market, positioning itself as an attractive location for weekend breaks and as part of longer journeys in the North West of England.

Overview and key opportunities

- Carlisle has strong historic assets in the city centre, such as Carlisle Castle, Cathedral and Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery.
- Even before COVID-19, Carlisle saw a decrease in the total number of overnight stays with a 5% reduction in the number of tourists staying overnight in 2018 compared to the previous year and total spend dropping from £48m to £32m between 2011-15. Comparator cities significantly outperform Carlisle, with Lincoln, for example, seeing an £8m increase during the same period.
- It is estimated that the tourism industry's economic impact fell by £404m (72%) from 2019, to £156m in 2020.
- It is likely that the tourism industry will rebound after lockdown measures are lifted in 2021 with an expected strong demand for domestic tourism.
- With only 11 hotels in Carlisle, the accommodation offer is relatively weak.
- Event such as the Cultural Bazaar and monthly Farmers' markets are very popular in Carlisle. There is demand for these events to be continued or restarted post-pandemic. Those stakeholders who are involved in running events cited the need for appropriate infrastructure for these to function at the best of their ability e.g. water and drainage for outdoor stalls or suitable indoor space during the colder months.
- Carlisle is currently not a popular option for UK holidays (at least in terms of searches for holidays), even with an increasing interest in the nearby Lake District and Hadrian's Wall. There is an opportunity for Carlisle to rebrand itself to take advantage of this trend in staycations.

Suggested actions

1. Develop an Events & Festivals programme to re-invigorate the visitor economy attracting new and encouraging previous visitors as well as the resident community. These events need to be well-publicised at a local, regional and national level.
2. Market Carlisle as a base from which to explore Hadrian's Wall and the Lake District.
3. Encourage local accommodation and service providers to sign up to 'Deals' websites (e.g. Travelzoo, Secret Escapes etc.) and explore options such as joint ticketing for attractions.
4. Provide supporting infrastructure to host events (e.g. physical infrastructure such as electricity and water in key locations) as well as making the process of applying for permits/hosting events easy and transparent
5. Engaging with city centre business and heritage residents to support them in hosting events.
6. Work with accommodation/ service providers in the city centre to encourage greater dwell time during events.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: New development on the former Central Plaza site

Pipeline: Improved entrance to Tullie House and upgrades to the Market Hall. Lighting Up Carlisle is a Town Deal project for improving infrastructure to provide lighting for events and key attractions.



Case study: Oxford City Council supporting the visitor economy after COVID-19

Tourism generated around £988m for the Oxford's economy in 2019 and around 14% of all jobs in the city were related to tourism. The pandemic has had a devastating impact on the sector with footfall in the city centre was down 62.3% in July 2020.

The new investments to stimulate the economy include:

- £50,000 to Experience Oxfordshire to help support the tourism sector in Oxford over the next two years.
- A partnership to deliver a much-needed new hotel in the former Boswells building. Pre-pandemic, only 15.5% of visits to the city are overnight stays - however, overnight stays generated around 60% of total visitor spend. The City Council has partnered with a private company to convert the former Boswell's department store into a four-star boutique hotel.
- £20,000 to find a long-term solution to tourist coach parking.

Source: https://www.oxford.gov.uk/news/article/1719/oxford_city_council_investing_now_to_help_visitor_economy_rebound_after_pandemic-and
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-oxfordshire-50574858>

2.3 The leisure economy – bringing vibrancy to the city centre, in particular the evening economy

Carlisle's reliance on the retail sector (both for visitors and as a source of employment) will be severely impacted by changing trends in this sector. The city centre needs to bolster its leisure offer in order to be more resilient and attract larger number of visitors.

Overview and key opportunities

- The night-time economy in Carlisle city centre is relatively poor. It is felt that the Botchergate area is not family friendly and more could be done to extend the 'after five' offer in Carlisle into the centre of the city with a wider variety of entertainment and leisure facilities for all age ranges.
- Food stalls were highlighted as potentially offering a wide range of benefits, being a leisure service to residents and visitors, creating an entrepreneurial culture as well as celebrating different food cultures from across Carlisle and Cumbria's residents.
- Suggested ideas for vacant units include exhibition space, a community hub, a cooking school, a community cinema and a food hall. With many large vacant units in the centre this may be an opportunity for a multi-use space operating as both a cinema and community hub for example.
- Carlisle Town Investment Plan is considerate of the need for better leisure facilities for older people as well as young adults and families is encouraging as this will be central to a post-pandemic home working offer.
- Carlisle city centre has the opportunity to *rebrand* its leisure economy to be attractive to a wider demographic.

Suggested actions

1. Explore the opportunity for an independent/community-run cinema in a vacant building (viewings can be tailored to attract different demographics at different times of day).
2. Potential for an indoor food market where vendors can hire 'pop up' stands at low cost (also encouraging an entrepreneurial culture).

Case study: Robert Burns Centre Film Theatre caters for all



The Robert Burns Centre Film Theatre (RBCFT) is a 69-seat cinema in a converted 18th century mill on the outskirts of the city centre on the banks of the River Nith in Dumfries. It is operated by the local District Council and serves a wide rural population.

The Centre shows a variety of films and hosts live events. They have regular screening for children and families as well as autism friendly screenings and dementia friendly films.

The centre also hires out the space for cultural events, lectures and workshops. The cinema caters for all residents and offers a tickets subsidy to those in receipt of benefits.

Source: <http://www.rbcft.co.uk/> and <https://www.dgculture.co.uk/venue/robert-burns-centre/>

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Pipeline: Improved entrance to Tullie House, improvement to facilities in the Market Hall, exploring options to create a food court and events space.

2.4 Residential development – attracting and retaining a greater city centre population

Carlisle's small city centre resident population contributes to a perceived lack of vibrancy. Enticing more people into the centre, especially young people, by offering suitable housing and supporting infrastructure would improve city centre vitality.

Overview and key opportunities

- Only 4,220 people live in the city centre, this is a decline of 7.2% since 2011.
- The working age resident population in the city centre has fallen by 11%, whilst the over-65s population has increased by 21% over the same period.
- A greater amount of younger people are needed to help sustain and support the city. This was identified by stakeholders who think more needs to be done to attract a younger, working age population to secure future economic growth in the area.
- Unlike many other town and city centres across the UK, Carlisle city centre has a limited number of residential units. The residential units that do exist in the city centre are principally located along the fringes of the centre, with clusters located along the railway line near the Historic Quarter and to the north in the vicinity of Corporation Road.
- Carlisle's Local Plan (2015-2030) includes policy to increase city centre living through the utilisation of the space above shops or in the introduction of new units.
- Together with an improved leisure offer, the provision of suitable residential units in the city centre will help Carlisle *rebrand* itself as an ideal place to live, with the convenience of a commercial hub and an abundance of cultural and natural assets nearby.

Suggested actions

1. Repurposing vacant units for residential use.
2. Ensuring supporting infrastructure and amenities (e.g. GP surgeries) are in place to encourage new residents.
3. Diversify the city centre living offer for young professionals (see theme 2.3: The leisure economy)

Case study: Listed Chester building gets permission for residential conversion



A grade-two listed building will be converted into 12 apartments. The building is in the heart of Chester city centre and has stood vacant for over 10 years, originally built as townhouses but later used as legal offices. The apartments will be high-end and will be respectful of the heritage of the building.

Chester, like Carlisle, is a small historic town. The property sits within the historic city wall and is close to the Roman Amphitheatre.

Source: <https://www.placenorthwest.co.uk/news/listed-chester-building-gets-residential-conversion/> and <https://www.pwaplanning.co.uk/news/go-ahead-chester-office-resi-conversion/>

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: Caldew Riverside remediation underway to deliver a potential site for urban living.

Pipeline and concept stage: Development to 6-24 Castle Street and redeveloping the Northern Quarter will likely include residential development.

2.5 Community facilities – strengthening an inclusive community feeling in Carlisle

Community spaces do not have much prominence in the city centre. Increasing provision for all demographics (young people, young families, older people.) will help develop a culture of wellbeing across social, mental and physical health; in addition, it will both connect individuals and increase their engagement with the city centre.

Overview and key opportunities

- Stakeholders cited that community space, particular for young people and those from BAME groups, is needed in the city to both connect individuals and increase their engagement with the city centre.
- A space suitable for group activities, exhibitions and teaching could help share the many cultures resident in Carlisle.
- Stakeholders suggested that development of a community hub would provide an opportunity to repurpose vacant buildings and could include space for exhibitions, multicultural centre, community hub, cookery school and youth centre.
- Carlisle Town Investment Plan identifies that Carlisle has a declining working age population and repositioning for growth that is sensitive to this demographic trend is key for future prosperity.

Suggested actions

1. Explore the opportunity for an independent/community-run cinema (see leisure economy sub-theme).
2. Investigate the opportunity for a community cooking school, youth centre; space for creative industries and Community Hub.

Case study: Former Debenhams set to become a food hall in Worcester



The vacant property on Worcester high street will be converted into an artisanal food hall and community led farmers market over three or four floors which will also include music art and creative space. The food hall is likely to open in 2022. Local operators, producers, farmers, growers, makers and creators will be involved in its operation. The developers, Hammonds of Hull, are progressing a similar project in Hull with the conversion of the former House of Fraser department store. Altrincham Market is similar venue, the building, dating from the 13th Century, was updated in 2014 to house 10 independent food operators (pictured). The venue is now the leading market in the area and is advancing the revitalisation of the town.

Source: <https://www.worcesternews.co.uk/news/19143005.empty-worcester-department-store-set-become-food-hall/> and <https://www.visitmanchester.com/food-and-drink/altrincham-market-house-p340841>

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: Cultural facilities to help enhance vitality and vibrancy in central Carlisle will be provided as part of the Citadels project funded by the Borderland Inclusive Growth Deal.

Pipeline: Refurbishment of the City Centre Library to create an accessible digital skills and community learning hub. 6-24 Castle street development has the potential to incorporate community development by providing creative and work/live space.

Theme 3: Ensuring a supportive and innovative public sector

3.1 Land use planning – diversifying land and property use in the city centre

With retail's physical presence declining and a likely reduction in demand for office space in the city centre there is a fear that footfall will permanently reduce, thus affecting the viability of city centre businesses. Post pandemic, Carlisle city centre will need to offer a diverse range of activities to draw people back into cities.

Overview and key opportunities

- See Theme 2.1: A sense of place
- Strategy documents, such as the City Centre Development Framework, suggest locations for retail expansion. However, Carlisle needs to rethink the expansion of retail and concentrate on the diversifying the city centre.
- There is potential to *restructure* governance to ensure development opportunities are capitalised on and supported by the Council.

Figure 6.1: Current land use - Carlisle city centre



Source: Mott MacDonald

Suggested actions

1. Identify broader opportunities for repurposing of vacant buildings and land within town centres.
2. Most non-retail development is unlikely to come forward if left solely to the market, so some council co-funding is likely to be required – the focus for public-sector funding should be on ‘exemplar’ projects that demonstrate what is possible to private developers (for example, 6-24 Castle Street).
3. Communicate and engage with private property owners in the centre to ensure a coordinated approach to the redevelopment of the city centre with public and private sector visions aligning.
4. Adopting a ‘street-by-street’ approach, rather than a ‘building-by-building’ approach, to city centre improvements to ensure developments are holistic.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

The redevelopment of 6- 24 Castle Street, former Central Plaza site, regenerating the Northern Quarter and Healthy City Hub all potential either make use of vacant building or involve land use changes.



Case study: Public and private sector collaboration in Blackpool

In 2013, Blackpool Council published a ‘Town Centre Strategy’ outlining their ambition in the following 15 years to develop a ‘a co-ordinated and comprehensive approach to the improvement of the town centre. Blackpool Council led a strong town centre partnership approach supported by investment agencies, private landowners, local businesses, and other stakeholders.

The Business Improvement District and Pride of Place networks were important to form successful collaboration when implementing the Town Centre Strategy. The coordinated approach was adopted for the extension of the Houndshill Shopping Centre. The project secured £5m from the Getting Building Fund which will fund the construction on the extension allowing the private sector to invest in a new cinema, two restaurants and retail store relocation. Collaboration between the public and private sector is enabling the delivery of the Town Centre Strategy.

Source: <https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Planning-environment-and-community/Documents/Town-Centre-Strategy-March-2013.pdf>,
<https://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/documents/s56289/Item%206%20-%20Town%20Centre%20Regeneration%20Update.pdf> and
<https://democracy.blackpool.gov.uk/documents/s56838/Item%204c%20-%20Place%20Portfolios%20report.pdf>

3.2. Business support - supporting business resilience, growth and innovation

Post-pandemic, it will be important to identify opportunities for businesses in Carlisle and determine how best the Council can support this. This can contribute to business resilience, growth and innovation in Carlisle city centre.

Overview and key opportunities

- During the pandemic people have become more aware of shopping locally, both due to travel restrictions but also the benefit of support local businesses. The 'Buy Local Carlisle' campaign launched in 2021 will support small businesses in Carlisle and aims to continue the interest in shopping locally from the pandemic. Carlisle Ambassadors also provided a network for business support through the pandemic.
- An increase in home working, demand for flexible office space, online shopping and sustainability awareness are major trends present in the economy. Businesses may need to consider these trends for future growth.
- The Southern Link road and projects developed through the Future High Street Fund and Town Deal all present the opportunity for the flow of public sector money into Carlisle. There is the ability for public sector spend on infrastructure to penetrate through the local economy if the supply chain is local.
- A shared vision and ambition are required a coordinated response from private businesses towards redevelopment and reinvention of the city centre. This was cited to be a difficult task that would require Council input. There is an opportunity for a Business Improvement District (BID) network to help in this endeavour.
- For Carlisle to be an attractive location for businesses to locate there will need to be an element of *reinvention* that occurs, with purposeful action to encourage business settlement. This may be through dedicated incubation space and support programmes.

Suggested actions

1. Focus on developing local institutions and supporting local businesses, as well as identifying in which sectors Carlisle have an advantage (potential sectors of focus include: sustainable tourism; leisure economy)
2. Offer support to businesses for repurposing vacant units, such as the Architectural Heritage Fund. Non-profits and parish and town councils can apply to the fund to revitalise a heritage building on a high street or in a town centre. The fund is run by a charity.
3. Explore the potential for a BID.
4. Clarity on opportunities across Carlisle will help ensure applications for government support can be successful, building on a consistent, credible platform.
5. Engage with Cumbria University on how to support students wanting to start businesses in Carlisle, and help facilitate engagement between students and prospective Carlisle-based employers.

Case study: Lincoln University supporting local business

Lincoln University have implemented various schemes to help local business, support students and build relationships between the University and the city of Lincoln.

- **Local partnerships:** The university has established relationships with Siemens and Greater Lincolnshire Manufacturing Network to help them grow by delivering the skills and innovation industry needs, whilst ensuring their students benefit.
- **Incubation space:** The University's Sparkhouse business incubation centre has provided the services, knowledge and facilities for 300 new start-ups since its opening in 2003.
- **SME support during the pandemic:** SMEs were at greater risk than larger businesses during the pandemic. Action was taken to make student talent more easily accessible to SMEs thus allowing local businesses to benefit from the skillsets and resources students have to offer, providing them with the opportunity to innovate and respond to potential market changes.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: The Bitts Park Cultural and Creative Courtyard will deliver a hub of catering, retail and health/wellbeing units available as short term lets for start-up enterprises and local entrepreneurs.

Pipeline: The Council is working with the University through the Citadel Business Infrastructure project to support entrepreneurship.

Concept stage: The Enterprise Centre redevelopment supports local businesses.

3.3 Securing investment - supporting investment applications for both public and private sector

The Council's income stream may be impacted by a loss of retail businesses in the city centre (through a loss of business rates). Applying to Government-funding schemes (Future High Street Fund Towns Fund, Levelling Up) will be more important than ever, and it will be important to present well thought-out projects that meet the challenges and opportunities post-pandemic. The Council should also investigate how best to support businesses in accessing any additional Government recovery funding.

Overview and key opportunities

- Vacant units, whilst impacting the city centre environment, also has financial implications for the council. With retailers such as Debenhams set to vacate high footprint buildings the loss of income from business rates will have a negative impact on the council's finances.
- Working patterns, changes to land use demand, sustainability considerations and trading relation with the EU are all major factors affecting the development of city centres. Stakeholders highlighted the need for Carlisle to adapt to changing circumstances.
- There is an opportunity for restructure the office provision in the city centre. Better quality and position of office could encourage businesses, both private and public, to locate in Carlisle city centre.

Figure 6.2: Future High Street Fund project locations



(blue location points highlight spatial distribution of FHSF projects)

Suggested actions

1. Apply to government funding schemes, such as the recently announced Levelling Up fund.
2. Support business in accessing additional government funding.
3. One longer-term action could involve the reallocation and rationalisation of public sector office space in the city centre. Carlisle is currently home to Carlisle City Council, Cumbria County Council and the Rural Payments Agency, and a holistic approach might be considered to how these three organisations might best make use of existing and future office developments (e.g. repurposing the Northern Quarter). This might involve sharing facilities such as conference spaces and meeting rooms, enabling closer collaboration and more efficient use of space. As such, Carlisle could become a model for hosting an effective and efficient public sector, which may in turn attract other public sector agencies and related third party organisations to relocate to Carlisle (linking to the Government's Estates Strategy, which will move thousands of public sector jobs out of London by 2030), for example DEFRA and Unions. Carlisle's good transport links and growth ambitions are well-placed to support such an action.
4. Strategic marketing of Carlisle to regional and central government could lead to greater opportunity for the area. Leaders within the council have the ability to showcase Carlisle's strengths to encourage investment in the city.

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Confirmed: Future High Street Fund.

Pipeline: Town Deal.

Early stage: Levelling Up fund, Redeveloping the Northern Quarter, Botchergate Townscape project.

Case study: Relocating public services

The Centre for Cities notes two main beneficial effects for the consolidation of public services to city centres:

1. Increasing city centre footfall and spend due to a greater number of workers within access of shops and services.
2. Efficiency savings from concentrating services in fewer buildings and reducing duplication of running costs.

Bradford Metropolitan District Council consolidated their services in Bradford city centre from 2008-10. To finance the move, 44 council buildings were sold; in addition, £64m was saved in maintenance costs due to the move. The move saw public sector jobs in the city centre increase by 1,300 between 2008 and 2010, which helped to offset the negative impact of the recession on the city centre.

Coventry City Council consolidation of services saw 27 buildings merger into 9 in 2016. The movement of council staff into the city centre is intended to be a catalyst for the movement of other businesses into Friargate – a mixed-use business district.

3.4 Sustainable development - ensuring post-pandemic recovery is environmentally conscious

COVID-19 has highlighted the importance of sustainable development and ensuring post-pandemic recovery is in line with responding to the climate emergency. Active travel within Carlisle is an aspect of the city to enhance post pandemic.

Overview and key opportunities

- In May 2020 the Prime Minister stated that the economy will be built back better based on fairer, greener, and more resilient foundations. In addition, the government has set out a 'Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution' which, as well as aiding recovery from the pandemic, will guide the country to achieve the 2050 net zero carbon emissions goal.
- The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sudden fall in greenhouse gas emissions due to a dramatic fall in travel. This has demonstrated the significant impact collective action can have. The simultaneity of the climate crisis and the pandemic means that the post-pandemic recovery will be a pivotal period for securing an environmentally conscious future.
- Repurposing vacant units was a focus for stakeholders, not the creation of new buildings.
- There is an opportunity for *repositioning* of current and future policy to better address current environmental issues.
- See Theme 1.4: Transport Infrastructure for active travel considerations.

Suggested actions

1. Work to ensure new development in the city centre is environmentally sustainable.
2. Encourage active travel modes to and around the city centre

Related projects in development by Carlisle City Council

Early stage: Future-proofing the city centre through supporting electric vehicle usage in addition to active travel interventions mentioned in theme 1 – Transport Infrastructure.

Case study: Oldham: Greater Manchester's first 'Green New Deal Council'

Oldham Council is developing a reputation for clean growth and green innovation – a leader in low carbon, community renewables and a flourishing food economy. The Council's Green New Deal sets out how the Council will achieve carbon neutrality by 2025, followed by the whole borough by 2030, aiming to become the greenest borough in Greater Manchester.

Priorities in the strategy include investment in the green sector, active travel, renewable energy, and a focus on repurposing existing buildings.

Carlisle City Council's sustainability strategy is encompassed within the 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' published in 2011. An updated strategy acknowledging more recent environmental developments should be considered to ensure future development in the city is environmentally sustainable.

Source: <https://www.oldhampartnership.org.uk/business-investment/>

Next steps

This document has set out an Economic Action Plan to support Carlisle city centre in successfully recover from the economic and social impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. A series of actions have been suggested to address the opportunities and challenges present in Carlisle city centre. Overlap between themes and actions is present due to the intertwining nature of the economy and the strengths and opportunities present due to the pandemic. Therefore, listed below are 10 key actions considered to be a priority for Carlisle City Council.

1

Explore opportunities for incubator office & start-up space in the city centre repurposing currently vacant units

2

Ensure a coordinated approach to the redevelopment of the city centre, aligning the regeneration visions of the public and private sector

3

Work with Cumbria LEP and Cumbria County Council to secure grant funding for digital infrastructure

4

Identify the need for supporting infrastructure for walking and cycling e.g. cycling storage and bike racks

5

Consider the reallocation and rationalisation of public sector office space in the city centre

6

Liaise with property owners to identify appetite for vacant unit development; establish exemplar development projects

7

Strategic marketing of Carlisle within the private sector (especially with regards to the visitor economy) and to the public sector (regional and central government) as a place to live and work

8

Explore the opportunity for an independent/ community-run cinema in a vacant building

9

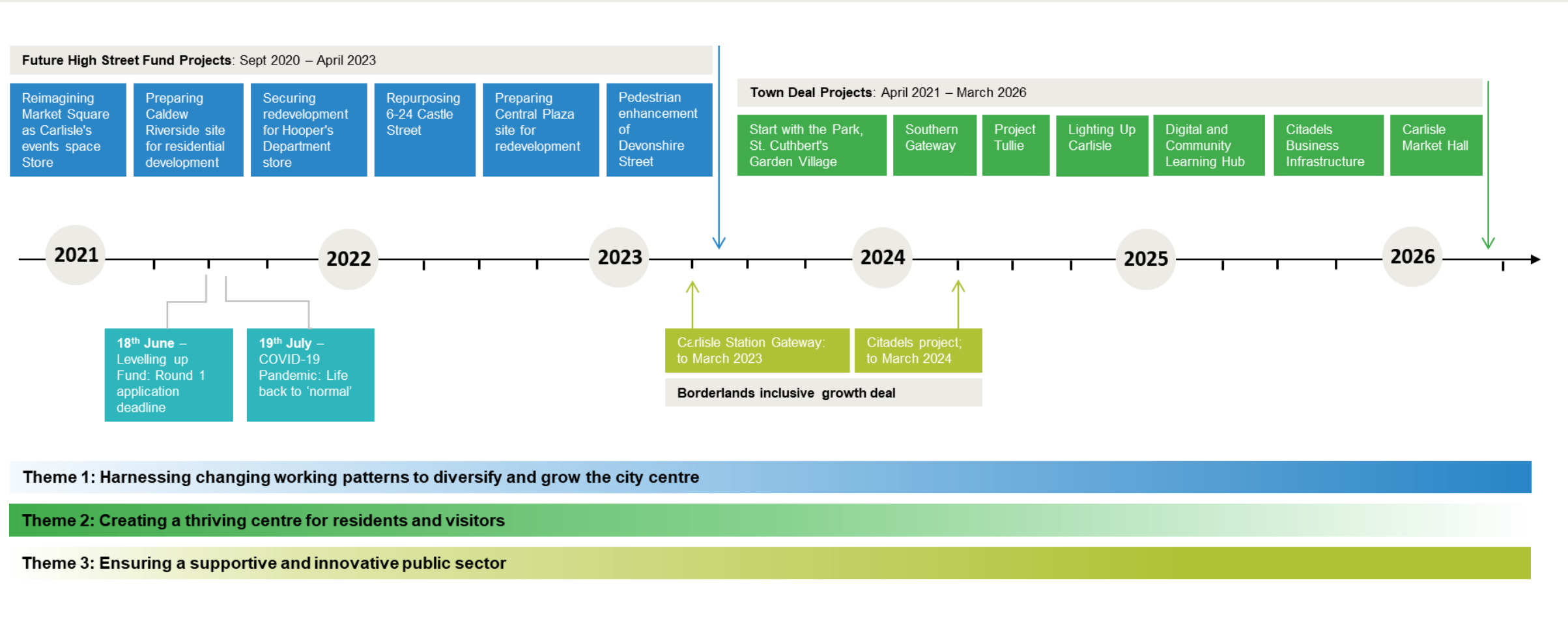
Diversify the city centre living offer for young professionals – residential & leisure offer

10

Work to ensure new development in the city centre is environmentally sustainable

The figure below shows future investments and notable dates in Carlisle city centre. The themes, sub-themes and related actions detailed in this document should be considered alongside future development in Carlisle.

Future developments in Carlisle City centre



Source: Mott MacDonald