

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR REGENERATING CAMBUSLANG MAIN STREET



Cambuslang Business Survey 2017

Cambuslang Community Council



CAMBUSLANG
Community Council

Acknowledgements

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The Community Council are very grateful to the following businesses for taking part in the survey:

AM Ducie Florist	Glasgow Law Practice	Pandora's Box
Andy's Convenience	Greggs	Phone to U
Asian Fusion	Health & Wellbeing	Pizza Hut
Asian Tandoori	Hospice Shop	Proper Print & PC
Bennys	Hugh Black	Ritz Bar
Black Bull	Iain's Carpets	Scissor Sisters
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Cambus News	John Fairweather	Special Moments
Cambuslang Dental	Karen's Ice Cream	Speciality Cakes
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Chikos (2 shops)	Leslie Chemist (2 shops)	Sun Shack
Chillies	Lucky Oriental	Super Save
Cibelli Barbers	M&Co	Superdrug
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Coral	McCallum's Cafe	Tyre Centre
Corkys	Money Shop	Vanity Hair & Beauty
Credit Union	Naz	Vapetek
Dee's Deli /Burgers	Night Star (fish shop)	William Hill (2 shops)
Eastern Delight	No Hat Required	Zippy
Farm Foods	Optical Express	
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Cambuslang Community Council welcome comments on this report, further ideas for its Community Strategy and offers to get involved. Please contact CambuslangComCo@aol.com or phone 07973 744807.

Cambuslang Community Council, February 2017

BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR REGENERATING CAMBUSLANG MAIN STREET

THE CAMBUSLANG BUSINESS SURVEY 2017

SUMMARY

The of the Cambuslang Business Survey is to assess what Main Street shops and other businesses think of the town centre and what needs to be improved. The survey was run from November 2016 to January 2017 and achieved 73 responses, equivalent to a 95% response rate from the 77 businesses approached for the survey.

The results show that **the Main Street is in trouble** and may be reaching a tipping point. A sizeable proportion of retailers (40%) have experienced declining business performance over the past three years. Almost a quarter assess their current performance as poor, and 20% have considered closing down or moving out of Cambuslang.

The **potential damaging economic impact** is clear from the data analysis undertaken for this survey. The Main Street retail sector supports some 350 jobs and an estimated turnover of between £8 million and 11 million. Losing more shops would accelerate a vicious circle of decline. Less measurable, though also important, is the effect of decline on civic pride.

The shifting fortunes of the Main Street are partly due to changing shopping patterns. However, there are factors specific to Cambuslang which retailers believe need urgent action. **Top of the list is a new parking strategy** to address the lack of sufficient spaces and time for parking. Other important priorities are related to security (crime vandalism anti-social behaviour), the layout and appearance of the street and the level of traffic and congestion. A greater diversity of shops is needed, particularly at least one new anchor store (supermarket) in the centre of the Main Street.

Further decline of the Main Street is not inevitable. There are many examples of how town centres across the UK are taking effective action to turn around their main streets and high streets. Regeneration will require concerted action by businesses with support from the wider community, and – crucially – leadership from South Lanarkshire Council.

The results of this survey indicate **a clear case for a new strategy** to regenerate Cambuslang Main Street. Important components of such a strategy would be:

- (i) relaunch of the **Town Centre Forum**, with a specific mandate to address the above priorities, starting with immediate action on parking;
- (ii) development of a **Business Improvement Plan** for commercial revival of the Main Street;
- (iii) **prioritisation of Main Street regeneration** in the new SLC Local Development Plan, including rescinding of planning approval for a new supermarket on Bridge Street;
- (iv) **a 'town centre first' policy** in strategies and planning investment decisions by all relevant SLC departments;
- (v) development of **a new masterplan** for the layout of Cambuslang Town Centre to provide a road-map for future decision-making on planning and investment.

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BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR REGENERATING CAMBUSLANG MAIN STREET THE CAMBUSLANG BUSINESS SURVEY 2017

1. OBJECTIVES OF THE CAMBUSLANG BUSINESS SURVEY: WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

Four years ago, the Scottish Government launched its ‘Town Centre Action Plan’ to reinvigorate town centres across Scotland. The Action Plan called for a *“long term vision for each town centre which will make our town centres fit and viable places to interact, do business, and access facilities and services”*.¹ The principle of ‘town centre first’ applies to all policies and strategies of the Scottish Government, local government and other organisations.

In response, the South Lanarkshire Council’s Local Development Plan² has an objective to *“sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the network of town centres”*, encompassing strategic centres (e.g. East Kilbride, Hamilton), town centres (such as Cambuslang) and neighbourhood centres (such as Burnside, Fernhill, Halfway). It makes commitments to promoting town centre living, vibrant local economies, community-led regeneration, accessible public services, investing in digital infrastructure, and pro-active planning (including health checks).

While there is evidence of some of these commitments being implemented, there are major question marks over the economic sustainability of Cambuslang Main Street. It is not clear whether SLC has carried out a health check of Cambuslang Main Street. There is certainly no publicly recognised vision or strategy specifically for Cambuslang town centre.

The view of the local community is that the town centre has declined significantly over the past decade. The main conclusion of the Cambuslang Community Survey, carried out by Cambuslang Community Council in 2015³ is the huge public dissatisfaction with Cambuslang Main Street. Two-thirds of respondents were unhappy with the appearance and layout of the Main Street, and almost 70% are critical of the limited range of shops. Among the specific issues of concern: the layout of the Main Street was considered a mistake; parking was too limited; the range of shops on the Main Street was regarded as too limited; the large trolley waste bins were considered to be unsightly and contributed to the drab appearance of the street; and there was a need for better provision for cycling.

¹ Scottish Government Town Centre Action Plan <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/regeneration/town-centres/review/action-plan>

² South Lanarkshire Council Local Development Plan Supplementary Guidance –Town Centres and Retailing, 2015.

³ The Cambuslang Community Survey was carried by Cambuslang Community Council in Summer 2015. It achieved almost 1100 responses, making it one of the largest community surveys conducted in Scotland. The results are available here: <http://www.cambuslangcommunitycouncil.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Cambuslang-Community-Survey-Report-final3.pdf>

The Cambuslang Business Survey was undertaken by Cambuslang Community Council to find out whether shopkeepers and other business owners/managers share the views of local people about the Main Street and their priorities for change. Those running businesses on the Main Street have the most direct stake in the health of the town centre. They can see most clearly what is wrong and which improvements would have the most immediate impact.

The Business Survey was launched by Cambuslang Community Council in November 2016 and ran until the end of January 2017. Survey forms were given to every retailer and other business fronting on to either side of the Main Street and adjacent streets (Greenlees Road, Tabernacle Lane, Westcoats Road), encompassing a total of 77 businesses. 73 businesses responded, yielding an impressive response rate of 95%. With this high level of response, which is rare in surveys of this kind, the Cambuslang Business Survey can claim to be a comprehensive assessment of business opinion. It includes the views of all types of business situated in all parts of the Main Street and therefore provides a well-informed basis for assessing the problems experienced and identifying the priorities for improvement.

The survey asked ten questions on the following issues:

1. **Characteristics of the business:** how long has your shop/business been operating on the Main Street? Do you live in Cambuslang? Are your premises leased or occupied? How many staff do you employ?
2. **Business performance:** how do you assess your current trading performance (good, satisfactory, poor)? How has it changed over the past three years (improved, much the same, declined)?
3. **Assessment of the Main Street:** how has the Main Street changed over the past three years (stayed the same, improved, declined)? What are the main problems experienced – commercial factors (trade, competition, customer parking), cost factors (rent, rates, improvement finance, premises), staffing (recruitment, retention) and environment factors (traffic, security, anti-social behaviour, appearance of the street)?
4. **Priorities for improvement:** What are your priorities for improving the Main Street for your business – commercial environment (more national multiples, more specialist shops, foodstore), cost factors (reduced rents, rates), parking issues (more spaces, more time to park), environment (more policing, better streetscape), and promotional activity (marketing, events)?

A copy of the questionnaire is provided in an annex to this report.

The following sections discuss each of these issues, complemented by data analysis. It summarises the results of the survey and provide an indicative range of the supplementary comments made by respondents. It should be noted that respondents were assured that the survey results would be anonymised and no comments are attributed to specific businesses.

2. CAMBUSLANG MAIN STREET – WHAT SORT OF RETAIL CENTRE?

Cambuslang has units for 83 shops or business services fronting on to the Main Street or adjacent streets. 75 of them are occupied, with eight lying vacant. There are a further 57 business units, 52 of them offices and most of them in the Cambuslang Gate complex.

2.1 Retail profile – dominated by hair, beauty and takeaway shops

The profile of the Main Street is typical of many neighbourhood centre shopping streets, with a significant number of hair and beauty salons, takeaway food shops, pubs and betting shops (see Figure 1).

The Main Street also has a range of health-related services (dentist, opticians, pharmacies), restaurant/cafes, professional services (finance, property) and a mix of other shops and businesses. Over two-thirds of the businesses are independents and c. 30 percent are branches of regional or national chains.

Many of the shops on the Main are relatively small (see Figure 2). Two-thirds are less than 100 m² in size, and almost half of these are under 50 m². This is similar to other UK shopping streets dominated by convenience goods, personal services and fast-food outlets.

Fewer than ten percent of shops have a floorspace greater than 200 m², the largest units being Farmfoods, M&Co and The John Fairweather.

Figure 1: Retail profile of Cambuslang Main Street

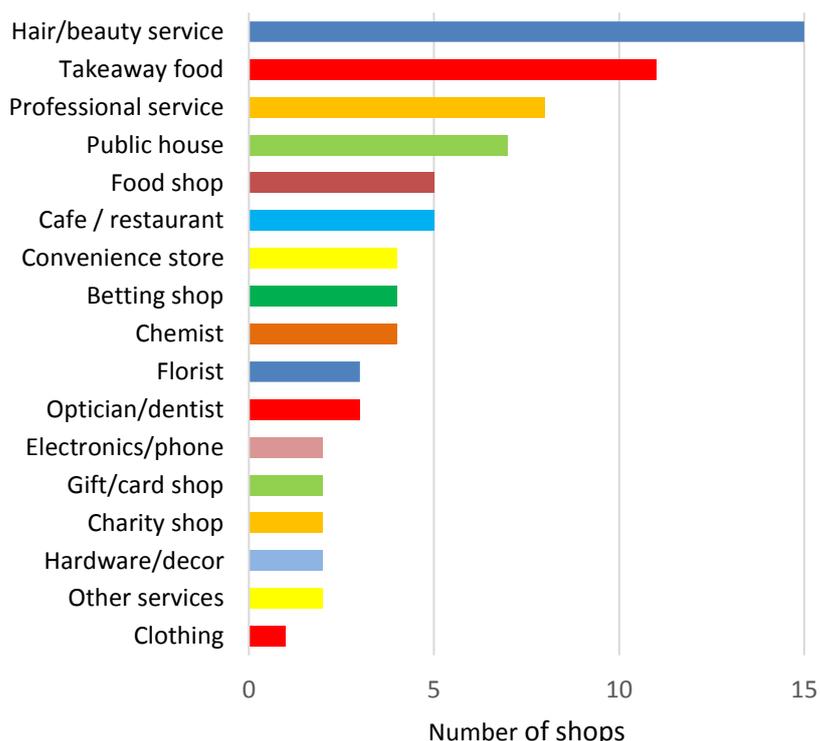
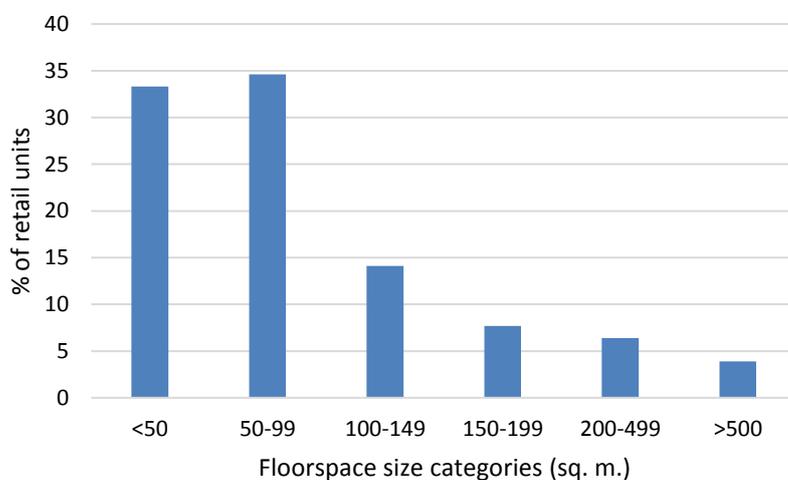


Figure 2: Size of shops on the Main Street



2.3 Retail floorspace - less than 10,000 square metres

Overall, the Main Street has a total retail floorspace of 9,746 square metres, of which 8,246 m² are currently occupied by retailers.⁴ For comparison purposes, the central business district of Hamilton has a retail floorspace of 82,800 m², and the East Kilbride shopping centre has over 100,000 m². The total floorspace of all retail and service units on the Main Street combined is less than the total of local supermarkets, and less than the size of some individual superstores such as Sainsbury's and Tesco (see Table 1).

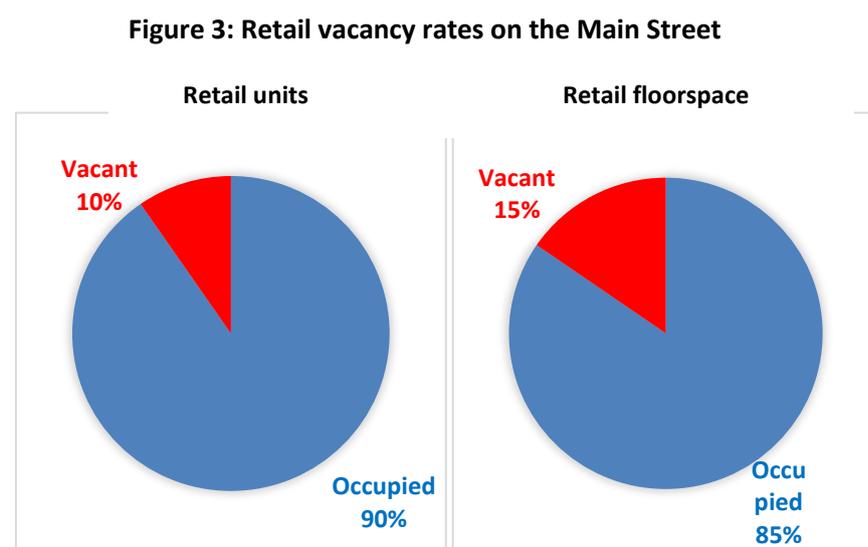
These figures also indicate the threat posed by the South Lanarkshire Council Masterplan for the Hoover site, which includes approval of a supermarket with 9,104 m² of floorspace on Bridge Street.⁵ Its focus on convenience goods would represent significant competition for Main Street shops and the continued viability for some.

Table 1: Comparison of Cambuslang Main Street floorspace

Shops/centres	Floorspace (sq. metres)
Cambuslang Main Street	9,746
Morrisons	4,730
Aldi	1,515
Lidl	1,962
Tesco Burnside	2,520
Sainsburys Kingsgate	10,783
Tesco Dalmarnock	10,859

2.4 Vacant units - lack of anchor stores

The Main Street has eight vacant retail units, c.10% of the total stock of shops. This is above the 2016 average for Scotland⁶ with respect to the number of units vacant (see Figure 3).



The scale of vacancy is still greater in terms of retail floorspace, where 15% of floorspace is vacant.

Three vacant units have floorspace in the 200-500 m² range, indicating the difficulty of attracting larger retailers – among them a tenant for the former Scotmid supermarket in the centre of the town. The

⁴ Data collated from the Scottish Assessors Association (SAA) portal (www.saa.gov.uk)

⁵ South Lanarkshire Local Development Plan – Town Centres and Retailing Supplementary Guidance, 2015.

⁶ Scottish Retail Consortium 2016 survey data.

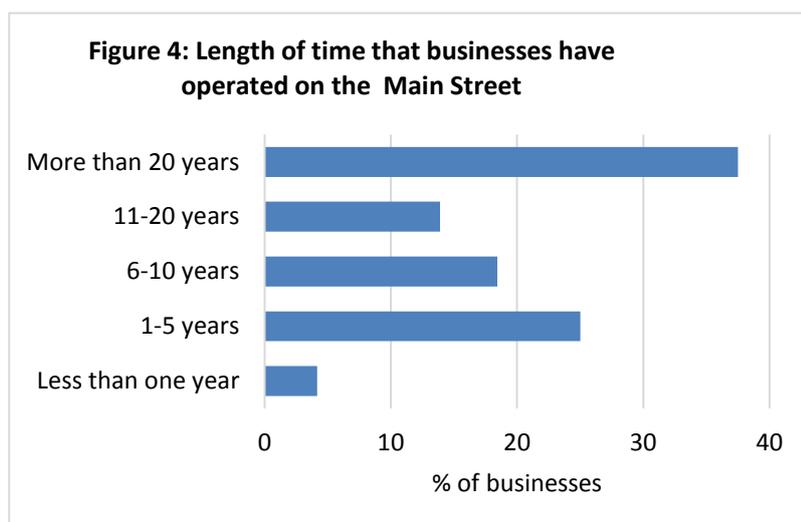
lack of anchor stores to draw retail traffic to key parts of the Main Street is a major concern for the town centre's sustainability.

This is not a recent problem. Some of the units on the north side of the Main Street have been empty since the development of the Cambuslang Gate complex in the mid-2000s i.e. pre-dating the economic crisis. One factor is likely to be cost: according to the SAA valuation rolls, the rateable value of units in Cambuslang Gate are among the highest on the Main Street



2.5 Many retailers are well-established, and most premises are leased.

The majority of businesses on the Main Street are well-established. Around half have been operating on Cambuslang Main Street for at least ten years and well over a third for more than 20 years. There is also a significant number of new businesses that have opened within the past five years (see Figure 2).



However, the profile of the Main Street has changed substantially over the past two decades.

The number of shops selling food has declined in recent years, only one clothes shop remains, there is no longer a supermarket in the centre of the Main Street, and two of the remaining three bank branches have closed in 2016-17.

There have been some new additions – particularly the redevelopment of the derelict cinema/bingo hall to create by JD Wetherspoon. However, a comparison with the Main Street of 20 years ago is stark. At that time, Cambuslang still had a shoe shop, furniture shop, fresh fish shop, second hand furniture shop, DIY store, fruit shop, and more than one butcher and clothes shops. In the words, of one local resident *“you didn't need to go out of Cambuslang for anything”*.

Importantly, a high proportion of businesses (60% of respondents) lease the property that they occupy. Only a quarter are owner-occupied. For the multiples and other externally owned businesses, decisions on investment are often made outside Cambuslang. As the recent experiences with RBS and Clydesdale Bank demonstrate, the decision to stop trading can be made at very short notice.

3. IMPORTANCE OF THE MAIN STREET FOR THE LOCAL ECONOMY

The Main Street is an important generator of employment and income for the economy of Cambuslang. Using the data from the survey responses, and applying basic Retail Impact Assessment techniques,⁷ it is possible to quantify the economic impact of the retail sector on the Main Street.

3.1 Employment – provision of 350 jobs and £4 million of income

The Main Street retail businesses are estimated to create some 350 jobs. Based on the findings of the survey, which asked respondents to provide figures for full and part-time staff, the total retail employment of Main Street retailers is estimated as 354 jobs – 171 full-time and 183 part-time.⁸

Table 2: Employment created by Main Street retailers

	Retail jobs recorded	Retail jobs (full-time equivalent)	Direct, indirect and induced jobs
Full-time staff	171	171	225.7
Part-time staff	183	91.5	120.8
Total	354	262.5	346.5

Around 90 percent of the retailers have five or fewer staff, with almost 10 percent being run by one person. The remaining retailers have more than five staff, with the largest recording 28 full and part-time staff.

Assuming that part-time employment averages 0.5 FTE, the retail employment on the Main Street jobs equates to 263 full-time jobs. This employment will be associated with indirect and induced jobs elsewhere. Applying a standard Scottish Government employment multiplier of 1.32,⁹ it can be estimated that total direct, indirect and induced employment is of the order of 347 jobs. With the addition of commercial employment in the offices in Cambuslang Gate and elsewhere, the total figure for jobs associated with Main Street businesses is likely to be well in excess of 400.

Retail and food service jobs are among the lowest paid sectors in Scotland, with median hourly pay (excluding overtime) of £8.66 and £7.42 respectively.¹⁰ This equates to an annual salary of

⁷ It is important to underline that this is not an RIA, and the figures for income and turnover are indicative.

⁸ Eight respondents were not able to provide employment figures, and estimates have been included for these businesses.

⁹ <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/Input-Output/Multipliers>

¹⁰ Earnings in Scotland 2016, Scottish Parliament Information Centre.

£16,707 and £14,315 respectively. Applying these salary figures to the above data for direct employment in the different businesses suggests that the generation of wages and salaries of the Main Street retail sector could be of the order of £4.09 million per year.

3.2 Business turnover for the Main Street - between £5 and 11 million?

The turnover of Main Street retail businesses can be estimated from floorspace data from the SAA valuation rolls. As noted above, the total floorspace of operating retailers is 8,246 square metres. Retail Impact Assessment studies conducted for neighbourhood centres, including in Scotland, assume that between 60% and 70% of floorspace will be sales area (net floorspace) to which they then apply a turnover value ranging between £1,000 and £2,500 per square metre. Lastly, they apply an economic multiplier, usually between 1.2 and 1.5.

Applying this methodology to the floorspace figures for the Main Street is shown in Table 3. This assumes a gross/net floorspace ratio of 65% and turnover values of £1,000-£2000 per square metre.

Table 3: Estimated annual turnover of Main Street retailing

Turnover per sq.m.	Total turnover	Multiplier of 1.2	Multiplier of 1.5
£1,000	£5,359,684	£6,431,621	£8,039,526
£1,500	£8,039,526	£9,647,431	£12,059,289
£2,000	£10,719,368	£12,863,242	£16,079,052

The outcome suggests that the turnover of retail businesses on the Main Street is at least £5.4 million per year and more likely to be in the £8-11 million range. Even with a conservative multiplier of 1.2, the wider direct and indirect economic impact of retailing in Cambuslang could be approaching £13 million per year.

4. HOW IS THE RETAIL PERFORMANCE OF THE MAIN STREET CHANGING?

The survey results indicate that the contribution of the Main Street to local employment and income is under threat. In the survey, respondents were asked to assess their current business performance and how it has changed over the past three years.

Only a minority (18%) of Main Street retailers say that their current performance is good (see Figure 5).

While the more than half consider that their business performance is currently satisfactory/ok, almost a quarter assess their performance as poor.

Looking at trends, only 14% of retailers say that their business performance has improved over the past three years (see Figure 6). Almost 40% consider that performance has stayed much the same.

Of most concern is that almost 40% of Main Street retailers say that their business performance has declined over the past three years.

Many of those recording declining business performance are also those who rate the current situation as poor. Some of these have got to the stage of considering closure or moving out of Cambuslang (see Figure 7); they comprise almost one-fifth of retailers of the Main Street, many of them higher added value shops.

Figure 5: How is your current performance?

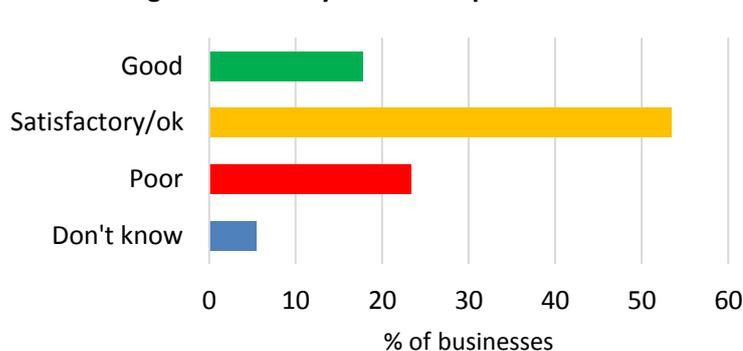


Figure 6: How has your performance changed in the past three years?

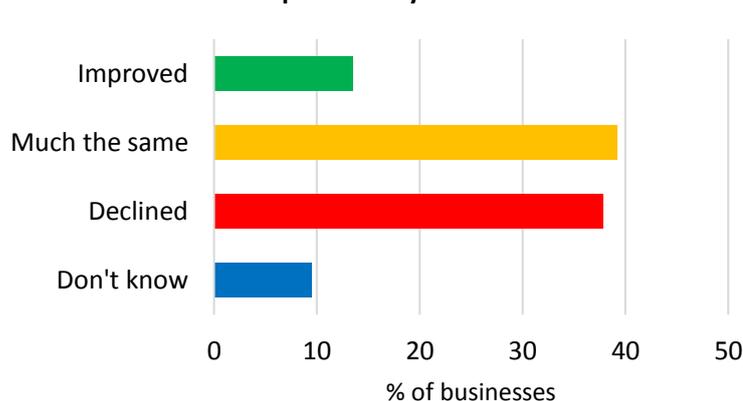
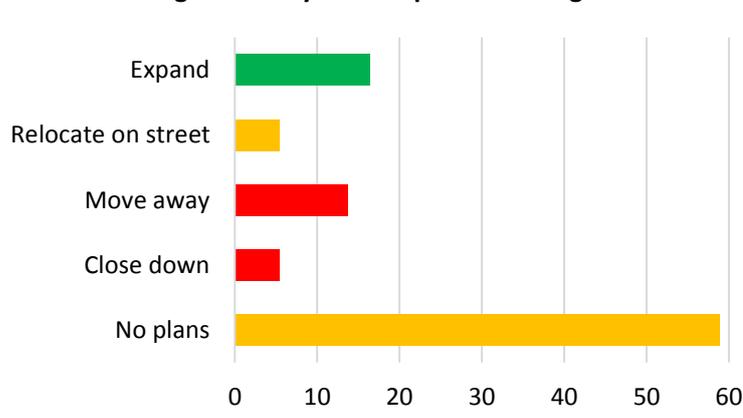
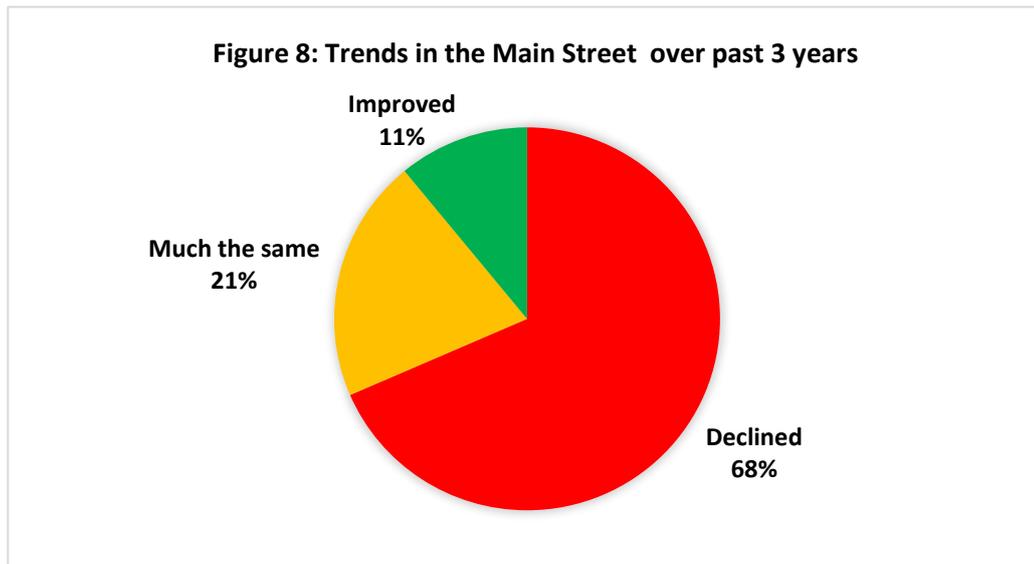


Figure 7: Do you have plans to change?



Survey respondents were also asked to comment on how they felt Cambuslang Main Street had changed over the past three years (see Figure 8). Only around one-tenth considered that it had improved, many of these responses being attributed to the street planters and hanging baskets organised by Cambuslang Community Council through Cambuslang in Bloom. Other positive factors identified were the new food service shops that have opened over the past 2-3 years, particularly The John Fairweather (although this was also seen negatively by some because of increased competition).

A further 21% of respondents could identify little change, considering that the Main Street has stayed much the same.



However, the vast majority of retailers – over two-thirds – consider that the Main Street has declined. Numerous problems were listed in the survey: lack of parking; poor street design; lack of diversity of shops; loss of the RBS branch; declining footfall; unappealing streetscape; loose slabs; waste bins on the street; vacant units; and relocation of the post office. Unfavourable comparisons were made with the better maintained streetscapes of Burnside and Rutherglen.

The following quotes are representative of the respondents who see the Main Street in decline:

“The Main Street has been destroyed – it’s like a ghost town now”

“Business is declining – day-by-day I am thinking more of quitting”

“There is less and less to keep me here. The Council keep putting obstacles in the way. I’m giving it until the end of the year and then will look at moving”

“The loss of RBS and other key businesses has really affected footfall”

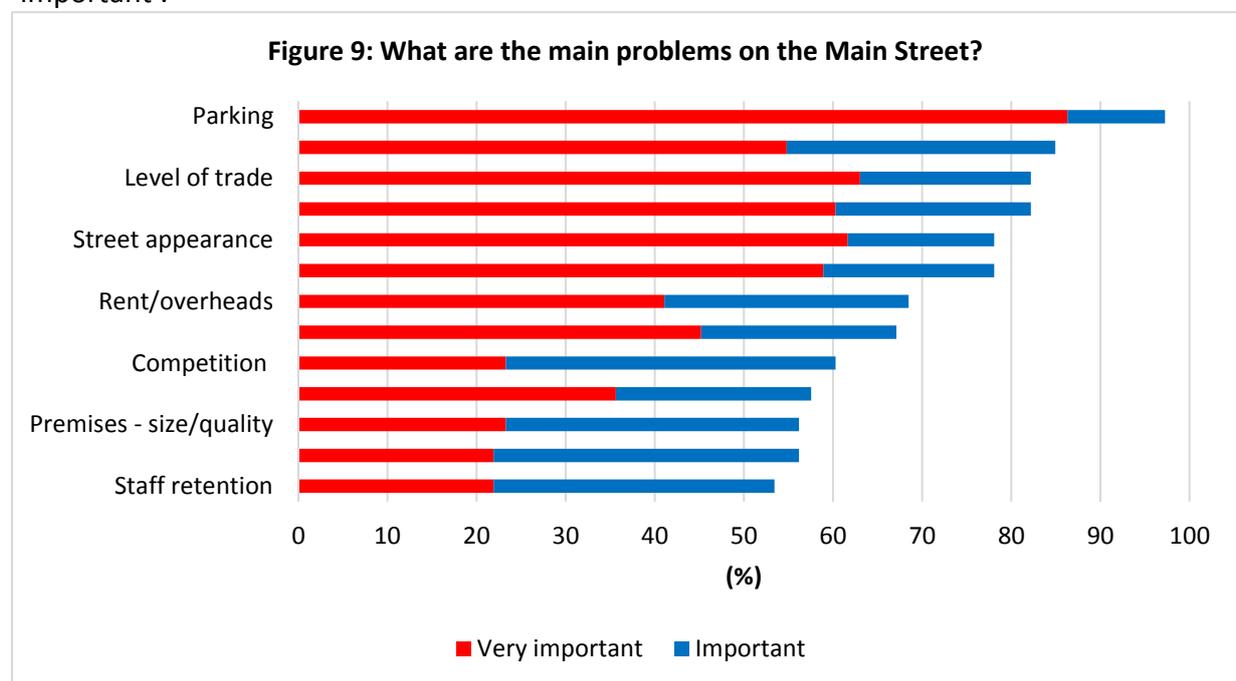
“The Main Street has declined due to the lack of overall vision of a plan to improve the shopping area for the benefit of the local residents and shopkeepers. The current decline will only continue unless a drastic change is implemented”

The next section explores the perceived problems in more detail.

5. WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS OF CAMBUSLANG MAIN STREET?

Insufficient spaces and time for parking top the list of problems experienced by retailers in Cambuslang Main Street. Other important issues are related to security – crime vandalism anti-social behaviour – and the (declining) footfall and level of trade on the Main Street. The streetscape also ranks high on the list notably the layout and appearance of the street and the level of traffic and congestion. Business factors are important but to a lesser degree: the availability of business finance for improvements; the size and quality of premises; and the recruitment and retention of staff.

Figure 9 ranks the list of problems identified in the survey as being ‘very important’ and ‘important’.



5.1 Parking – everyone’s No. 1 concern

The universal strength of feeling on the lack of parking for shoppers in Cambuslang Main Street is evident in the fact that 97% of businesses identified this issue as an important issue, and 85% cited it as ‘very important’. Simply put, the current parking policy of South Lanarkshire Council is regarded as detrimental to business.

From the commentary provided by survey respondents, the problem of parking has three parts.

- First, the 30 Main Street **parking bays are limited to 30 minutes’ parking time**, rigorously enforced by traffic wardens. Justified by SLC on the grounds that it encourages rapid turnover of custom, this policy prioritises the ‘pop-in-



pop-out' customers shopping for convenience goods, but it (a) disadvantages customers visiting establishments which require longer periods of parking (e.g. hair/beauty salons, professional services, cafes etc), and (b) it discourages customers from spending more time shopping in several places on the Main Street. Several shopkeepers commented that they had lost custom through customers being ticketed for even minor over-runs of parking time.

- Second, the Allison Drive car park has **insufficient parking bays for shoppers**. The current configuration of the car park has 97 unrestricted parking bays and 54 bays which allow for one-hour parking time. The unrestricted bays are generally filled up from early morning by commuters and those working in nearby offices, and the time-limited bays are too few in number for the number of shops in the Main Street. Use of the car park has the additional disincentive of requiring shoppers to use a pedestrian crossing regarded as confusing (see below).
- 
- Third, the **availability of parking for shoppers in local streets has disappeared**. Two decades ago, it was possible for local people to park in residential streets or small car parks (e.g. Cherry Tree Court) close to the Main Street. These opportunities for parking are now almost non-existent. The growth of housing in Cambuslang has been associated with a massive increase in use of Cambuslang Station; an average of 1,000 extra passengers are using the station every day compared to the 1990s. Many commuters drive to the station and park in nearby streets from 7.00 onwards. With SLC and ScotRail failing to provide additional parking facilities, local streets are becoming congested with commuter parking. North of the Main Street, there are conflicts over parking provision for the flats along Allison Drive. South of the station, as one shopkeeper noted, "*Hamilton Drive has become a commuter car park*"; the same is true for West Coats Road, Douglas Drive and Beech Avenue.

5.2 Security

The problems of crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour were highlighted by 80-85% of businesses. There are three major concerns. One is the perceived high levels of drug use and alcoholism, associated with shoplifting and erratic behaviour that disconcerts shoppers on the Main Street.

Another is vandalism and graffiti. This was associated by some shopkeepers with the lack of facilities for young people; one commented "there is not enough for kids to do other than cause trouble and walk up and down the Main Street all night." A third issue is the lack of a visible police presence, especially at times



of the day (and evening) when anti-social behaviour is most prevalent.

Similar points were made by the wider community in the 2015 Cambuslang Community Survey, where responses indicated that some people felt intimidated about going to the Main Street in the evening.¹¹

5.3 Street layout and appearance

The current street layout is deeply unpopular among many shopkeepers. Most are critical of the fact that the single-lane service lane is immediately blocked by a stationary bus or delivery van stopping to unload. Others regret that through traffic is diverted away from the shops making it impossible for drivers to stop for an impulse purchase.

The pedestrian crossing is also widely criticised because of its counter-intuitive design, creating uncertainty among users about which way to look when crossing. Shopkeepers in the western part of the Main Street feel that there should be a second pedestrian crossing. One said: *“the underpass should be filled in – few people use it and it’s often vandalised; it should be replaced by a crossing.”*

Apart from its layout, the appearance of the Main Street is regarded as an important factor in explaining the decline in footfall. One blunt comment summed up the view of many: *“the Main Street is a dump, with too many trip hazards.”* The streetscape is considered to be poorly designed, with too many different kinds of paving slabs that have either not been laid on solid foundations or are unable to cope with mechanical cleaning. A large number of shopkeepers mentioned examples of customers tripping on loose slabs, in some cases having bad falls. Repeated repair of paving slabs appears to bring no improvement.

Another issue is the prevalence of waste bins, and the lack of a SLC provision for these to be out of sight. One shopkeeper commented: *“you don’t see waste bins on other streets in Burnside or Rutherglen.”*

Many felt that ignoring the problem of bins (and overflowing waste by shopkeepers) was symptomatic of SLC neglect of Cambuslang. Numerous respondents argued that the back courts should be improved to allow bin storage; where this is not possible, SLC should provide bin shelters on the street.

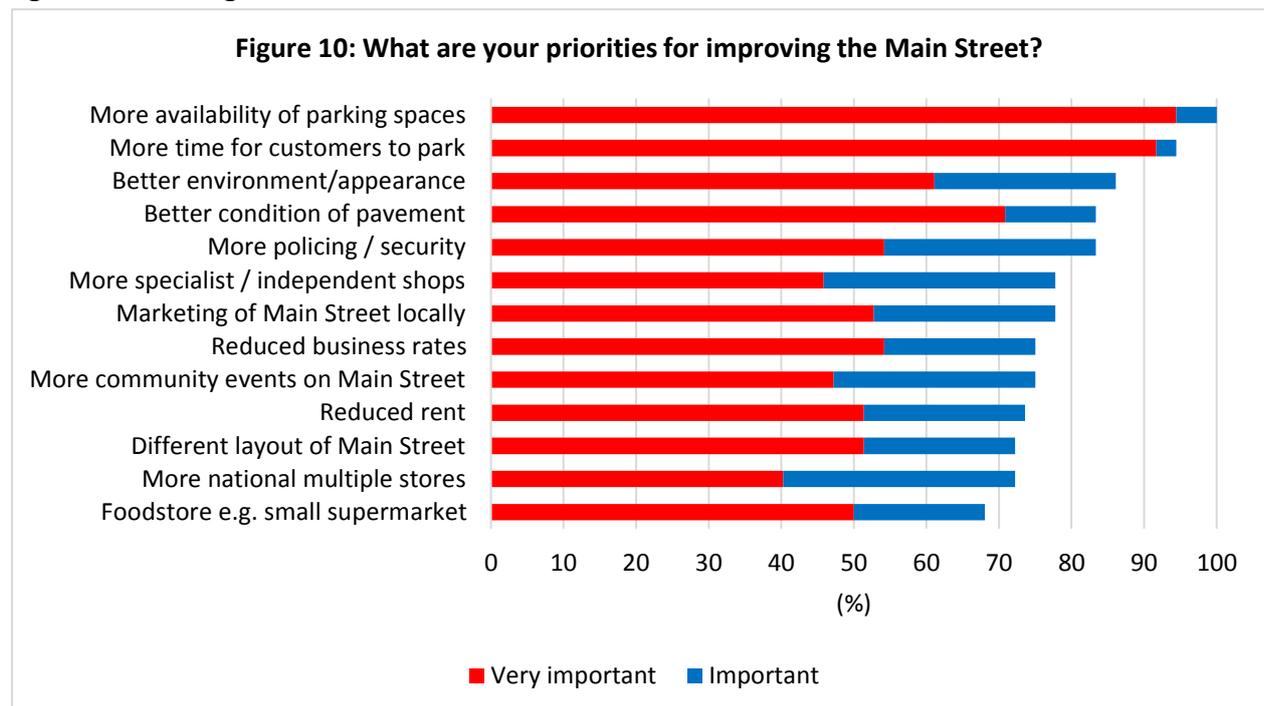


¹¹ Cambuslang Community Survey p.8

6. WHAT ARE THE SOLUTIONS? BUSINESS PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

The retail businesses on the Main Street have clear ideas on what needs to change to address the problems described in the previous section, and to reverse the decline of the Main Street and reinvigorate the town centre.

Thirteen priorities were identified in the survey response, listed in Figure 10 below. While they are listed in rank order of importance, all 13 were supported by at least two-thirds of businesses and most by at least three-quarters; all of them should therefore be taken seriously as part of an agenda for change.



Priority 1 – Parking: Every single business in the survey wants more availability of parking spaces, and some 95% consider this to be ‘very important’. Over 90% also want more time for customers to park and shop. This universal level of support is significant because SLC have resisted changing their current policy on parking on the basis that opinion among Main Street business is divided about parking times. These survey results indicate that this is not so; there is a consensus on the need for change – not just more spaces but also more time to park.

Priority 2 – Improvements to the streetscape. Over 80% of businesses want to see improvements to create a more attractive retail environment that encourages shoppers to spend time on the Main Street. An immediate priority is to upgrade the paving once-and-for-all so that there is a level, stable and – above all – safe pavement for customers that does not require constant repair. Equally important from the survey comments is the removal of the unsightly number of waste bins on the Main Street by creating facilities in the back courts and/or bin shelters. A longer-term

priority for over 70% of businesses to re-model the Main Street to create a layout that is more friendly for pedestrians and provides better accessibility.

Priority 3 – Security. Shopkeepers are keen to see more policing of the Main Street, especially in the evenings. They would like to see more patrols on foot and greater consistency in the police officers patrolling Cambuslang, with a view to building up a more personal relationship with the shopkeepers and allowing more regular feedback on problems on an ongoing basis.

Priority 4 – Diversity of shops. One of the important priorities for improving the commercial environment is to have a greater diversity of shops, especially with more specialist and independent stores. Currently there is a broad mix of shops but with a high proportion of two types of shops – hair/beauty salons and takeaway food places (some of which are only open in the evenings). Encouraging more people to spend time on the Main Street would require greater variety of shops. It was noted that at least one new anchor store is needed. An additional foodstore or supermarket is seen as important by almost 70% of retailers; this is particularly important for shops in the western part of the Main Street, most of whom see the urgent need for a supermarket in the former ScotMid premises. As one respondent noted, *“along the length of the Main Street from Greggs to Cinnamon there is nowhere to buy a pint of milk or an apple”*. The need for more national multiple stores was also included in the list of priorities though with the lowest proportion of ‘very important’ ratings.

Priority 5 – Marketing and events. Around three-quarters of respondents consider it important to have greater marketing of the Main Street and to exploit the potential of more community events in the town centre. It was noted that other centres across the UK have been successful in promoting the ‘brand’ of their main/high streets, with collaboration among businesses to have street markets and other events. Several shopkeepers emphasised that this would need to be part of a wider regeneration strategy, including action on the above priorities, to be effective; as one commented *“we can’t just expect more customers to shop, unless we can provide adequate parking and more variety”*. It was also noted that any events would need to be policed; many shopkeepers are unhappy that the legacy of Summerfest is graffiti which may not be removed for weeks or months.



Priority 6 – Reduced rates and rents. The final set of issues identified by survey respondents is the reduction of business operating costs. The comments of retailers focused on the need for some kind of rate relief, even if only on a temporary basis, to attract tenants to the larger vacant units, notably the empty ScotMid shop and the units in Cambuslang Gate. The current rate revaluation will be a critical point. It was also noted that landlords should be involved in the discussions about reviving the Main Street with a view to considering whether temporary rent reductions would be feasible to help arrest the decline and possible closure of shops.

7. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? A NEW STRATEGY

This survey by Cambuslang Community Council of Main Street retailers was prompted by the perception in Cambuslang that the Main Street is declining. It was undertaken to assess current and recent business performance, to identify perceived problems and explore possible solutions. The willingness of businesses to engage with the survey – evident in the very high response rate of 95% - is an indicator that concerns about the health of the Main Street are widespread.

7.1 Conclusions of the survey: the Main Street under threat

The results show that the Main Street is in trouble and may be reaching a tipping point. A sizeable proportion of retailers (40%) have experienced declining business performance over the past three years. Almost a quarter assess their current performance as poor, and 20% have considered closing down or moving out of Cambuslang.

The potential damaging economic impact is clear from the data analysis undertaken for this survey. The Main Street retail sector supports some 350 jobs and an estimated turnover of between £8 million and 11 million. Losing more shops would accelerate a vicious circle of decline, with declining footfall as shoppers have less reason to visit the Main Street, which in turn undermines the viability of other businesses. Less measurable, though also important, is the effect of decline on civic pride. Vacant units, a limited range of shops and a shoddy streetscape are damaging to the image of the town for local people and visitors.

The changing fortunes of the Main Street are partly due to changing shopping patterns. Three edge-of-town supermarkets, which collectively have as much floorspace as the Main Street, have drawn trade away from the town centre. The rapid rise of online shopping, estimated to be approaching 22% of retail UK-wide, and different shopping tastes are also important factors.

However, the survey has shown that there are factors specific to Cambuslang which retailers believe need urgent action. Top of the list is a new parking strategy to address the lack of sufficient spaces and time for parking. Other important priorities are related to security (crime vandalism anti-social behaviour), the layout and appearance of the street and the level of traffic and congestion. A greater diversity of shops is needed, particularly at least one new anchor store (supermarket) in the centre of the Main Street.

7.2 Recommendations: a new strategy for regenerating the Main Street

Regeneration of Cambuslang the Main Street will be a major challenge. Retail experts foresee continued pressures on town centres, with the loss of trade and shops.¹² Secondary and tertiary centres are seen as being under particular threat.

¹² See for example: *Retail Futures 2018*, Centre for Retail Research, University of Nottingham. *Retail Think Tank*, KPMG. *Retail 2020: Fewer but better jobs*, British Retail Consortium, February 2006.

However, further decline of the Main Street is not inevitable. There are many examples of how town centres across the UK are taking effective action to turn around their main streets and high streets.¹³ Initiatives include pop-up shops, street markets, collectives and collaboration among retailers, shopfront refurbishment schemes, start-up loans for new retailers, town centre websites and digital engagement with local customers, loyalty cards, branding and marketing, mentoring programmes, and real-time smartphone information on special offers or parking availability. Strategies also include using vacant units for community initiatives, and remodelling to make town centres more attractive to pedestrians and cyclists.

The 2015 Cambuslang Community Survey showed that Cambuslang has strong community spirit and a desire for a dynamic and attractive town centre. A successful regeneration strategy will need the commitment of businesses and support from the local community through the wide range of community groups in the town and, fundamentally, more local people shopping on the Main Street and using its services.

Leadership by South Lanarkshire Council is essential. Part of this involves recognising what has worked and not worked in the past. In response to recent press criticism about the decline of the Main Street, South Lanarkshire Council have referred to the significant investment made in Cambuslang town centre the mid-2000s.¹⁴ This had some benefits, notably bringing community services such as the library onto the Main Street and creating new office space. Equally, several aspects of this investment are considered a failure within the business community: the out-of-scale architecture of Cambuslang Gate; a development with shop units that have never had a tenant; a street layout with a single-lane service road; a confusing pedestrian crossing; excessive use of railings and barriers; and paving where slabs constantly become loose and regularly cause trips and falls. A broader concern is the apparent lack of a specific SLC plan for reviving Cambuslang town centre and its perceived unwillingness more to engage positively (and pro-actively) on retailers' concerns.

The results of this survey indicate a clear case for a new strategy to regenerate Cambuslang Main Street. Important components of such a strategy would be the following.

- (vi) **Relaunch of the Town Centre Forum**, bringing together senior SLC officials from relevant departments, representatives of Main Street businesses and the wider community. This should have a specific mandate to address each of the priorities identified in this report, most urgently the problem of parking but also security and appearance of the Main Street, with immediate action to demonstrate intent.

¹³ Scotland Towns Partnership (<http://www.scotlandstowns.org/news-and-resources>) The Great British High Street (<http://thegreatbritishhighstreet.co.uk/pdf/GBHS-Good-Practice-Guide.pdf?2>)

¹⁴ Cambuslang locals reveal how they would improve their Main Street, *Reformer*, 1.2.17

- (vii) **Development of a Business Improvement Plan.** Learning from good practice in reviving other neighbour centres, this should focus on commercial revival of the Main Street, specifically actions to attract a new anchor store for the central part of the street and tenants for other vacant units, the use of branding and street festivals as well as wider marketing to bring more customers to the town centre. This will need strong commitment from all the businesses on the Main Street working together, and support from the wider community.
- (viii) **Focus on Main Street regeneration in the new SLC Local Development Plan.** The new iteration of the SLC Local Development Plan should prioritise the regeneration of Cambuslang town centre. The outline planning approval for a new supermarket on the former Hoover site – that would have the same floorspace as the whole of the Main Street retail sector – should be rescinded given the potential damage that it would do to the economic future of the Main Street.
- (ix) **A ‘Town Centre First’ policy by SLC.** All relevant SLC departments (Community & Enterprise Resources, Planning, Roads & Transportation, Environmental Services, Housing & Technical Resources) should assess ongoing policy strategies and planning/investment decisions relating to Cambuslang in ways that support the regeneration of Cambuslang Main Street.
- (x) **Development of a new masterplan for the layout of Cambuslang Town Centre.** While current budgetary constraints limit the potential for major infrastructure investment in the short-term, work should begin on developing a new masterplan (for example through design charrettes) that meets the needs of business, different road users (drivers, cyclists, pedestrians), and the wider community. This would provide a road-map for future decision-making on planning and investment, beginning with affordable improvements to street furniture and working towards a new town centre that is universally seen as fit for purpose and a focus for civic pride.