

connecting herne bay

people places ▶ play



issues and opportunities

consultation draft
January 2006



contents

introduction	2
setting the scene	2
a vision for the future	3
history	4
planning policy	5
purpose	5
regeneration area	6
issues and opportunities	7
image	7
central area	7
the park	8
the seafront	8
connections	8
vehicle movement	10
pedestrian movement	11
car parks	12
public spaces and streetscene	12
recreation needs	13
signage	14
housing	14
community	14
threats	15
the process	16

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issues and opportunities

introduction

This document aims to provide a general overview or framework for a discussion on pushing forward Herne Bay town centre regeneration. It examines the issues facing the area and discusses opportunities for regeneration and future development. This document and the outcomes of a public consultation process will provide the basis of an Urban Design Framework. This Framework should act to guide development and regeneration in a coherent manner that enhances the town's identity.

With the increase in popularity of the area and the changing attitude towards Herne Bay as a place to live and visit, comes development pressure and ultimately change. Canterbury City Council wants to work with local people to ensure that any change is guided by, and benefits, the town and population as a whole. Adopting an urban design approach in consultation with the residents of Herne Bay means that ultimately an agreed plan or framework can be produced to guide development.

Urban Design is about shaping the built environment to create attractive, memorable places, for people to enjoy and use. An urban design framework is a guide as to how buildings, circulation routes and spaces are best organised to produce exciting, comfortable and vibrant places.



setting the scene

Herne Bay is a small seaside town on the north coast of Kent. A visit to the seafront gives a taste of yesteryear, a step back in time to an era of family holidays at the seaside where good clean fun, fresh sea air and ice creams were the order of the day. Unfortunately the town centre has not moved on from that time.

Herne Bay does, however, have great potential and all the ingredients to evolve. It has a lively seafront which still provides a pleasant day out for families, a beautiful park with established trees and gardens and the potential for a range of recreational activities, a centrally located swimming pool and supermarket, a diverse and interesting range of shops, good public transport links and large quantities of centrally located car parking. Herne Bay has a great many assets and the potential to develop a vibrant town centre linking Memorial Park, town centre and seaside to create a place for families to visit, shop and play.

Sadly, although the seafront area has been beautifully renewed and buildings such as the Bandstand faithfully restored, the town centre lags behind. With shabby unkempt and sometimes out-of-keeping buildings, a grid of busy roads and insufficient pedestrian friendly areas. Along with little investment in urban landscaping, the town centre gives an impression of a lack of civic pride and what appears at first glance to be a dying town. The fact is that Herne Bay has developed a poor regional image and is often maligned as being dull and characterless. This image is unfortunate and is not particularly accurate.

Beyond a poor image there is a need for economic opportunities for residents of the town. Although growing in popularity as a place to live,

the town centre needs to become more attractive for new developments and businesses, and more viable for existing businesses. The application of urban design principles is one step in a process to achieve growth, regeneration, create an attractive town centre and improve highways, pedestrian routes and public spaces.

The Community Visioning for Northgate, Heron and Harbour Wards survey (April 2005), highlighted a number of issues relevant to the town centre's regeneration that can be incorporated and addressed through the application of an Urban Design Framework. These included; providing healthy, safe, prosperous communities that are pleasant places to live with opportunities for all.

It is also noted that there is a demand for housing in the district, and that many residential properties in and adjacent to the town centre are rundown and empty, creating an opportunity for a housing renewal area.



a vision for the future

Herne Bay has a great many assets and the potential to develop a vibrant centre linking the park, town centre and seaside to create a place for families to visit, shop and play.



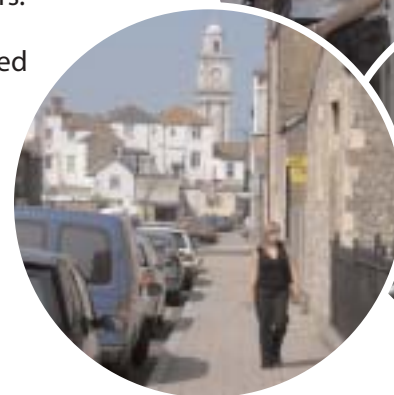
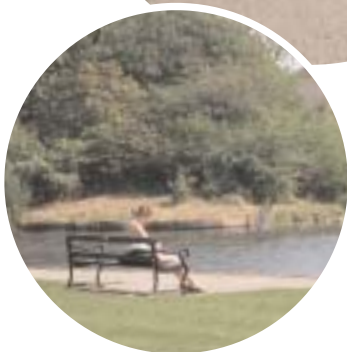
- A renewed town in which the quality and success of the seafront is extended into the town centre and Memorial Park.

- Well signposted, safe, tree lined walking routes connecting the seafront, shops and Memorial Park.

- Bustling streets with a wide range of shops and space for cafes and shops to spill out into.

- A series of town squares surrounded by shops with trees, outdoor spaces, street vendors and entertainers.

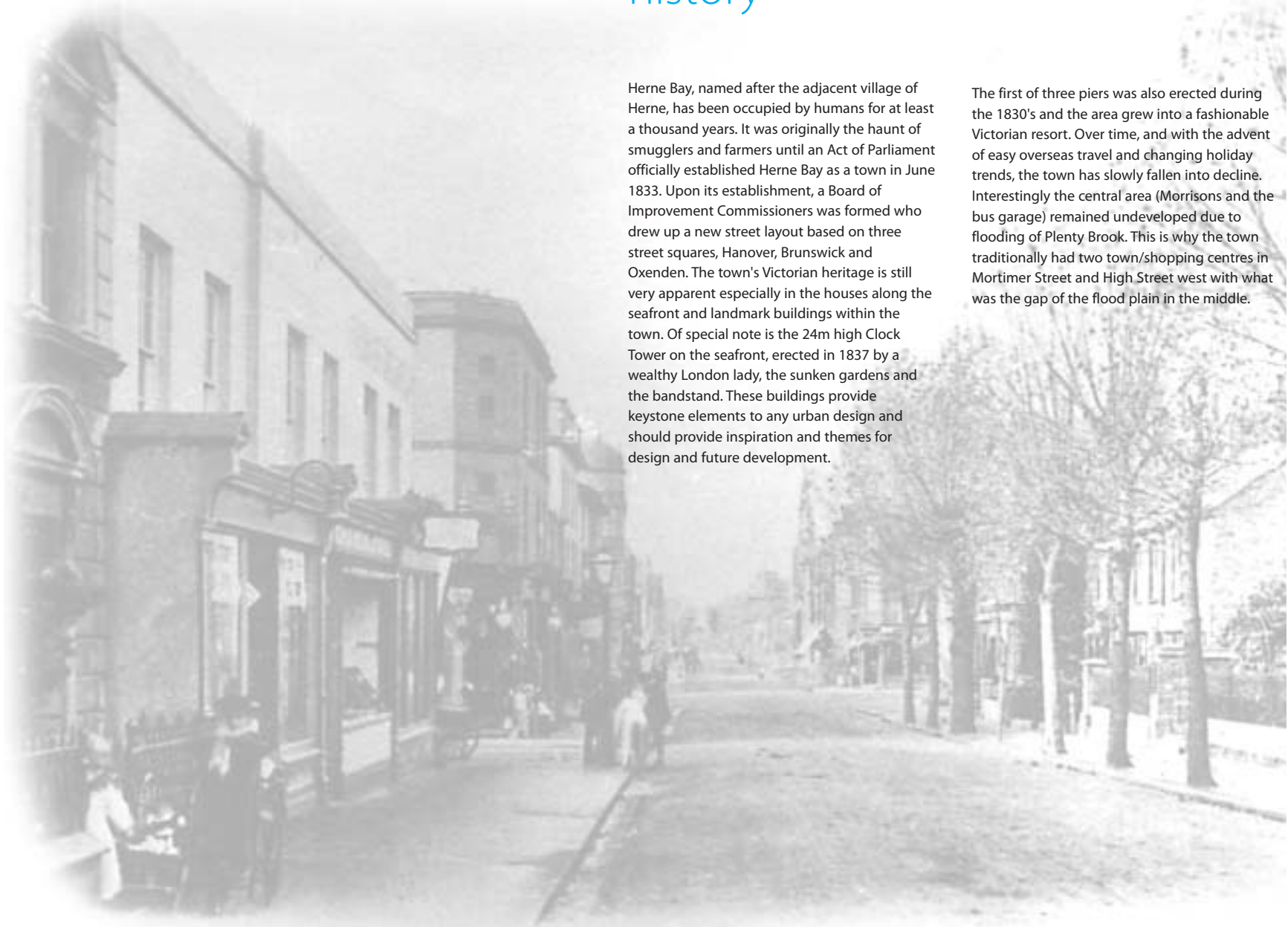
- A wealth of easily accessible, centrally located community and recreational facilities.



history

Herne Bay, named after the adjacent village of Herne, has been occupied by humans for at least a thousand years. It was originally the haunt of smugglers and farmers until an Act of Parliament officially established Herne Bay as a town in June 1833. Upon its establishment, a Board of Improvement Commissioners was formed who drew up a new street layout based on three street squares, Hanover, Brunswick and Oxenden. The town's Victorian heritage is still very apparent especially in the houses along the seafront and landmark buildings within the town. Of special note is the 24m high Clock Tower on the seafront, erected in 1837 by a wealthy London lady, the sunken gardens and the bandstand. These buildings provide keystone elements to any urban design and should provide inspiration and themes for design and future development.

The first of three piers was also erected during the 1830's and the area grew into a fashionable Victorian resort. Over time, and with the advent of easy overseas travel and changing holiday trends, the town has slowly fallen into decline. Interestingly the central area (Morrison's and the bus garage) remained undeveloped due to flooding of Plenty Brook. This is why the town traditionally had two town/shopping centres in Mortimer Street and High Street west with what was the gap of the flood plain in the middle.



planning policy

The new Local Plan, which is expected to be adopted in June 2006, sets out the spatial strategy for the Canterbury District, including Herne Bay. It includes policies on housing, the economy, town centres, the natural and built environment, community infrastructure and many others. A number of designations are particularly relevant to Herne Bay, including those relating to Conservation Areas, open space and flood risk. Proposed allocations related to housing, mixed uses, leisure and open space are also in the Local Plan.

The Kent and Medway Structure Plan is also an important planning document and is expected to be adopted early in 2006. It provides strategic planning policies for the whole county, and includes policies on retail and tourism that are particularly relevant to Herne Bay town centre.



Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) sets out key principles for development in the South East Region. Specifically it identifies a Priority Area for Economic Regeneration (PAER) at Herne Bay.

The planning system has changed and the Local Plan will be replaced by a Local Development Framework (LDF). The LDF consists of a collection of Local Development Documents, including Area Action Plans, which will address a wide range of land use and planning issues. Area Action Plans have the following key features, they:

- provide guidance on layout, design and the distribution of uses
- make site specific allocations
- have a strong focus on implementation
- set the timetable for the implementation of proposals

The Herne Bay Urban Design Framework will be an Area Action Plan under the new planning system. It will provide the context for the preparation of detailed plans to be prepared before and during the development process and assist in the delivery of planned development that will contribute to Herne Bay's regeneration. It will be a guide to how buildings, circulation routes and spaces should be best organised to produce exciting comfortable and vibrant places.

purpose

Town centre design should be functional and should provide spaces and places that:

- lift the human spirit,
- people have a positive emotional response to,
- people wish to return to; and
- in which people wish to linger

Herne Bay town centre as it stands can be divided into three distinct areas with few obvious links between them. It has a well-utilised seafront area, a disjointed retail area and an under utilised Memorial Park.

The major aim of this process is to advance the regeneration and revitalisation of Herne Bay town centre and provide an attractive functioning urban environment. Associated with this will be:

- restoration of community pride and ownership in the town and increasing community benefits
- increased economic activity and employment opportunities
- creation of an identifiable town centre and enhancement of town centre streetscapes
- provision of a pedestrian friendly environment to encourage people to move between the seafront, town centre and Memorial Park



- improved vehicle movement throughout the town to reduce vehicular/pedestrian conflict
- provision of accessible centrally located community and recreational facilities
- realisation of the full value and potential of Council owned assets
- making the town an attractive place for visitors and locals alike all year round
- provision of a series of attractive public spaces available for a variety of uses
- guidance and provision of opportunities for redevelopment of town centre sites
- improvement of Herne Bay's image and re-establishment of the town as a key destination all year round
- growing the town's tourism potential

regeneration area

Herne Bay is a town without a natural centre; it has dispersed functions in its two main areas, the commercial core and the seafront. The vibrancy of the town centre economy has also declined over many years. The Community Visioning survey highlighted the need for a better town centre, which would act as a focal point for community gatherings and could cater for a variety of activities. In response to the issues surrounding Herne Bay's development needs the Council has identified a regeneration area as the first step in revitalising the town.

The Regeneration Area has been divided into two distinct areas. The area outlined in blue is the town centre Regeneration Area and is outlined as the site for new town centre uses, including shopping, housing, health and fitness, car parking and a street market. It encompasses the area between the current Stagecoach site across to the Herons Centre and between the high street and Kings Road.

The larger Improvement Area outlined in green encompasses all of the centre core of Herne Bay. This area may also include other urban renewal projects not directly associated with the central core such as a housing renewal schemes, the pier and improvements to Memorial Park.

The identification of the Regeneration Area and the issues highlighted through its formation acted as a starting point for this document. The resulting Urban Design Framework will include a wider range of issues all of which will impact upon the successful regeneration of the town centre.



issues and opportunities

The central area of Herne Bay is not particularly attractive and is not functioning effectively as a town centre. There are a number of issues including the town's poor image, rundown buildings, lack of pedestrian routes, unattractive public spaces and uninspiring street scenes. It is anticipated that the regeneration and urban renewal process will facilitate the resolution of many of the issues identified.

However, the very nature of the Herne Bay Town makes it a sustainable location for development. Herne Bay has centrally located facilities and attractions such as the seafront area, supermarket, Memorial Park, swimming pool, centrally located car parking, and, public spaces and streets that lend themselves to being redeveloped and organised into pleasant pedestrian routes, whilst providing for functional vehicle movements. The town has a strong community spirit and a will to progress helping to drive regeneration and urban renewal.

image

issues

- A poor town image locally, regionally and nationally.
- No sense of identity.
- Town area does not provide a sense of place.

opportunities

- Create a distinctive marketable identity (family destination).
- Provide a sense of place for local people.
- Promote a café/beach culture and water sports.
- Make Herne Bay an all year round destination.
- Reflect the rich architectural heritage of the town centre and seafront in new developments.

central area

Lethargy has led to the town's continued decline and it is now being left behind other areas actively involved in regeneration and urban renewal. This is highlighted by the lack of a coherent, farsighted vision to guide development and regeneration.

issues

- The lack of a coherent visually attractive central shopping area.
- The need for an economically viable and vital retail shopping area.
- No obvious commercial hub or centre to the town.
- Parts of the town centre are not visually appealing.
- There are a large number of poorly maintained buildings.
- Lack of local support for shops.
- Location of heavy trade and industrial style uses in town centre.
- Uninspiring dated buildings and developments.
- Lack of holiday accommodation.



opportunities

- Improve visual appearance of town centre through urban design and improvement of streetscapes.
- Increase the flow of foot traffic by improving linkages.
- Retain the compactness of the town and avoid urban sprawl.
- Retain the supermarket in central location as it has the added benefit of drawing shoppers into the town centre.
- Develop further the variety of speciality shops, galleries, holiday accommodation and diverse food experiences.
- Tie regeneration in with the existing redevelopment projects occurring in William and Mortimer Streets and along the seafront.
- Redevelop rundown central areas for retail, business and housing uses.
- Relocate industrial type uses to more appropriate sites and allow redevelopment of these areas.
- Promote Herne Bay to developers.



the park

issues

- An under-utilised Memorial Park.
- A poor playground.
- Lack of facilities in park.
- Links between town, Memorial Park and railway station are not obvious.

opportunities

- Develop the centrally located park as a green heart to the town.
- Provide more public facilities.
- Retain, maintain and highlight pedestrian links through the park.
- Relocate and improve children's playground.



the seafront

issues

- The seafront attracts a large number of people who do not move through to the town or Memorial Park.
- The assets and attractions of the beachfront and bay area are not fully utilised.
- Visual lines to the waterfront from the town are either cut off or, in places, not obvious.
- Maintenance problems with paving.
- Problems with graffiti and damage.
- Removal of sports pavilion from the pier.

opportunities

- The seafront provides a focus for the town and draws visitors, which should be exploited.
- Facilitate use of and further develop, the beach, water sports and tourist attractions.
- Full utilisation of the seaside assets.
- Improve linkages and sight lines with urban design.
- Improve locals sense of ownership and pride in their town.
- If the sports pavilion were to be removed it would create an opportunity for the redevelopment of the pier.



connections

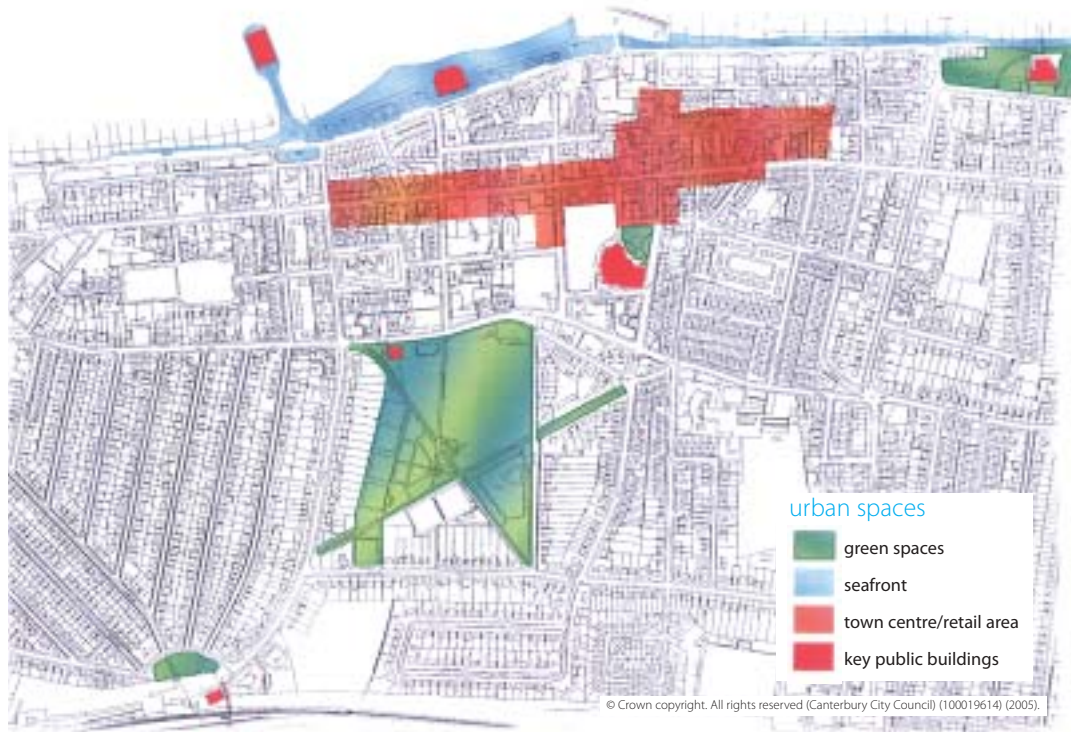
In urban design terms, the principle problem with the town is that the centre is divided. There are no clear links between the seafront, town centre and park. The business area is also divided. The High Street, supermarket, Mortimer and William Streets, and the old town have no clear visual or pedestrian links.

issues

- No clear links between the seafront, shopping areas and Memorial Park.
- Disjointed retail areas.
- No obvious heart to the town.
- Traffic flows, in combination with the lack of pedestrian areas and landscaped spaces, give the main area of the town a cluttered and congested feel.

opportunities

- Upgrade and improve existing links between the shopping area, Memorial Park and seafront.
- Direct the flow of traffic and people from seafront to park via the town and vice versa.
- Create linked urban spaces.
- Reorganise on road parking to reduce congestion and clutter.
- The town is compact with most facilities within walking distance of each other.
- Encourage people to move from the seafront through the town to Memorial Park.



vehicle movement

- main routes
- secondary routes
- conflict points (with pedestrian movement)
- parking



vehicle movement

issues

- The streets are busy, disjointed and congested with relatively fast moving traffic and on street car parking.
- Traffic problems are compounded by the unclear, illogical, badly signposted mix of one and two way streets.
- Pedestrian ability to cross many of the highways easily and safely is compromised.

opportunities

- Reorganise the highway network in the town centre.
- Reorganise the streets from the Memorial Park to the waterfront, to provide a more pedestrian friendly environment.
- Highlight main routes.
- Consider closing some streets to vehicles and/or making them shared spaces.



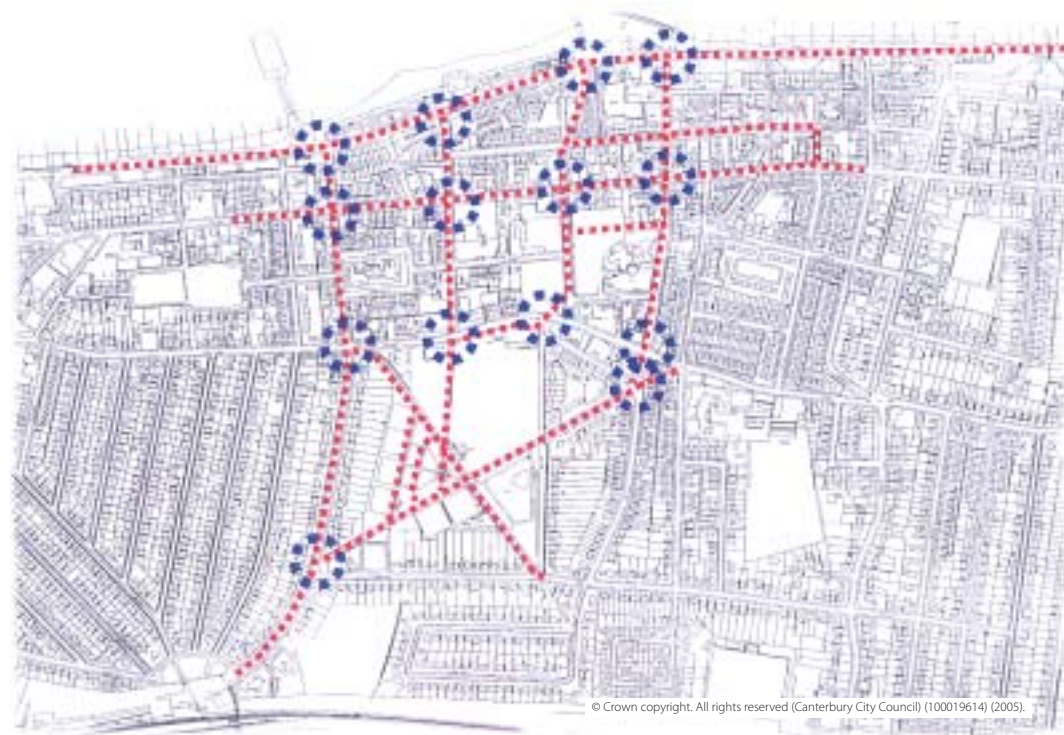
pedestrian movement

issues

- There is a lack of obvious and pleasant pedestrian routes through town and between attractions and facilities.
- A lot of the town is not pedestrian or cycle friendly.
- There is a less than pleasant hidden walkway from Beach Street to the seafront.
- It is hard to cross many of the roads including the High Street and the road between the car park and Memorial Park.

opportunities

- Upgrade and renew existing links to the shopping area, Memorial Park and seafront (including the walkway to the seafront), creating a pedestrian-friendly network in association with the centrally located car parking.
- Utilise the good existing public transport links with train and bus services.
- Encourage people to park their cars and walk.
- Improve pedestrian crossing points over main roads.
- Create a network of streets with dedicated pedestrian areas and pedestrian priority areas.
- Two pedestrian priority areas have already been successfully created at the top of William Street and along Mortimer Street.
- Use planting, surface dressings and street furniture to highlight pedestrian routes and link areas and facilities.



pedestrian movement
- - - main pedestrian routes
●●● conflict points
(with vehicle movement)

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car parks

issues

- It is hard to find where car parking is and how to get into it (signage).
- Present car parks are inefficient and visually uninteresting, being grey asphalt with no softening landscaping and views of the back ends of houses and shops.
- The Saturday market takes place on a car park causing the loss of car parking on one of the town's busiest days.
- The Market Car park was a gas works so contains contaminated land.

opportunities

- Make full use of the plentiful, centrally located car parking adjacent to the seafront and town centre.
- Improve the appearance and efficiency of car parking by reorganising the lay out and undertaking landscaping and tree planting.
- Retain as much car parking as possible.
- Encourage park and walk from present centrally located car parks.
- Provide an alternative venue for the market that the car park. Preferably locate it in a pedestrian priority street.
- Improve signage.

public spaces and streetscene

issues

- Public spaces within the town are ordinary mono-use spaces that do not encourage use and have little visual amenity.
- There are no visual links between points of interest.
- Visually disjointed streetscene.

opportunities

- Use keystone and significant buildings to highlight spaces.
- Build upon the variety and diversity of buildings, including a number of quality key landmark buildings, to create a distinctive image for the town.
- Undertake and implement a scheme for streetscene and public space improvement including; redesign of places, creation of more public spaces and squares, tree planting, surface dressing, and street furniture.





recreation needs

issues

- At Herne Bay there is a link missing in the coastal cycle/walking route.
- Lack of central recreation and leisure opportunities.
- Lack of cycle lanes and walkways.
- The identified need to relocate Herne Bay Sports Centre from the pier.

opportunities

- There are a number of unused or under utilised sites and buildings at key points throughout the town, that could make an active contribution to the streetscene and provide venues for leisure activities.
- Ensure that community facilities in the town are retained or developed centrally within close walking distance of each other and car parking.
- Improve and redesign green spaces and public amenity/use spaces within the town to create useable visually pleasant mixed use spaces.
- The seafront parade and the Memorial Park are attractive versatile public spaces that could be enhanced to provide visitor attractions.
- Create a pedestrian and cycle route from Reculver to Whitstable and beyond.
- Provide a pleasant accessible stopping/watering hole in Herne Bay.



signage

issues

- Signage is often absent, illogical or, in other places, excessive.

opportunities

- Provide user friendly signage that highlights car parks, pedestrians routes and attractions and promotes a positive image for the town.

housing

issues

- The prevalence of empty, unattractive and run down housing in the central area and the need for more housing in the district.
- A shortage of affordable housing.

opportunities

- Investigate housing renewal in central Herne Bay to support the improvement of owner-occupied and private rental homes.
- Redevelop some areas for attractive town centre housing, which is high value and may provide funds for other improvements.



community

issues

- Need for community based facilities and buildings.
- Disassociated youth and the need for more youth activities.
- Herne Bay has a tendency to be a dormitory town.
- Inclusion of the local community in the process.
- Problems with anti-social behaviour.

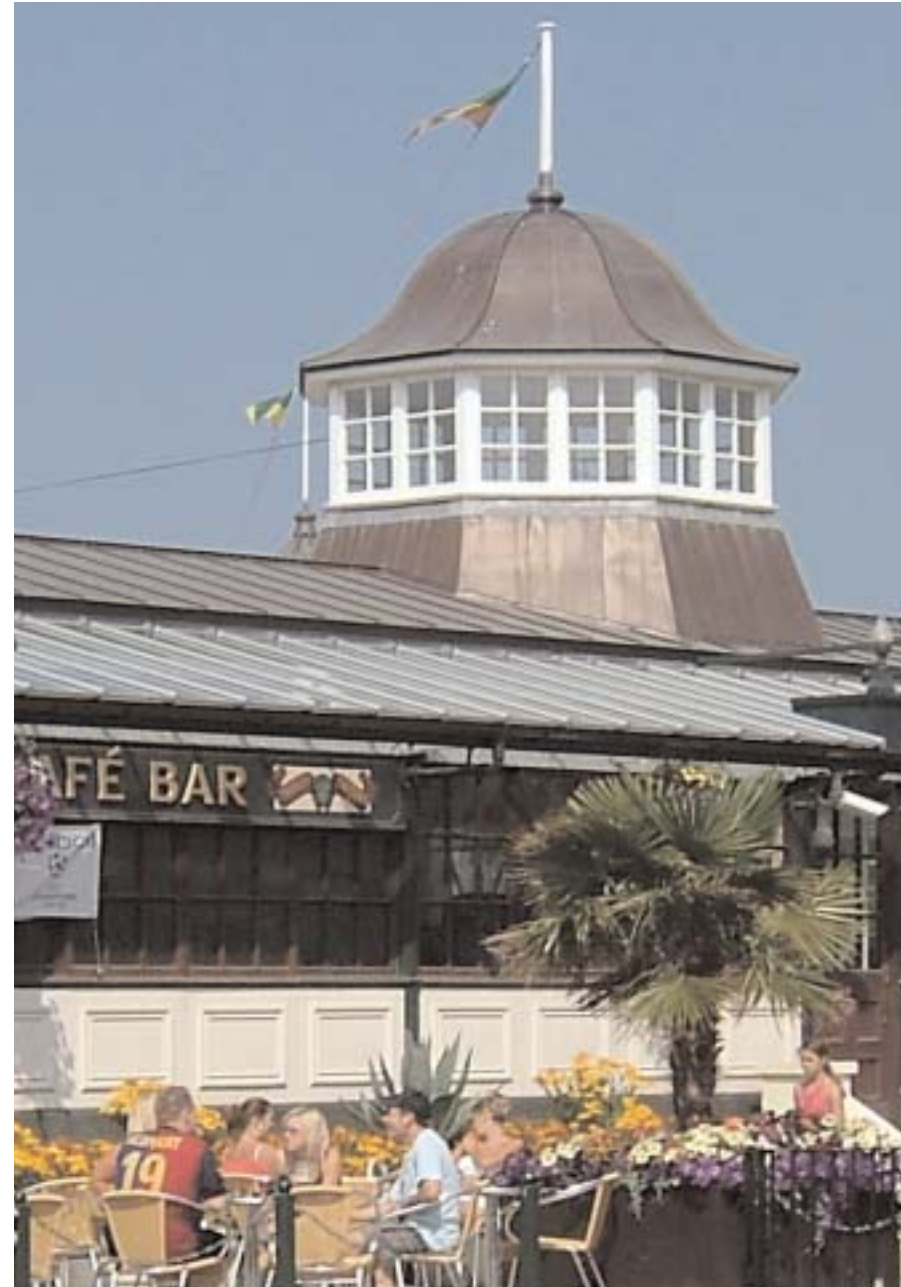
opportunities

- Encourage and promote social interaction through provision of public facilities, increased foot traffic, provision of attractive open and public spaces.
- Community consultation and 'ownership' of the regeneration process.
- Chase funding for public schemes and buildings.
- Promote pride and 'ownership' of the town centre.
- Investigate potential for lighting and security schemes for public spaces

threats

There are a number of factors at play in Herne Bay which may limit the success of any regeneration project.

- Inability to distinguish and determine, and agree on an identity for the town.
 - Poor maintenance of current and new developments due to a lack of funds.
 - Lack of coherent, farsighted vision for regeneration of the area to guide development and regeneration.
 - Taking a quick fix approach or the cheap option.
 - Disjointed redevelopment of individual areas without an overall scheme, or overriding aim in mind.
 - Over development.
 - Lethargy leading to the town's continued demise so it gets left behind other areas.
 - Lack of community ownership of the project through a perceived lack of input or feeling left out of the decision making process.
 - Lack of funds to allow the project to proceed to completion.
 - A weak market discouraging private sector investment.
 - Inability to provide a project that addresses the needs of the diverse sectors in the local population.
-





the process

The Urban Design Team at Canterbury City Council has produced a consultation document as a lead-in to an Urban Design Framework for the regeneration of Herne Bay town centre.

The Framework is at an initial draft stage, but establishes key issues and objectives the team has identified as central to creating a positive and 'legible' sense of place for Herne Bay.

The overall aim of the consultation would be the endorsement of the issues and opportunities identified within an Urban Design Framework. As the Urban Design Framework is at an early stage, the Council is keen to encourage and include public and stakeholder views to ensure that all involved have a sense of ownership of the process.

The aims and anticipated outcomes of the process are community input and involvement on the issues and opportunities.

the key questions to be answered are:

- **Is this process heading in the right direction?**
- **What are the primary issues facing Herne Bay town centre, and are there other issues that need examining?**
- **Is the assessment of the opportunities correct?**
- **Do you consider that there are any additional opportunities not already covered?**
- **Is an Urban Design Framework the right way to approach the problems?**
- **Do you endorse the regeneration process and draft Urban Design Framework?**
- **What are your thoughts and ideas?**
- **What would you consider to be the way forward from here?**
- **How would you like to see Herne Bay town centre developed?**

what happens next?

- **Undertake stakeholder consultation on the Issues and Opportunities.**
- **Once issues and objectives have been established and agreed, identify solutions and ways forward towards the completion of a draft Urban Design Framework.**
- **Re-consult interested parties and groups, stakeholders, community groups and hold a general public meeting.**
- **Summarise and assess information gathered from public consultation process in conjunction with Council Officers.**
- **Produce an Urban Design Framework based on consultation and confirm with all involved.**
- **Finalise the Urban Design Framework.**

for more information visit: www.canterbury.gov.uk/planningpolicy
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