



Feasibility Study – A Business Improvement District for  
**Crewe Town Centre**

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**Prepared for :**  
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## 1.0 Executive Summary

### 1.1 Findings

- This study has been produced to assess the feasibility of a business improvement district (BID) in Crewe town centre. The project has involved engagement with a sample of 318 businesses and stakeholders to gauge opinion on a range of issues and challenges for Crewe town centre.
- The feedback within this report is from 93 businesses where Groundwork were able to actively engage with the business and obtain contact details, and secure agreement to provide some feedback through this project. Of these companies, 84 provided general feedback on the key challenges and opportunities for Crewe town centre, with 47 providing further detailed feedback through a comprehensive on-line consultation survey.
- The results of these consultations have shown a number of areas for improvement in the management of Crewe town centre and the surrounding areas. Many of the areas for improvement are added value requirements, above and beyond the statutory responsibilities of Cheshire East Council.
- The study has produced three models for the geographical coverage for a BID in Crewe town centre. For each model four finance options have been included allowing stakeholders to understand the financial implications from different percentage levies and the use of caps for the two largest rateable value premises (Tesco and Asda).
- Each geographical option provided features pros and cons, with the smallest model incorporating 178 businesses enabling engagement with a smaller group of businesses, through to the largest model incorporating 293 and requiring engagement with up to a further 115 occupiers of premises.
- The issues reported by businesses were largely similar in nature regardless of the location of business premises, providing evidence of common need for improvements being expressed by most respondents in the three proposed BID models.
- The analysis of rateable value has shown that a BID could generate an investment of between £0.56million and £1.49million over five years from up to 333 hereditaments with a rateable value above £12,000 depending on the geographical option and percentage value of the levy charged.

## 1.2 Recommendations

- The option for a BID incorporating the town centre, Grand Junction Retail Park and the wider surrounds leading to Nantwich Road and the train station is considered to be a viable consideration given the feedback from local businesses about their existing challenges. Page 28 of this report expands on the case for this model.
- Further smaller geographical models have also been provided by this study, which may also be considered viable (with the exception of the smallest financial model is not recommended). These models whilst viable would miss a potential opportunity to bring together a wider collective of businesses behind a new vision for their trading environments bringing together what are currently disparate and disconnected trading environments.
- It is recommended that the higher value levy of 1.5% is considered (as opposed to a 1% levy), due to the significant additional revenues this will generate for investment into projects and services required to tackle the issues reported. The additional cost for individual businesses between a 1% and 1.5% is considered to be marginal for the majority of companies.
- Recommendations have been provided to support the next steps in development of a BID for Crewe town centre. These include recommendations on expected development costs, resource requirements and a timeline with a target of a BID being operational by April 2023.

### 1.2 The Inclusion of wider stakeholders

- During the development of the study with Crewe Town Council, wider conversations were held around incorporating some larger employers such as Bombardier and Bentley. This could be in the form of a wider community improvement district (CID) model. CIDs are where wider businesses and community organisations outside the core BID area are included in the BID. With the existence of a Town Council that charges a precept to residents to raise revenues, it is proposed that only select businesses above a specific rateable value be included in such a model for a wider area CID / BID.
- CIDs are not formally legislated for in England, and thinking to date has focused on the concept providing a mechanism to support wider neighbourhood communities beyond a traditional town centre focus. The BID regulations will need to be utilised for such a project and the terms of the BID developed to allow stakeholders and businesses to become involved outside of the three modelled areas.
- It is recommended that should a BID be developed, some of the larger employers outside the modelled areas are consulted on their interest in supporting such a project.

## 2.0 Introduction and Project Background

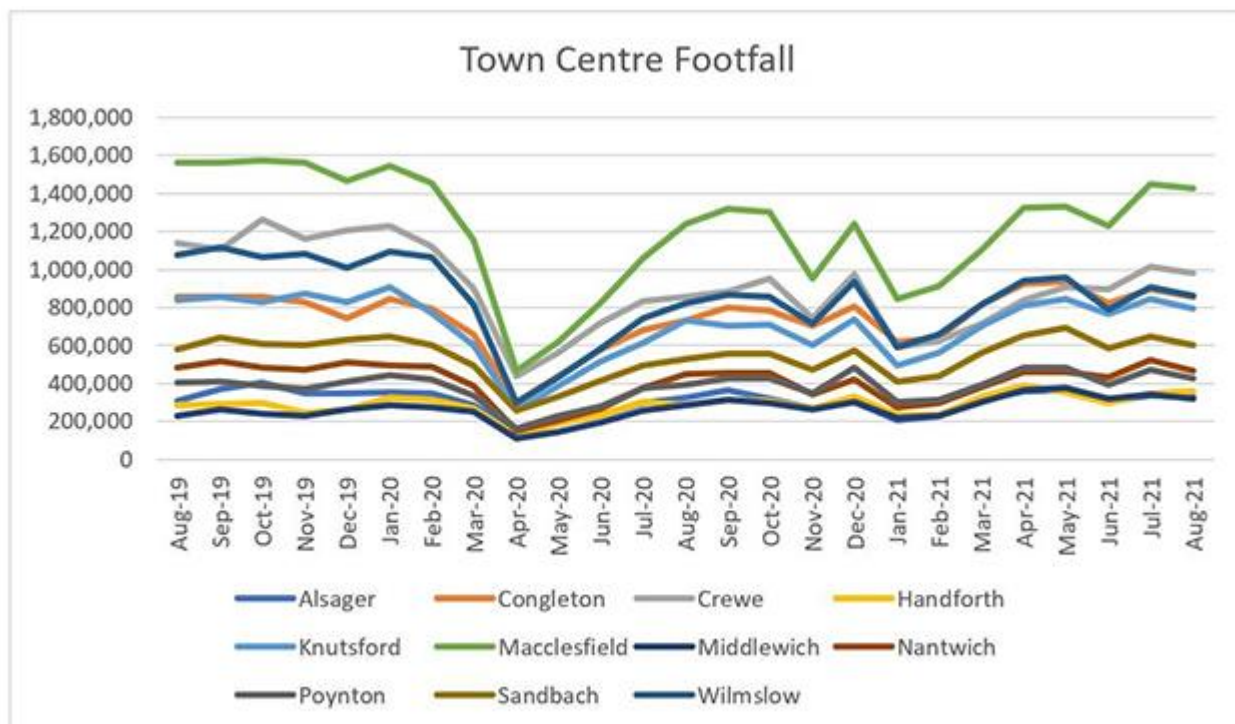
This project was commissioned to review the feasibility of a Business Improvement District (BID) for Crewe town centre. The core town centre in Crewe has been in significant decline in recent years facing many of the challenges seen in town centre across the UK linked to changing consumer behaviours, online competition, withdrawal and demise of anchor / flagship stores from high streets and out of town retail.

For Crewe town centre, the core district has been severely impacted in particular by the development of Grand Junction Retail Parks, which borders the town centre and has created a highly successful retail destination, attracting larger retail brands which in the past would have been based within the town centre (where appropriate sized units can be located).

To support efforts to regenerate Crewe, public and private sector stakeholders have been successful in securing additional investment for the core town centre and wider areas around Crewe. Since 2016 this has delivered a new Market Hall, the opening of the University Technical College in the town centre, and a new lifestyle centre also located in the town centre.

The Crewe Town Board have also secured investments for a pipeline of projects including £43million redevelopment of the Royal Arcade (first phase due to open in 2023), £750,000 accelerated award from the Towns Fund for the Lyceum Square, £14million Future High Street Fund bid and a £22.9 million Towns Fund Award.

Crewe is a significant town centre within Cheshire East Council, and footfall has been impacted in a similar pattern to other towns within Cheshire East with regards to the recent covid-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns.



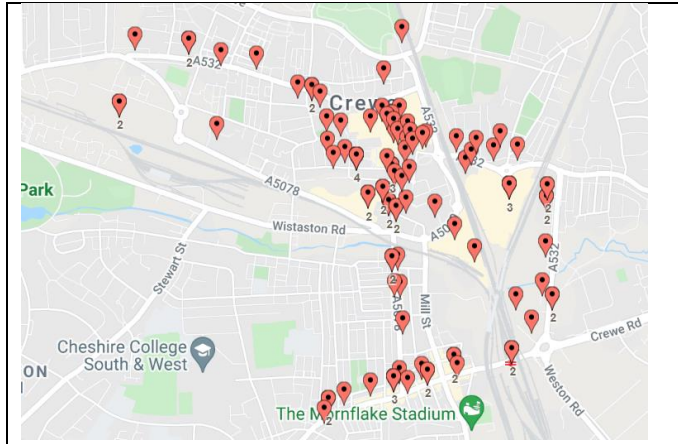
Above: Cheshire East Council Footfall across 11 key town centres

## Target Area and Premises

Due to the relationship between the core town centre and its neighbouring retail parks and districts (including Nantwich Road) this project has engaged with companies within the core town centre, neighbouring retail parks and premises nearby, on or associated with Nantwich Road.

The purpose of this is to establish the challenges and opportunities that businesses believe exist in and around the town centre, in order to review the business case for a core town centre BID and a BID with a wider geographical remit.

The project area includes a broad range of businesses types, based in 875 hereditaments / premises.



Above: Map of postcode districts targeted through the study

62% of these premises have a rateable value of £12,000 or below and were not targeted for engagement for the purposes of this project due to the very small amounts of revenue that such premises would generate for a BID.

This left a dataset of 333 hereditaments / premises, including retail / hospitality venues, office space and leisure facilities. Of these premises, 56 could not be reached by mail using the data provided by Cheshire East Council.

## About BIDs

A BID is a business led formal process that enables the occupiers of business premises (hereditaments) to generate additional investment from a small levy charged through the business rates system.

Typically BID levies are between 1.25% and 2% of the rateable value of a premises, and on average equate to an equivalent daily cost for a business of £2- £3 paid through an annual charge.

For a BID to be established a proposal document is produced which outlines what, when and how a BID will work in a specific town centre. The proposal is required to meet minimum statutory requirements set out in the BID regulations 2004. Once a proposal has been produced all eligible premises will receive a postal ballot with a statutory 28 day period in which to cast the vote to approve or reject the proposal.

There are two requirements at ballot that must be met for the BID be established:

1. A majority of ballots cast must be in favour of the BID
2. A majority in the rateable value of ballots cast must be in favour of the BID

Around the wider region, BIDs have been increasing in number since their introduction in 2004. Within the Cheshire / Staffordshire region operational BIDs include Newcastle Under Lyme BID, Northwich Town Centre BID, Chester City Centre BID and Warrington Town Centre BID. These projects have proven successful, receiving positive ballots at their 1<sup>st</sup> and some in subsequent (after 5 years) renewal ballots where these have been reached.

These neighbouring BIDs have brought together private sector led consortiums of business and stakeholder organisations (including Councils, LEPs and Town Councils) to deliver five year programmes of improvements. Improvement programmes have generally focused on:

- Marketing and promotion through a blend of online and hard copy activities to attract consumers and new inward investment
- Investment in additional events and activities to animate town centers
- Greening and cleaning projects to tackle grot spots, lift the appearance of street scene beyond the minimum requirements of the local authority
- Safety and security projects to create an enhanced consumer experience and pro-active approach to tackling risks
- Business support, networking and town centre management capacity.



## 2.1 Project Aim and Methodology

This feasibility study on a Business Improvement District for Crewe town centre has been commissioned by Crewe Town Council, and produced by Groundwork, with the aim of producing:

1. Key findings and trends from interviews with businesses and stakeholders
2. Geographical option for development of a BID
3. Recommendations on timescales and the process for developing a BID for Crewe town centre
4. Production of a rateable value database for Crewe town centre, including the analysis of RV data to develop a geographical option for a BID to provide an options appraisal
5. Producing a BID development timeline for Crewe town centre
6. A developed understanding on the role a BID could play in the future development of Crewe town centre and advice on whether a BID is feasible.

### Methodology

- The project was delivered through a blend of online, face to face engagement and distribution of hard copy consultation forms to business premises.
- A consultation questionnaire was released for companies to respond to in November 2021, with a 4 week window for businesses to respond. The questionnaire was posted to each premises, and followed up by business engagement staff with additional copies of the consultation.
- The analysis of rateable data has been conducted using data supplied by Cheshire East Council.
- Consultation has also been facilitated with Cheshire East Council officers around the feasibility of a BID being operated within Cheshire East Council with no policy or technical issues presented that would be a barrier to a BID progressing.

## 3.0 Crewe town centre BID Feasibility Key Findings

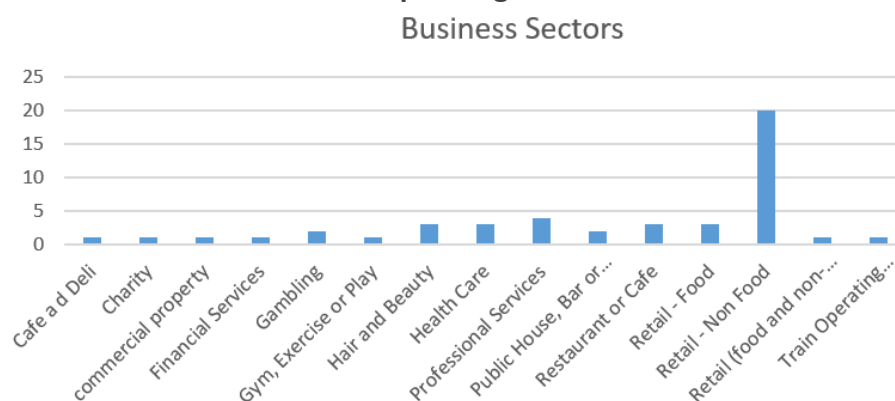
### 3.1 Stakeholder and Business Interview Results

- A total of 333 premises were written to and invited to partake in the consultation on the proposal for a BID in Crewe Town Centre.
- Of these premises, 15 are either occupied by Cheshire East Council, designated car parks or are premises where one business occupies a 2<sup>nd</sup> neighbouring premise. This left a total of 318 businesses to target following release of the initial letter.
- 56 of the letters sent to companies using the data provided by Cheshire East Council were returned by Royal as not been able to be delivered.
- 93 business were able to be actively engaged with the project or our business engagement staff, providing contact details and registering an interest. From these 84 provided a form of general feedback on the key challenges and opportunities, and 47 provided detailed feedback through a comprehensive on-line consultation.
- Within the core town centre, a few business within areas which have been subject to severe decline over recent years displayed an aggressive response to the request to partake, and refused to complete the consultation.

#### Sectors represented by responses to the consultation:

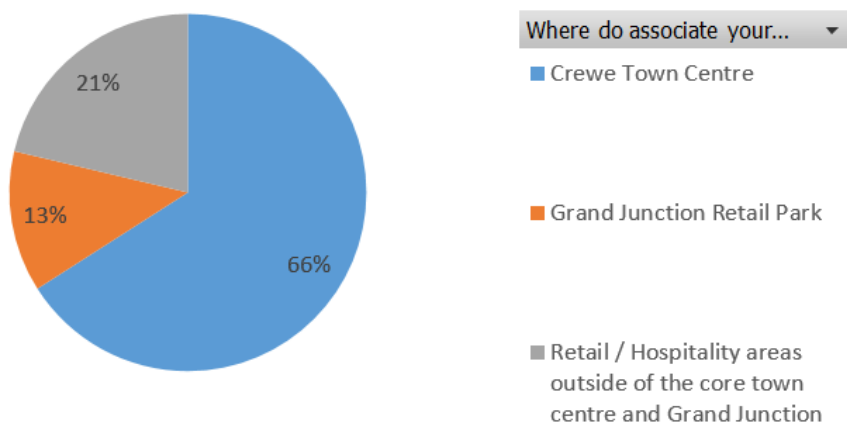
• Retail - Non Food	• Professional Services
• Retail - Food	• Financial Services
• Public House, Bar or Club	• Charity
• Restaurant or Cafe	• Entertainment / Leisure
• Health Care	• Commercial Property
• Hair and Beauty	• <b>Train Operating Company</b>
• Gambling	

#### Below: Business Sectors responding to the detailed consultation:



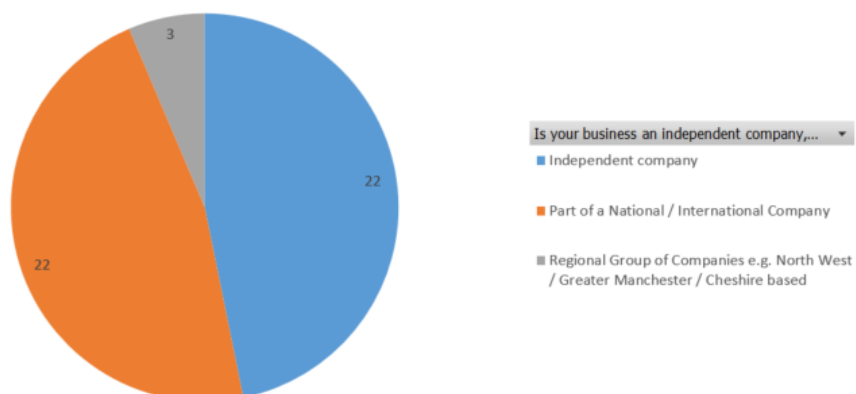
**Below: Percentage of responses from target areas to the Consultation**

% of responses from each target area



**Below: Chart displaying the number of responses received by business ownership**

Business Ownership



### 3.2 Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic

To understand the impact on business of the covid-19 pandemic and corresponding restrictions on trade, a series of questions were asked to gauge business confidence, current operating hours, response to the requirement for a Covid risk assessment as well as needs for general business support:

- **Majority of businesses are operating at pre-covid opening times (November 2021)** with the exception of:
  - **19% are working reduced hours** predominately in the following sectors
    - Restaurant or Café
    - Hair and Beauty
    - Retail - Non Food
- **Business confidence is on average is 2.8** on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being high and 1 low).
  - 28% of companies scoring confidence in the high range (score 4 or 5)
  - 36% of companies scoring confidence in the low range (score 1 or 2)
  - 36% of companies scoring confidence in the middle range (score 3)
  - 3 businesses responded that they are moving away from the town centre quoting reasons of:
    - Grand junction retail park
    - Not sure as yet but looking to move to somewhere nicer and bigger as soon as I can find somewhere suitable
    - If footfall increases will stay if it doesn't the business will close down

For comparison, the same question around business confidence was asked of companies in Wilmslow town centre in Cheshire East in July 2021 with the following score:

- 55% of companies scoring confidence in the high range (score 4 or 5)
- 13.5% of companies scoring confidence in the low range (score 1 or 2)
- 31.5% of companies scoring confidence in the middle range (score 3)
- 3 businesses responded that they are moving away from the town centre.

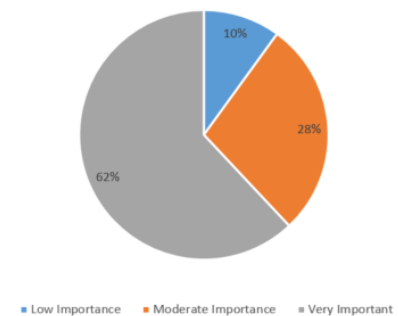
- Companies were asked what additional support they may require following the lifting of Covid restrictions; the following priorities for additional support were provided:
  - Recruitment of new staff
  - Business Planning
  - Access to finance
  - Getting customers into the town centre
  - Security
  - Investment in the local area to improve general demand
  - Recruitment support
  - Business planning support
  - Business Planning
  - Staff Training
  - Centre working with businesses
  - Redundancy

### 3.3 Marketing and Events:

The survey sought to understand the importance of marketing to businesses in Crewe town centre, and business's opinion on how well Crewe was marketed to consumers / visitors.

- 62% of businesses responded stating the marketing of Crewe as destination was very important to their business.
- When combined with the respondents who stated it was of moderate importance the percentage who believe marketing is of moderate importance or very important increased to 90%

How important to the success of your business is the marketing of Crewe as a destination?

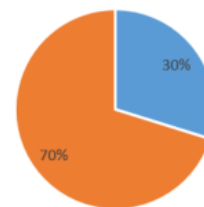


■ Low Importance ■ Moderate Importance ■ Very Important

Business were then asked how well they rated the marketing of Crewe as a destination.

- No respondents rated this question as good.
- 70% of respondents rates the marketing of Crewe as a destination as poor.
- 30% consider marketing acceptable.

Count of How do you rate the marketing of Crewe as destination?



■ Acceptable ■ Poor

Businesses were asked about where they felt investment opportunities should be focused, ranking five options (Website / Hardcopy-press / Social Media / Weekend Events / Weekday Events) low, moderate or high in terms of importance.

Additional events on weekdays

Additional events at weekends

Business led social media presence to raise the profile of Crewe with new consumers and visitors on-line

Business led hard copy press campaign to raise the profile of Crewe with new consumers and visitors on...

Dedicated business led town-centre website to promote events, businesses offers and news about t...



■ Not Important ■ Moderate Importance ■ Very Important

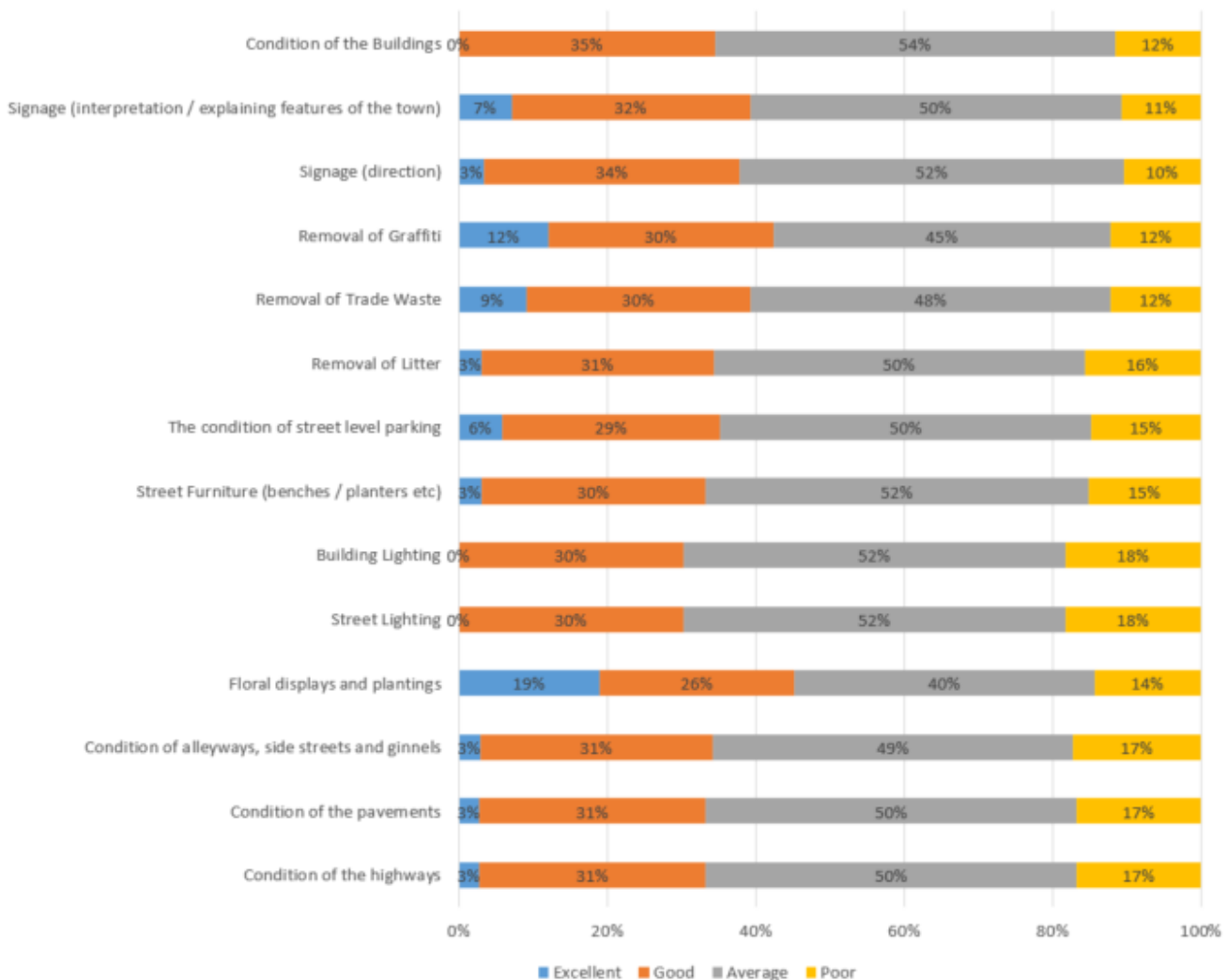
- The answers highlight interest in investment in social media as the highest priority area, followed by investment into a dedicated business led town-centre website and hard copy press campaigns.

### 3.4 Image / Street Cleansing and Town Centre Management in Crewe

Respondents were asked to rank a range of environmental factors providing business feedback on their view on the image and street cleansing of Crewe town centre. Not every respondent ranked each factor, however the majority of factors were ranked by more than 70% of respondents.

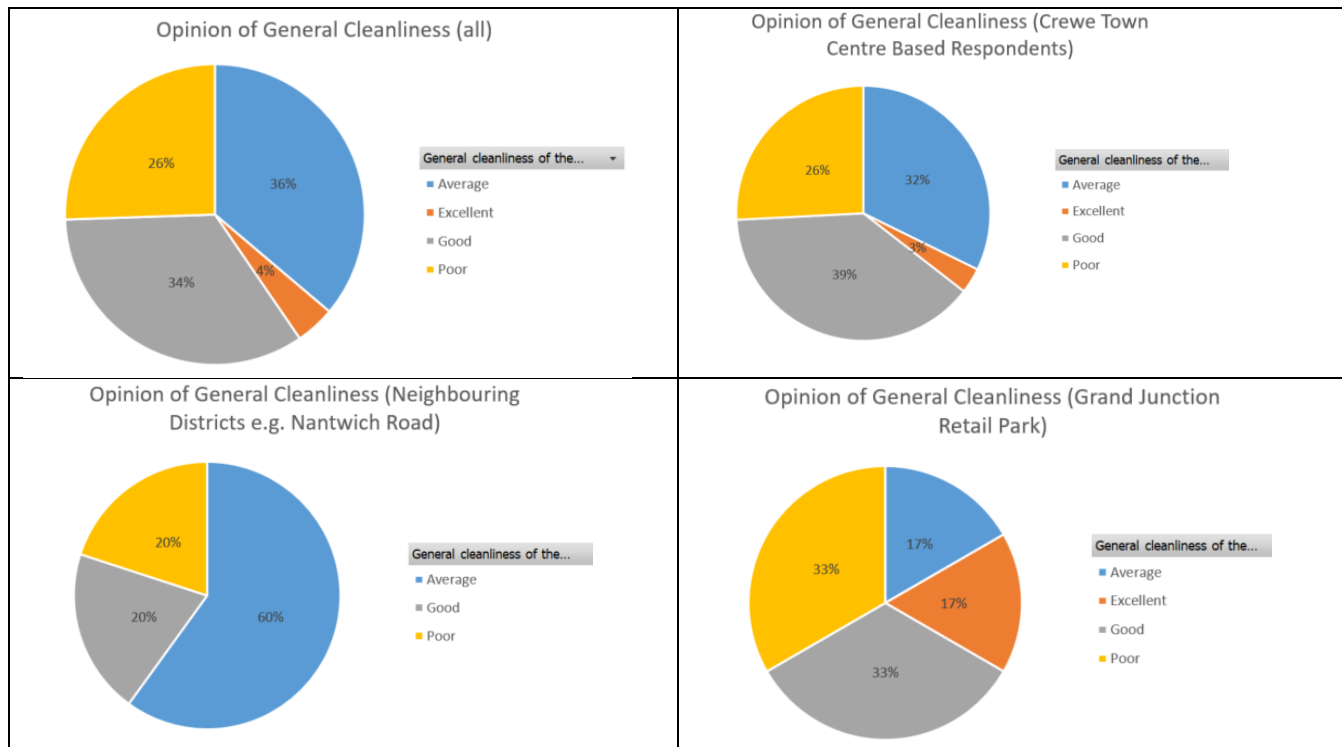
#### Ranking of a range of environmental factors by businesses across the target area:

Ranking of a range of environmental factors from businesses across the target area



- 50% of respondents rated all factors as average.
- Floral displays and planting was the highest ranked environmental factor - 45% rating as excellent or good
- Building lighting and street lighting were the lowest ranked environmental factors

## Opinion of General Cleanliness – Companies were asked to rate the General Cleanliness of their areas



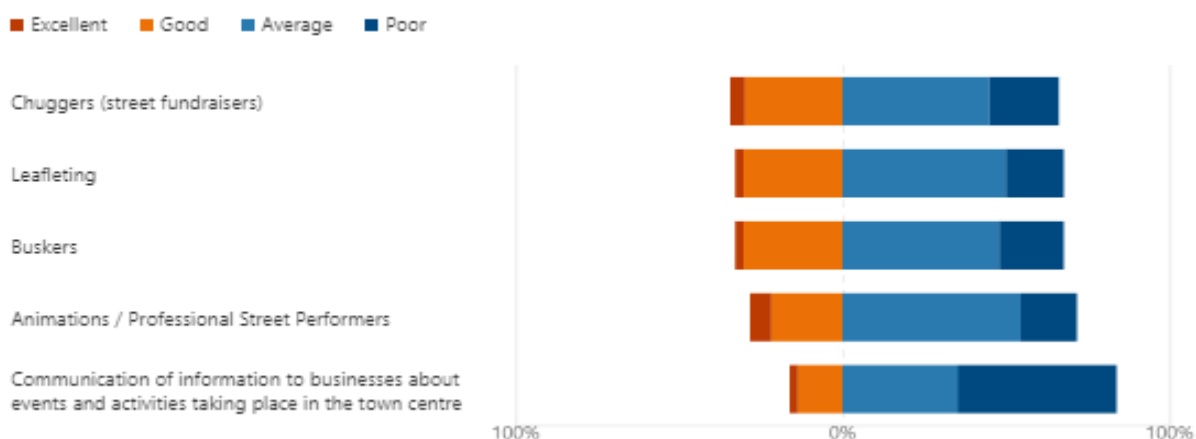
- Of note is the lower rating of cleanliness from companies in the neighbouring districts e.g. Nantwich Road.

### 3.5 Management of High Street Activities

Companies were asked to rate the management of five aspects of high street activities including management of chuggers, leafleting, buskers, animation and communications around events. Responses were received from all respondents who participated in the consultation.

Communication of events was rated poor by 48% of respondents, the 2<sup>nd</sup> worst ranked element was management of animation of the town centre and professional street performers.

The detailed results are provided below:



### 3.6 Crime and Security

Crime and security challenges have been reviewed through a series of consultation questions seeking insight into the overall incidence of crime, types of crimes, the impact these crimes have had on businesses and finally what solutions businesses believe require future investment.

Key findings:

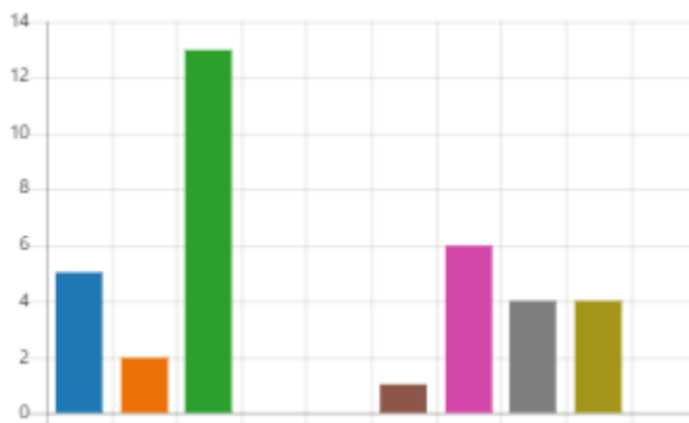
- 45% of businesses have been affected by crime in the last 12 months.
- The majority of incident relate to shoplifting, antisocial behavior, vandalism or criminal damage.
- 10 (21% of total respondents) of companies reported that criminal incidents have had a significant impact on their business.
- 10 (21% of respondents) companies reported this was a weekly or daily occurrence.
- A range of solution received support from circa 60% of respondents including additional CCTV, additional lighting and additional police patrols.
- When asked how safe do your staff and customers report feeling during daytime, evening and nighttime the results of respondents who felt unsafe were:
  - Daytime – 8.5% of respondents reported feeling unsafe (47 responses)
  - Evening – 43.2% of respondents reported feeling unsafe (44 responses)
  - Night time – 70% of respondent reported feeling unsafe (40 responses)

For comparison the same question when asked in Wilmslow town centre in June 2021 generated the following results:

- Daytime – 2% of respondents reported feeling unsafe
- Evening - 4% of respondents reported feeling unsafe
- Night time – 24% of respondent reported feeling unsafe

#### Types of criminal incidents reported by respondents to the consultation

<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Criminal Damage	5
<span style="color: orange;">●</span> Arson	2
<span style="color: green;">●</span> Shoplifting	13
<span style="color: red;">●</span> Online/cyber-crime	0
<span style="color: purple;">●</span> Physical assault	0
<span style="color: brown;">●</span> Burglary	1
<span style="color: magenta;">●</span> Anti-social behaviour	6
<span style="color: grey;">●</span> Vandalism	4
<span style="color: olive;">●</span> Theft	4
<span style="color: teal;">●</span> Other	0



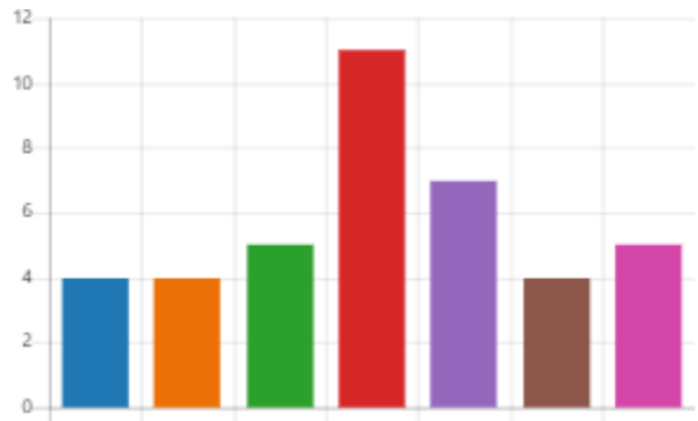


### 3.7 Procurement

Business were asked if they would be interested in participating in a range of joint procurement initiatives:

- 34% of respondents provided a response to this question, with the priority areas being websites, marketing and PR, followed by health and safety / first aid training.

Utility costs - joint procurement	4
Security services - joint procur...	4
Waste disposal - joint procure...	5
Marketing, website and PR tra...	11
Health & Safety and First Aid t...	7
HR & Employment Law training	4
Legislation updates	5



### 3.8 Management of the Town Centre

In multiple town centres and commercial business districts across the UK companies have organised themselves to form business led, independent bodies to represent and lobby for the interests of companies. These groups have traditionally been funded through local authority budgets or voluntary subscription services to varying degrees of success, and contingent up funding availability (public sector) and willingness to make voluntary contributions.

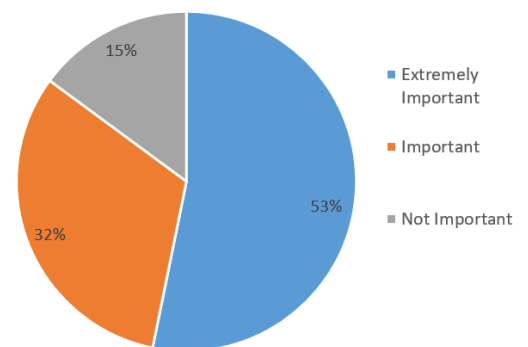
In recent years over 300 town centre and commercial locations have formalised their management of town centre activity through the establishment of Business Improvement Districts (legislated for in 2004 in the UK), particularly where voluntary subscription arrangements or local authority funding mechanisms have failed to deliver sustainable models for such groups.

To gauge the interest from companies in establishing a business led, independent body representing the interests of the business community in Crewe town centre such as a BID the following question were asked:

*How important is it for there to be a business led independent body representing the interests of the business community in Crewe town centre as exists in towns such as Altrincham, Stockport, Northwich and Warrington?*

- 53% of businesses stated it was extremely important for a *business led independent body representing the interests of the business community in Crewe town centre*.
- 32% stated important in response to this question with 15% stating it not to be important.

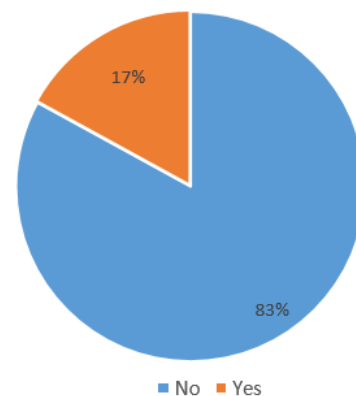
How important is it for there to be a business led independent body representing the interests of the business community in Crewe town centre and the surrounding retail / hospitality locations?



*Are you familiar with Business Improvement Districts (e.g. have you owned, managed or worked in a business located in a town centre where a Business Improvement District operates)?*

- Only a small number of respondents reported they are familiar with BIDs.
- This highlights a need for further awareness raising with companies about the benefits of a BID for Crewe town centre, and how a BID may operate.

Are you familiar with Business Improvement Districts (e.g. have you owned, managed or worked in a business located in a town centre where a Business Improvement District operates)?



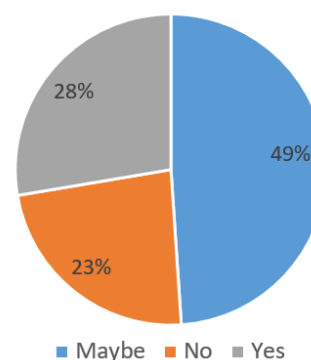
*Based upon your previous experience of BIDs do you have any feedback on how a BID might be beneficial for your business in Crewe, conversely if you have concerns please summarise these (see responses - right):*

- “Needs to include health and wellbeing of residents by encouraging active travel infrastructure”
- “I don't have any previous experience.”
- “I have no experience with BIDS”
- “Why are we wasting money on outside contractors too many people passing the responsibility”
- “Waste of money”
- “We need a BID but it must include Nantwich Road”
- “On the point of rubbish. The rubbish from the market hall is not recycled. It is put in the normal waste, this includes paper, cardboard and milk cartons etc. Its a disgrace, but it's the same in scope house as well”
- “Never worked with BIDS”

*Would you be interested in participating in a future working group that would support and guide the development and implementation of project/services that will benefit Crewe town centre and the surroundings areas.*

- 11 respondents indicated they would be interested in participating in a group.
- 23 respondents indicated maybe.
- 5 of these respondents which indicated yes to being involved in a working group identified themselves as business in the surrounds.

Would you be interested in participating in a future working group that would support and guide the development and implementation of project/services that will benefit Crewe town centre and the surroundings areas



### 3.9 Overall Priorities for Improvement

Respondents were asked to indicate the relative importance to their business that each of the following areas for possible investment might make in creating an improved trading environment in Crewe town centre.

The summary of responses from respondents is shown below:

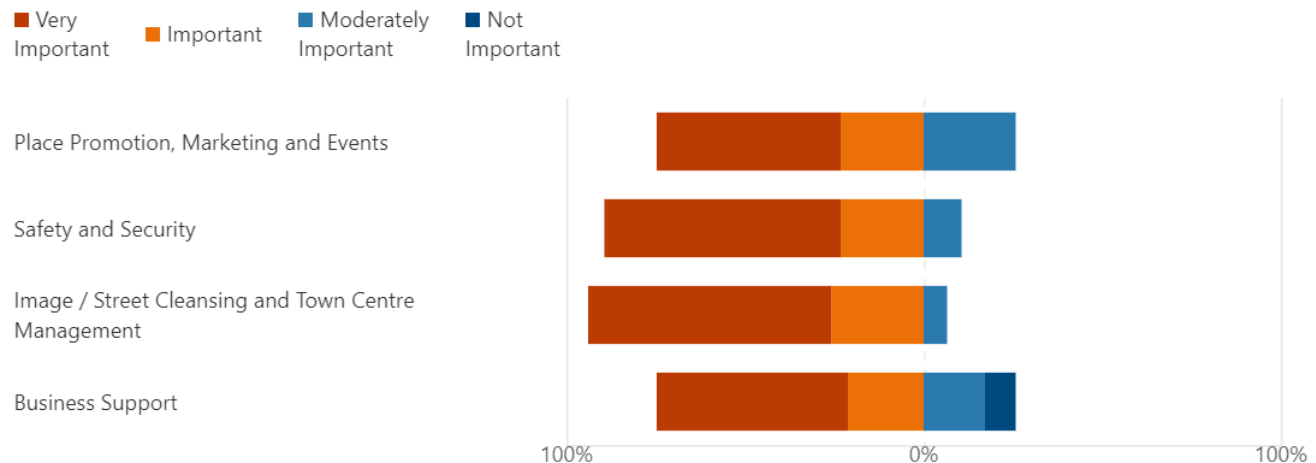


Image / Street Cleansing and Town Centre Management were a clear priority for businesses in the town centre. This was followed by safety and security as the 2<sup>nd</sup> priority area for investment.

Place promotion, marketing and events was considered very important by 55% of businesses, whilst business support was considered important by 55% of respondents.

Overall there was broad support for investment into all four areas proposed. 77% of respondents reported investment into all four themes was important or very important; 91% reported investment into safety and security was important or very important, whilst 97% of respondents reported investment into image / street cleansing and town centre management was important or very important.

This highlights the importance of future town centre initiatives covering a wide portfolio of activity subject to resources and capacity within the town centre business community and its stakeholders.

It should be noted that whilst a BID can deliver additional investment over and above the baseline levels of services provided by Cheshire East Council into areas such as street cleansing (e.g. many BIDs fund additional or deep cleanses of their town centres), it is important for Cheshire East Council to meet any future commitments towards baseline services in order to clearly demonstrate where additional private sector investment is making a difference.

### 3.10 Qualitative and Anecdotal Feedback

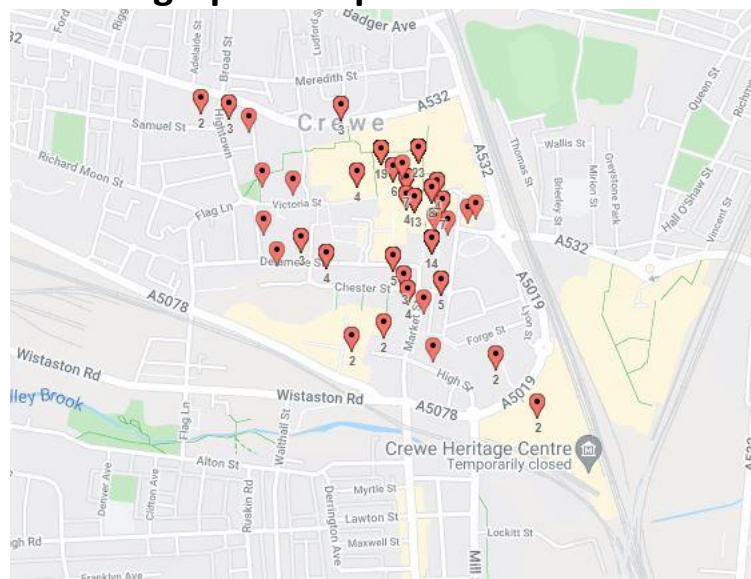
79 additional written pieces of feedback were received which have been summarised using the word cloud below to highlight the most common terms / references from respondents.



## 4.0 Geographical Coverage of a Business Improvement District for Crewe Town Centre

Following an analysis of the rateable value of hereditaments within Crewe town centre, the following options show the potential income depending on the levy set. The analysis has been conducted using a list of hereditaments (premises) supplied by Cheshire East Council as identified on the council's list of non-domestic rate payers.

### BID Geographical Option 1



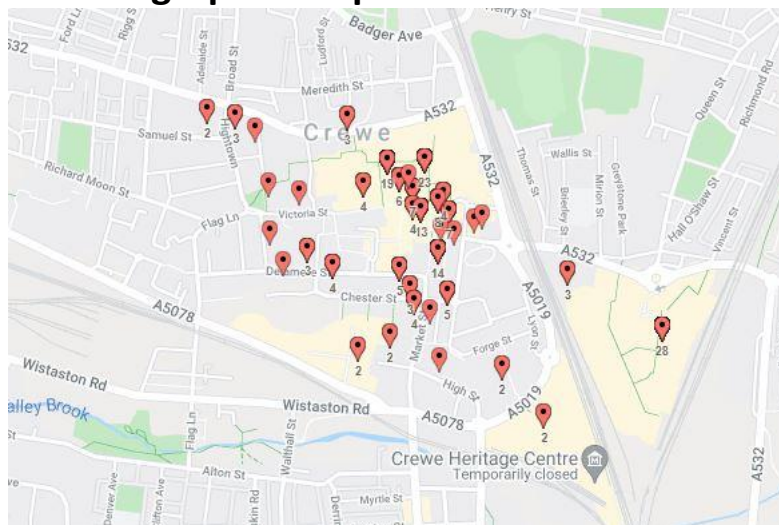
**Crewe Town Centre BID estimation of revenue raised @1.5% with a £12,000 RV exemption**

% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
1.5%	£12k	£188,130	£0.94million	178
1.5%	£12k (£10000 cap)	£157,280	£0.79million	178

**Crewe Town Centre BID estimation of revenue raised @1% with a £12,000 RV exemption**

% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
1.0%	£12k	£125,420	£0.63million	178
1.0%	£12k (£10000 cap)	£111,520	£0.56million	178

## BID Geographical Option 2



**Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park BID** estimation of revenue raised @1.5% with a £12,000 RV exemption

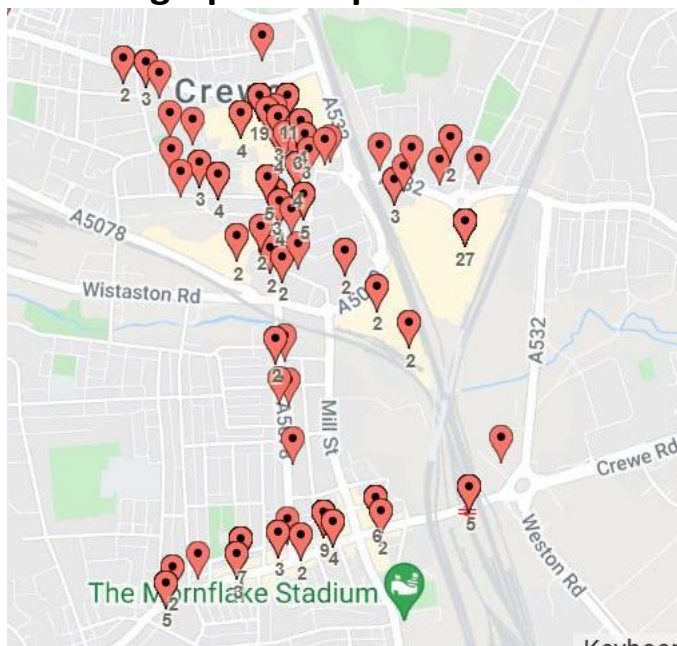
% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
<b>1.5%</b>	£12k	£263,812	£1.32million	210
<b>1.5%</b>	£12k (£10000 cap)	£232,962	£1.16million	210

**Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park BID** estimation of revenue raised @1% with a £12,000 RV exemption

% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
<b>1.0%</b>	£12k	£175,875	£0.88million	210
<b>1.0%</b>	£12k (£10000 cap)	£161,975	£0.81million	210



## BID Geographical Option 3



**Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park + Surrounds BID** estimation of revenue raised @1.5% with a £12,000 RV exemption

% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
<b>1.5%</b>	£12k	£299,625	£1.49million	293
<b>1.5%</b>	£12k (£10000 cap)	£268,775	£1.34million	293

**Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park + Surrounds BID** Estimation of Revenue Raised @1% with a £12,000 RV exemption

% Levy	RV Threshold (below which hereditaments are exempt)	BID levy raised p.a.	BID levy raised over 5-years	Hereditaments levied
<b>1.0%</b>	£12k	£199,750	£0.99million	293
<b>1.0%</b>	£12k (£10000 cap)	£185,850	£0.93million	293



**Notes about our analysis of the above three options for a BID in Crewe town centre:**

- RV = Rateable value
- 1% and 1.5% is for illustrative purposes only, to demonstrate the income that would be raised by a BID levy at the % of hereditaments rateable value within Crewe town centre. The final BID levy percentage for a BID in Crewe would need to be determined through the business plan development process.
- Models have also been provided showing the impact of a cap of £10,000 for the largest premises (Tesco and Asda).
- The income analysis listed has been taken from information provided in the Business Rates database supplied by Cheshire East Council and is estimated income. The total BID levy income could change through the development process for a number of reasons which include any change in national policy on business rates, properties that may be demolished, constructed, merged or split throughout the BID development process.
- The three proposed BID areas cover:
  1. Core town centre
  2. Core town centre and Grand Junction Retail Park
  3. Core town centre, Grand Junction Retail Park and nearby surrounding areas (including Edleston Road, Nantwich Road)
- Notable absences for consideration in the development of the BID include new developments on Mill Street and the Royal Arcade redevelopment (which was not complete at the time of the study).

## 5.0 Summary Time Line for Development of a BID

Key Actions for Developing a BID	Date
1 <sup>st</sup> Stage Feasibility Study complete	January 2022
Proceed to Business Plan development and consultation to refine businesses priorities	March – July 2022
Develop and finalise baseline agreements with the Local Authority, Cheshire Police and other public agencies	March – July 2022
Business Improvement District Regulations – 84 day notice	June 2022
Finalise the BID Business Plan/BID proposal document	July - September 2022
Business Improvement District Regulations – 42 day notice	October 2022
Develop and deliver a marketing campaign for the BID vote	August - November 2022
Business Improvement District Vote Period – minimum 28 days	Oct / November 2022
Set up BID	January – March 2023
BID Implementation day	1 <sup>st</sup> April 2023

## 6.0 Summary Findings and Recommendations on a BID for Crewe town centre

### A Business Improvement District (BID) for Crewe town centre

- Feedback from the sample set of businesses and stakeholders has identified a number of opportunities for improving town centre management beyond the statutory responsibilities of Cheshire East Council and Crewe Town Council (note the majority of statutory responsibilities e.g. highways, lighting fall to Cheshire East Council).
- Respondents have shown a strong interest in supporting a business led independent body representing the interests of the business community in Crewe town highlighting a need for additional capacity that could be delivered through a BID
- Key areas for improvement that have been identified are:
  - Additional crime and security interventions, in partnership with the statutory and discretionary functions of Cheshire Police, Cheshire East Council and Crewe Town Council
  - Improvements to the image and cleanliness of Crewe town centre and the surrounding districts
  - Stronger marketing and profiling of Crewe town centre as a retail and leisure destination
  - Enhanced events and festivals to re-animate the town centre
  - Improved communications links and business support
  - Development of a single, independent, dedicated body / partnership for Crewe town centre that can effectively lead and realise successful outcomes for businesses and stakeholders.
  - Business support
- If stakeholders decide to proceed and develop a BID, during the development of the business plan, further analysis and market testing of the size and scale of the BID will be required. In particular, this must include national retailer's property departments. The two largest hereditaments include Tesco and Asda. Asda historically have not been supportive of BIDs, whilst Tesco historically base decisions on a case by case basis, however are involved corporately organisations including British BID which demonstrates support to the concept of BIDs in principle.
- The Council should strongly consider establishment of a private sector led, Town Centre BID Steering Group, to guide and direct the development of projects and services that will form the fundamental basis of a BID for Crewe.
- Three geographical options for a BID have been provided, along with options around the percentage of rateable value the BID levy should represent. The calculations also show the impact of offering a financial cap for the two largest ballot hereditaments. It is not believed that a cap would make a material difference with regards to Asda's vote, however the use of a cap may be a useful negotiating tool with Tesco.
- Stakeholders are recommended to carefully consider the three geographical options. The only option which is not recommended is for a 1% levy for a BID covering only the town centre. This is due to the small amount of revenue that will be generated affecting the likely viability of a BID to make a material impact.
- All the other models demonstrate levels of income at which a town centre BID would be viable. Similar projects in Burnley and Northwich generate annual income of around £160k-£180k and both have demonstrated the viability of a BID at this level. Larger amounts of levy can be raised with a 1.5% levy, and many town centre BIDs charge 1.5% and achieve positive ballot results.

- It is recommended that serious consideration is given to the higher value of 1.5% due to the significant additional revenue this would raise for investment into the target area. The additional material cost to most individual businesses would be minor (e.g. a £30,000 rateable value premises would pay £450 / year at 1.5% compared to £300 / year at 1%, an additional daily cost of £0.41 / day).

**The case for a BID in Crewe town centre, Grand Junction Retail Park and the surrounds leading up to and including Nantwich Road Retailers**

- The respondents that identified themselves as 'Retail / Hospitality areas outside of the core town centre and Grand Junction Retail Park' have reflected similar challenges and opportunities as the businesses in the core town centre, highlighting a wish to see enhancements to their trading environment.
- Qualitative comments from comments from these businesses highlights feelings of being left out, views that Crewe is far behind other towns and the request for a deliverable plan for the train station and town centre.
- There was interest from 70% of respondents to be involved in a working group to support and guide the development and implementation of project/services that will benefit Crewe town centre and the surrounds.
- Feedback from two respondents has made specific referenced about the need for a BID, one business has also experienced the positive impact of the BID in Northwich.
- The investment into HS2 and subsequent plans for redevelopment of the train station provides an opportunity to strengthen the existing route ways between the train station and the town centre creating a stronger sense of place and identify for the area.
- A BID stretching out along this important route way could be instrumental in working with partners to enhance over the term of a BID the experience for consumers and visitors coming into the town centre from the train station or visiting the football ground.
- A BID plan could incorporate into its vision an aspiration to create a business led vision for creating a location for consumers and visitors incorporating the town centre, retail park and smaller independents between the town centre and the railway station.
- Although not included in this study, the role of the key stakeholders and businesses in Crewe including the football club, Bentley Motors, Mornflake Foods and Bombadier could further be explored. Efforts were made to engage with Bentley Motors and Bombadier during this study, however no formal responses to the consultation were received. It should however be noted that Bentley and Bombadier have both recently received investment to secure their futures in Crewe.

- Should a BID be developed incorporating extensive areas of managed retail space e.g. the Grand Junction Retail Park, consideration should also be given to a discount for existing managed spaces, where additional service charges are already paid to landlords for additional cleansing and marketing. This is not mandatory, however is provided by some BIDs where businesses are already making additional investments to the wider amenity of their trading environments. This would of course reduce the overall budgets for a BID.
- It is important that the group is private sector-led, and contains significant representation from the private sector. Partnership arrangements and representation from public sector bodies should be included however balanced against the need for private sector leadership in the BID development process. It will also be important to secure membership for the development group across the key sectors in Crewe town centre.

- 13 respondents have shown interest in participating in a working group to support and guide the development of projects and services that will benefit the town as trading environment, a further 23 suggested they may be interested.
- The members of the Town Centre BID Steering Group should be encouraged to become ambassadors for the BID project, actively selling the concept within their own organisations and to fellow traders / businesses within Crewe town centre.
- In establishing the geographical area for a BID, it recommended that the following risks are considered:
  - The level of rateable value at which hereditaments are excluded (the study has been based upon an exemption level value for premises £12,000 or less.
  - The role a cap can play in encouraging support from larger hereditaments, principally Tesco.
  - The deliverability of a BID across the town centre, Grand Junction Retail Park and the surrounding retail / hospitality areas.

## Resources

- The financial budget required to develop the BID would be dictated by the level of outsourcing of the project that Crewe Council decides to take, however a budget of circa £30,000 may be required to complete the development phase.
- The return on investment for such an investment could be around £1million of additional investment into the town centre between 2023 and 2028.
  - In terms of the costs of developing a BID, these can be (should the funder decide), recovered from the project once established.
  - A further option may be seeking support from national government or Cheshire East Council.
    - Cheshire East Council would be easier to engage for local stakeholders, however as a local authority they have not previously funded BID development projects.
    - The Government have managed a BID development fund in recent years, however this is currently on hold pending appointment of a new delivery body.
- CEC would need to work with the BID development project including liaison by council staff from the following council functions during the development of a BID:
 

○ Economic development	○ Highways
○ Business rates	○ Environmental Services
○ Electoral affairs	
○ Street cleansing	

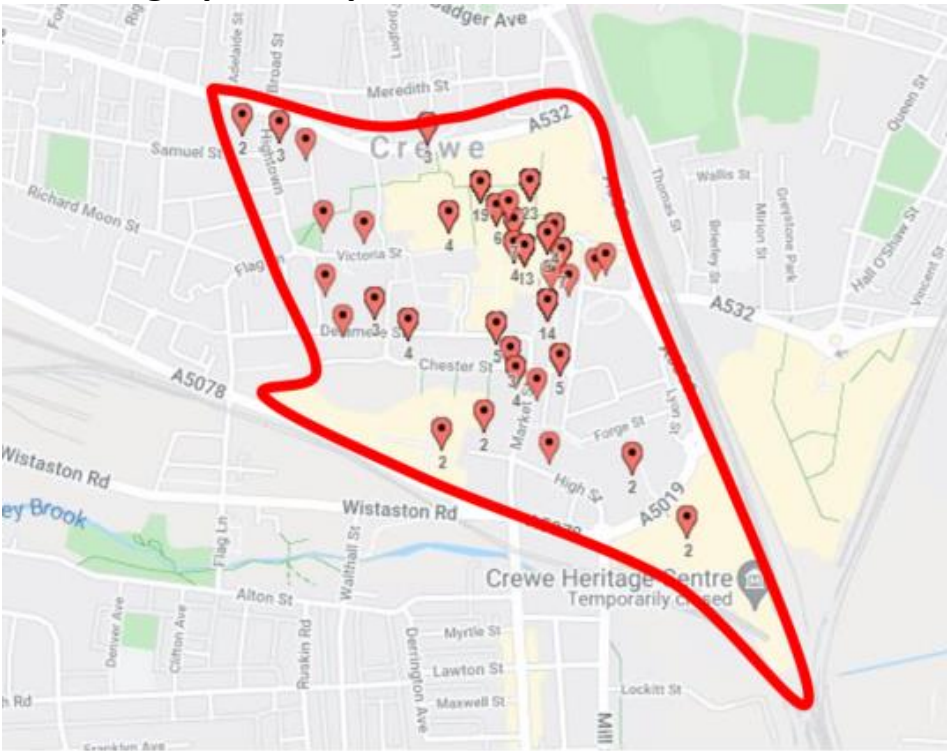
Note: this list is not exhaustive, however is illustrative of the level of cross-departmental working that is likely to be required in establishing and / or delivering a BID.

## Cheshire East Council Responsibilities

- The development of a BID for Crewe town centre would require Cheshire East Council to formalise and make available public baseline agreements relating to their statutory obligations in areas such as street cleansing, removal of litter, maintenance of open space (including car parking), and highways.
- Cheshire East Council is recommended to begin the process of reviewing and establishing baselines for the town centre and ensuring that these are being met, in order for the BID to clearly demonstrate how it would be delivering added value projects and services above and beyond Cheshire East Council's statutory obligations.

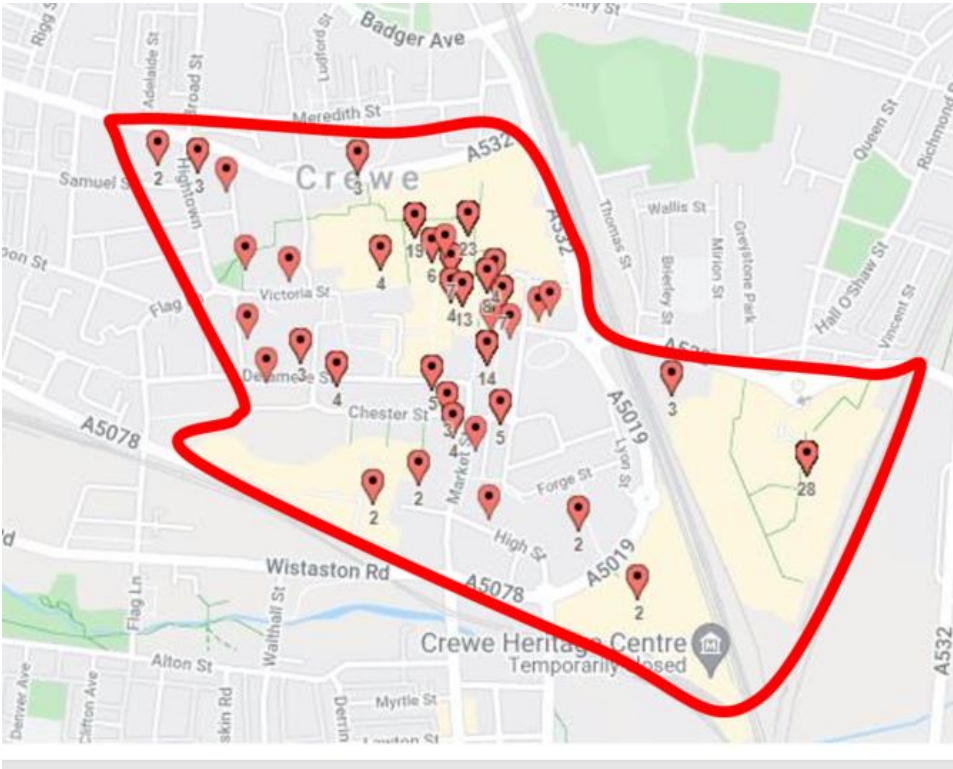
Appendix One – Map of Proposed BID areas

BID Geographical Option 1



Crewe Town Centre BID

BID Geographical Option 2



Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park BID



BID Geographical Option 3



Crewe Town Centre + Grand Junction Retail Park + Surrounds (Nantwich Road) BID

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