

Cotswold Town Centres Initiative

Detailed Report & Recommendations

Produced by Heartflood, January 2026



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Prepared by Heartflood for Cotswold District Council 2026.



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Executive summary

Heartflood were commissioned by Cotswold District Council in September 2025 to undertake work to support the economic health and vibrancy of Lechlade-on-Thames, Moreton in Marsh, and Tetbury town centres, particularly with regard to vacancy rates. The overall findings of the project include the following main results.

- Despite the inherent strengths of Cotswold District, businesses within each of the three centres studied are reporting significant barriers to their economic vitality
- The analysis of a range of information has identified a number of priority improvement measures which could begin to address the current challenges being experienced
- The willingness of businesses to become part of new groups to spearhead improvements in each of the town centres ranges from reasonable to encouraging

Whilst the following report contains detailed information, observation and analysis of the current circumstances with regard to each of the town centres, the overall recommendations from this piece of work are summarised as follows.

1. Immediately enact an ongoing suite of interventions to address the key issue of reducing the number of vacant business premises within each town centre.
2. Support a business-led approach to the creation of new town centre groups, to oversee a range of improvements to increase footfall in each location, including immediate activities around all of the following, with the specific approaches and nuances adopted in each location to be decided by the respective new group.

Lechlade-on-Thames

Car parking improvements, building on current discussions

More frequent public transport services

Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience

More town centre events and activities

Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town

Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units

Lechlade-on-Thames

Improvements to the appearance of empty shop frontages

Activities and events which focus on evening & night-time businesses

Moreton in Marsh

Car parking improvements

Schemes to save businesses money on overheads

Projects to improve traffic flow through the town centre

Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience

Social media campaigning

Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town

Litter removal and cleanliness

Increased floral planting

Tetbury

Car parking improvements

Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units

Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience

New Christmas lights displays

Schemes to save businesses money on overheads

More frequent public transport services

More town centre events and activities

Social media campaigning

3. Ensure that, whilst each group will be business-led, strong partnership arrangements are embedded with public sector organisations and local community groups to create a balance of input toward the improvement projects.
4. Despite public sector resources being under increasing pressure, establish a priority to identify and allocate a degree of staff time and financial input from the three tiers of local government to ensure that momentum can be established and maintained towards improvements, many of which will be very achievable quick wins.
5. Share this report with businesses and stakeholders in each of the three town centres, in order to embed a sense, and approach, of shared ownership and collective effort.

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Section 1

Background & introduction

Heartflood were commissioned by Cotswold District Council in September 2025 to undertake work to support the economic health and vibrancy of Lechlade-on-Thames, Moreton in Marsh, and Tetbury town centres, particularly with regard to vacancy rates. The requirements of the commission were embodied by five main project outputs, which were as follows.

1

Review the composition of uses and the physical environment in each of the town centres.

2

Review how each of the town centres promotes itself and how businesses work collectively, or otherwise.

3

Investigate whether there are any specific barriers relating to each of the vacant premises in question which prevent them from being occupied.

4

Liaise with Town Councils and other local stakeholders, such as business groups and individual traders, to ensure their views are registered and their local knowledge harnessed.

5

Devise an Action Plan to address the issues identified.

1.1 Economic context and overview

The current UK economic challenges are both profound and well-documented, with current key pressures including international trade tensions and tighter government financial controls resulting in heightened consumer and investor caution. The dampening effects on national GDP are clearly manifested within our towns and cities, with recent data published by The Place Coalition indicating that over half of the place managers surveyed reported a drop in pedestrian footfall within their town or city centres over the past 3 years.

Cotswold District sits within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which is characterised by high quality rural landscapes punctuated with distinctive limestone architecture. The sub region also contains a number of generally very attractive towns and villages, which include the three of those which form the focus of this study. The District is relatively economically buoyant, generating approximately £53,000 of GDP per head of population and has recently outlined plans to develop additional economic activity in the next three years by supporting growth, with a particular focus on high value, highly skilled, and environmentally sustainable business sectors.

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Section 2

Research methodology

The report included a range of methodologies in order to understand the key factors which are impacting upon the current vitality of Lechlade-on-Thames, Moreton in Marsh, and Tetbury town centres. A number of factors were assessed via a series of key methods, summarised as follows.

2.1 Visual and investigative assessments



The project team paid several site visits to all three town centres to assess a range of physical and interpretive factors relating to each location. As per the requirements of the commission, this was combined with a particular focus on vacant business units and the collation of information relating to how well each location is promoted and the level to which businesses work collectively.

2.2 Business uses composition



The town centre site assessments included the development of a breakdown of uses of all town centre business premises and particular importance was given to the number of vacant business premises in each location. An important factor to note, is a comparison which was made with the vacancy values made available from the District Council approximately four years earlier, and which indicates a relatively worrying increase in the number of vacancies across the three towns studied, shown as follows.

Location	Vacancy rate, September 2021	Vacancy rate, January 2026
Lechlade-on-Thames	4%	12%
Moreton in Marsh	3%	9%
Tetbury	3%	8%

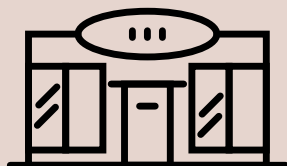
Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 1 – Recent vacant unit trends for all three town centre locations

Whilst the current vacancy rates sit relatively comfortably within the national average for town centres, of approximately 14 %, the trend within all of the three centres over the past four years are of relative concern, particularly that seen in Lechlade. We would emphasise that we did not detect any notable barriers to the vacant units in the towns being returned to active use, although there is only limited visibility of the premises being actively marketed, with a low number of letting boards, and relatively few results when conducting online searches. There are many factors which are likely to be contributing to the current vacancy rates in each of the locations, and these are considered to include all of the following:

- The current economic circumstances, particularly the high levels of uncertainty, are resulted in a diminished levels of entrepreneurialism, particularly within town and city centre locations
- Given the attractive nature of the Cotswolds as a residential destination, each of the three town centres is vulnerable to the conversion of commercial premises to residential uses which, unless curtailed, could weaken the attraction of the town centre and erode the critical mass of businesses which are required. This seems to have been particularly pronounced in Lechlade, particularly where former hospitality premises are concerned and, given the compact size of the town centre, this is beginning to require relatively urgent intervention
- There is currently more of a challenge to bring former public houses back into active use, which adds to this issue, particularly in Lechlade
- In Tetbury, there is a concentration of vacant units within Church Street, which seems to correlate with increasing distance away from the core commercial centre

Whilst we would point out the view from discussions with local agents that the market is generally resilient, we would emphasise the recent negative direction of travel with regard to vacancy rates, and the importance of preserving the character and vitality of each of the town centres, and would therefore suggest a suite of interventions is immediately enacted in order to address this key issue, to include all of the following.



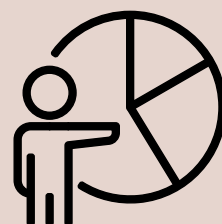
ESTABLISH AN ONGOING PROJECT TO REDUCE VACANT UNITS ACROSS THE THREE TOWN CENTRES



ENCOURAGE THE PARTICIPATION OF ALL THREE TIERS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND INCLUDE LOCAL BUSINESSES, PARTICULARLY PROPERTY AGENTS



GAIN THE DETAILS OF THE LANDLORDS OF ALL CURRENTLY VACANT PREMISES AND WORK TO BRING THE UNITS INTO ACTIVE USE



FORTIFY LOCAL PLANNING POLICIES TO PRESERVE THE REQUIRED CRITICAL MASS OF BUSINESS PREMISES IN EACH LOCATION



CONSIDER COMMISSIONING EXPERT SUPPORT TO DELIVER THIS SPECIFIC PROJECT

The vacant units project should work closely with a range of parties to identify any barriers to bringing any units back into active use, which would not only improve the economic position of each centre, but possibly also allow an incubation effect for fledgling business entrepreneurs.

2.3 Local stakeholder feedback



In all cases, we made contact with local groups and organisations and, key amongst these were the Town Councils for all three of the locations. The Town Councils proved to be very supportive of measures to identify improvements for their respective town centres, and also propagated the project messaging to their local networks.

2.4 Business visits and communications



Feedback from town centre businesses is of fundamental importance in a project of this type and a number of sites visits were undertaken as part of the study to visit town centre premises to speak to businesses, deliver project information and encourage feedback. In overall terms, businesses engaged well with the project and a total of 70 responses were received to the surveys, which were set up for each location.

2.5 Town centre surveys



In each location, a key component of the project involved consultation with a range of town centre businesses and key organisations and information was gained from direct contact and via online survey questionnaires. The findings of the analysis of this data is shown as section 4 of this document.

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Section 3

Detailed town centre assessments

Given the requirements of the project, each of the locations was subject to detailed assessment, based on both desktop research and site observations and the findings are outlined within the following section.

3.1 Lechlade-on-Thames

Lechlade-on-Thames is situated near the south-east boundary of the Cotswold District, close to the convergence with the counties of Oxfordshire and Wiltshire. With an immediate population of only approximately 3,000 Lechlade town centre plays the role of a Local Centre, serving the day to day needs of this immediate catchment. The town centre area is small, comprising only approximately 45 business units, which generally occupy building types of relatively high architectural merit. The town centre is laid out in a relatively linear form along Burford Street and High Street, which meet at a compact central Market Place. Despite holding a charter for over 900 years, Lechlade does not currently host town centre street markets, with the Market Place area mostly utilised for car parking.

3.1.1 Lechlade business uses

Our audit of ground floor business uses in October 2025 indicated a total of 43 business units, with a uses composition as follows.

Business type	Approximate %
Comparison Retail, to include Fashion, Giftware, Homeware & Charity Shops	25%
Convenience Retail, to include Newsagents, Supermarkets and Convenience Stores	7%
Leisure Operators, such as Pubs, Hotels, Restaurants, Coffee Shops and Gyms	16%
Professional uses, such as Estate Agents, Opticians, Solicitors and Accountants	14%
Services, such as Hairdressers, Beauty Salons, Key Cutting and Mobile Phone Stores	19%
Takeaway Food outlets, not containing any interior dining	7%
Vacant units	12%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 2 – Lechlade-on-Thames town centre business uses, October 2025

Whilst the level of vacant units is of concern, even given that it is the highest of the three towns studied, this is still in line with the current national average. The other proportions are positive, in that they indicate both a good range of business sectors and a number of comparison retailers, all of which fulfil the function of the town centre as predominantly serving the immediate local catchment.

3.1.2 Lechlade site observations

The project included detailed site visits to Lechlade, with the following summarising the qualitative information regarding the overall feel of the town centre which the assessors took from these visits.

 <p>ABSENCE OF STREET DRESSING, PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING OR PUBLIC ART</p>	 <p>FEELING OF SAFETY & SECURITY</p>	 <p>GOOD PROPORTION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES</p>
 <p>HIGH PROPORTION OF VACANT UNITS</p>	 <p>HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURE</p>	 <p>LIMITED CENTRAL CAR PARKING PROVISION</p>
 <p>LOW LEVELS OF LITTER OR GRAFFITI</p>	 <p>RECENT INVESTMENT IN STREET FURNITURE, ALTHOUGH FOCUSED IN A COMPACT AREA</p>	 <p>OVERALL STREETSCENE REQUIRES A DEGREE OF IMPROVEMENT</p>
 <p>LOW PEDESTRIAN NUMBERS, WITH LIMITED SENSE OF VIBRANCY</p>	 <p>SOME HIGH QUALITY SHOPS AND SERVICES</p>	

Source Heartflood Ltd

The commission included an assessment of the current levels of promotional and event activities within each town centre, and, whilst we have made recommendations regarding this in section 5 of the report, our findings indicated the following in Lechlade:

- Christmas lights switch on and lantern parade
- Degree of local information, including leaflets, within the small community-run library and visitor centre
- Existence of town information leaflet
- Lechlade not referenced in regional print media at the time of the study
- Reasonable degree of information on Town Council website
- Relatively dated wall-mounted map and information point

As a very important contextual factor, whilst the Fairford and Lechlade Business Group exists, there is no partnership-driven place management function, such as a Town Centre Partnership or Town Team currently active in the central area.

3.1.3 Key Lechlade issues

The following are considered to be the current issues which are providing both barriers and opportunities to improvements to the vitality of Lechlade town centre.

Challenges	Opportunities
Relative peripheral location in terms of the District	Opportunities to build on momentum from recent investment into the central area, which could include expansion of the new street furniture & planters to cover the entire town centre area and a painting programme for all central lamp columns and signpoles
No central place management function	Stakeholders such as the Town Council and the Fairford & Lechlade Business Club likely to be supportive of improvements – also, the level of business survey responses also indicates that private sector involvement would be relatively high
Relatively high number of vacant units	Ability to build on the strengths of the river and marina area, particularly given that conversations with stakeholders indicated this as something which would be likely to boost visitor numbers from boaters and support the town centre economy

3.2 Moreton in Marsh

Moreton in Marsh is situated in the northern section of the Cotswold District, close to the boundary with Warwickshire. With an immediate population of approximately 5,000 Moreton town centre plays the role of a minor District Centre, serving the day to day needs of the immediate catchment, although also attracts a proportion of visitors from further afield, primarily due to high-quality retail and leisure provision. The town centre area is relatively small, comprising only approximately 90 business units, which, as with Lechlade, generally occupy building types of relatively high architectural merit. The town centre is laid out in a straight, linear form along the ancient Fosse Way. Despite the very attractive appearance of the architecture, a significant degree of the streetscene is dominated by frontage car parking.

3.2.1 Moreton business uses

Our audit of ground floor business uses in October 2025 indicated a total of 90 business units, with a uses composition as follows.

Business type	Approximate %
Comparison Retail, to include Fashion, Giftware, Homeware & Charity Shops	30%
Convenience Retail, to include Newsagents, Supermarkets and Convenience Stores	6%
Leisure Operators, such as Pubs, Hotels, Restaurants, Coffee Shops and Gyms	22%
Professional uses, such as Estate Agents, Opticians, Solicitors and Accountants	9%
Services, such as Hairdressers, Beauty Salons, Key Cutting and Mobile Phone Stores	23%
Takeaway Food outlets, not containing any interior dining	1%
Vacant units	9%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 3 – Moreton in Marsh town centre business uses, October 2025

Whilst the level of vacant units is of concern, it is the second lowest of the three towns studied, and considerably below the current national average. The other proportions are positive, in that they indicate both a good range of business sectors and almost a third of businesses being comparison retailers, which tend to act as attractors to town centre locations. With regard to the latter factor, and given the presence of a number of high quality businesses, the town centre is capable of being more effectively promoted to attract a wider range of visitor numbers.

3.2.2 Moreton site observations

The project included detailed site visits to Moreton, with the following summarising the qualitative information regarding the overall feel of the town centre which the assessors took from these visits.

 <p>ABSENCE OF STREET DRESSING, PEDESTRIAN WAYFINDING OR PUBLIC ART</p>	 <p>FEELING OF SAFETY & SECURITY</p>	 <p>HIGH PROPORTION OF VACANT UNITS</p>
 <p>HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURE</p>	 <p>LIMITED CENTRAL CAR PARKING PROVISION</p>	 <p>LOW LEVELS OF LITTER OR GRAFFITI</p>
 <p>STREETSCENE REQUIRES A DEGREE OF MAINTENANCE, SUCH AS PAINTING OR REPLACEMENT OF STREET FURNITURE</p>	 <p>RELATIVELY HIGH PROPORTION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES</p>	 <p>RELATIVELY LOW PEDESTRIAN NUMBERS, WITH LIMITED SENSE OF VIBRANCY</p>
 <p>SOME VERY HIGH QUALITY SHOPS AND SERVICES</p>		

Source Heartflood Ltd

In terms of promotional activities and events, whilst we have made recommendations regarding this in section 5 of the report, our findings indicated the following in Moreton:

- Annual Moreton in Marsh Show on the periphery of the town
- Christmas lights & market event
- Degree of local information, including leaflets, within Moreton Area Centre, including display board with paper map and information
- Moreton not referenced in regional print media at the time of the study
- Reasonable degree of information on Town Council website
- Weekly street market

As a very important contextual factor, there is currently no partnership-driven place management function, such as a Town Centre Partnership or Town Team currently active in the central area.

3.2.3 Key Moreton issues

The following are considered to be the current issues which are providing both barriers and opportunities to improvements to the vitality of Moreton town centre.

Challenges	Opportunities
Very traffic sensitive through road, which often creates significant problems getting into the town centre	Stakeholders such as the Town Council likely to be actively supportive of improvements – and mitigating opportunities exist, both to reduce road traffic through local sustainable transport initiatives, as well as to increase the online presence of key retailers
No central place management function	Ability to promote the strengths of the town centre
Relatively high number of vacant units	Branding opportunities around the geographical presence as a northern gateway to the Cotswolds

3.3 Tetbury

Tetbury is situated near the south-west boundary of the Cotswold District, close to the county of Wiltshire. With an immediate population of 6,000, Tetbury town centre plays the role of a District Centre, serving the day to day needs of this immediate catchment as well as attracting visitors from a wider area, particularly due to the impressive range of high quality retail and leisure businesses, as well as other attractors. The town centre area is the largest of the three studied as part of this project, comprising approximately 100 business units, which generally occupy building types of high architectural merit. The town centre is laid out predominantly around the spur formed by Long Street, Market Place, Church Street and Chipping Street, which centre at the landmark medieval Market House building. We noted a proliferation of very high quality antiques retailers, which are clustered on a section of Long Street, and consider that this represents a key marketing opportunity to encourage additional visitors. However, and despite the evident range of strengths of Tetbury, the town centre is not currently considered to be performing to its full potential in economic terms.

3.3.1 Tetbury business uses

Our audit of ground floor business uses in October 2025 indicated a total of 102 business units, with a uses composition as follows.

Business type	Approximate %
Comparison Retail, to include Fashion, Giftware, Homeware & Charity Shops	48%
Convenience Retail, to include Newsagents, Supermarkets and Convenience Stores	6%
Leisure Operators, such as Pubs, Hotels, Restaurants, Coffee Shops and Gyms	14%
Professional uses, such as Estate Agents, Opticians, Solicitors and Accountants	10%
Services, such as Hairdressers, Beauty Salons, Key Cutting and Mobile Phone Stores	13%
Takeaway Food outlets, not containing any interior dining	1%
Vacant units	8%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 4 – Tetbury town centre business uses, October 2025

Whilst the level of vacant units is of concern, it is the lowest of the three towns studied, and still a good degree below the current national average. The other proportions are very positive, in that they indicate both a very good range of business sectors and almost half of businesses being comparison retailers, which tend to act as attractors to town centre locations. Our overall assessment of the business

composition of Tetbury is that it is of a notably high standard. As a result of this, and given the presence of a wide number of high quality businesses, including specialist antiques retailers, the town centre should be promoted to attract a much wider range of visitor numbers.

3.3.2 Tetbury site observations

The project included detailed site visits to Tetbury, with the following summarising the qualitative information regarding the overall feel of the town centre which the assessors took from these visits.

 <p>FEELING OF SAFETY & SECURITY</p>	 <p>HIGH PROPORTION OF INDEPENDENT BUSINESSES</p>	 <p>LOW LEVELS OF LITTER OR GRAFFITI</p>
 <p>NUMBER OF VACANT UNITS</p>	 <p>NUMEROUS PLANTING FEATURES LINKED TO TETBURY IN BLOOM</p>	 <p>OVERALL SENSE OF VIBRANCY</p>
 <p>PRESENCE OF VERY HIGH QUALITY SHOPS AND SERVICES</p>	 <p>REASONABLE NUMBER AND SIZE OF CAR PARK SITES ACROSS THE TOWN</p>	 <p>SLIGHTLY COMPROMISED BY BUSY CENTRAL ROADS</p>
 <p>STREETSCENE REQUIRES A DEGREE OF MAINTENANCE, SUCH AS PAINTING OR REPLACEMENT OF STREET FURNITURE</p>	 <p>VERY HIGH QUALITY ARCHITECTURE</p>	

Source Heartflood Ltd

In terms of promotional activities and events, whilst we have made recommendations regarding this in section 5 of the report, our findings indicated the following in Tetbury:

- Annual Tetfest event
- Christmas events, including Christmas Tree Festival
- Detailed Visit Tetbury website
- Good array of local information, including leaflets, within Tetbury Visitor Information Centre
- Information board at the entrance to the Church grounds
- Pictorial sign-mounted town centre map
- Printed Visit Tetbury street map & guide
- Reasonable degree of information on Town Council website
- Tetbury not referenced in regional print media at the time of the study
- Twice a week street markets
- Very detailed Tetbury Advertiser magazine

As a very important contextual factor, there is currently no partnership-driven place management function, such as a Town Centre Partnership or Town Team currently active in the central area.

3.3.3 Key Tetbury issues

The following are considered to be the current issues which are providing both barriers and opportunities to improvements to the vitality of Tetbury town centre.

Challenges	Opportunities
Busy through road, which can create traffic problems and conflicts with pedestrians	Ability to promote the strengths of the town centre, including the number of high quality retail and leisure businesses
No central place management function	Improved reciprocal links with surrounding tourist attractions, such as the Highgrove Estate and Westonbirt Arboretum
Relatively high number of vacant units	Stakeholders such as the Town Council likely to be actively supportive of improvements

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The Bell Inn

was visited by the author

J.R.R Tolkien.

It has been attributed
as the inspiration for the inn of

The Prancing Pony

which features in

The Lord of the Rings

Attribution by The Three Farthing Stone Social

*a meeting group of Tolkien Society Members
and Tolkien fans*

Section 4

Business survey analysis

The project involved a survey of businesses in each location to identify their views on priority interventions for their respective town centres. A number of efforts were made to gain the highest levels of feedback, which included:

- Site visits to each location to speak to businesses at their premises
- The production and delivery of bespoke information sheets for each centre
- Electronic communications to encourage survey responses
- Support from the Town Councils and other local organisations to propagate the survey messaging via their communication channels

The resulting overall survey response rate was relatively high, with an average percentage return of 32 %, and the breakdown by each location shown as follows:

Location	% return
Lechlade-on-Thames	44%
Moreton in Marsh	18%
Tetbury	33%

Source Heartflood Ltd

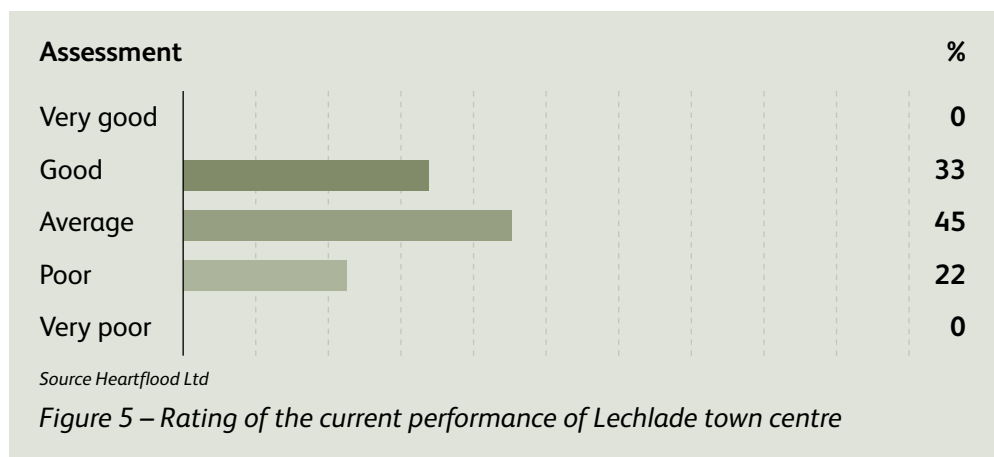
The detailed survey analysis for each location is shown in the following section.

4.1 Lechlade survey analysis

The survey for Lechlade town centre attracted 18 responses, and the fact that this constituted a return of 42 %, meant that it significantly exceeded the response rates for both Moreton and Tetbury.

4.1.1 Perceived economic performance

Survey respondents consider that the current performance of Lechlade is reasonable, as indicated by the following.



4.1.2 Priority improvement projects

The following improvement activities were identified for Lechlade by survey respondents, with these being listed in order of priority.

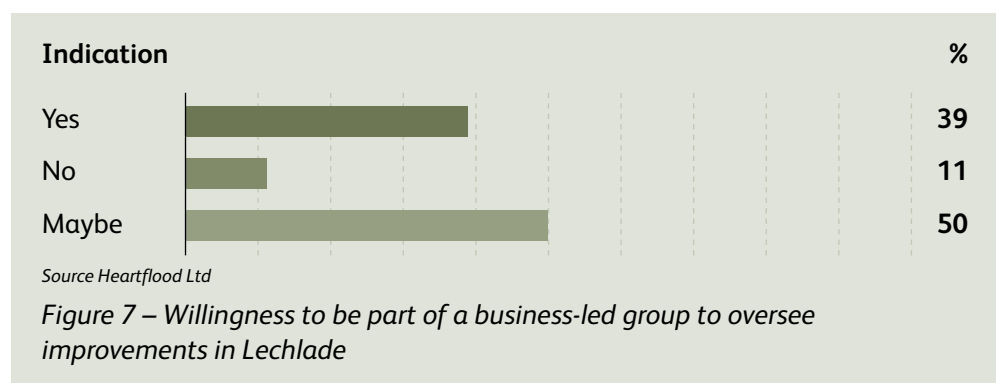
Activity	% support
Car parking improvements, building on current discussions	83%
More frequent public transport services	56%
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	56%
More town centre events and activities	50%
Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town	44%
Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units	39%
Improvements to the appearance of empty shop frontages	33%
Activities and events which focus on evening & night-time businesses	33%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 6 – Prioritised improvement activities for Lechlade town centre

4.1.3 Support for an improvement group

Willingness to be part of a business-led group to enact the required improvements is encouraging, as indicated by the following.

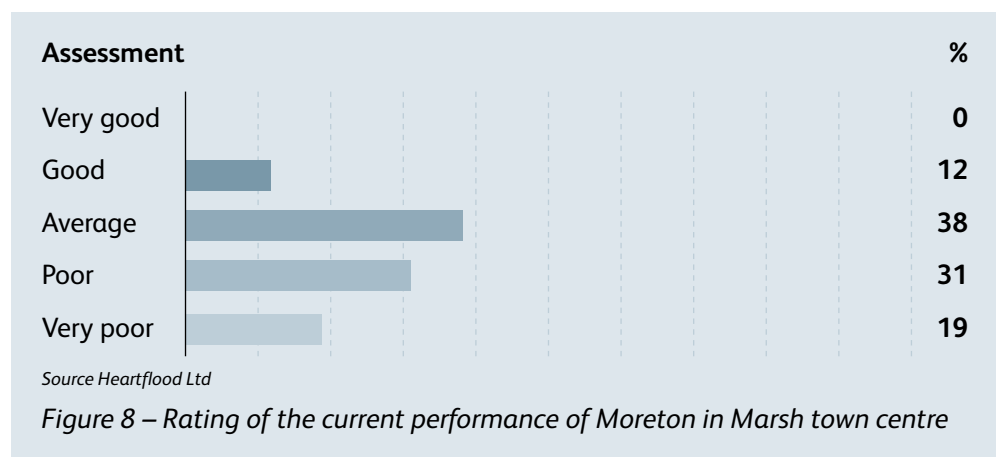


4.2 Moreton survey analysis

The survey for Moreton town centre attracted 16 responses, and the fact that this constituted a return of only 18 %, meant that it was significantly less than the response rates for both Lechlade and Tetbury.

4.2.1 Perceived economic performance

Survey respondents consider that the current performance of Moreton is relatively poor, as indicated by the following.



4.2.2 Priority improvement projects

The following improvement activities were identified for Moreton by survey respondents, with these being listed in order of priority.

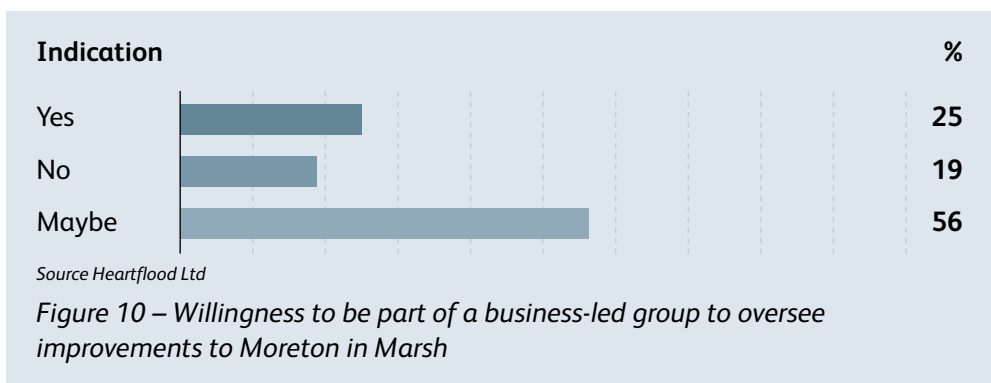
Activity	% support
Car parking improvements	67%
Schemes to save businesses money on overheads	60%
Projects to improve traffic flow through the town centre	60%
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	53%
Social media campaigning	53%
Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town	40%
Litter removal and cleanliness	33%
Increased floral planting	27%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 9 – Prioritised improvement activities for Moreton in Marsh town centre

4.2.3 Support for an improvement group

Willingness to be part of a business-led group to enact the required improvements is reasonable, as indicated by the following.



Source Heartflood Ltd

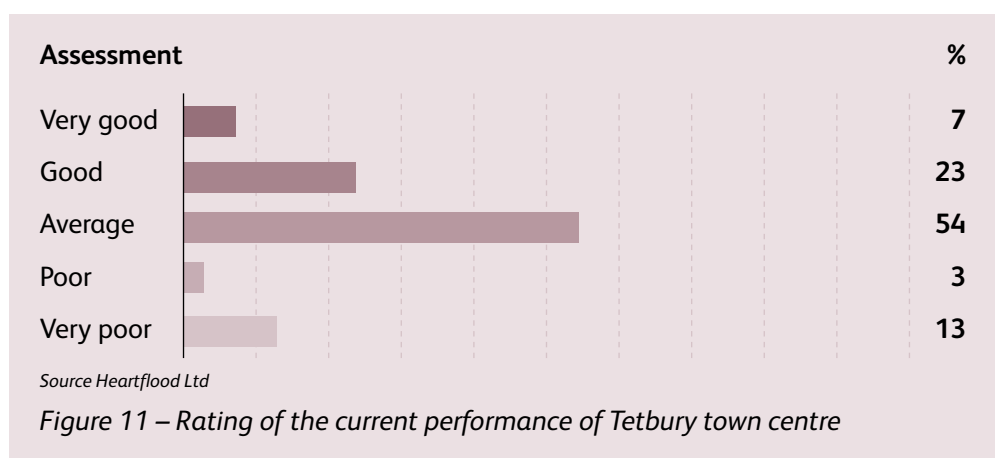
Figure 10 – Willingness to be part of a business-led group to oversee improvements to Moreton in Marsh

4.3 Tetbury survey analysis

The survey for Tetbury town centre attracted 33 responses, and the fact that this constituted a return of 31 %, meant that it was positioned in the middle of the response rates for both Lechlade, which was higher, and Moreton, which was lower.

4.3.1 Perceived economic performance

Survey respondents consider that the current performance of Tetbury is relatively polarised, as indicated by the following.



4.3.2 Priority improvement projects

The following improvement activities were identified for Tetbury by survey respondents, with these being listed in order of priority.

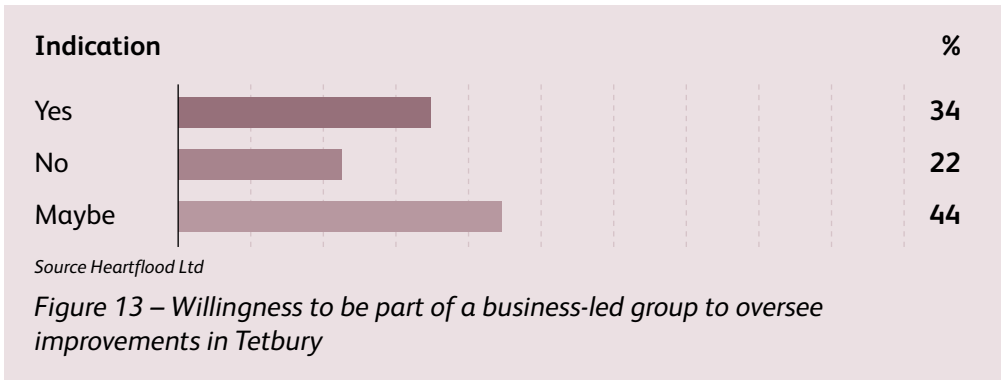
Activity	% support
Car parking improvements	73%
Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units	48%
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	45%
New Christmas lights displays	45%
Schemes to save businesses money on overheads	42%
More frequent public transport services	36%
More town centre events and activities	33%
Social media campaigning	33%

Source Heartflood Ltd

Figure 12 – Prioritised improvement activities for Tetbury town centre

4.3.3 Support for an improvement group

Willingness to be part of a business-led group to enact the required improvements is reasonably encouraging, as indicated by the following.



4.4 Deployment of the survey analysis

For all three locations, and given our approach of developing an achievable plan of interventions for towns and cities, we have combined the above business feedback with our knowledge of improvement projects to produce the proposed series of activities which should be adopted in Lechlade, Moreton and Tetbury. Our key recommendations are outlined as follows.

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Section 5

Key recommendations

Having reviewed a wide range of data, we have developed a range of recommendations which we consider will serve to both preserve and enhance the vitality of all three of the locations studied.

5.1 Overall recommendations

Our main recommendations are as follows.

1. Immediately enact a suite of interventions to address the key issue of reducing the number of vacant business premises within each town centre.
2. Make an immediate start towards developing and supporting business-led groups in each of the three locations, to include strong public sector participation and collaboration.
3. Support the new groups in the creation of immediate improvement plans to increase footfall, and to include the following activities listed in priority of importance, and, with the specific approaches and nuances adopted in each location to be decided by the respective local group:

Lechlade-on-Thames	Specific actions
Car parking improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the owners of all significant parking areas within the town centre, such as the Memorial Hall and hotels regarding a coordinated car parking scheme • Install improved signposting to car parking facilities • Pursue the ambition to create a new car park near the town centre
More frequent public transport services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create productive links with bus operators to improve services into the town centre • Consider incentives to allow for more frequent services

Lechlade-on-Thames	Specific actions
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a town centre website, to include new Lechlade branding • Establish social media channels to promote the range of town centre attractions, including businesses • Target local residential catchments with positive messaging
More town centre events and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new annual food and drink festival, to involve town centre businesses • Build on existing events, such as the Christmas lantern parade to ensure that more town centre businesses become involved and benefit more from them • Consider activities to focus on the marina and to benefit from passing river boaters
Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build better relationships with all tiers of local government and influence coordinated ongoing investment • Mobilise funding sources towards town centre improvements, including via grant funding, or crowdfunding • Develop a place plan, which identifies a framework of planned improvements for the town centre over the next 5 to 10 years
Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain the details of the landlords of all vacant units • Work to bring any currently vacant units into active use, as appropriate • Fortify local planning policies to protect business uses
Improvements to the appearance of empty shop frontages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact a system of window dressing where access is possible • Introduce attractive adhesive window vinyls where internal access is not possible

Lechlade-on-Thames	Specific actions
Activities and events which focus on evening & night-time businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an evening economy town centre sub group • Introduce tasting evening events • Create evening activities, such as quiz nights, or live music, and alternate these around venues
Moreton in Marsh	Specific actions
Car parking improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the owners of all significant parking areas within the town centre, such as the hotels, regarding a coordinated car parking scheme • Consider the introduction of additional car parking spaces, possibly via the creation of an overspill car parking area at the southern edge of the town centre
Schemes to save businesses money on overheads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission an expert provider to introduce a scheme to reduce business costs • Gain economies of scale by introducing such a scheme to Moreton
Projects to improve traffic flow through the town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with all three tiers of local government to introduce improved traffic management systems • Ensure, as far as possible that the frequency of queuing traffic is significantly reduced
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a town centre website, to include new Moreton branding • Develop and maintain a campaign to promote Moreton as the northern gateway to the Cotswolds, to include new signage
Social media campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish social media channels to promote the range of town centre attractions • Create targeted messaging to promote the range of attractions in Moreton, such as the high quality retail and hospitality businesses

Moreton in Marsh	Specific actions
Greater lobbying, representation and championing of the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build better relationships with all tiers of local government and influence coordinated ongoing investment • Mobilise funding sources towards town centre improvements, including via grant funding, or crowdfunding • Develop a place plan, which identifies a framework of planned improvements for the town centre over the next 5 to 10 years
Litter removal and cleanliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the three tiers of local government to improve the litter management regime and install additional litter bins • Provide additional resources to Moreton Gardeners Association to support litter removal, including an annual town tidy day
Increased floral planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce high impact new planting structures, such as flower towers • Provide additional resources to Moreton Gardeners Association to support litter floral planting

Tetbury	Specific actions
Car parking improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the owners of all significant parking areas within the town centre, such as The Chippings, The Goods Shed, hotels and sporting venues regarding a coordinated car parking system • Install improved signposting to the range of car parking facilities
Activities to reduce the number of empty shop units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain the details of the landlords of all vacant units • Work to bring any currently vacant units into active use, as appropriate • Fortify local planning policies to protect business uses

Tetbury	Specific actions
Marketing and promotion to project the town to a wider audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create specific campaigns to promote the range of attractions in Moreton, such as the high quality retail and hospitality businesses • Develop reciprocal publicity arrangements with local venues, such as Highgrove and Westonbirt Arboretum
New Christmas lights displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the three tiers of local government to introduce additional festive lighting within the town centre • Provide additional resources to the Christmas Lights Committee to improve the current displays
Schemes to save businesses money on overheads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commission an expert provider to introduce a scheme to reduce business costs for Tetbury, as well as other District town centres
More frequent public transport services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create productive links with public transport operators to improve services into the town centre • Consider incentives to allow for more frequent services
More town centre events and activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new annual food and drink festival, or festival of motoring, to involve town centre businesses • Build on existing events, such as the annual Tetfest and the Woolsack races to ensure that more town centre businesses become involved and benefit more from them • Provide promotional support to the range of other town centre events and activities
Social media campaigning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide resource to improve the reach of the existing social media channels and to expand the number of platforms used • Create coordinated promotions for the existing range of town centre social media profiles and platforms • Develop a series of strong promotional hooks for the town centre, including as a centre for antique retailing

4. Support the new groups to develop into strong place management functions, such as Town Centre Partnerships. These should continue to be business-led, with robust public sector support, and include representation from all of the following:
 - Businesses, to cover a range of sizes and sectors and to be spread across the geographical extent of the town centre
 - Property owners
 - Public sector bodies
 - Stakeholder organisations
5. Within 12-18 months, support the Town Centre Partnerships towards an ongoing process of working with partners, businesses and local residents in developing and delivering annual action plans and improvements for each town centre, with a sample of such a plan included as Appendix 1 of this report.

5.2 Key factors regarding the study recommendations

In each location, we have identified a willingness for local businesses to support the initiatives, with 39 % support for this in Lechlade, 25 % in Moreton and 34 % support for this in Tetbury. If, however, support towards forming a new group should not be forthcoming, we would suggest that the three tiers of local government collaborate on initial improvements in order to kickstart the required interventions. We would also emphasise that the specific improvements for each location should be developed with as much local input, as possible, in order to both ensure that the most appropriate actions are proposed, and also to impart the greatest possible sense of local ownership. We have, however, listed what we consider to be a range of specific projects which could be enacted in each town, provided that they are considered appropriate at the local level, and these are shown as Appendix 2 of this report.

Our study has identified both the range of strengths which exist in Lechlade-on-Thames, Moreton in Marsh and Tetbury, as well as the challenges which each are currently facing. Importantly, we have highlighted a range of very achievable opportunities to support the economic health and vibrancy of town centres and we are hopeful that these suggested local partnerships can be deployed in order to gain considerable traction towards achieving the potential of each place.

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Appendix 1

Sample town centre partnership action plan

1. **Events & Vibrancy**
 - Co-ordinate a programme of events, music and street entertainment
 - Develop a major new event
 - Establish and promote a central Heritage Trail
 - Work with partners so that businesses benefit more from existing events
2. **Marketing & promotion**
 - Create Support Local campaigns to promote all business sectors
 - Establish & expand a library of high-quality photographic images of the centre
 - Work with local tourism bodies to promote our offer to a wider audience
 - Develop a new website and carry out focused social media activities
 - Establish a new customer loyalty scheme and implement a gift card project
3. **Streetscene improvements**
 - Organise an annual Tidy Day to address key areas identified by businesses
 - Arrange for street decoration to improve the ambience of the town
 - Enact additional and improved floral planting & landscaping
 - Improve street furniture and arrange for additional flower planters
 - Remove redundant signage and introduce an attractive new signage scheme
 - Introduce new street art features
 - Create attractive new areas to encourage people to dwell for longer
4. **Supporting businesses**
 - Provide staff training opportunities to develop key business skills
 - Provide regular business newsletters and updates
 - Offer business benefits as part of a collaboration with local training providers
 - Ensure that all projects reflect business priorities
5. **Management**
 - Employ a Part-Time Manager to help deliver a range of improvement projects
 - Organise robust & transparent governance processes
 - Maintain strong leadership via a Steering Group and a business membership scheme
 - Arrange all necessary financial filing & returns, supported by professional advisors
6. **Other projects**
 - Other projects will include lobbying by representing businesses on key groups & bodies, communicating through ongoing business visits & surveys and demonstrating success via measures such as footfall monitoring and vacant shops rates

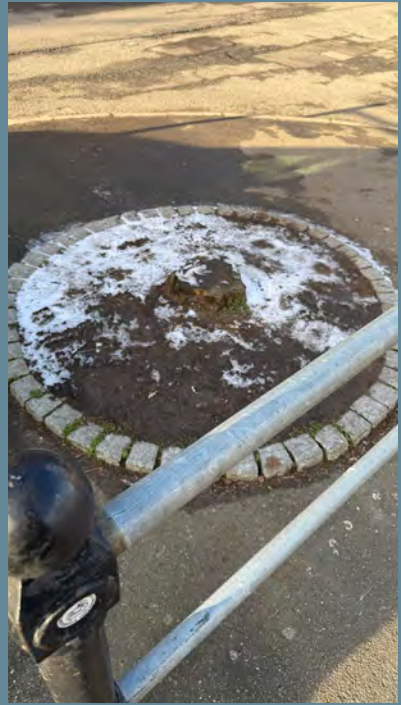
Appendix 2

Examples of streetscene improvements required

Lechlade-on-Thames



Moreton in Marsh



Tetbury



Appendix 3

Vacant business premises, January 2026

Lechlade-on-Thames

11 Burford Street – sold, subject to confirmation

7 Burford Street – being advertised to let

5 High Street – available to let, but not yet being advertised

2 High Street – ownership being checked

High Street, former Crown Inn – for sale by auction

Moreton in Marsh

Regent House, High Street – ownership being checked

3a Oxford Street – ownership being checked

Corner of High Street & New Road (2 units) – being advertised to let

High Street, adjacent to Bellini – being advertised to let

High Street, former Jon Fox – sold

High Street, former Dale House Antiques – for sale by auction

23 High Street – change of occupier in progress

Tetbury

51 Long Street – small unit unoccupied, which forms part of the property

13 Market Place – ownership being checked

10 Church Street – being advertised for sale

13 Church Street – ownership being checked

12 Church Street – being advertised to let

19 Church Street – change of occupier in progress

26 Church Street – change of occupier in progress

33 Church Street – ownership being checked

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