Crisis Beneath Success

A Living City Diagnostic Discussion Paper
The Detailed Diagnosis



Citrey CIC

In partnership with:

Adaptiv. Mojobouji

Introduction

Crisis Beneath Success: Overview **introduced a central question:** how can Derby's considerable economic strengths become a better everyday life for more of its people?

This paper examines that question in greater depth. The crisis concerns hardship and delayed support already experienced today, alongside the risk that persistent pressures weaken Derby's capacity to renew its businesses, relationships and opportunities.

The city centre is one place where these wider conditions become visible. Understanding its vitality means examining the institutions, relationships and household circumstances that shape people's ability to use, contribute to and benefit from it.

Derby: strength and strain in the same city

Economic Strength	Everyday Strain
22,000 manufacturing jobs, representing 15.9% of Derby's employee jobs in 2024-compared with 7.3% across Great Britain.[1]	15,300 children aged 0-15 lived in relative low-income families in 2024/25-27.9% of that age group.[2]
375,066 attendances at events produced, presented or supported by Derby Live in 2024/25.[3]	19% of surveyed city-centre ground-floor units were vacant in July 2025, although this had improved from 26% in 2022.[4]

Several pressures are intensifying

Derby City Council's Annual Performance Report 2024/25 shows deterioration across several measures of opportunity, timely support and local economic renewal. Alongside the city's considerable strengths, these changes raise a further question: **are pressures growing faster than Derby's capacity to respond?**

Moving the wrong way (APR 24/25)	2023/24	2024/25
Year 12-13 NEET or not known	4.7%	7.4%
New EHCPs issued within 20 weeks	29.2%	14.9%
Claimant count, working-age	5.1%	5.7%
Universal Credit claimants	19.6%	22.4%
Youth claimant count	6.8%	7.3%
Enterprise births per 10,000	54.2	46.5
Net additional homes delivered	1,345	806
Youth offending cases with EHCPs	21%	31%



SOURCES

1 Nomis
2 Derby key statistics
3 Annual performance results
4 Authority Monitoring Report

Introduction

Derby as a Living City
The Living City™ framework examines community and institutional roots; the civic qualities that develop between them; the friction that obstructs useful activity; the visible economic canopy; and the prosperity people experience.

We distinguish published evidence, attributed local experience and working hypotheses. Together, these help identify what is happening and which explanations deserve closer investigation. National policy, wider markets and household circumstances also form part of that picture.

Inspired by the Eiffel Tower. Rooted in Derby.
The Eiffel Tower turned engineering ambition into a symbol people could experience and identify with. Its future was secured through new uses, particularly wireless communication. This is a great reminder that enduring value depends on adaptation and renewal.

That story resonates with Derby. As a city shaped by engineering and industry, Derby faces the challenge of turning its productive strengths into a shared sense of pride, ownership, opportunity and belonging.

Our image combines a tower's interdependent structure with a tree's living roots and capacity to grow. Two root systems - community and institutions - support the whole civic system.

The experience we bring

Lauren Thompson: Citrey founder and founder of Roots & Futures, bringing place development and championing deliberative democracy and direct engagement with people using the high street.

Amit Zala: founder of Adaptiv, bringing organisational and systemic advisory experience, The Living City framework and the Ghost Town Paradox paper.

Devon Daley: founder of Mojobouji and Destination Derbados, bringing decades of experience in media, cultural programming, events and audience building across Derby and the UK.



The Living City™

What turns a city's strength into a good life for its people?

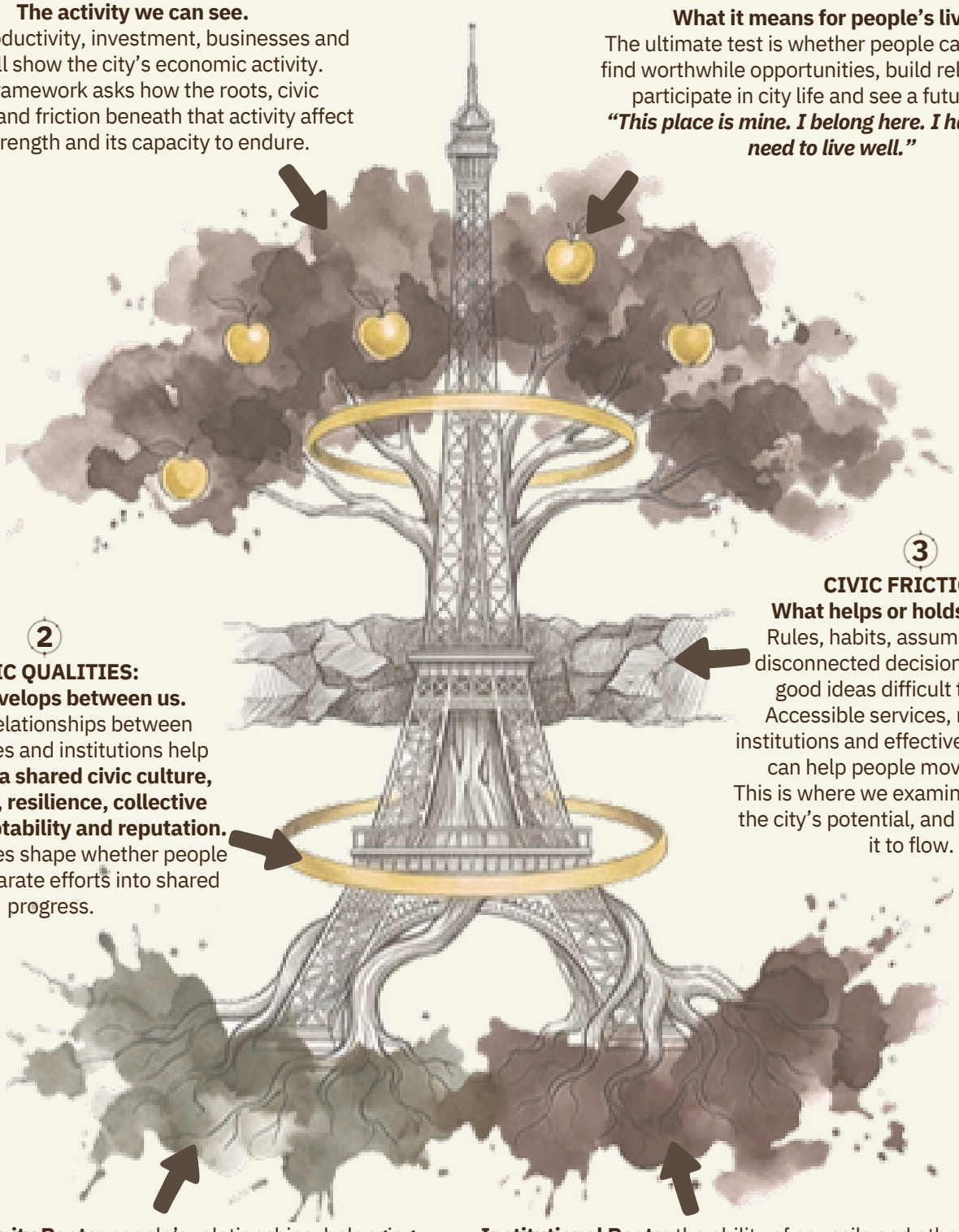
A city's prosperity grows through the relationship between its people and its institutions. The Living City framework explores how those foundations shape the city's ability to work together, overcome barriers and turn economic activity into lasting wellbeing. ***Read the tower from the roots upwards.***

4

CIVIC CANOPY:
The activity we can see.
Jobs, productivity, investment, businesses and footfall show the city's economic activity. The framework asks how the roots, civic qualities and friction beneath that activity affect its strength and its capacity to endure.

5

CIVIC PROSPERITY:
What it means for people's lives.
The ultimate test is whether people can live well: find worthwhile opportunities, build relationships, participate in city life and see a future here.
"This place is mine. I belong here. I have what I need to live well."



3

CIVIC FRICTION:
What helps or holds us back.
Rules, habits, assumptions and disconnected decisions can make good ideas difficult to realise. Accessible services, responsive institutions and effective partnerships can help people move forward. This is where we examine what blocks the city's potential, and what enables it to flow.

2

CIVIC QUALITIES:
What develops between us.
Healthy relationships between communities and institutions help build **trust, a shared civic culture, coherence, resilience, collective energy, adaptability and reputation.** These qualities shape whether people can turn separate efforts into shared progress.

Community Roots: people's relationships, belonging, skills, culture and willingness to contribute.

Institutional Roots: the ability of councils and other civic institutions to listen, coordinate, deliver and learn.

1 **CIVIC ROOTS: The foundations of city life.** Together, these roots influence what a city can achieve, and whose needs it can respond to.

1 Civic Roots



Section A: Community Roots

Community Roots:

Who gets to take part in Derby's life?
Derby's community roots are sustained through everyday relationships: caring for relatives, helping neighbours, sharing skills, running businesses, making art and organising activity. Much of that contribution happens outside formal meetings and consultations. The question is whether people have the time, security, places and relationships that allow those contributions to flourish.

There is already a community to build with
Community Action Derby reports supporting 215 local groups since April 2022. Its work includes support for voluntary organisations and volunteering. That is evidence of an existing civic network whose experience belongs in any account of the city's future.[6]

Citrey adds one recent example. Since opening at 6a Sadler Gate on 28 June 2026, more than 600 people have crossed its threshold. Its team has hosted debates and conversations with residents, businesses and civic organisations. People have used the opportunity to question what is happening and suggest what could change.

People are already contributing. What happens to that contribution?

Civic energy already visible	The connection to investigate
People entering Citrey, joining debates and sharing their experience	How does what they share influence decisions beyond the room?
Community organisations organising activity and supporting residents	Can they access the spaces, resources and relationships needed to keep going?
Young participants asking for paid opportunities, advocacy and safe places	Who can turn those requests into accessible opportunities-and follow through?
Residents contributing to consultations and local projects	Can participants see what changed because they took part?

Organised participation reveals part of this capacity. A fuller account must also reach people whose contribution is informal, whose time is constrained or whose voices seldom enter public discussion.

The foundations are practical
More than 550 people contributed to the council's 2024 Local Plan Priorities Survey. Housing, green space, public transport and community safety were prominent concerns.[7] These connect civic participation to the practical conditions of everyday life.

A place to meet must be somewhere people can reach, afford and feel comfortable using. An opportunity to contribute must fit around work, care and other commitments.

With 27.9% of Derby's children aged 0-15 living in relative low-income families in 2024/25, affordability belongs at the centre of this enquiry.[1] Our hypothesis is that these practical conditions influence whose energy and ideas can become part of the city's future.



SOURCES
6 Community Action Derby • Community support and reported reach • accessed 22 September 2026
7 Derby City Council • Local Plan Priorities Survey • February-March 2024
1 Derby City Council • Key statistics • DWP low-income families 2024/25
8 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust • Derby communities revive green spaces • 22 February 2023

Community Roots:

Community roots in everyday life

Shared places, culture and belonging
Parks, libraries, cultural venues, community spaces and local businesses can give people reasons to meet repeatedly, form relationships and feel part of a place. Their value includes what people create, experience and sustain together.

In February 2023, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust described work with the council at Society Place in Normanton, where primary-school children were invited to help shape its redesign.[8] The important next question is what followed: could participants see their ideas reflected in the place, and did they remain involved?

We should examine cultural participation in the same way. Beyond attendance totals, who gets to make, perform, organise and belong-and what relationships endure afterwards?

A future that young people can enter
The ten teenagers involved in Citrey's Teenage Voices of the Summer asked for paid opportunities, advocacy and safe, affordable places to spend time. Their account gives us a concrete question: how does a young person move from expressing an ambition to meeting someone who can help make it possible?

That connection can involve employers, educators, cultural organisations and experienced adults. We need to understand where those relationships already work, who can access them and where they break down. The same question applies across generations: how can people's experience, skills and willingness to contribute find a useful place in the city?

Our working diagnosis
Derby has visible civic initiative, but the opportunities to contribute may be unevenly accessible. Our hypothesis is that security, affordable places and useful relationships help determine whether that initiative can grow and endure. Where access depends heavily on spare money, spare time or existing connections, valuable contributions may remain unseen.

Who can turn an idea or ambition into a real opportunity in Derby - and who is missing from that picture? Which everyday conditions would allow more people to contribute, build relationships and see a future here?

The next section examines the other root: how Derby's institutions respond to that potential, and what makes support dependable.



SOURCES
6 Community Action Derby • Community support and reported reach • accessed 22 September 2026
7 Derby City Council • Local Plan Priorities Survey • February-March 2024
1 Derby City Council • Key statistics • DWP low-income families 2024/25
8 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust • Derby communities revive green spaces • 22 February 2023

1 Civic Roots



Section B: Institutional Roots

Institutional Roots:

The capacity to deliver is uneven
A resident waiting for support and a visitor entering a new venue encounter different faces of the same city, both experiences are important. Derby's institutional strength must be judged by how dependably it responds to people, as well as by what it succeeds in building.

Derby can deliver
Market Hall, Vaillant Live and the Outstanding judgement on children's services demonstrate capability in different parts of Derby's institutional life.[5,11] Investment attributed to council interventions also rose from £3.81 million in 2023/24 to £30.71 million in 2024/25.[2]

These achievements warrant investigation: which relationships, resources and decisions made delivery possible, and what can other parts of the city learn from them?

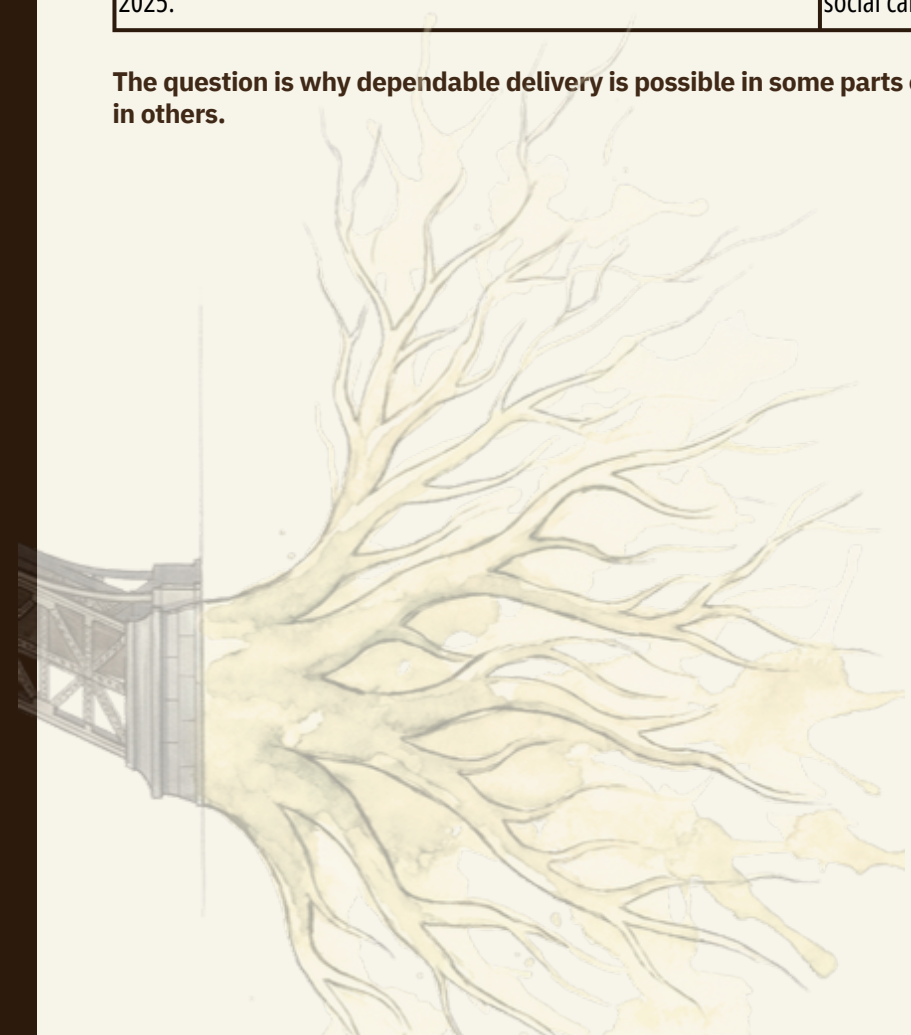
Delay is also an institutional outcome
Timely support presents a different picture. The proportion of new Education, Health and Care Plans issued within 20 weeks fell from 29.2% to 14.9% in 2024/25.[2] Separately, CQC's August 2024 assessment recorded a substantial backlog of adult social care reviews.[10]

These concern different services and periods. They show why institutional capability must be examined through particular responsibilities and people's experience of them.

The capacity to deliver & the capacity to respond

Evidence of delivery	Evidence of delayed support
Market Hall and Vaillant Live opened in 2025.[5]	14.9% of new Education, Health and Care Plans were issued within 20 weeks in 2024/25.[2]
Children's services received an Outstanding Ofsted judgement in May 2025.[11]	CQC's August 2024 assessment recorded 1,454 overdue adult social care reviews.[10]

The question is why dependable delivery is possible in some parts of Derby's institutional life and remains elusive in others.



SOURCES
11 Ofsted • Derby inspection summary
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
10 CQC • Derby assessment • Assessing needs • August 2024
15 ICO • Derby City Council enforcement notice • 26 August 2026

Institutional Roots:

Making support dependable

The experience of getting a response
Institutional capability becomes tangible when someone needs an answer: a family seeking support, a trader asking about premises, or a community group proposing a use for an empty building. They need to understand who can decide, what is required and when they will hear back. These are practical tests we propose applying across Derby.

The ICO's August 2026 enforcement notice concerning Derby City Council's Freedom of Information compliance provides a further documented example of difficulty providing a dependable response.[15]

The consequences of a poor response deserve investigation even when no single organisation controls the whole process. When responsibilities are divided, who helps the person navigate them? Who can resolve a problem that falls between services?

Responsibility extends beyond the council
Employers, schools, the university, health services, landlords and regional bodies shape access to work, learning, space and support. The institutional system includes the decisions they make individually and the arrangements through which they work together.

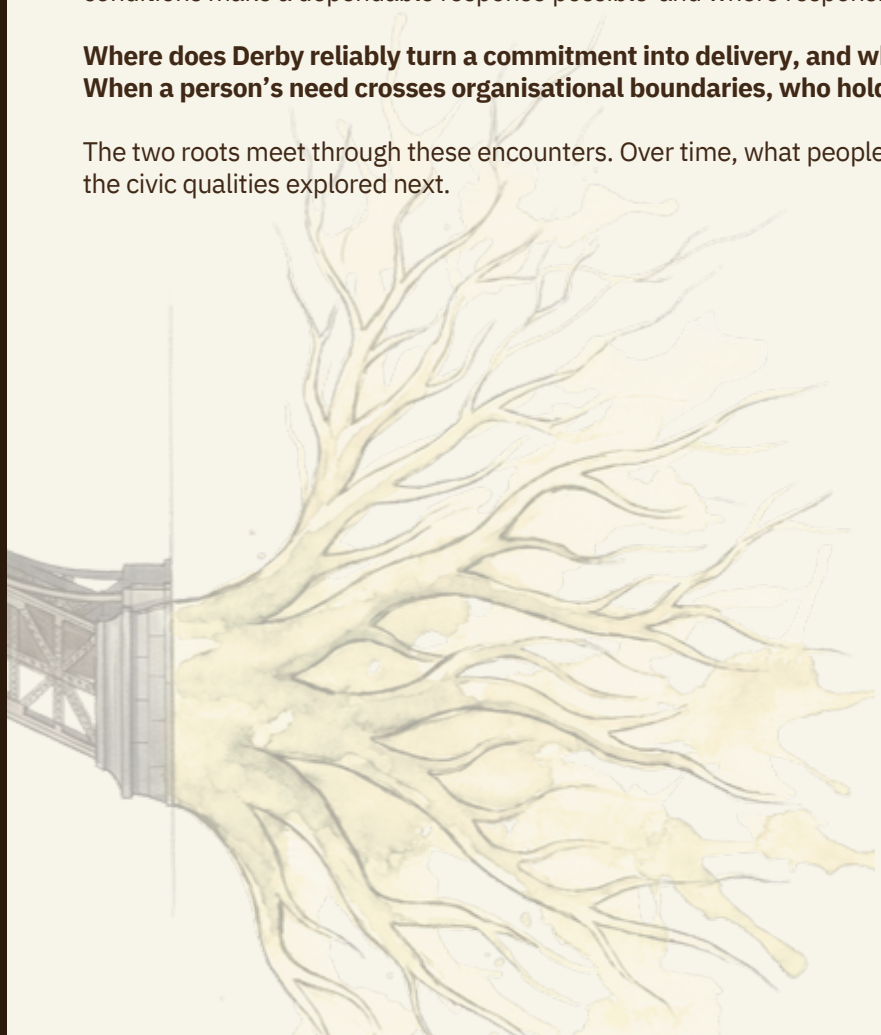
Derby Promise provides one starting point for examining these connections. The council's annual report describes a collaborative endeavour linking resources and opportunity.[5] The diagnostic question is what a young person can actually access through those relationships, and whether that access becomes dependable.

The evidence presented here is strongest on council responsibilities. A fuller diagnosis should examine comparable journeys involving employers, educators, property owners and other institutions.

Our working diagnosis
Derby's institutional delivery is uneven. Demand, staffing, funding, coordination and leadership practice are possible explanations, alongside national constraints. Following both successful and delayed journeys would help identify which conditions make a dependable response possible-and where responsibility for the whole journey is missing.

Where does Derby reliably turn a commitment into delivery, and what makes that possible?
When a person's need crosses organisational boundaries, who holds responsibility for the whole response?

The two roots meet through these encounters. Over time, what people experience in them may strengthen or weaken the civic qualities explored next.



SOURCES
11 Ofsted • Derby inspection summary
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
10 CQC • Derby assessment • Assessing needs • August 2024
15 ICO • Derby City Council enforcement notice • 26 August 2026

2 Civic Qualities



Civic Qualities:

Can separate strengths become a collective strength?
Derby can have capable organisations and committed residents yet still struggle to act together. The important question is what happens between them: whether commitments survive a meeting, concerns can be raised without closing doors, and learning in one place changes practice elsewhere.

The seven civic qualities provide a way to examine what people repeatedly experience in these relationships.

What happens between people and institutions?

Civic quality	The Derby Question
Trust	When people contribute, raise concerns or ask for help, do they expect a dependable response?
Civic culture	Can people challenge established thinking and still feel they belong?
Coherence	Do decisions about buildings, transport, programming and access support the same ambition?
Collective energy	Can enthusiasm around a debate or event become sustained work together?
Resilience	Can useful activity survive the loss of a grant, a venue or a key individual?
Adaptability	When experience contradicts a plan, how readily does the plan change?
Reputation	Do people's experiences give them reasons to recommend Derby, return or build a future here?

From participation to influence
More than 550 responses to the 2024 Local Plan Priorities Survey demonstrate willingness to contribute.[7] The next test is whether people can follow what happened to their contribution: what influenced the outcome, what could not be taken forward and why.

This is where trust and civic culture become tangible. People experience them through the handling of disagreement, the clarity of decisions and the fulfilment of commitments.

From gatherings to cooperation
Citrey's debates and Devon Daley's experience of cultural programming offer settings in which to examine what continues after an event: new relationships, shared work, repeat participation and commitments carried through.

Derby Promise and the Society Place design invitation provide further examples of collaboration.[5,8] The question is how far these relationships extend, who can enter them and whether they endure beyond a particular project.

We need to understand how far useful cooperation extends, how long it lasts, and whether people outside established networks can enter it.



SOURCES
7 Derby City Council • Local Plan Priorities Survey • February-March 2024
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25
8 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust • Derby communities revive green spaces • 22 February 2023

Civic Qualities:

Relationships that endure and learn

Resilience and adaptability
Resilience becomes visible when relationships and useful activity withstand disruption. Adaptability becomes visible when people change a decision or practice because experience shows that it is not working. For Derby, these questions belong in the life of an organisation, a street, a partnership and a neighbourhood.

Does a community activity survive when its organiser steps back? Can a partnership adjust when funding changes? When a consultation identifies an obstacle, does somebody have the authority and capacity to respond?

Reputation and lived experience
Derby's reputation is built through encounters: using a service, attending an event, trying to open a business, travelling home or finding somewhere to spend time. A successful destination and a struggling street can produce different accounts of the same city.

We should investigate those differences by place, time and group. What makes people return, recommend Derby or commit their future here? Which experiences discourage them?

Our working diagnosis
Derby has examples of cooperation, but its reach and durability need closer examination. Our hypothesis is that useful relationships may be concentrated in particular networks, leaving others with fewer routes to influence decisions or gain support.

Following a small number of collaborations over time would help test this: who joined, who was missing, what was promised, what changed and what survived after the initial activity ended. This would also show where Derby already knows how to build cooperation that lasts.

Where does cooperation outlast a project, a funding round or a particular individual?
What would make it easier for people outside familiar networks to influence decisions and contribute?

The next section examines the rules, assumptions and practical arrangements that can make those relationships productive or leave useful activity stuck.



SOURCES
7 Derby City Council • Local Plan Priorities Survey • February-March 2024
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25
8 Derbyshire Wildlife Trust • Derby communities revive green spaces • 22 February 2023

3 Civic Friction



Civic Friction:

Where worthwhile activity gets stuck
An empty unit is an outcome. Understanding why it remains unused means following the proposed activity, its costs, the property terms and the decisions required to open it.

In July 2025, 19% of surveyed city-centre Core Area ground-floor units were vacant, down from 26% in 2022.[3] The improvement gives us successful cases to learn from; the remaining vacancy gives us obstacles to investigate.

Different activities need different support
A community meeting place, an independent shop and a major commercial venue create different combinations of income and public benefit. Their funding and property arrangements need to reflect those differences.

Our hypothesis is that some worthwhile activities struggle because the support available does not fit their operating model. Testing this requires examining demand, budgets and operating capability alongside the terms being offered.

Different activities need different financial conditions

Activity	How it supports itself	The financing challenge	Support worth exploring
Community and youth spaces	Grants, contributions and some earned income	Affordable access may generate public benefits that user income cannot cover	Revenue grants, affordable premises and ongoing subsidy
Community ownership of property	Rental or activity income over time	Acquisition and repair costs arise before reliable income	Capital grants, patient investment and blended finance
Independent shops and trading social enterprises	Sales of goods and services	Start-up costs and repayments can put pressure on early trading	Flexible loans, patient capital and workable property terms
Commercial venues and anchors	Ticketing, sales, rental or other commercial income	Substantial investment depends on credible demand and returns	Commercial investment, with agreed local benefits where appropriate

Where does progress stop?
Follow a real proposal from finding premises to agreeing terms, securing finance, obtaining permissions and opening. Which cost, condition or decision determines whether it proceeds?

A requirement may protect a legitimate interest while, in combination with other requirements, making the activity unworkable. The diagnostic task is to establish where that happens and whether an alternative arrangement could preserve the safeguard while enabling progress.

A systemic diagnosis becomes useful when it can explain a recurring obstacle precisely enough for people to challenge it.



SOURCES
3 Derby City Council • Authority Monitoring Report 2025 • City Centre Health
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25

Civic Friction:

The assumptions behind the obstacle

What counts as success
Market Hall and Vaillant Live provide new settings for trade and cultural activity. Their delivery is an achievement. The next question is what supports their continuing use and their connections with the wider city.[5]

Our hypothesis is that physical completion can receive more attention than the continuing conditions for use: programming, affordability, operating capability and relationships with neighbouring businesses. Budgets, responsibilities and performance measures would help establish whether this occurs in Derby.

Risk and the length of the decision
Different organisations may assess the same proposal through different responsibilities. Friction arises when those assessments leave nobody able to assemble a workable overall response. For example, a temporary use may become impractical if the approval process outlasts the opportunity.

Behind the process sit assumptions worth examining: how quickly should an activity pay for itself? Which benefits count? Who is expected to carry the cost of experimentation? What evidence would justify changing an established approach?

Our working diagnosis
Some opportunities may be constrained by a mismatch between their public value and the finance, property terms or decision arrangements available. We should test this alongside demand and operating viability.

The strongest next evidence would pair a Derby proposal that stalled with a similar one that progressed. Comparing the journeys could reveal which constraints were unavoidable, which arrangements helped and what the wider system could learn.

Personal relationships may help a proposal through. The further question is whether that experience improves the route for people without the same contacts.

Which recurring rule or assumption prevents a worthwhile activity from becoming viable?
Where has Derby overcome that obstacle, and could the conditions that helped be made more widely available?

The Canopy section now examines the visible pattern of activity that these conditions help to shape.



SOURCES
3 Derby City Council • Authority Monitoring Report 2025 • City Centre Health
5 Derby City Council • Annual Report 2024/25

DISCUSSION PAPER · DETAILED DIAGNOSIS · DERBY



4 Civic Canopy

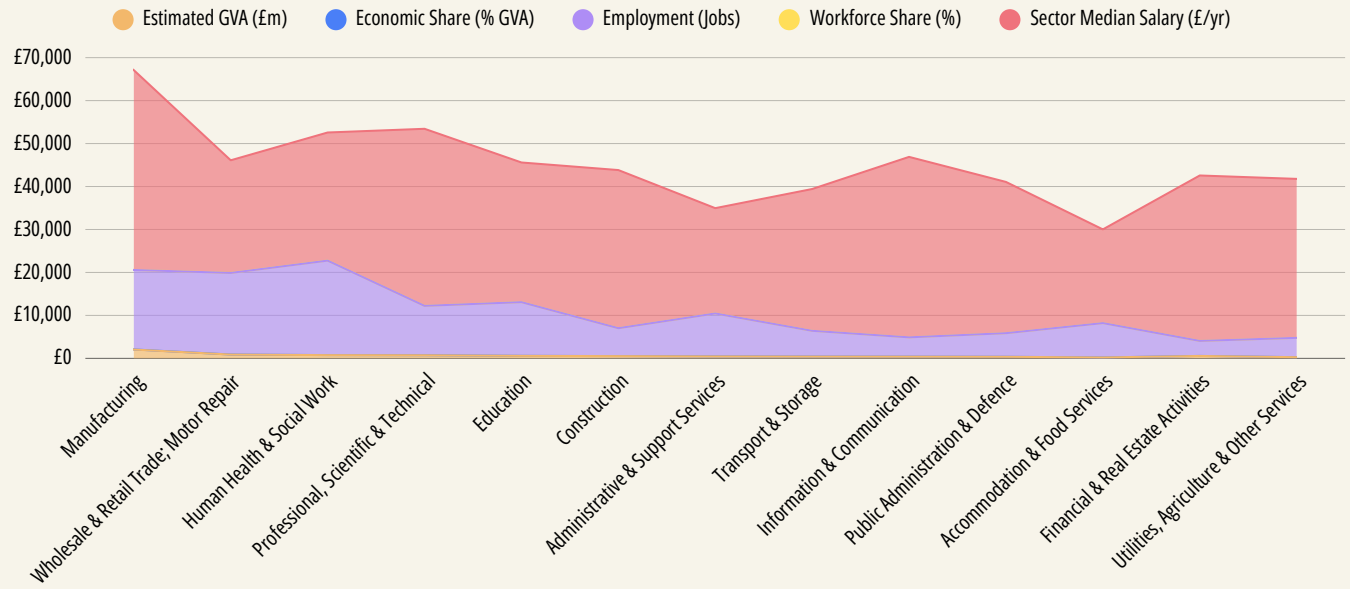
Civic Canopy:

A productive city with an uneven centre
Derby's economic strength is substantial. In 2024, the city had 138,000 employee jobs, including 22,000 in manufacturing. Manufacturing accounted for 15.9% of employee jobs, compared with 7.3% across Great Britain. That strength must be part of any serious account of Derby.[4]

The difficult question is how this activity connects to the city around it. A large workplace, shopping destination or event can be successful while nearby streets struggle. We need to understand the links between those places rather than assume that economic scale guarantees a flourishing centre.

Derby's economy: where value and employment sit

A sector comparison of economic output, employment and median annual pay.



An earnings gap that needs explanation
In 2025, median weekly pay for full-time employees working in Derby was £794.60, compared with £733.50 for those living in Derby.[4] These measures cover different populations, because people commute both into and out of the city.

The gap raises questions about occupations, skills and access to better-paid work. Understanding its significance requires evidence about commuting and household circumstances; it does not measure spending lost from Derby.

The street still matters
The city-centre vacancy rate had improved to 19% by July 2025, but substantial space remained unused. The survey covers ground-floor units in the Core Area and excludes Derbion.[3]

Citrey's founder's street-level account records seven Sadler Gate business exits between 1 June and 31 August 2026. That local experience warrants attention alongside the wider improvement. The dates and areas differ; both can be true without describing a uniform trend.

The council's performance report also records a fall in enterprise births per 10,000 residents aged 16 and over, from 54.2 to 46.5 in 2024/25. Alongside the evidence of business exits and vacant premises, this raises a question about local renewal: what conditions help new businesses start and establish themselves in Derby? This concerns new enterprise formation, not the survival of existing shops, but it adds another reason to examine the conditions for starting and sustaining activity.[2]

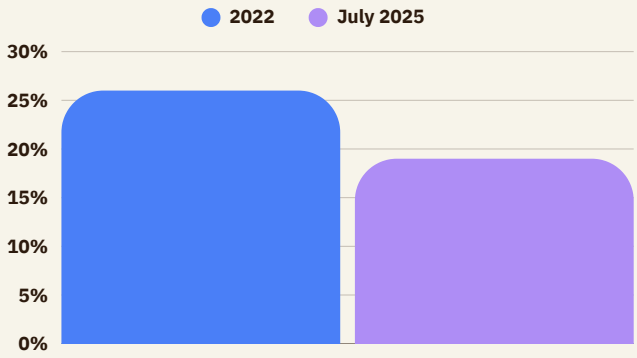
Derby needs to understand which parts of its economy generate opportunities for the wider city, and where those connections are weak.

SOURCES
4 ONS Nomis • Derby labour market profile • ASHE 2025 and BRES 2024
3 Derby City Council • Authority Monitoring Report 2025 • City Centre Health
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
13 Derbion • Corporate information

Civic Canopy:

Vacancy has fallen, unused capacity remains

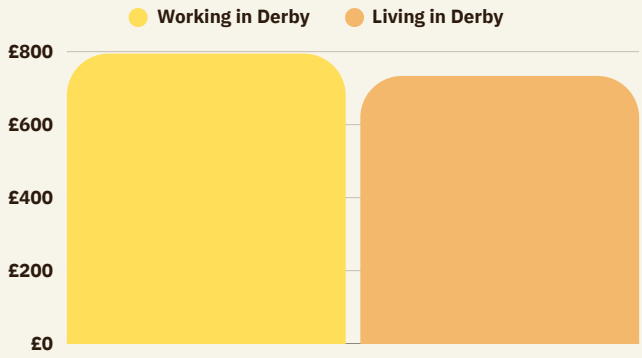
Vacant ground-floor units in Derby's surveyed city-centre Core Area. Derbion excluded.



Source: Derby Authority Monitoring Report 2025. Two survey observations, rather than a continuous annual trend.

Working in Derby and living in Derby

Median gross weekly earnings for full-time employees, 2025.



Source: Nomis. These measures cover different populations. The difference does not measure spending lost from Derby.

Connecting destinations and everyday life

Activity is present

Derby Live reported 375,066 attendances at events it produced, presented or supported in 2024/25.[2] Derby has an audience to build with.

Derbion's role as a major destination, including its parking relationship with Vaillant Live, provides another starting point.[13] The opportunity is to understand how a visit to one destination becomes a meal, a walk, another purchase or a reason to return.

Those connections depend on what visitors encounter between destinations as well as within them.

An event and an everyday economy

Experience of audiences at QUAD, Pride Park and venues on the periphery offers cases to explore. Differences in attendance or spending may reflect programming, price, access, familiarity, perceived safety or the people an event is designed to attract. The location alone cannot establish the cause.

We should examine what happens between large events as well as during them. Which activities create repeat visits? What gives someone a reason to stay after work? Can a young person or a family use the centre without making an expensive purchase? These questions connect the visible Canopy to the people and places beneath it.

Our working diagnosis

Derby combines strong employment, established audiences and major destinations with persistent vacancy and local business strain. Our hypothesis is that the location and timing of activity, access and the surrounding offer influence how widely its benefits spread.

Comparing visitor journeys, trading patterns and repeat visits would help identify where those connections work and what prevents them elsewhere. Successful destinations and independent businesses both have knowledge to contribute.

What connects a successful destination to a thriving surrounding street?
What would give more people a reason to use Derby's centre regularly, beyond a single purchase or event?

The final section asks the question that activity totals cannot answer on their own: what kind of life does the city's success make possible, and for whom?

SOURCES

4 ONS Nomis • Derby labour market profile • ASHE 2025 and BRES 2024
3 Derby City Council • Authority Monitoring Report 2025 • City Centre Health
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
13 Derbion • Corporate information



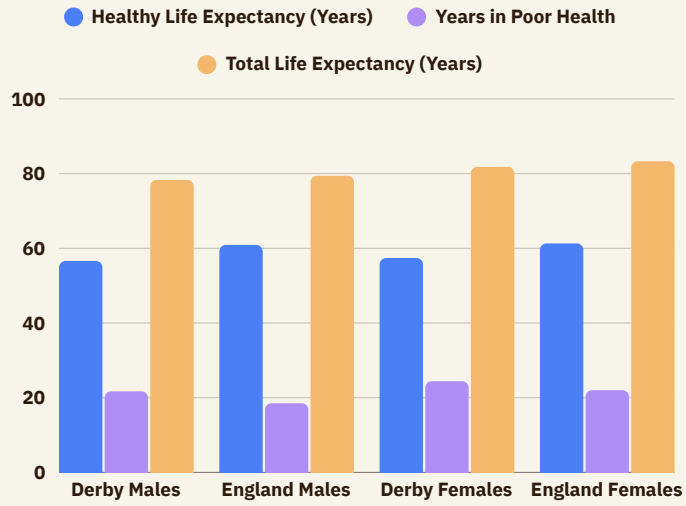
5 Civic Prosperity

Civic Prosperity:

Success has to reach everyday life
The strongest reason to investigate Derby's system is the gap between its productive capacity and the insecurity many people experience. Employment and investment matter because of the lives they can help sustain. Household hardship and restricted opportunity show where that promise remains incomplete.

The pressure is substantial
More than a quarter of Derby's children aged 0-15 lived in relative low-income families in 2024/25.[1] Healthy life expectancy at birth was estimated at 57.7 years for males and 57.4 for females in 2022-2024.[16,17]

These figures describe conditions in which people raise children, meet everyday costs and plan their futures. Their distribution across neighbourhoods and groups matters: city averages can conceal where pressure is greatest.



15,300 children	12% of households
Lived in relative low-income families in 2024/25	Were recorded as fuel poor in 2024
27.9% of Derby's children aged 0-15	A separate measure of household hardship

Entering working life
The proportion of young people in the school-year 12–13 age group recorded as not in education, employment or training, or with activity not known, rose from 4.7% to 7.4% between the annual report's 2023/24 and 2024/25 figures.[2] Understanding this increase requires separating those known to be outside education, employment and training from those whose activity was unknown.

Separately, the August 2026 claimant rate for people aged 18–24 was 7.3%, representing 1,855 people.[4] These measures raise questions about both access to worthwhile opportunities and the ability of services to maintain contact with young people who may need support.

Citrey's ten teenage participants give a human question to place beside these indicators. When young people ask for paid opportunities, advocacy and safe places, what route can they actually see into the city's future? Their account is local and specific; the wider evidence makes that enquiry urgent.

The city's capacity to create work needs to be examined alongside people's ability to enter it and build a secure life.

SOURCES
1 Derby City Council • Key statistics • DWP low-income families 2024/25
16 ONS • Healthy life expectancy male • 2022-2024 data
17 ONS • Healthy life expectancy female • 2022-2024 data
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
4 ONS Nomis • Derby labour market profile • ASHE 2025 and BRES 2024
12 Centre for Cities • Great British Brain Drain Derby • 2017

Civic Prosperity:

A future people can share

Opportunity across generations
A city's future depends partly on the opportunities people can see within it. For younger people, these include worthwhile work, affordable places to live, relationships and room to develop their interests. For older residents, participation includes opportunities to contribute alongside access to companionship, care and support.

The Centre for Cities graduate analysis published in 2017 concerns earlier cohorts. It helps explain why retention became a question, but cannot establish today's position. Any claim that Derby currently loses graduates because its cultural life is weak needs more recent destination evidence and the reasons people give for their choices.[12]

Staying, leaving and returning can each reflect positive choices. The diagnostic question is whether people have meaningful options-and whether Derby benefits from relationships that can continue across different stages of life.

Prosperity returns to the roots
Prosperity helps renew the conditions that produced it. Security and opportunity can give people more capacity to care for others, participate, develop skills and support local activity. Persistent hardship can restrict those possibilities.

This is the feedback relationship at the heart of the Living City framework: the outcomes people experience today help strengthen or weaken the community and institutional foundations on which tomorrow depends.

Our working diagnosis
Derby's productive capability coexists with serious hardship and uneven opportunity. Our proposition is that the connections between people, resources and decisions help explain who benefits, alongside national policy and wider economic conditions.

The preceding sections identify where to investigate: access to civic life, dependable institutional responses, cooperation that lasts, workable conditions for useful activity and connections between successful destinations and surrounding places.

Who benefits when Derby prospers, and whose circumstances remain largely unchanged?
Is Derby renewing the conditions that allow the next generation to live well here?



SOURCES
1 Derby City Council • Key statistics • DWP low-income families 2024/25
16 ONS • Healthy life expectancy male • 2022-2024 data
17 ONS • Healthy life expectancy female • 2022-2024 data
2 Derby City Council • Annual Performance Results 2024/25
4 ONS Nomis • Derby labour market profile • ASHE 2025 and BRES 2024
12 Centre for Cities • Great British Brain Drain Derby • 2017

Conclusion:

Three connections Derby needs to strengthen
Derby has substantial capability, civic initiative and places that attract people. It also has serious household hardship, delayed support and streets struggling to sustain activity. The annual performance report shows deterioration across several selected indicators, adding urgency to the question running through this paper: *how can the city's strengths improve everyday life while renewing the conditions for future success?*

This diagnosis identifies three connections that deserve priority:

1. **Economic strength and everyday opportunity:** Employment, investment and cultural activity matter because of the lives they help make possible. We need to understand who can access those opportunities, who faces persistent barriers and which conditions would allow more people to benefit.
2. **Community initiative and dependable institutional support:** People are already contributing ideas, time, experience and energy. The next question is what happens when that contribution meets the organisations controlling resources, space and decisions? Where does support become dependable, and where do worthwhile efforts lose momentum?
3. **Successful destinations and thriving surrounding places:** Derby has destinations that attract audiences and investment. Understanding how that activity connects with neighbouring streets, independent businesses and everyday civic life could reveal opportunities that headline totals overlook.

Investigate the connections. Build on the evidence.
These priorities provide a basis for choosing what to examine next. Real cases can show where a barrier occurs, who can influence it and what has already worked elsewhere in Derby. Feasibility work can then assess which responses are practical, affordable and capable of producing lasting benefit.

The long-term question is whether Derby is renewing the relationships, capabilities and opportunities on which its future depends.

Derby's next chapter should be judged by the life its success makes possible-and by how widely that life can be shared.



CITREY CIC · DERBY'S VOICE HQ

From diagnosis to ideas for action.

Help sharpen the diagnosis
Add missing evidence and experiences. Challenge the explanations. Share examples of work already making a difference, and identify the connections or barriers that most deserve attention.

Join the discussion on 30 September
On Wednesday 30 September 2026, we will come together at Citrey, 6a Sadler Gate, to discuss the diagnosis and share emerging ideas for action.

These will explore opportunities for civic participation, youth employment and enterprise, intergenerational support, and spaces that bring people together. We will also discuss the partnerships, feasibility work and funding needed to develop promising ideas.

The invitation is to help shape those ideas: what deserves priority, what needs testing, and who could contribute experience, relationships or resources to take it forward?

To share your views or reserve a place, contact **hello@citrey.co.uk**. Space is limited.

Citrey CIC

In partnership with:

Adaptiv. Mojobouji