

FILWOOD BROADWAY ACTION PLAN



Filwood Broadway Action Plan

Developed with the
Filwood Broadway Action Team.



Funded by
UK Government



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00 + George Lovesmith + Studio Mothership

This Action Plan was delivered by a Bristol-based design and research team led by Architecture 00, working closely with local architect George Lovesmith and local design practice Studio Mothership. Engagement was conducted by the design team with the support of interactive experience designers Uninvited Guests.

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All photos unless otherwise stated are taken by the author.

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1. Overview



Performers at Knowle West Fest 2023.
Photo via Knowle West Media Centre. Credit: Scott Piggott.

The Filwood Broadway Action Plan presents a shared vision for a thriving community-led high street that caters to the needs of Knowle Westers and nurtures inclusive economic and cultural growth.

The plan sets out short, medium and long-term goals for the high street, and the actions needed to achieve them. These goals and actions have been defined collectively over 13 workshops with members of the Filwood Broadway Action Team, a group made of local organisations, residents, council officers and business owners.

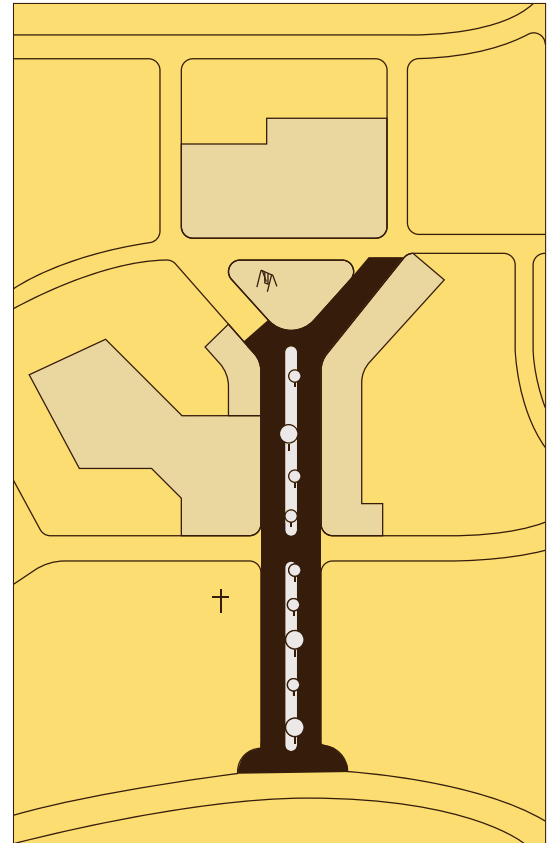


Knowle West is a community in South Bristol known for its friendliness, but with long-awaited hopes for regeneration. Decades of hard work and activism have been a foundation for a major government investment. This is a time for charting the next steps to take things forward. Watch this space for transformation!

Ian Watt, Resident, Action Team member

Levelling Up

This Plan is part of the larger Levelling Up Funded ‘Transforming Filwood Broadway’ regeneration project, that will see the renovation and expansion of the community centre, new housing and retail units on the site of the old cinema and west parade, a new roadway, enhanced landscaping and an arts programme. The regeneration was itself initiated by motivated local people determined to create change.



Our Approach

An essential part of this Action Plan is building a long-term strategic vision for the high street, recognising that it is not often that communities receive this level of investment. We have researched and discussed many different forms of stewardship, tenancies and investment strategies to inform a bespoke approach rooted in an understanding of Knowle West. We understand that change takes time and see this work as one part of an ongoing process of capacity building in the community.

The high street improvement project has also included the delivery of government funded:

- Shopfront Improvements on the East Parade
- A Community Chest to deliver on the Action Plan goals.
- Appointment of a High Street Community Connector for an initial three years.

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2. Shaping the Plan



Uninvited Guests backcasting workshop in September 2024 hosted at the Filwood Community Centre.

Working closely with local people has ensured the Action Plan is rooted in the community and businesses of Knowle West and shaped by local knowledge and aspirations for the area. Alongside workshops with the Action Team, it has been informed by over 100 hours of conversations with residents, businesses and key stakeholders.



Design sessions with shop owners were held to help design the new shop fronts and shop identities in a collaborative way.

Supporting the community to hold and own the plan resists the normal top-down approach to urban development, where decisions can feel imposed on a community rather than being made by them.



Local Knowledge

Speaking to active locals helped us to understand previous successes and failures on the Broadway and how the wider Knowle West community may benefit from regeneration efforts. Shop unit tenants provided us with valuable insights into the challenges that the high street faces such as the specific locations where young people spend time, and how the street changes throughout the day and week. Engagement allowed us to understand key issues such as:

- not feeling safe on the high street / antisocial behaviour
- some reliance on low-cost rent agreements
- few places to meet friends (cafes or bars)
- fatigue from repeat engagement with no tangible outcomes
- confusing retail lettings processes and slow communication (East parade)
- campaigns for healthy fruit and veg vendors
- importance of youth spaces
- the potential of arts and culture
- decades of hard work from active local people
- importance of supporting local economy

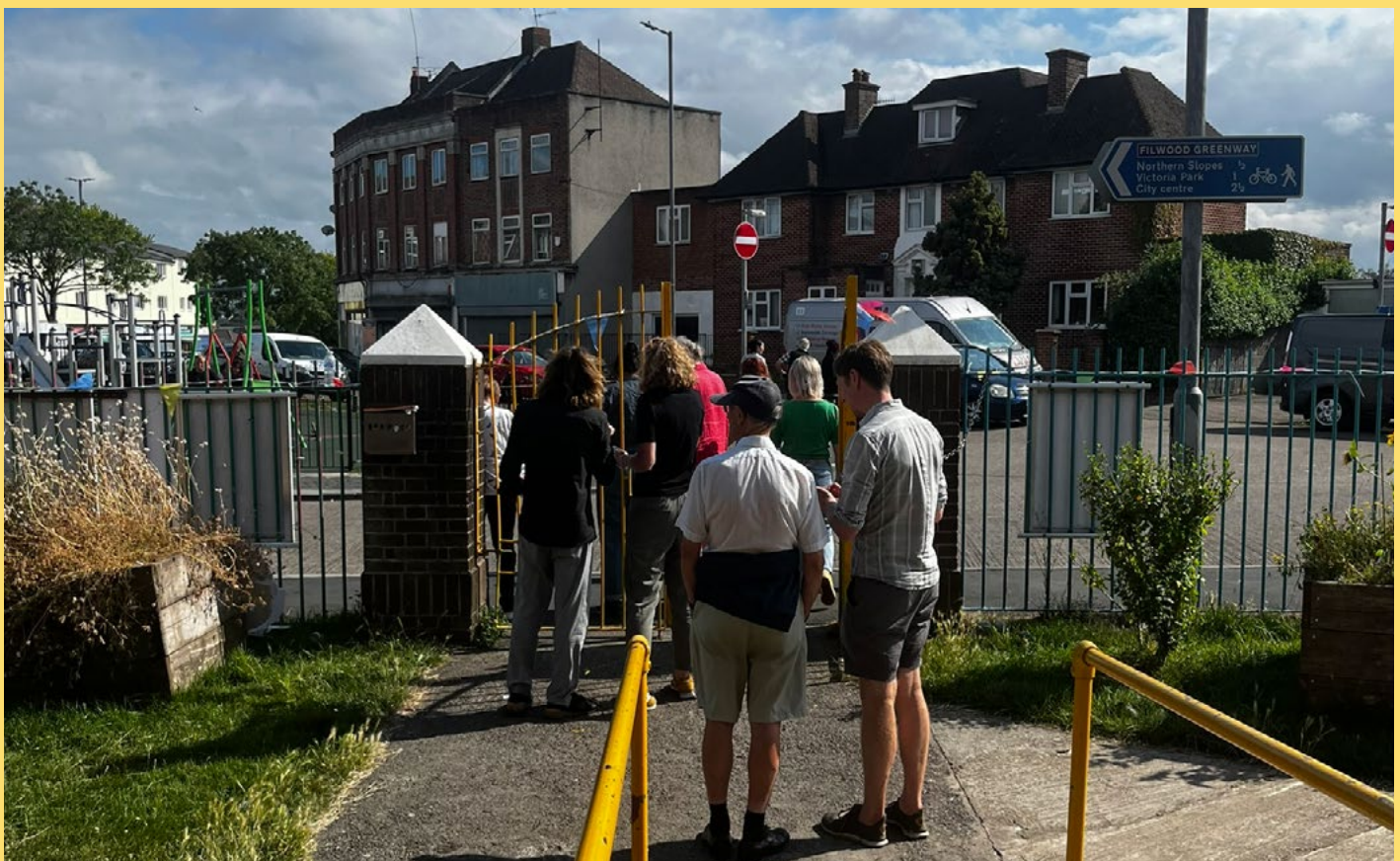
Wider High Street Trends

Broader national trends such as diversifying away from retail, changes to business rates, the rise in online shopping and flexible working have all impacted how smaller suburban high streets like Filwood Broadway function. Inevitably each high street context is very different but learning from and connecting with other community-led initiatives such as Bedminster Works, Nudge Community Builders and the GLA High Streets Network can offer valuable new ideas.



Above: Shop Owners from Filwood Broadway were crucial in their input to our approach and process.

Below: Local residents were engaged through public meetings and workshops.





3. Funding for Filwood Broadway



Alongside the Action Plan, the project allocated funding to invest in making Filwood Broadway look like a more loved high street. But rather than spending all the money on signs and repair works, the Action Team decided to allocate part of the funds to a **Community Chest** and a **Community Connector** role.

The Community Chest was established to support future community activities and the economic development of the high street. It is an idea that has been in the making for several years and aims to give local people the agency to have a say in how resources are spent.

We considered several options for the structure of the chest, including setting up permanent and spendable funds, small grants programmes and loans. The Action Team concluded that a Community Chest is only useful if it is supported by a paid role (the Community Connector) that is actively engaging with local community members to make decisions about how it is spent.

What Can Be Funded?

The Chest will make an initial sum of £20k available for activities on the high street over three years. These are funds that can be spent in any way that can be evidenced to deliver on the Action Plan objectives. Decisions will be reviewed and signed off collectively by the Action Team.

Who is the Community Connector?

Employing a Community Connector is a key strategy for executing the Action Plan through managing the Community Chest, maintaining the functioning of the Action Team and nurturing ideas of local people, shop unit tenants and community organisations.

They will be employed for two days/week for a minimum of three years. They will be based on the Broadway, working closely with the community centre and Knowle West Alliance to deliver on the objectives through their role including:

- Convening the Filwood Broadway Action Team.
- Building relationships locally with businesses.
- Connecting people with ideas to support and resources.
- Co-producing projects and initiatives on the high street.
- Campaigning and building partnerships.
- Seeking additional funding to grow the Community Chest.

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4. Key Considerations



It is unusual for a high street to have consistent ownership and only two landlords. This provides the opportunity for a coordinated approach that can deliver on our strategic goals. These goals, and their associated actions respond to a range of opportunities and challenges including:

Opportunities

- Two landlords: Council and Places for People (long lease), with some sublets through the Community Centre.
- The high street already offers valuable services beyond retail.
- Community of active local organisations and residents.
- Low property values limit the impact of business rates.
- New assets and upgrades as part of Levelling Up Funding.
- Existing business owners' commitment to area.
- Many new retail uses that could complement existing offer.

Challenges

- Slow stakeholder communication and lettings processes.
- Few spaces for people to meet in afternoons and evenings.
- Closed security shutters create appearance of high vacancies and increases risk of vandalism.
- Security and antisocial behaviour concerns limit footfall.
- Limited community capacity and potential burnout.
- Low spending power and high needs locally.
- Some precarious financial and rental positions.

Our research and engagement in Knowle West revealed an area full of potential with many active groups pushing to redefine the image of a neighbourhood that has been wrongly mischaracterised and has felt ignored for the past decades. The Action Plan was shaped around these key considerations that emerged from local people as priorities:

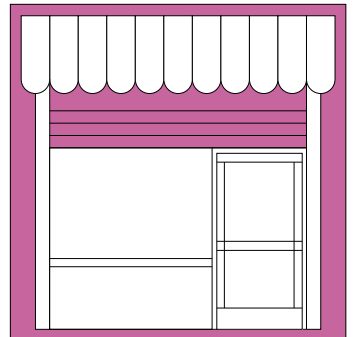
Supporting the local economy

Nurturing local entrepreneurial spirit and understanding the ambitions of existing shop tenants. Making resources and opportunities available for new local businesses to develop.



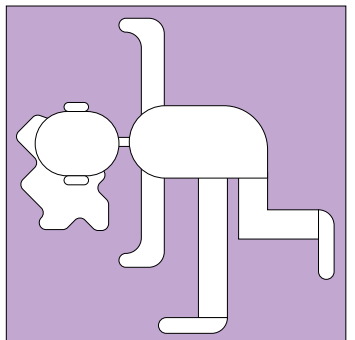
Building a clearer lettings process

Working with landlords and agents to shape and implement a fair and transparent retail lettings process. This should make unit availability clear, enable vacancies to be filled quickly and encourage a diverse range of shop tenants.



Catering to the needs of young people

Recognising the potential of arts, culture and sports to enrich the lives of young people. Creating spaces for young people to thrive alongside a functioning high street.





5. Action Plan



Building on the achievements of an already active community, this Action Plan sets out a vision of a thriving community-led high street that provides a range of services for local people while supporting local businesses. The plan provides a suite of resources (including a Community Chest) that aim to champion local resident-led action, while setting out a series of shared goals and strategies to deliver long-lasting economic and social change.

The following pages outline short, medium and long-term goals and associated actions. These are intended to act as a guide for the Action Team in the coming years and inform the activities of the paid Community Connector.

Short Term

In the next year

These short-term actions were defined with members of the Action Team during an in-person workshop. Some of these actions have been delivered during the high street improvement project and the remaining actions will be delivered by the Community Connector with the Action Team.



Initial Action Team meeting in the Community Centre.

S1. Building the Action Team

The Filwood Broadway Action Team has steered the direction of the regeneration from the offset. Since May 2024 we have hosted 13 sessions covering visioning, researching, steering shop front improvements, setting Action Plan principles, a lettings process and defining the Community Chest.

- Knowing each other's skills - strengthening the network and compiling a directory.
- Connecting people working on similar initiatives.
- Developing shared plans and pooling resources.
- Planning a trader networking event.
- Engaging with community police.
- Renaming from a Working Group to an Action Team.

S2. Championing Resident-led Action

The Action Team recognises the importance of supporting locals to deliver the change they want to see for the area. There is potential for a mutually beneficial relationship between Action Team members and embedded local people - exchanging networks and experiences.

- Finding more local champions (incl. residents and traders) who are respected locally and can lead initiatives.
- Facilitating local champions: Local organisations to act as facilitators and upskill.
- Setting up a Community Chest supported by a paid role.

S3. Testing New Ideas

We saw this period of high street improvements as an opportunity to test new ideas that could be grown and eventually reoccupy the high street. There is a big leap from having an idea to securing a tenancy. The temporary artists residence hosted by the Media Centre has shown how valuable a programme of public arts workshops can be.

- Testing new ideas including potential collaborations with the 'Filwood in Motion' public art programme.
- Test and Learn pilot for Community Centre.
- Pop-ups in vacant unit and events spaces for local businesses.
- Public events, street parties, a 'how to' guide / support.

Medium Term Actions

After the building works

Ensuring that the high street is continually activated through and after the construction period. These actions form key aspects of the role of the Community Connector.



Boxing match at
Chrisp Street on Air,
The Decorators, 2014.
Credit: Dosfotos.

M1. Implementing Successful Ideas

As ideas are tested in pop up and event form across the Broadway, the Action Team can help to signpost to further funding and business development opportunities and advocate for prospective tenants as the landscape changes.

- Understanding local needs.
- Preparing joint funding applications and sharing opportunities with each other.
- Charity and volunteer-led initiatives.
- Combining multiple ideas in one space.
- Reviving previous initiatives e.g. community market.
- Special events e.g. outdoor cinema, late openings, social occasions.

M2. Matching High Street Uses to Local Needs

The Action Team aim to develop processes to encourage a diverse range of businesses that serve the needs of people in Knowle West. This can include trader targeting, supporting existing and emerging local businesses to access opportunities and negotiating assessment criteria with agents.

- Nominating potential shop tenants to relevant agents.
- Working with landlords to develop a shared letting strategy.
- Using the Filwood Broadway website to advertise opportunities more widely.
- Continuing to welcome shop tenants to Action Team.

M3. Partnership Building

The Action Team can take a proactive approach to finding funding opportunities and collaborators. A key part of the Community Connector role will be establishing these partnerships on behalf of the Action Team. This match making could enable more funding to come into the area.

- Holding and updating a directory of individuals' skills and offers locally for matchmaking.
- Meeting with potential match funders and partners.
- Exploring wider funding opportunities to grow the Community Chest.
- Advocating for Knowle West at a city-level.

Long Term Actions

2030 and beyond

Having a long-term view of the growth of the high street can increase the likelihood that the area will continue to thrive long after the Government funding has been spent. We look ahead in this section to what we would like to achieve by 2030 but acknowledge that any good long-term plan is dynamic and responsive to the changing context.



The Bourne street market to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, via Lincs Online.
Credit: David Pearson.

L1: Making Filwood Broadway a Destination

A central objective of the Filwood regeneration project is to reinvigorate the high street into a thriving and well used parade. This means having a reason to visit Filwood Broadway with a range of facilities and activities on offer for residents whilst attracting visitors. As a long-term ambition for the high street, there are many actions that need to happen from different parties to unlock Filwood Broadway's potential.

- Marketing / web strategy.
- Cultural event programming.
- Tackling antisocial behaviour.
- Increasing footfall.
- Boosting community pride and changing perceptions.

L2: Creating Spaces for Young People

Our engagement highlighted the importance of creating space for young people on the high street, providing more activities for young people to do while mitigating the impacts of antisocial behaviour on the street. Understanding and establishing strong relationships of trust with the young people will be key.

- Maintaining local youth provision on the Broadway.
- Outdoor space provision for teenagers.
- Indoor activities for young people e.g. gym.
- Thinking about targeting activities for ages nine-eleven e.g. Outdoor BMX / pump track.
- Giving young people positive role models.

L3: Supporting the Local Economy

Regeneration plans must deeply consider and support the local economy and enable new opportunities for entrepreneurs. Keeping money circulating locally can increase the wealth of the whole community. Increasing local employment will also mean that residents do not have to travel as far for work.

- Testing activities / demand through small grants.
- Supporting growth of independent businesses.
- Serving local needs.
- Signposting and connecting community champions to money and spaces.
- Connecting potential collaborators with each other.
- Advocating for more employment spaces in the area.



6. High Street Tenants



Economic investment and campaigning alone cannot lead to a thriving high street. Shop tenants have an important enabling role as stewards of the high street. The Action Team can continue to unlock this potential by building relationships and a shared understanding with traders.

An active shop tenant can offer a range of valuable goods and services to Knowle Westers while enabling the high street to be a well-functioning space for community life.

To do this, existing businesses must be supported to access opportunities (such as grants and business support) and communication between traders, landlords and active organisations should be more fluid.

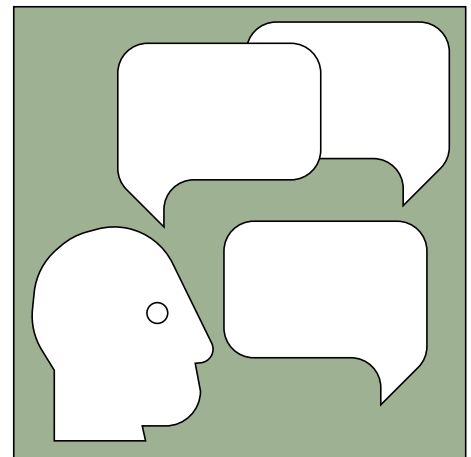
There are many potential new businesses that could benefit local people (such as affordable food, hair & beauty services, restaurants, bars and healthcare). The Community Connector and the Action Team aim to establish a working relationship with estate agents to support new tenants that aim to bring positive change and new amenities to the area.

How can shop unit tenants contribute to the Action Plan goals?

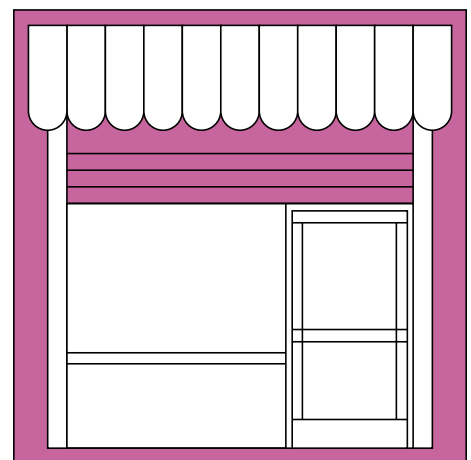
The street can appear to be closed and unloved due to limited opening times and inactive shop fronts. The principles set out below are positive actions that shop tenants are taking to enhance the high street and deliver on the Action Plan objectives:



› Knowing and serving the needs of residents.



› Keeping informed on local issues.



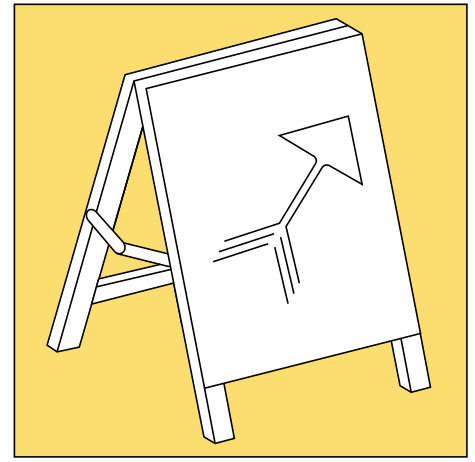
› Shutters up



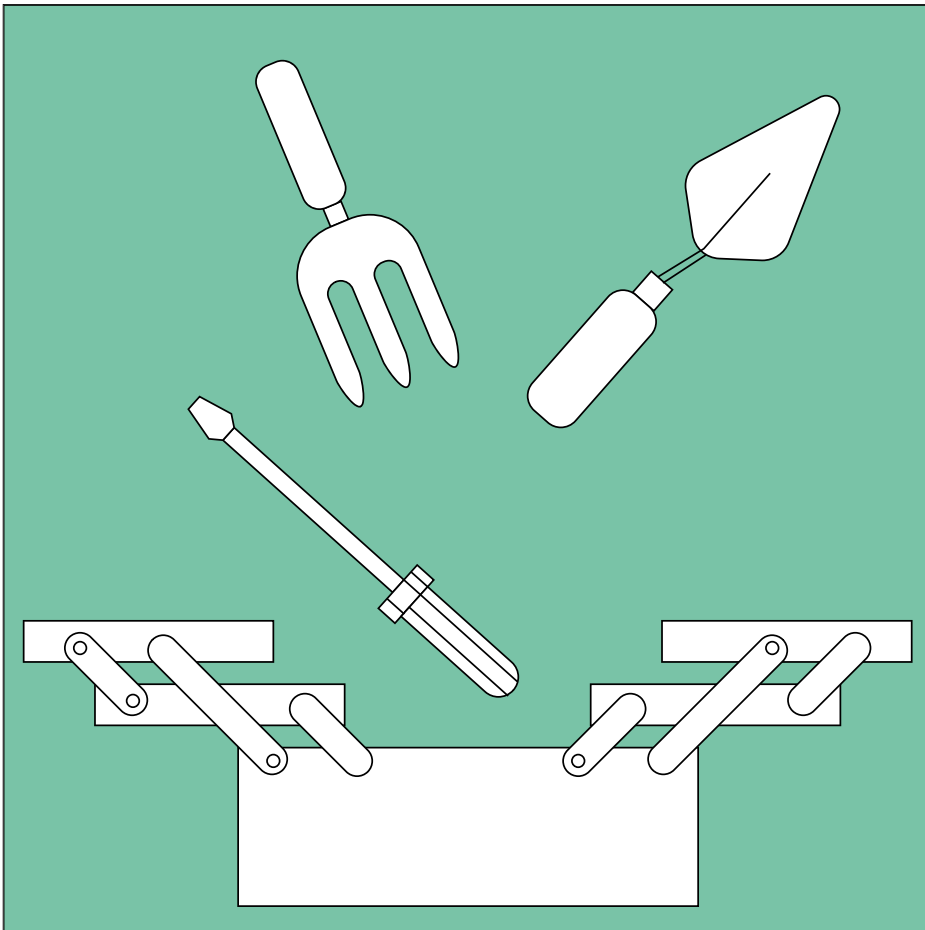
> Active public frontage onto high street



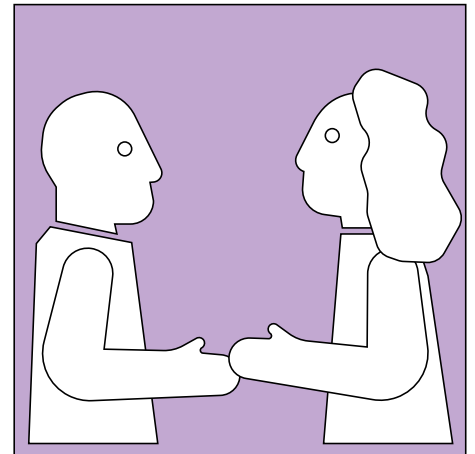
> Regular and later opening hours



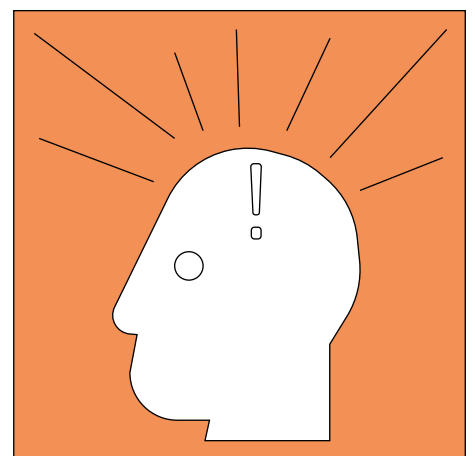
> Initiatives to attract more people to Filwood



> Maintaining shop front to show it's cared for.



> Communicating with other tenants.



> Testing new ideas



Version 1.1

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Get involved: For more information, or if you would like to join the team, please get in touch with the Filwood Broadway Action Team at kate.bedney@bristol.gov.uk



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