

MARCH 2024

# BUSINESS RESEARCH



youngharrow  
foundation



# Methodology

## Aim

To get insights from the business community and professionals about what is going on in Harrow Town Centre with young people and learn their experiences they have faced and what they want to do moving forward to solve these issues.

## Interviews

6 interviews were carried out with professionals working in the Town Centre, from business owners, security staff and management staff.



# Common Themes

There are a number of commonalities that became apparent during the interviews. This presentation will outline the nuances and details within each.

- 01 Business community feel abandoned** while facing the most difficult period of business many of them have experienced in their career. They feel left behind by Harrow Council, by schools and sometimes feel police are powerless to take action.
- 02 School partnerships** are currently very poor, and many feel that the tensions with anti-social behaviour and truancy could be greatly improved if there were better school partnerships. Notably with Jubilee Academy.
- 03 Security** is under huge pressure because of cut backs. They are overwhelmed and some shops are vulnerable with no personal security at all.
- 04** Shoplifting by young people is a big issue - but they are predominantly seeing this happening among **young girls**.
- 05** The issue with anti-social behaviour from young people used to peak after 3pm, but now with **truancy** this is becoming something staff are dealing with all day.

# Experiences

“  
We had an incident last week with a 12 year old girl who had to be detained who had stolen £300+ worth of items from Boots. It took 4 officers to support because of her behaviour  
”

“  
My biggest concern is that there will be a knife attack on a member of staff next as the tensions are rising  
”

“  
They come in here with their own food and drink, don't spend any money and leave a mess. They are in big groups and putting off customers entering. There is a very real risk of our business failing.  
”

“  
We had a group of 3 girls who had stolen from Boots and locked themselves in a baby changing cubicle (while a mother and infant waited outside to use) the girls smeared lipstick over the cubicle, and were drinking and vaping, refusing to leave.  
”

“  
Incident in the cinema where a group of young males pulled out big knives.  
”

“  
Accusation of theft made against a young person. A week later a group of 20 young people returned to damage and intimidate the stall holder.  
”

“  
Fireworks have been throw in towards staff and customers  
”

“  
Fights with about 50 kids have broken out in here  
”

“  
They have ripped the doors off our toilets  
”

# Case Study

- Small business, tiny team. struggling to make a profit - real chance this business could go under!
- Customers are put off / intimidated by big groups of youths and many wearing ski masks.
- McDonalds ban on eating-in seems to have inadvertently displaced the issue to them.
- Criminal damages have taken place (light bulbs removed and thrown in the toilets, toilet door removed, pool table damage).
- No security! They are vulnerable and 300+ young people coming through the door each day - most in school time.
- They are open to working with the community.




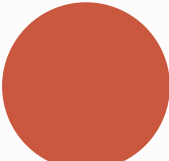
Everyone we spoke to proactively acknowledged and empathised that young people have nowhere locally to go - many come innocently for WIFI, a warm space, somewhere to charge their phone and hang out with friends.




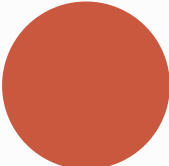
# 1. Partnership

Low morale among the business community and a feeling that they are facing this issue of high levels of anti-social behaviour and crime by young people, alone.

 The relationship with the Council has broken down, and is often is dependent on individual relationships..when people move on that connection is lost.

 Some reported that when they report things to police, and even provide CCTV, no charges are brought forward. Businesses are frustrated with this, and also concerned about backlash/retaliation from young people when a crime is reported.

 Sometimes when parents are called because of a serious issue, they say their child doesn't behave like that at home. They are not willing to address the child's behaviour. Parent engagement is lacking for more minor antisocial / truancy issues.

 Harrow Business Against Crime is an alliance of businesses connected sharing CCTV, intelligence, trend sand ongoing issues. This group works in partnership with police well already - their is an opportunity to engage them with wider partners and this project.

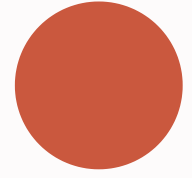
# 2. Schools

- Many of the students they experience real problems with, attend Jubilee Academy. Yet, there is zero engagement or relationship with them.
- The issue of truancy is becoming more prevalent - and when a lot of the crime issues are taking place. Yet there is no partnership with schools to tackle this, and there is no truancy policing. Businesses and BID are left to deal with this, every day!
- Schools hold the key to student identification and parent engagement. It's about accountability and support.
- Many of the businesses feel like schools don't know or understand the scale of the problems - they want them to see and understand.

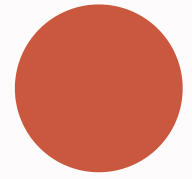




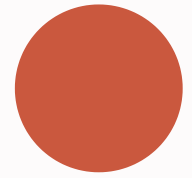
# 3. Safety



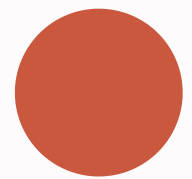
There are big pressures on security staff – they are overwhelmed due to staffing cut backs. Vulnerabilities for certain shops who don't have security and also vulnerabilities at key times – e.g. late at night.



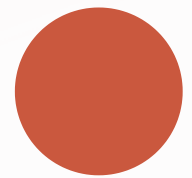
Shoplifting by young people is rife, but underneath this appears to be a culture of lack of care or respect, and when challenged, this is often met with aggression. How do we tackle this together?



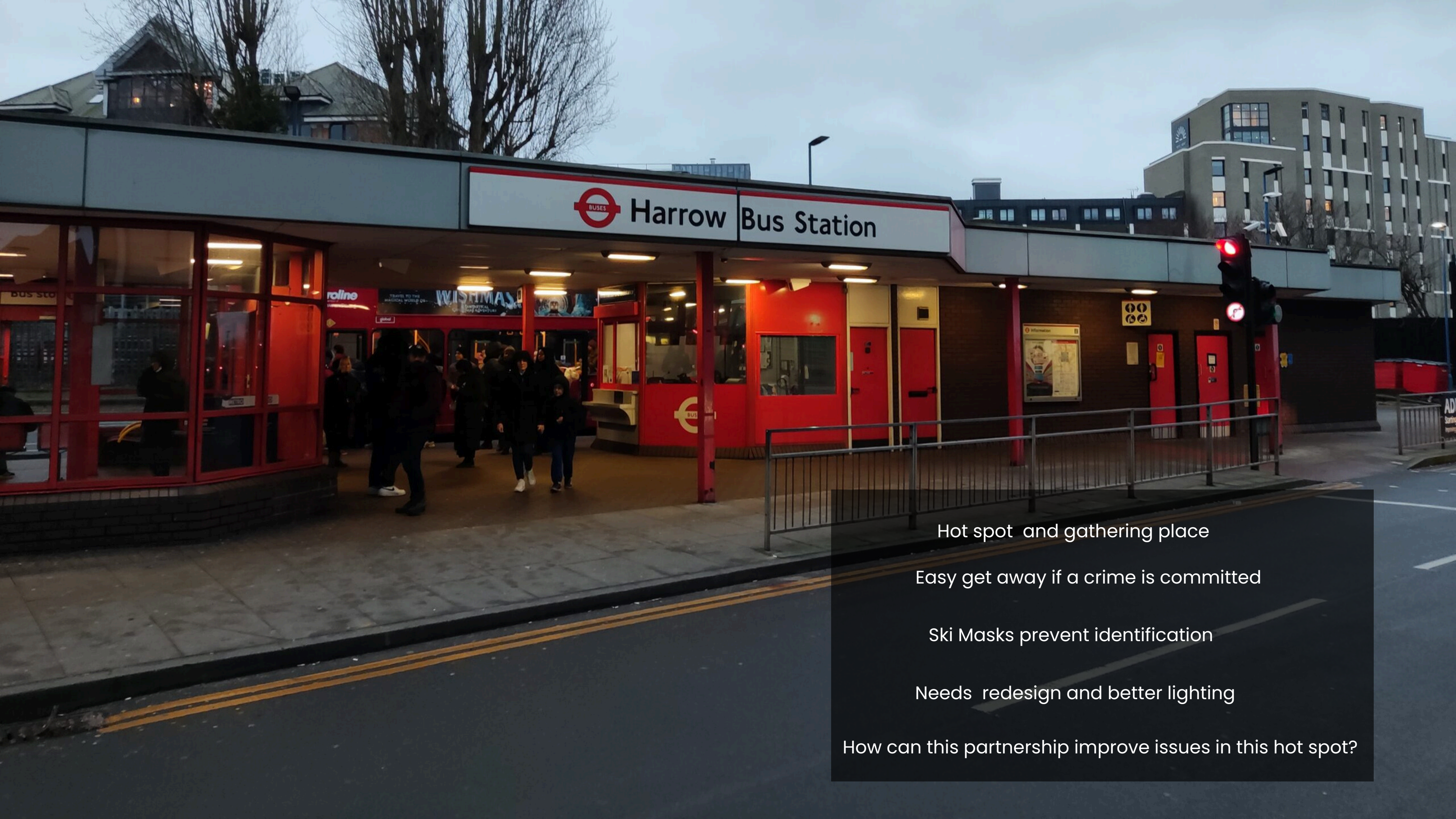
Current rise in girls shoplifting – do we understand why?



Acknowledgement of increased police presence from some shops, but others would welcome more presence and patrolling especially at peak times.



There is concern for shop staff's safety – a feeling and worry that they will be victims of violent crime.



Hot spot and gathering place

Easy get away if a crime is committed

Ski Masks prevent identification

Needs redesign and better lighting

How can this partnership improve issues in this hot spot?



**THANKS**

[youngharrowfoundation.org](http://youngharrowfoundation.org)