

Helston Place Shaping Strategy and Background

1. Introduction

This document establishes the principles that form the foundation for the Helston Place Shaping Plan, an initiative which aims to restore Helston as a thriving town centre. The Plan has been produced by Helston CIC in collaboration with Helston Town Council, residents, businesses and community groups.

Our ambition is to enable Helston to develop into a dynamic and sustainable town fit for the future.

Following informal discussions which began in 2017 the Helston Community Interest Company (HCIC) was formed in 2018 by local volunteers concerned with the very visible decline of Helston town centre. Working with Helston Town Council (HTC) members, local Cornwall Councillors and our local Cornwall Council Community Link Officer a Place Shaping Sub-Group was established and since early 2019 the group has developed a well-defined Place Shaping Plan for Helston.

Details of the structure and processes of the Place Shaping Board development are included in Appendices 2, 3 and 4.

In understanding our town, defining the issues and developing proposed solutions we have engaged widely with the community and a broad range of stakeholders. We have also examined and incorporated the many plans, studies and reports commissioned over recent years. In this way we have been able to distill the many ideas, suggestions and proposals into a detailed Place Shaping Plan.

Assessment methods included:

- Consultations - open meetings, presentations, surveys, individual comment and social media feedback
- Discussions with a wide range of organisations - Cornwall Councillors, Helston Town Councillors, Cornwall Council Officers, Community Groups, Businesses, our Constituency MP, Helston Climate Action Group and various specialists
- Desk research to quantify the issues raised
- Examination existing plans, strategies and reports - including local, county, regional and national policies

The outcomes from this research are detailed in section 4 of this document.

A full listing of the consultations undertaken to date is contained in Appendix 1 of this document.

2. Strategic Aims and Objectives

Based upon our ambition and informed by a deep knowledge of Helston's current situation we aim to:-

- Use our understanding of Helston to identify achievable projects and activities which will positively impact the town and drive towards our vision
- Incorporate where possible the ideas and plans of the people, community organisations and representatives of our town
- Understand, use and where feasible, align with previously developed plans and strategies for Helston
- Link with other Helston organisations to ensure strong coordination of the Place Shaping Plan with other important activities underway in the town, maximising our effectiveness
- Develop projects to a state of being 'shovel ready' – ie. to a level of detail ready for submission of bids for capital funding and subsequent implementation
- Begin to seek funding for the identified projects and manage each project through to implementation and monitoring

3. Place Shaping Projects

Having assessed all the information available to us and considered the fit with our Aims and Objectives, we have identified seven projects which form the first phase of work within the Place Shaping Plan. It is envisaged that, as we implement projects we will create capacity and momentum to add further projects to our Plan.

We have selected our first phase of projects on the basis of:

- Strength of alignment with our Vision, Aims and Objectives
- Impact on the issues identified during our research
- Alignment with key town strategies (Helston Town Plan, Helston Climate Action Plan etc.)
- Knowledge that a project is achievable and deliverable
- Commitment and passion from the Place Shaping Board members to deliver the project
- Sufficient range and variety of projects to ensure that we have a strong likelihood of alignment with future capital funding sources whose criteria are yet to be defined
- Where applicable, the strength and availability of existing preparatory work

This is not an exact science. However, through debate and consultation, we have identified the following projects to form the first phase of our Plan:

- **Helston Cultural Quarter** – an historic public realm project that will deliver improvements within and around Market Place, The Museum of Cornish Life, the Drill Hall Yard and access through to the CAST building and Wendron Street, creating a town square and a strong outdoor link between several of the key cultural assets of Helston.
- **Reimagining Helston's High Streets** – creating an attractive town centre that will encourage more people to visit Helston and spend more time in the town. Addressing the issues of traffic dominance and difficult pedestrian access as well as restoring some of Helston's most important heritage features such as pavements and kennels.
- **Reconnecting Helston** – addressing the issues of Helston's isolation and reliance on motor vehicles for commuting and accessing the town centre. Evolving the potential for reconnecting a rail link to Helston as well as developing green links and better public transport within the town.

- **Town Centre Homes and Workspace** – finding ways to utilise of empty premises to provide more residential and live/work accommodation within the town centre, bringing people to live and work in the town.
- **The Penrose Trail** – completing a ‘green’ link between Helston and Porthleven with a National Trust entrance to Penrose at the foot of the town providing an improved outdoor amenity as well as attracting visitors to Helston.
- **Town Centre Community Hub** – creating a community building within the town that will address the lack of facilities for Helston’s young people and families, drawing them into the town centre and thereby improving the vitality of the town.
- **Promotion of Helston** – already funded by Helston Town Council this well-developed marketing strategy for Helston has now been fully implemented

The following Section 4 details the findings from our research and Section 5 identifies how the selected projects address the key issues identified.

4. Understanding Our Town

Helston is the tenth largest town in Cornwall with a growing population of around 12,000 and is one of the Duchy’s oldest settlements. The town is also the gateway to the Lizard peninsula, serving approximately 118 square miles across a notable area of outstanding natural beauty. There are 16 villages within the Lizard with an estimated population today of around 15,000. A further catchment area for Helston covering nearby villages such as Porthleven, Breage and Wendron, provides close to another 15,000 inhabitants, making a total for the town and surrounding districts of approximately 42,000.

Although somewhat distant from the coast itself, Helston’s location enables the town to access the additional tourist population visiting the area, however this is mostly to the benefit of large, edge of town retail and there is much to be done to enable the town centre to attract visitors and benefit from the tourist economy.

The sense of heritage here is strong with many historic buildings and well known ancient traditions which have been preserved for generations. The architectural attractiveness of the town centre is outstanding and must be regarded as a cornerstone for any proposals which aim for improvement.

Helston is however, typical of many rural market towns across the UK, challenged by out of town shopping, increasing levels of empty shop premises and declining town centre footfall. Its comparative isolation from main transport links is undoubtedly a hindrance.

As well as a deteriorating retail offer the town centre is traffic dominant where walking space is difficult for pedestrians, having often narrow, poor and uneven pavements and only small areas of level, social space. By many of the recognised indices the town rates as fairly average compared to its peers in Cornwall, however, this does hide pockets of significant deprivation.

On a positive note Helston is a family town: we have good schools and some excellent events and venues such as Christmas Lights, The Museum of Cornish Life, Helston Makes It, Flora Day, Helstonbury, CAST and activities in Coronation Park to name but a few. As these and our other community activities restart after Covid, they will add to Helston’s appeal as a great place to live and support its attractiveness as a town for visitors to enjoy.

Most importantly it is the local community which most clearly defines Helston - so many clubs, societies and groups which make Helston a strong town. The most southerly town in the country has much to be proud of.

Helstonians have been keen to address the town's issues and a number of recent community-led projects have achieved some notable success. The Museum of Cornish Life based in Market Place has gained much positive profile since its devolution to a community managed Trust, increasing visitor numbers year on year. The Cornubian Arts and Sciences Trust (CAST), established in the Passmore Edwards building, has attracted international recognition for its art programmes and high-quality workspace for nationally recognised artists. Recent refurbishments of the Grylls Monument area and the devolution and refurbishment of Coronation Park close to the town centre have proved extremely successful and attractive to visitors. Strong community organisations such as Helston Climate Action Group and South Kerrier Alliance are delivering positive change.

However, these initiatives have not arrested Helston's decline which necessitates more substantial positive intervention.

It is notable that much of this work has been achieved by residents, working for their community and finding funding wherever they can, whilst Helston has missed out on the major regeneration programmes offered to other Cornish towns.

To demonstrate and summarise the knowledge gained and conclusions drawn through the Place Shaping process, we have summarised our research using the categories identified within Cornwall Council's Place Shaping Toolkit, but have re-ordered the categories with the final section being 'Town and Town Centre Renewal' as the data naturally flows to this as a conclusion.

Our research and consultation outputs are therefore divided into the following sections:-

- a) Population – Identifying and understanding the community
- b) Employment and Deprivation – Understanding issues and dependencies
- c) Economy – Understanding the key factors which can drive economic growth
- d) Connectivity – key infrastructure issues
- e) Consultations – public and business Views
- f) Climate Action – changing the way we live
- g) Town Centre – issues and opportunities for renewal
- h) Existing Plans and Strategies – to ensure strategic alignment

a) Population

Current population statistics:

Helston Town: 12,184 (2.1% of Cornwall's population)

Community Network Area (CNA): 35,000 (6.1%) (Helston & The Lizard)

Area considering Helston as the main service town: 42,000 (7.3%) (Praa Sands to Constantine and Wendron as well as the Lizard)

Cornwall Population: 572,000

The collective population of the CNA is estimated to have increased by 5.6% in the period 2011 to 2019: from just over 33,000 to approaching 35,000. The greatest increase was in those aged over 65 which grew by over 20% in the period (Cornwall population growth is 6.7% over the same period).

Across the area there has been a general depopulation in people who are of 'working age' and particular gains in those who are in their early 70s. People over the age of 65 have increased in number by over 20%. Helston North saw the biggest fall in 25-49 year-olds at almost 15%.

There is evidence to suggest that young people are significant in depopulation with falls in the region of 12-13% estimated. Significant falls amongst those aged 18-49, with a bias to the 18-24 age group will not be good for long-term economic prospects and succession strategy in business.

Helston and The Lizard have a Local Plan allocation of 2,300 additional homes for the period 2010-30 of which 1,363 (almost 60%) have been delivered, with another 1,301 either with planning permission or under construction and a further 320 windfall: exceeding the allocation with a total of almost 4,000 homes to be delivered over the period. It should be noted that housing demand is strong with the majority of new homes in Helston on the town's periphery where access to out of town supermarkets is easier than access to the town centre.

The number of children and young people under the age of 16 is estimated to have grown. The new housing is definitely attracting more families to live in and around Helston.

Conclusions:

- Increases in population must be turned into increases in town centre footfall
- We must find ways of attracting/keeping younger working people in Helston to assist in boosting its vitality
- We must find ways of attracting and catering for a growing older population across the CNA whose higher disposable incomes and patronage could help the town centre develop as a thriving local economy and build community wealth
- Although both CAST and the Museum of Cornish Life provide imaginative and high-quality creative activities for children and families, most of which are free, there is little other provision for family activities in the town centre. This must be addressed if we are to encourage the growing population on Helston's periphery to use the town

b) Employment and Deprivation

Helston is a market town but not a coastal town and has a high dependence on defence employment via RNAS Culdrose (with 3,000 personnel one of the largest helicopter bases in Europe and the singular largest work site in Cornwall which contributes around £100m to the local economy each year). Three quarters of Cornwall's defence-related jobs are dependent upon Culdrose.

The median total annual income for Helston households in 2017 was reasonably high in Cornish terms (£38,200) but this was linked to defence employment and unearned income. In-context research by Cornwall Council in 2018 indicated that Helston had the second highest proportion of retail jobs (behind Penryn) of almost 32% (ONS).

Data from 2019/20 indicates that median gross annual pay per individual (full time employed) is as low as £25,800 (Cornwall average £28,800, UK average £36,600). Constituency figures show that this rate has actually declined by over 9% since 2018.

Total workplace gross annual median earnings in Cornwall in 2018 were 81% of the UK average; for the St.Ives travel to work area (which includes Helston and The Lizard) it was 74%.

While average gross weekly full-time pay for residents in the St.Ives Parliamentary Constituency (which includes The Lizard) increased by 20% between 2012 and 2019 before falling back, for part time workers the median pay figure fell by 8% over a similar period. The APS illustrates that between the year ending 2012 and that of 2019 the number of part time workers increased by almost two thirds, so earning potential has been held back. The area has proportionately more part time employees than Cornwall as a whole.

The Helston workplace population is dominated by L1 and L2 qualifications, which gives an indication of a low level of disposable income to support, for example necessary car use.

GVA per hour worked has seen a slow decline over the period 2004-16 in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly to stand at £36,415 per filled job or 69% of the UK average by 2016. The region has been good at creating employment in terms of volume; but not in terms of value, although centres of employment growth such as Falmouth (a local travel to work area for Helston) are now believed to be seeing better performance.

In September 2020 the number of individuals claiming Universal Credit across the CNA was 1,270. This is almost 6.6% of the Cornwall total, 6% higher than the Cornwall average and over three times the number of people claiming from a year earlier. Of these, 240 were in the 18 to 24 age group a figure that had also trebled on the previous year.

Deprivation statistics are generally produced by town or CNA with Helston typically mid-table in assessments of Cornish towns. However, this does hide areas of chronic deprivation within Helston which rate within the lowest 20% (and often the lowest 10%) in the country across the range of measures. Additionally, there is a definite 'Culdrose Effect' where a significant minority of the working population benefit from this large employer, elevating the average statistics. However, at a postcode level 'the two hub towns of Penzance and Helston are the most deprived clusters in West Cornwall' – CLLD funding research 2018.

Helston, as a whole, ranks poorly with regard to 'geographical barriers' which emphasises its comparative isolation in terms of accessibility, specifically relevant for travel to employment which necessitates car ownership (see Key Infrastructure below).

Across the range of deprivation measures the challenges within the town point to deficiencies in the indoor and living environment.

Conclusions:

- The significant minority of high earners and those with unearned (likely retired/investment) income indicates strong, local spending power which would benefit the town centre if they could be induced to visit
- There is a large (mostly younger, part-time, retail and service employed) sector who have low incomes and struggle to access employment and training outside of the CNA due to the lack of connectivity/cost of transport
- There are pockets of severe deprivation that must be addressed
- There are currently no opportunities identified in the area for the creation of jobs to support a green recovery and help Helston and Cornwall meet their climate emergency commitments

c) Supporting Sustainable Economic Growth

The economy of Helston and The Lizard is worth around £300m in GVA or just over 4.0% of the Cornish economy whilst being the domicile of 6.1% of the population of Cornwall (Cornwall Council research 2008); the area is under-performing in terms of GVA by around 25%. This also suggests that the area has a high number of workers who travel out of area for work.

Two thirds of enterprises in CNA employ less than 10 people but this is compared to almost 90% in Cornwall as a whole (2020). This means that the area has a number of 'larger' employers (Culdrose, MJL Contractors etc.)

It is important to deal carefully with the labour-intensive retail service sector which makes up almost 48% of Helston's complement – the highest of any town in Cornwall. This requires support or at least a planned approach to phasing the workforce to other areas of activity. Covid vulnerability is extremely high.

Consideration should be given for Helston to participate more fully in supporting the growing Falmouth economic area, being the most local and easily accessed. Allowing access to these university, marine, defence aerospace related and digital jobs and in fact considering how the growth of this area can bleed over into Helston. It is clear that a significant sector of the working population in Helston are discouraged from labour market participation because opportunities are not logistically reachable. They would benefit substantially if such economic growth could be brought to the town.

We must also consider the need and opportunity to strengthen our area in a resilient way which addresses the challenges of climate change and the climate emergency. Community & Social Wellbeing and Resilience must be further understood by our organisations and actions taken accordingly.

The work undertaken by the South West Productivity Commission in 2017 notes: *'The availability of labour and skills was a significant challenge facing rural businesses. Underlying factors influencing this shortage included housing affordability, transport and an ageing population. Attracting higher skilled individuals was a particular challenge influenced by the loss of younger people from the area to study, as well as a 'cul-de-sac' effect which prevents higher skilled people from re-locating to the area.'*

The Local Plan includes the objective to *'maintain and enhance Helston as a high-quality service and retail centre for its local residents and its surrounding parishes. To provide more employment opportunities within Helston, in doing so reducing the reliance on Culdrose as the primary employer, whilst still continuing to support its continued operation. Enable the provision of rural workspace and encourage business mentoring and support.'*

However, the latest Cornwall Local Plan monitoring for 2019 estimates that in the nine years since the start of the Local Plan the CNA has delivered only 3.8% of its office target (Cornwall 14.6%) and 39% of its industrial target (Cornwall 40.5%). The assumption in the development of the Local Plan is that between one third and 40% of jobs are sourced through employment land.

Conclusions:

- We must deal very carefully with the declining retail sector where Helston has a significant over-reliance in terms of employment
- Helston continues to fall further behind other areas of Cornwall in terms of economic development
- Higher income earners have a high reliance on travelling – mostly by car (see Key Infrastructure below)
- Opportunities for economic linkage with Falmouth especially should be high priority
- Economic investment is hampered by lack of connectivity, but arguments for connectivity require a case built on economic demand – Helston is caught in a 'no win' situation
- Social and community resilience which addresses the climate emergency must be incorporated into our future plans

d) Key Infrastructure

Truro, Redruth, Camborne, Hayle (which is, in population terms much smaller than Helston) and Penzance benefit from inter-connectivity of regular and strategic bus routes, main line rail connectivity and the A30 trunk road running close to all of them. These have aided their economic development through strategic investment for growth; Helston has not had this opportunity.

Demand for industrial land is predicated on good A30 access or proximity to growth opportunities. This has justified further linking infrastructure (such as the St.Austell link road or St.Erth transport interchange). Helston and the Lizard need quick and efficient links to the main transport networks to overcome the distance and cost issues which impact investment decisions.

Trips from Helston to Penryn are dominated by driving - 97.5% either as a driver or passenger; for trips to the Camborne/Pool/Redruth area this statistic is 88.3% (Cornwall Towns Study 2005). These statistics show that there is a fundamental issue with public transport provision.

Such a reliance on inefficient, fossil fuel transport raises significant concerns for a town that has committed to working towards carbon neutrality.

Referencing the South West Productivity Commission in 2017 again: *'For young people living in rural areas, poor transport accessibility limits choices and opportunities to access education, training and apprenticeships.'* Also *'We found a need to improve both the strategic transport network into the South West, as well as the need to improve the connectivity into the strategic network – especially for more peripheral parts of the area. Improving accessibility to rural employment, apprenticeship and education opportunities for young people was also a priority, as well as sustainable transport development.'*

A key function of transport infrastructure is to boost the productivity of an area; to connect the talent pool with jobs and opportunity. Although commuting patterns are likely to be changed long term as a consequence of Covid, it must be remembered that Helston's working population is dominated by L1 and L2 qualification levels meaning that home-working is not possible for the majority of people.

Available road traffic data for Cornwall illustrates how it has particularly grown since 2014: with cars and taxi use increasing by over 50% in the 1994-2019 period. Around 211,000 journeys were on the B3297 Helston to Redruth road alone. Of 164 fatal or serious road accidents in the St.Ives Parliamentary Constituency between 2015 and 2019; 115 (70%) were on rural roads. The National Transport Model has predicted vehicle miles will increase by 44% by 2035 in rural areas but lost working seconds per mile will double from 4 to 8.

Generally, older age groups past working age and young people are most likely to lack private car transport even though public transport availability and cost is poor for the area. Over 17% of households over the age of 65 in Helston and surrounding villages did not have access to a car. In the Helston Central ward this is almost 30%. This rate was 15% for 16-24 year-olds.

According to the most recent data (y/e 2019) from the DoT for Cornwall there were 302,982 cars in Cornwall: 14,991 of them were in the five local authority wards that make up The Lizard (just under 5% of the Cornwall total). 16,560 cars in Cornwall were over 6 years old (5.5%) and surprisingly 8,868 of these were in the Helston CNA - 57% of Cornwall's older cars! In Crowan and Wendron 70% of the cars are over the age of 6 years.

In terms of commuting, the Parsons Brinkerhoff study for the Cornwall Council Local Plan process in 2015 noted that there were much higher levels of short distance trips than the Cornwall average (most under 5km) indicating that car usage for local residents to visit their own town centre is the predominant means of access.

According to CPI measurement motor insurance costs have risen by an average of 18% 2016-20 and the repair of vehicles by 12%. Bus travel is now 55% more expensive using an RPI measurement. The overall cost of living is higher the smaller the settlement one lives in. Further barriers will be created as transport is directed by Government to an electric base pushing the capital cost of a vehicle much higher.

Electric cars will be out of the reach of many. The long term solution to move away from private car ownership and invest in public transport to make it affordable and accessible to everyone, is an important issue for Helston. We need to make our roads safe for cyclists and pedestrians so that people can choose active travel as a primary form of transport if we are to move towards the goals of the Climate Action initiative.

Research on Cornwall's cycle trails shows that Helston and the Lizard are the worst connected areas in Cornwall and fall well behind all other areas in terms of cycling infrastructure. St.Ives, Bodmin, Hayle, Truro, Camborne, Pool, Redruth, St.Austell, Falmouth and Penryn all have Active Travel maps, produced as part of the Access to Education project and funded by the Department for Transport's Local Sustainable Transport Fund. Helston has had no such support.

Helston can be classed as one of the most isolated towns in Cornwall based upon its reliance on poor road network for the vast majority of journeys, lack of cycling and green route connectivity and upper decile costs for public transport.

Conclusions:

- Although distances to economic centres are relatively low, journeys are difficult and costly making the Helston CNA one of the most isolated in Cornwall
- This lack of accessibility relates to roads, cycle ways and public transport
- Highly car reliant, transport poverty will continue to increase especially as we shift to a lower carbon economy
- Significant constraints on accessibility particularly affect the prospects of Helston's 16–24 year-olds who rely on public transport for training, education and employment
- This is driving both depopulation of young people and reliance on part time retail and service employment

e) Consultations

The above sections provide a statistical assessment of Helston, however it is essential to understand the views of residents, seek their ideas and involve the widest range of the community in helping to define the Place Shaping Plan.

Helston CIC and subsequently the Place Shaping Board, have used workshops, meetings, presentations, questionnaires and analysis of social media comments in order to compile and distill the many suggestions and proposals into the Helston Place Shaping Plan. A full listing of the consultations undertaken during the development of the Plan is included in Appendix 6 of our submission.

The key points raised by businesses, the community and also visitors to the town can be summarised as follows:

- There is significant concern over the lack of footfall and consequent ongoing decline in the vitality of Helston town centre
- The visual appearance of unkempt properties, empty shops and poorly maintained public areas is the most commented upon and complained about issue

- The loss, by dilapidation or development, of Helston's heritage features and structures is diluting its attractiveness and causing the visual decline of what should be its unique selling point
- The town centre is traffic dominant with difficult pedestrian routes
- The ability to 'get around' due to poor pavements, building accessibility, accessible public transport is a key concern
- There is no outdoor market space or public square near the centre
- Access to town centre premises by car (especially short-term parking, resident access and 'pick up-drop-off' ability) is seen as essential by many town centre businesses – a point debated with great vigour during the Covid related road closure of Meneage Street.
- Although there is good car parking provision, the view that parking is too expensive is always a common theme, especially amongst business owners
- The phrase 'Why would you come to Helston?' is often used
- Helston needs to be promoted both to potential visitors as well as to its own community
- The situation is causing a decline in the community's pride in their town – a dangerous factor which, based on experience of other parts of the UK, has an accelerating effect in town centre decay

It is interesting to note that although the issues of crime and lack of policing, deprivation, homelessness, drug-taking and other typical town-based issues were raised during discussions, these were far outweighed by the community's concern over the vitality of Helston town centre.

f) Climate Emergency

The Climate Action agenda has gained strong support in Helston. The Town Council has declared a climate emergency and a Climate Action Plan has been developed. For brevity the Plan is not repeated here, however a summary can be found in Appendix 7. Helston has committed to working towards carbon neutral by 2030.

Positive local initiatives, especially around public space management and rewilding are taking place with tree planting and horticultural plans underway. However, the fundamental change required to the key carbon generators of transport, indoor space heating, business and agriculture are harder to influence. The Climate Emergency is still not embedded within our ways of living and working.

Conclusions:

- All Place Shaping projects must incorporate a Carbon Reduction and Environmental benefit, not only respecting the Climate Action Plan but also finding ways to assist in delivering the Climate Action goals.
- All projects must demonstrate how proposals fit with the Carbon Neutral programme outcomes, and employ the Climate Change Decision Wheel process.

g) Town & Town Centre Renewal

Helston's recent decline has been rapid. The town has experienced the fastest rate of increase in empty retail premises of any town in Cornwall – a 7.0% decline in the last 3 years leaving Helston at 15.5%. This is 3.5% worse than the Cornwall average of 12.6% (national average 12.9%). These statistics pre-date the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent 'lockdown' measures.

An HCIC survey of town centre businesses in November 2019 showed that trade was worse in 2019 vs 2018 for 42% of these businesses, with 25% seeing no change. These statistics pre-date the coronavirus pandemic which has undoubtedly accelerated this decline.

Centre for Towns Research has noted that Helston has a higher than average economic vulnerability to the impact of Covid across all towns in England and Wales. Covid vulnerability is through the fact that retail jobs account for 13% (compared to 9.3% country-wide) and the retail sector accounts for 48% of Helston's GVA.

Towns such as Penzance, St.Ives, Redruth, Truro and Falmouth have a critical mass of arts and cultural assets with visitor numbers enabled through larger town centre residential communities and stronger connectivity.

Helston does, however, have a wealth of cultural and heritage assets some of which are nationally and internationally recognised for their excellence. There is potential for the use of heritage and the arts to create a coherent year-round offer.

The town centre of Helston has fallen behind the majority of Cornish towns in investment terms over many years and has been overlooked for many recent funding opportunities:

- High Street development funds
- Cornwall Council Cycle Way funding
- CLLD funding (the geography allocated to Helston makes it virtually impossible to access funds)
- Coastal Towns funding
- Towns Fund – not selected by Cornwall Council
- High Streets Heritage Action Zones (Historic England) – not prioritised by Cornwall Council
- Green Infrastructure for Growth – not selected by Cornwall Council

to name but a few.

As a town for which heritage is its fundamental unique selling point it is interesting to note that Helston has had only £3.00 per head allocation of Lottery funding vs a South West average of £27.00 per head and an England average of £46.00 per head (2018).

It is estimated that there are at least 100 empty premises within the town centre which could be converted to residential and live/work space. These are mostly above or behind retail premises.

Conclusions

- The decline in footfall and loss of vitality is the key issue for Helston's community
- Town centre economics are poor and change is needed
- Heritage and cultural assets must be protected, improved and used as economic drivers
- There is much opportunity for residential space within the town centre - notably in an area where there is high demand for homes and declining value of commercial property
- We need to examine how we adapt a new economic model in which carbon reduction and the climate emergency are addressed

h) Existing Plans and Strategies

Over the last 10 years a wide range of studies and subsequent planning exercises have defined strategies for improving Helston. This constitutes a significant body of work, performed by some very capable specialists and includes:

- Helston Townscape Heritage Initiative - Simmons & Richards 2009
- Conservation Area Assessment & Management Strategy – Alan Baxter 2010
- Helston & Lizard Place Based Topic Paper – Cornwall Council 2013
- Helston Town Framework 2013

- A Brighter Future: Working together for South Kerrier - South Kerrier Alliance Strategic Plan 2013
- Cornwall Council Infrastructure Needs Assessment
- Helston Traffic and Urban Realm Study - Parsons Brinkerhoff 2015
- Helston Town Framework 2017
- Helston Walking & Cycling Feasibility Report 2018
- There are also Public Realm Framework documents, archaeological assessments, project-specific studies and other reports and strategies.

There is significant alignment in many of their findings and recommendations, but most of this planning has remained unimplemented.

Additionally, the more recent Helston Climate Action Plan 2019 requires our full alignment.

5. Establishing Priorities

Having assessed all of the information available to us, and considered the fit with our Aims and Objectives, we identified seven projects to form the first phase of work within our Place Shaping Plan.

As defined in Section 3 above, we selected these projects based on the following:

- **Alignment** - Strength of alignment with our Vision, Aims and Objectives
- **Impact** - A project's impact on the issues identified during our research
- **Existing Strategies** - Alignment with key town strategies (Helston Town Plan, Helston Climate Action Plan etc.)
- **Deliverability** - Knowledge that a project is achievable and deliverable
- **Team Commitment** - Commitment and passion from the Place Shaping Board members to deliver the project
- **Variety** - Sufficient range and variety of projects to ensure that we have a strong likelihood of alignment with future capital funding sources whose criteria are yet to be defined
- **Previous Work** - Where applicable, the strength and availability of existing preparatory work

It was also considered important that some 'quick wins' were identified within the Plan.

This is not an exact science, however, via debate and consultation we have identified the following projects forming the first phase of our Plan:

5 = Fully Supports Objective 1 = Does Not Support Objective									
Projects Selected to form the Helston Place Shaping Plan	Alignment	Impact	Existing Strategies	Deliverability	Team Commitment	Variety	Previous Work	Quick Win	TOTAL
A. The Helston Cultural Quarter	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	3	36
B. Re-imagining Helston's High Streets	5	5	3	3	5	4	4	1	30

C. Reconnecting Helston	5	5	4	2	5	4	2	1	28
D. Town Centre Homes & Workspace	5	5	3	4	5	5	2	2	31
E. The Penrose Trail	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	32
F. Community Hub	5	5	1	3	5	5	1	3	28
G. Promoting Helston	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	37

6. Describing the Plan

For each of the selected projects a 'one page template' was created to provide a document that defines the concept and is suitable for presentation. Over the course of 2020, these templates were presented publicly and to various Helston groups, discussed, revised and finalised, forming the starting point for each project.

An Overview template for the full Place Shaping Plan is attached in Appendix 2 of this document with the full Place Shaping Plan presentation enclosed within the Vitality Fund bid submission.

Subsequently Project Briefs have been developed, describing each project in detail – see papers accompanying this document.

Actions have already begun for most of the projects and the first project to be completed – Promoting Helston – was launched in January 2020. Work continues with defined project teams for each of the remaining projects.

DT 04/01/21

Appendices enclosed:

- 1 Listing of Place Shaping Consultations Undertaken to Date
- 2 Helston Place Shaping Plan – Overview Graphic

Appendix 1 – Listing of Place Shaping Consultations Undertaken to Date

Date	Activity	Outcome
May 2018	Community Survey designed by HCIC – funded and administered by office of Derek Thomas MP	Defined themes and areas for improvement in Helston
18.7.2018	Initial meeting with CC traffic specialists incl. Rebecca Riley & James Hatton.	Discussion of potential projects Action agreed on cycle routes and signage
31.7.2018	Meeting with Newton Abbott Town Council and CIC.	Good advice about working together and Importance of identifying key projects
8.10.2018	Meeting with Justine Hornsby, Helston in Bloom.	Links established and HCIC to aid with expanding volunteer base
8.11.2018	Public open workshop events (11-1 & 6.30-8.30pm) to highlight our objectives. Had four tables: marketing, green Helston, economics, traffic & access. Presented John Martin's visual of one-way down Coinagehall Street	Attended by a total of around 120. Feedback positive and written outputs collected on post-it notes and summarised by MO. Approx. 42 ideas and potential projects identified
Nov. 2018	Launch of town centre window display competition.	Very positive response and agreed to run 2x per year - Easter & Christmas. Trophy obtained for Spring 2019
18.1.2019	Business presentation meeting to highlight activities around Museum & Coronation Park plus ideas for HCIC projects	Attended by 19 businesses. Positive response and general proposals agreed. No formal data collected.
1.3.2019	Meeting with CC: Bob Egerton, Tamsin Daniel, Adam Birchall to present our main projects around Coinagehall Street, Helston to Penrose Trail, Community Hub	Supportive of Coinagehall Street development, Community Hub and Penrose Trail. Agreed HCIC would form a Place Shaping Sub-Group with representation from CC & HTC
25.3.2019	Meeting with Maxine Hardy to agree formation of place-shaping sub-group	Agreed representation with two Cornwall Councillors (JM & MT), HTC Officer (MS), MH & HCIC.
27.3.2019	Meeting with Darren Buckley & Kim Conchie from Cornwall Chamber of Commerce.	Positive feedback about HCIC projects and approach
12.4.2019	First meeting of Place-Shaping sub-group.	Coinagehall Street and Pensrose Trail plans agreed
17.4.2019	Presentation of marketing plan for new website and social media to HTC.	Positive response. Marketing sub-group identified. Funding agreed for three years with annual review.
April 2019	Collaborative project between HCIC, South Kerrier Alliance CIC, Friends of the Earth to install a drinking fountain in Coronation Park	Drinking fountain & signage implemented funded by Friends of the Earth and Cllr John Martin Community Chest fund.
2.5.2019	HCIC attend discussion with Derek Thomas MP and Police reps to discuss crime issues in Helston	Traffic speeding identified as an issue but no major actions or issues related to crime reported
June 2019	Publication Discover Helston 2019 as part of the Helston Marketing and Promotion Plan	Very positive response
5.6.2019	Presentations by companies tendering for Discover Helston website design	Appointed Mike Postons of 3deep Media.
2.7.2019	HCIC, Cornwall and Town Councillors attend Helston Climate Action Group town walk around to review public spaces in Helston	Identified opportunities for project initiatives

24.7.2019	HCIC present proposals for Penrose Trail to Helston Town Council Amenities Committee	Positive support received
30.9.2019	Launch of Helston Climate Action Plan	Public presentation involving HCAG members and Helston Town Councillors
1.10.2019	Meeting of Place-shaping sub-group also attended by Adam Birchall, James Hatton & Colin Edwards from CC.	Announced funding for cycle routes across Helston
15.11.2019	Follow up meeting of the Helston Place Shaping Sub-Group members	Approach and processes agreed
6.11.2019	Open evening for businesses to present work done to date and objectives for the future.	Attended by eight businesses who were very positive. One business owner agreed to take forward formation of group for businesses
7.11.2019	HCIC and Town Council reps view the empty Old Factory Shop to assess potential for community Hub use	Subsequent detailed assessment indicates that no 'value for money' options could be identified. Discounted as option for Community Hub project
13.11.2019	Open evening for public to present work done to date and objectives for the future.	Attended by 15, very positive
15.11.2019	HCIC reps meet with Cornwall Council officers and Aecom on site to agree design for Penrose Trail phase 1 elements	Project outline design agreed for Aecom to progress to detailed design and implementation
Nov. 2019	Business survey undertaken by HCIC	Completed by 31 businesses. Summary of results fed in to HCIC project plans
9.1.2020	HCIC meet with Cornwall Council officers (Economic Devt and Car Parking) to highlight opportunity for Community Hub within the old Budgens building	Positive support received and agreement to progress actions on car parking
9.1.2020	Place Shaping Plan presentation to Helston Town Council	Positive response received and agreement to support
22.1.2020	Place Shaping Plan presentation and discussion with CC Directorate Leadership Team (EG&D)	Positive response received and DLT group taken around the town to better understand issues and proposals
23.1.2020	HCIC attend Helston Town Council Amenities Group for Town Events discussion	Good discussion but agreed to defer any project work on events – therefore not included as priority in Place Shaping Plan
25.1.2020	Public presentation of Helston Place Shaping Plan held at Helston Bowling Club	Short presentation and then face to face feedback on visual plans. Feedback wholly positive
27.1.2020	HCIC reps and Helston Town Councillors meet with Cornwall Council officers and Aecom to agree plans for Penrose Trail phase 1 works	Detailed designs issued and agreed with various comments
29.1.2020	Discover Helston website launch	Feedback process included – all comments received to date positive. Reporting will be reviewed in 12 months
31.1.2020	Place-shaping sub-group meeting with CC (James Hatton & Lee Quinney – public transport)	JH agreed to undertake traffic flow survey. Data received June 2020 – see below
5.2.2020	Meeting between HCIC, Helston Climate Action Group and Exeter University to finalise plan for environmental consultation activity	Plan agreed
8.2.2020	Exeter University led consultation on environmental activities around	Strong public support and sign up to a community wildflower meadow and edible garden project in Coronation Park along planned cycle route

	Coronation Park and entrance to Penrose Trail	
14.2.2020	Meeting between HCIC and new National Trust Head Ranger for Helston & the Lizard to review proposals for the Penrose Trail project	National Trust confirm their support for the project
15.2.2020	Presentation of Helston Place Shaping Plan to Derek Thomas MP	Positive response and agreement by Derek to support proposals. Request to include Rail Reconnection into Place Shaping Plan agreed.
May 2020	Publication Discover Helston 2020 as part of the Helston Marketing and Promotion Plan – on line only	Positive response
2.6.2020	Meeting with CC Officers to discuss traffic study proposals	identifies traffic flows affected by the Future Town Centre project. Amendments made to project scope and proposals for next steps agreed
3.6.2020	HCIC attend Helston Town Council meeting to discuss street closure issues re Covid Emergency Measures	Public feedback reviewed
10.6.2020	HCIC attend Helston Town Council meeting to discuss street closure issues re Covid Emergency Measures	Public feedback reviewed
15.6.2020	HCIC attend Helston Town Council meeting to discuss street closure issues re Covid Emergency Measures	Public feedback reviewed
w/c 15.6.2020	“Drop In” public sessions as part of consultation for Meneage St road closure	Public comments received and summarised for inclusion in Future Town Centre Project
9.7.2020	Meeting with CC Officers to present overview of Helston Place Shaping Plan	For information only - positive reaction to proposals
15.7.2020	Meeting between HCIC reps and Helston Town Council Projects Officer to discuss options for CIL funding bids	Approach agreed
16.7.2020	Meeting between HCIC and National Trust review status of Penrose Trail project	Agreement to pursue a CIL funding bid for phase 2 of the project
20.7.2020	HCIC and local Cornwall Councillors meeting with CC Transport Officers to discuss Future Town Centre project	Review of transport survey outputs and agreement to develop proposals in more detail
21.7.2020	Place Shaping Plan update presentation and discussion with CC Directorate Leadership Team (EG&D)	Review of project progress and agreements to assist and promote various project actions
22.7.2020	Meeting of stakeholders for the Helston Cultural Quarter project	Agreement to the concept documents proposed by HCIC and support to move to the next stage of development
4.8.2020	HCIC meeting with Rebuild Southwest to discuss potential for using empty premises in Helston town centre for conversion to homes	Agreement to work together to define a Place Shaping Project to support this issue
6.8.2020	Meeting of reps of HCIC, Town Council with new owner of the old Budgens building	Positive support for HCIC proposals for a community hub in the building
26.8.2020	Meeting between HCIC and National Trust to agree route for Penrose Trail and CIL bid proposals	Proposed route agreed for NT to consult with lease holder and HCIC to consult with Porthleven and Helston Councillors (completed following this meeting)
4.9.2020	Meeting between Derek Thomas MP, Cornwall Council & Helston Heritage Rail group to agree approach to	Principles and submission of funding application agreed

	Reconnecting Your Railway Ideas Fund bid	
16.9.2020	Meeting with Cornwall Council Planning Team, building owners, HCIC and local Cornwall Councillors to discuss options for Community Hub in the old Budgens building	Agreement of opportunity and support for HCIC proposals. Building owner submission for linked planning pre-application to follow.
30.9.2020	Helston CIC strategic planning session (including new members)	Agreement of updated HCIC Strategy and supporting documentation
October 2020	Publication Discover Helston 2020 as part of the Helston Marketing and Promotion Plan – printed version	15000 copies printed – positive response from limited distribution so far
1.10.2020	Presentation of rail and cycleway proposals for improving Helston’s connectivity to Helston Town Council	Questions answered and full support given by Helston Town Council
8.10.2020	Presentation of rail and cycleway proposals for improving Helston’s connectivity to Crowan Parish Council	Questions answered and full support given by Crown Parish Council
13.10.2020	Meeting with MP Derek Thomas, Network Rail, Cornwall Council and consultants to discuss Helston connectivity issues	Agreement of actions to develop Reconnecting Your Railway Ideas Fund bid
16.10.2020	Presentation of Place Shaping Plan to prominent local business owner	Positive reaction and agreement to support
28.10.2020	HCIC – Helston Climate Action Group review of projects	Coordination of activities
3.11.2020	Place Shaping Plan update presentation and discussion with CC Directorate Leadership Team (EG&D)	Review of project progress and agreements to assist and promote various project actions
13.11.2020	Discussion of structure for Place Shaping Board including reps from HCIC, Town Councillors and Town Clerk	Agreed Place Shaping process and structure of Board. Amended Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct agreed.
18.11.2020	Presentation to CIL committee of bid for Penrose Trail Phase 2	Presented proposals and answered questions
19.11.2020	Meeting with MP Derek Thomas and local Cornwall Councillors to review Helston’s connectivity proposals including rail reconnection	Agreed key points for Reconnecting Your Railway Ideas Fund bid and also general approach to green links/cycle trails within and to the north
3.12.2020	HCIC and HTC meeting with Gocollaborate	Review and consideration of a digital community engagement tool