



Case Study

URBAN AND TOWN CENTRE LIVING STRATEGY

March 2023



THE CLIENT



BACKGROUND

Middlesbrough Council's Economic Development Team are embarking on a major push for Urban / town centre living. This is a product which central Middlesbrough has not had for many generations and the scale at which we are looking to develop will be a significant market disruptor.

The brief described Middlesbrough as having a (relatively) weak town centre / apartment living offer, which is characterised by low value and social housing stock. The council want to raise the bar in terms of quality and volume, allied with an enhanced employment, F&B and leisure offer – to support the attraction and retention of young professionals; and any other tenure mixes which will support this ambition.

The core purpose of the project was to provide more detail on who Middlesbrough's end users are likely to be, their demographics and the specifications/amenities which will attract and retain them. The council will then use the outputs as the basis of a targeted campaign to build anticipation, generate interest and feed into Middlesbrough's master planning.

Expected benefits from this work include;

- An increase in professional young people living and working in Middlesbrough.
- Creation of a new market with the change in population demographics.
- A functional and sustainable urban living market where public sector intervention is minimised and where the market can operate commercially.



Image 1. Boho Zero, Gosford Street (Didobi)

SERVICES AND SUPPORT DELIVERED

The focus from our engagement with Middlesbrough was to provide data driven analysis and commentary on the opportunities and constraints around Urban Living. In addition, we created an evidence-based process and structure that can be used for the ongoing monitoring of key data to support Urban Living in Middlesbrough. We anticipate this will have wider application and impact for other areas and projects within Middlesbrough.

We undertook several sequential stages to ensure we understood Middlesbrough, its people and its aspirations. Onsite meetings with the client, key stakeholders and the wider community was a key activity undertaken. The stages were;

- 1. UNDERSTAND.** Create a detailed understanding of the data on Middlesbrough and its potential as an urban living destination in order to deliver a SWOT and Markets analysis.
- 2. ENGAGE.** After a comprehensive period of stakeholder mapping in which we sought to identify businesses and education, training and other career support groups that could help us reach our target demographic, we started to push our online survey to key stakeholders. We combined our online activity with a further session of face-to-face engagement with students from a wide range of courses at Teesside University. In total we engaged with 331 people.
- 3. REVIEW.** A detailed review of quantitative and qualitative data from stages 1 and 2 was undertaken in order to inform the recommendations along with a detailed SWOT analysis.
- 4. REPORT.** A detailed and visual report was written taking into account all activities (data capture, data analysis, digital footprints and data mapping), the approach taken and existing work being undertaken by the Council. The report had a clear Executive Summary, Key Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations.

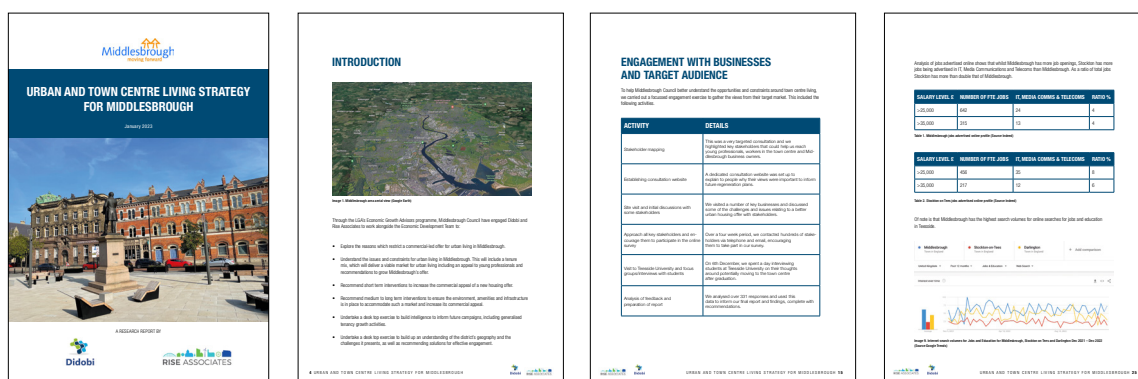


Image 2. Urban and Town Centre Living Strategy for Middlesbrough Report (32 pages)

CLIENT COMMENTARY

“I was absolutely delighted by the outputs from this project. From the outset the depth of experience, understanding and energy that Didobi brought was excellent. Their questions on ‘walk abouts’ of the town, their review of previous research to their sourcing and understanding of data – all was incredibly detailed and focussed.

Their broad engagement highlighted key areas for us to address and reinforced previously held views, and with over 300 people engaged along with stakeholder meetings, it was one of the most comprehensive engagements Middlesbrough has had.

The report Didobi delivered was very clear in identifying actions and the reasons why, along with a strong understanding of the journey Middlesbrough is on and how it can best be realised, monitored and evaluated. I was very pleased with the detail and evidence that lay within the key findings, conclusion and recommendations, which will form an integral part of our plans and evidence base to take Middlesbrough forward on this key priority area. Thank you to all involved and I hope we can work again together.”

Sam Gilmour, Head of Economic Growth and Infrastructure, Middlesbrough Council.

ABOUT DIDOBI

Didobi is a team of highly experienced specialists who deliver independent, innovative and clearly written research, insights, reports and content to public and private sector clients for the built environment. These include data science, data quants, research, placemaking, communications and strategy.

This unique combination of experience and knowledge has earned Didobi a reputation for distilling data into practical advice and knowledge that enables better strategic decisions and problem solving. We work directly and as well as a collaborate with our partners to meet the specific challenges and needs of our clients as a consortium.

Since its launch in 2018, Didobi has worked with a diverse range of clients including Amazon, the Investment Property Forum, Coal Pensions Trustees, the Urban Land Institute in both Europe and Asia Pacific, Vinci plc, the Greater London Authority and many local authorities across the UK.

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For further information on how we help your organisation, town or project then please get in touch;



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