

Summary of the key challenges

Underneath the overarching aim of building pride in place and increasing life chances, there are three UKSPF investment priorities: communities and place; supporting local business; and people and skills.



LOCAL BUSINESS

- Vacancy rates of retail units have risen
- Town Centre footfall has dropped
- Town Centre footfall at night-time is low and falling



PEOPLE AND SKILLS

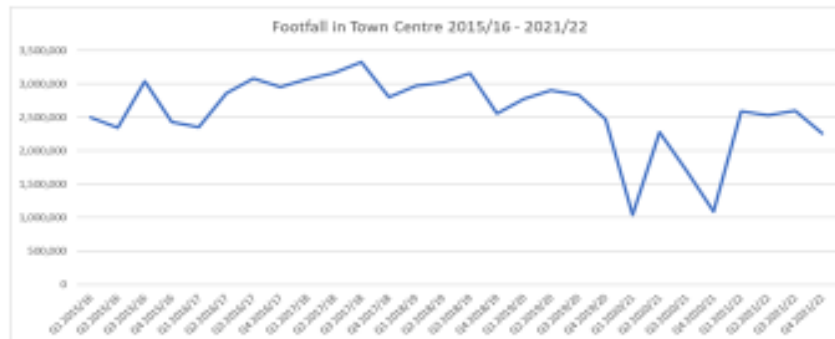
- Relatively high numbers of people on universal credit living in High Street.
- Relatively high numbers of people on Employment and Support allowance.



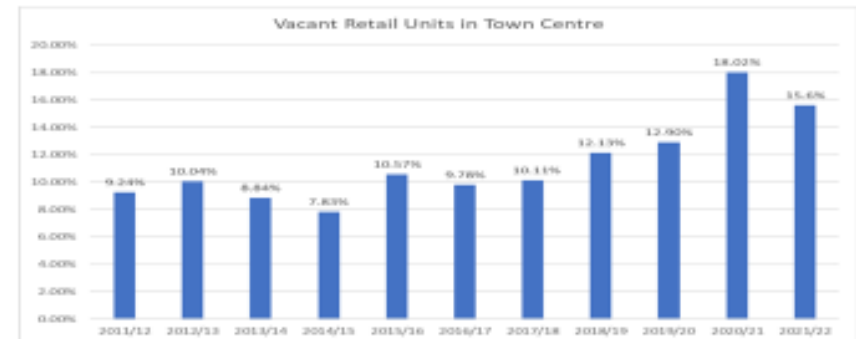
COMMUNITIES AND PLACE

- Reduction in the use of local services.
- Falling pride of place and people's happiness.
- People generally do not feel safe using the town centre at nighttime
- Residents have noticed an increase in the number of people using illegal substances in public.

Local business - challenges



Town Centre footfall has dropped from a peak of c3.25m in 2017/18 to 2.25m in 2021/22.



Vacancy rates of retail units have risen from 9.24% in 2011/12 to 15.6% in 2021/22.

Town Centre visits

69%

People said they visit the Town Centre during the day either weekly or more frequently

15%

Said they visit the Town Centre during the night at least weekly

39%

Over 75's year olds and disabled people don't visit during the night.

People and skills - challenges



PEOPLE AND SKILLS

- Significantly higher numbers of Universal Credit claimants in High Street – 1,835, which represents 15% of the total 11,350 residents.
- Higher numbers of people on Employment and Support Allowance.
- Highest numbers of people on Income Support in Park Wood and Shepway North.

Qualifications (2020)



Communities and place – key challenges

People feel less satisfied living in Maidstone...

Grant Thornton Sustainable Growth Index: community, trust and belonging (2019)

Maidstone's is ranked

172nd

out of 324 local authority areas



Satisfaction with local area as a place to live

They are using public infrastructure less...

	2019		2021
Museum visits	78,029	↓	33,490
Leisure centre	758,290	↓	275,091

And do not feel safe in the town centre, especially at night

80% said they do not feel safe visiting the Town centre at night time

32% of young people feel least safe in the town centre

Surveys found that the three least safe areas of Maidstone were identified as:

- Town Centre
 - Brenchley Gardens
 - Week Street
- (all town centre locations)