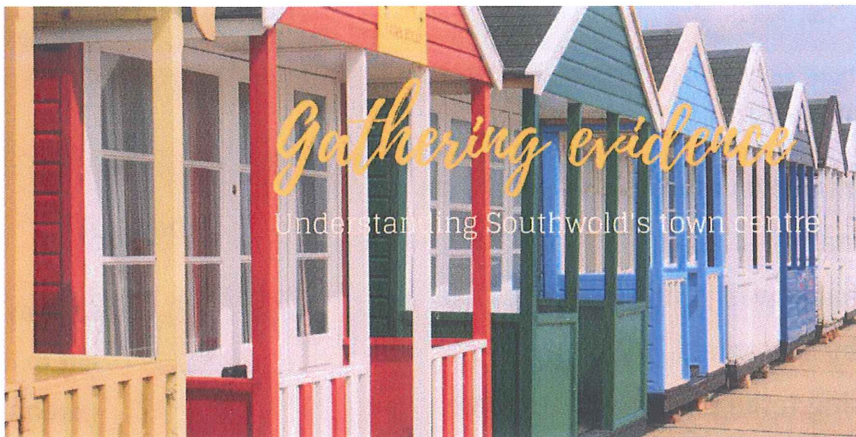


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Developing an evidence-base in Southwold [Home](#) / [Postcards from](#)

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Survey work developing an evidence base in Southwold demonstrates the importance of properly understanding town centre issues.

Southwold is a seemingly prosperous place with a high dependency on the visitor economy. Anecdotal evidence has, however, suggested that independent businesses are vulnerable to rising costs. These businesses are perceived as an essential element of the town centre's distinctiveness. There have also been concerns about the changing experiences and expectations of customers and how these will exacerbate such pressures.

The need

As part of its work to support the Southwold Coastal Community Team, Waveney District Council needed objective



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evidence to back-up such perceptions of the pressures facing the town centre. The Council and Coastal Community Team wanted to achieve this in a way that under-pinned long-term community engagement; took account of existing strategies; strengthened partnership working; informed objectives; shaped solutions; supported external funding bids; and provided measures to monitor impact.

The solution

The Council and Coastal team commissioned a comprehensive town centre survey comprising of the following elements:

- A desk-top review of existing strategies and data.
- An assessment of quantitative key performance indicators
- Qualitative stakeholder surveys.

The issues

The work revealed a number of issues:

- Southwold businesses are markedly more pessimistic than in comparable towns nationally
- The presence of national chains was jointly ranked as the most negative perception by customers
- Existing concerns about rising retail property costs were reinforced through recognition as a top issue
- Parking was perceived as the most negative current aspect of the town centre by both customers and businesses.
- Customers were more positive than businesses about Southwold town centre compared to businesses and national averages.
- 24 per cent of customers thought the town centre experience had worsened in recent years
- There are strongly positive perceptions of the 'brand' Southwold linked to the culture, heritage and quality of its environment.

More information

Find out more about how this work informed [Southwold Town Centre Strategy a Forward Framework](#).

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This case study is one of a series prepared by People & Places as part of the Local Government Association's [Revitalising Town Centres Handbook](#)

Read more about [foundations and evidence](#) as part of the accompanying [LGA revitalising town centres toolkit](#) including a more detailed version of this case study on [gathering town centre evidence in Southwold](#).

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