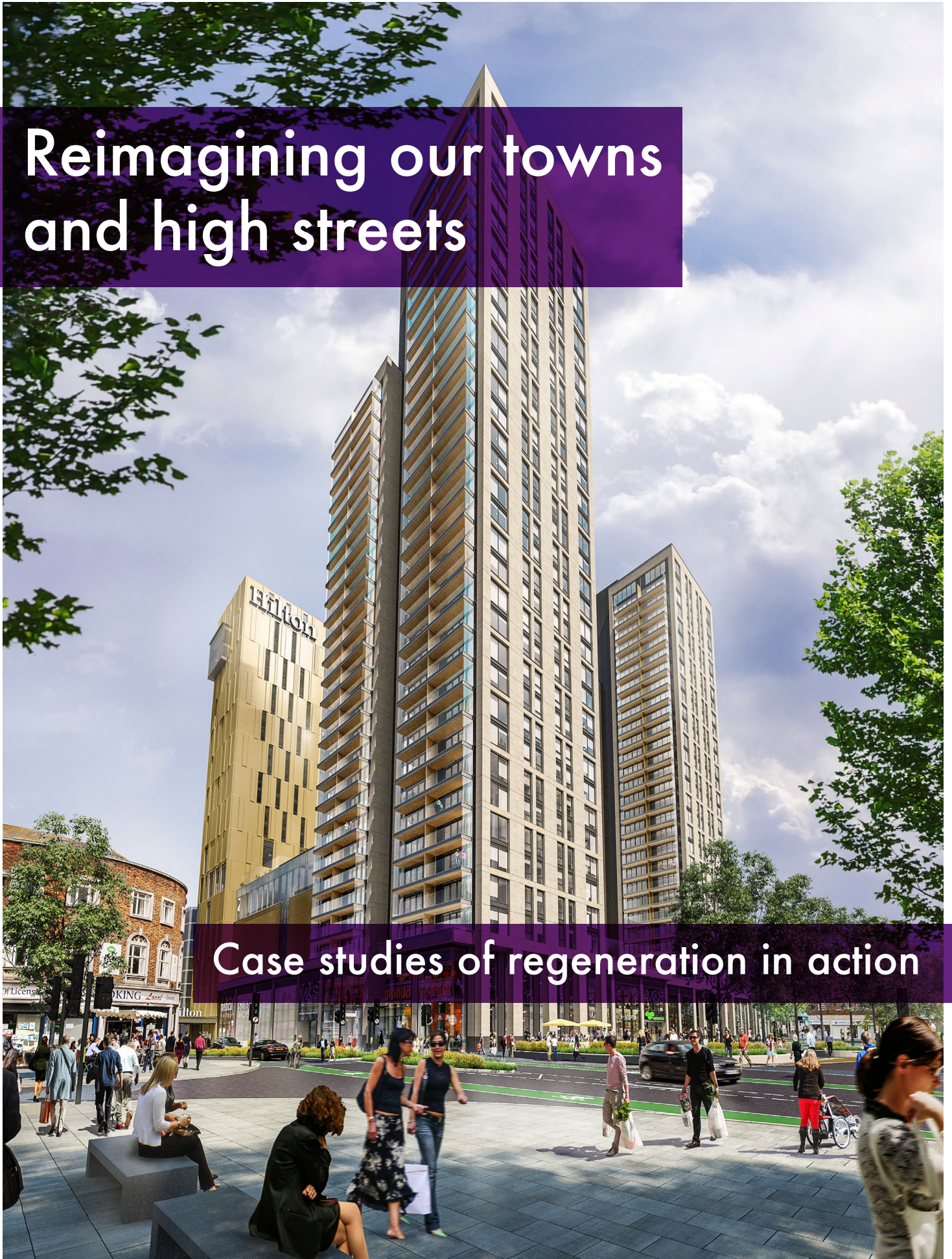


Reimagining our towns and high streets

Case studies of regeneration in action



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Foreword



Mark Robinson Chair of the High Streets Taskforce

It's my great privilege to be the Chair of the High Streets Taskforce. In my many years as an investor in this country's great town centres, I've never ceased to be amazed by the power of our high streets to be the heartbeat of thriving and inclusive communities. Many of our towns and places grew up around their high streets. Their identity is intertwined with the shops, parades and markets at their centre.

But in too many places there's also a sense that the high street isn't what it used to be and is past its heyday. There's more than a grain of truth to this. Many town centres are tired and need to be reimagined. In part this is due to underinvestment and neglect. Much of it is also due to changes in consumer behaviour over many years. This has been accelerated by the rapid development of technology and online alternatives. The impact of the Covid pandemic has posed new challenges and heightened predictions of the death of the high street.

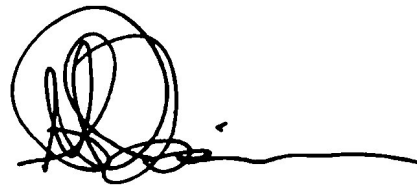
I prefer to see the opportunities. I'm hugely optimistic that there's a bright future for our high streets with the right love, care and attention. That's because I've seen in my own investment projects what can be achieved. There's nothing like seeing new life breathed into run-down high streets and shopping centres. Apart from the tangible benefits for local jobs, enterprise and living standards, regeneration offers hope and encourages aspiration in our communities. It restores and reaffirms our pride in where we live.

That's why the work of the High Streets Taskforce is so valuable. Of course, funding is important. But so are advice, training, data and imagination. That's what we're here to provide to 138 councils across England and counting. The Taskforce offers a network of support from experts in the private, public, and community-led sectors.

It supplements and intensifies the help that many of our towns are receiving from the Government's regeneration funding pots. It increases the chances that regeneration will succeed and endure for the long term.

I'm heartened to see the many examples in this pamphlet of councils with ambitious plans to reimagine their high streets for the 21st century. Some have already achieved great things. Others are just embarking on the journey. All are bursting with enthusiasm. Regeneration projects are rarely easy. But if we flush out the barriers, ask for help to overcome them and learn from each other, there's every reason to look forward to success.

Many of the towns featured here are eligible for direct expert support from the Taskforce. And every town in England can benefit from access to our online resources. Come and take a look at what we can do for you!



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Introduction

This selection of case studies celebrates our historic high streets, town centres, and shopping centres. Across England – in market towns, new towns, cathedral cities, coastal communities and the countryside – district, borough and unitary councils (DCN councils) care deeply about their future. The Covid pandemic has heaped further pressure on our struggling high streets. DCN councils have stepped up to deliver £9 billion of vital business support grants to thousands of businesses, including many of the shops, bars and restaurants at the sharp end of the impact.

But, long before Covid struck, our councils have been alive to the decline of the high street and have been developing bold plans to reverse it. DCN councils hold many of the keys to banishing the hard times and reimagining our town centres as part of thriving, modern, attractive local places. They have the capability to deliver change on the ground based on their proximity to, and understanding of, what local residents, businesses and communities want. That's why the Government has so far entrusted £1.3 billion of renewal funding to DCN councils across England through the Towns Fund, Future High Streets Fund and Levelling Up Fund.

Our councils recognise that successful regeneration goes beyond bricks and mortar. It's also about creating a welcoming atmosphere, a buzz, a place where people want to spend time. That's why so many of these projects focus on heritage, the public realm, and wider amenities: broadening the high street offer to cater for the evolving interests of our communities at the same time as reinforcing our communities' sense of identity and pride in their history.

These case studies are a testament to our councils' ambition, determination, and imagination. They're also a testament to the value of partnership. Across the country, our councils are working hand in glove with county councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships, local businesses, private companies, and charitable organisations to forge alliances that will deliver the goods. Our councils can't, and shouldn't, do it alone.

We hope you take inspiration from what you're about to read.

The North

Burnley Borough Council

Craven District Council

Pendle District Council

West Lancashire Borough Council

Burnley Borough Council

Burnley town centre regeneration

Following a £4 million joint investment between Lancashire County Council and Burnley Borough Council in new public realm, after widespread consultation, Burnley Council developed and adopted a Town Centre and Canalside Masterplan in 2018. This new vision for Burnley guided future development in and around Burnley town centre over the next decade and is well underway with significant milestones already achieved.

Key projects include:



UCLan Canalside Campus

Working with the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) to increase student numbers from 400 to 4000, £40 million has been invested into the UCLan (Burnley) Canalside Campus. The latest addition includes purpose-built 136-bed student accommodation, which was a joint venture between Barnfield Investment Properties and Burnley Council. Constructed during the height of the pandemic, the campus opened in September 2020.



Charter Walk shopping centre

In 2020, after seeking external specialist advice, Burnley Council purchased Charter Walk shopping centre for £20.7 million to ensure the centre remains a vibrant and thriving retail offer. Charter Walk is a well performing asset enjoying low vacancy rates and this played a significant role in the high street being named as the 'Best Performing' by Centre for Cities throughout the pandemic. Surpluses from the centre will be ringfenced for redeveloping and improving the retail centre.



Pioneer Place

To ensure the diversification of the town centre, Burnley Council in partnership with Maple Grove Developments has worked tirelessly to bring the Pioneer Place leisure development to the construction stage. The £23 million development will see the relocation of Reel Cinema into the town centre, 5 new food and beverage leisure units and 226 car parking spaces.

Pioneer Place is close to Burnley College and the UCLan campus and will form a key part of Burnley's successful re-positioning as the East Lancashire growth town, providing much needed dedicated leisure provision to complement the existing strong retail centre. The project has secured £3.7 million from the Government's Getting Building Fund, £3 million from Lancashire County Council and £300,000 from Burnley's largest employer, Boohoo. Burnley Council is funding the remainder of the development through capital contributions and rental income. Construction is underway and the development will be complete in late summer 2023.

A supermarket operator has signed up to take on the site of the old cinema and construction of the supermarket will commence when the cinema has moved to the town centre site.



Levelling Up Fund

The Council utilised its Town Centre & Canalside Masterplan as a key driver for its successful £19.9 million Levelling Up Fund application, which will see:

- Further expansion of the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) campus, via the development of new additional teaching and student support space in our historic Weavers Triangle, which will be a key next step in transforming Burnley into a university town.
- Development of an eastern gateway project called "Town to Turf", which will see significant pedestrian/traffic improvements and will complement planned investment in Burnley Football Club's Turf Moor stadium.
- Improved connectivity to the town by upgrading the quality and accessibility of Burnley Manchester Road station via a bridge and lift built over the rail lines to connect the platforms.

Since approving the Town Centre and Canalside Masterplan, working closely with a wide range of partners there has been significant progress in delivering major change in Burnley Town Centre and the delivery of the three interrelated Levelling Up Fund Grant projects will accelerate further transformation.

Craven District Council

Spectacular restoration of Skipton Town Hall

The Skipton Town Hall project has been a large-scale project funded by Craven District Council, National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and High Street Heritage Access Zones (HSHAZ) grants which have enabled a major redevelopment of the Grade II Town Hall building to ensure its long-term sustainability as a cultural hub for Skipton.

The project involved restoration and refurbishment of the historic concert hall; a complete reconfiguration and reinterpretation of the museum and the building of a museum store; and creation of a new build extension for a dedicated education room, dressing rooms for the concert hall performance space, and additional facilities including a changing places toilet.



The HSHAZ funding has been able to support works that sat outside the NLHF funded programme; this funding has supported the conservation and repair the concert hall, including reroofing, floor beam repair and replacement, restoration of ornate plasterwork and decorative timberwork, refurbishment of doors and windows, and conservation of chandelier lights.



Historic England has also been able to support Craven in paying for unforeseen additional costs with a grant uplift and have also awarded the council funds to complete improvements to the frontage of the historic Town Hall; this includes stone repairs, new building furniture and a redesign of the front cobbled area for planters and public seating.

The overall redevelopment project was a major capital project for Craven District Council, valued at almost £5 million, almost £400,000 of which came from the High Street Heritage Action Zone for the concert hall restoration and frontage improvements.

This project has created a modern museum that tells the story of Craven, Skipton and the wider Yorkshire Dales, along with a revitalised concert hall – now a flexible performance space suitable for the 21st century and capable of hosting ambitious productions, plus a 100m² white box exhibition gallery offering opportunities to see a range of exhibitions. It intends to increase visitor numbers from 60,000 to 100,000 per year.



At the time of applying to the HSHAZ programme, there were signs in Skipton of the national trend of the increasing number of historic buildings perceived as obsolete for town centre uses. All needed new purposes to protect the buildings and maintain the wider heritage fabric. The majority of these buildings have received unsympathetic additions over the years and as funding became tighter the state of repair deteriorated until the point when they were surplus to requirements.

Craven District Council committed to investing in its heritage asset at the Town Hall and were supported with significant funding from the NLHF and HAZ.

The results of the project so far are significant – an attractive, sympathetically restored and redeveloped listed building, thriving with creativity, culture and community focus.

As with any listed building development, challenges arrived in the shape of unforeseen building issues, such as a lack of foundations at one end of the historic concert hall, which was discovered when excavating for the new extension. Of course, a major challenge was the Covid global pandemic. The Town Hall redevelopment project progressed throughout, however major adaptations to how the site was managed had to be made and this delayed the overall timescale of the project.

The project has been a major success story; the feedback the council and Town Hall have had from both regular community and tourist visitors has been overwhelmingly positive; we have created a cultural hub where everyone feels welcome and visitor numbers are incredibly encouraging.

Pendle District Council

The future's bright at Northlight: the transformation of an iconic Lancashire mill

Pendle Borough Council's ambitious flagship project, Northlight – a £32 million learning, living, working, leisure and cultural destination for the North West is nearing completion.

The project is on a seven-acre former cotton mill site in Brierfield, adjacent to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. When Pendle Borough Council bought the derelict mill back in 2013 it was a daunting prospect. However, we secured a diverse range of local funding: including £4.95 million from the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (Lancashire LEP) Growth Deal Funding; £2.15 million from Lancashire County Council; and £1.5 million from Pendle Borough Council itself.



Northlight connects with our corporate priorities focused on strong communities and a strong economy. It gives hope in one of the most deprived areas of England, the town of Brierfield. The 2019 Indices of Deprivation reveal that Pendle was the 36th most deprived area out of 317 authorities in England.



Working in partnership

The Council teamed up with Pendle developers Barnfield, through a pioneering joint venture company called PEARL – Pendle Enterprise and Regeneration Ltd – to develop the site. The construction involved a range of local contractors: plumbers, electricians, painters and decorators.

Northlight has been delivered with several other partners in the private, public and community sector:

The historic mill office building is home to Lancashire Adult Learning which provides over 100 jobs and learning opportunities for thousands of people.

Northlight also offers a state-of-the-art community leisure facility, Leisure Box, run in partnership with Burnley FC in the community. It includes a climbing wall, gym and indoor football and cricket pitches. The facilities are well used by local people from Brierfield providing a place for families to come together and participate in activities.

A community arts organisation, In-Situ, offers cultural opportunities, bringing people in Pendle together in the converted historic mill garage.

A treasured town asset

Northlight was kept alive during re-development with exciting events. These included the UK Textile Biennial and other arts and community events, thanks to a partnership with In-Situ and Super Slow Way arts organisations.

The residential development provides urban apartment living with countryside views and access to leisure opportunities along the canal. Free gym membership is provided with every sale.

Next steps include an attractive gateway to the site from Brierfield town centre and food and drink opportunities coming to Northlight.

Northlight has provided opportunities for a better quality of life for local people, has supported a range of local businesses, created hundreds of jobs, secured much needed market housing, and regenerated a dilapidated site.

The developed landmark has helped build local pride in Pendle, recognising that several generations of local people have worked in the mill or lived alongside it, and celebrates Brierfield's cotton industry heritage.

The transformation has been carried out sensitively, preserving the complex's architectural heritage, whilst providing a vibrant, modern and inclusive offer for the local community.



West Lancashire Borough Council

Ormskirk Eastern Gateway

Ormskirk is a historic market town in the heart of West Lancashire. The core of the town focusses on the street market in Moor Street and Aughton Street, which has been a part of its history since 1286 and is physically marked by an impressive clock tower.

West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) and Lancashire County Council (LCC) have a long-held the aspiration to create better cycling and walking links between Ormskirk town centre and Edge Hill University, and to renovate Ormskirk bus station. In addition, part of Moor Street is cluttered with street furniture and in need of improvement to reflect the town's history, and address concerns over pedestrian safety.

Ormskirk Eastern Gateway conceived, developed and funded by West Lancashire Borough Council, Lancashire County Council and Historic England, with further support from Edge Hill University brings together a number of projects to realise these aspirations and ensure they are delivered in a complementary fashion and in a way which will create cost efficiencies in their construction.

WLBC has committed £185,000 of capital funding to the public realm improvements and nearly £500,000 in Section 106 monies from Edge Hill University.

LCC has committed £1.25 million of LTP3 funding to the Edge Hill Cycle Link and Ormskirk Bus Station projects and Historic England has committed £565,000 of Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) monies.

The creation of seamless connectivity across the town centre by enhancing Ormskirk's historic ginnels and alleyways and by exploiting underutilised public spaces will help create better connectivity within the town centre.



Improving the gateways to the town centre, in particular the Moor Street gateway, will improve linkages between the town's commercial and cultural assets. Sympathetic improvements to the public realm in Moor Street will support the evolution and growth of the market.

Developing the arts, cultural and heritage focus of the town, will increase the prominence of Ormskirk's offer as a unique historic market town between the two adjacent and competing urban conurbations of Liverpool and Greater Manchester.

The 1960s bus station on the very edge of the historic core will be demolished and replaced with a modern facility and include a cycle path to link the railway station and the bus station with the cycle path to Edge Hill University.

Generating the necessary funding is always a challenge but all the partners have shown great cooperation in compiling the necessary financial support.



The Midlands

Boston Borough Council

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Mansfield District Council

North Northamptonshire Council

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

West Lindsey District Council

Warwick District Council

Boston Borough Council

Boston Townscape Heritage Project

Boston Town Deal Board developed a vision and Town Investment Plan which has secured a Town Deal worth £21.9 million for what are called 'interventions'. The object being to deliver, "economic productivity through urban regeneration, planning and land use, skills and enterprise infrastructure and connectivity."

As part of the Town Deals Funding, Boston was awarded £750,000 of accelerated funding on 14th August 2020 to bring forward five projects to help level up Boston in a range of areas.

The Boston Town Heritage Project, through the Boston Town Deal Board, was awarded £277,700 of the accelerated funding for renovating shop fronts in the eastern area of the town's historic market place for the benefit of local businesses, the local community and visitors to the town.

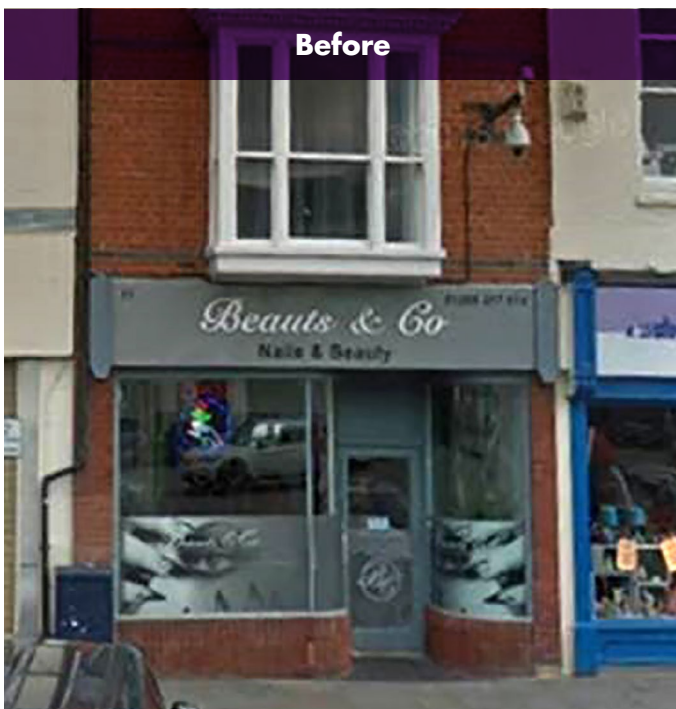
Town centre improvement is a long-known driver for wider regeneration schemes, and the same goes for the work in Boston. The shop front improvements have been really positively received by owners, occupants and the wider public and they have been the driver for wider investment in the town centre.

On site work have completed on a number of properties and work is ongoing on other properties within the Market Place in Boston.

The renovation works to the shop fronts have seen the business owners making a financial contribution to the works – for example:

- 16 Market Place – £100,000, owner contribution – £47,000
- 17 Market Place – £61,000, owner contribution – £25,000

An example of the work undertaken at 17 Market Place, Boston, is seen in the images below:-



The work undertaken on the shopfronts has been well received by the community who see the benefits to the shop front scheme as it raises the quality of the town centre and will hopefully attract more visitors.

The shopfront work is now part of the Healing the High Street project (lead by Heritage Lincolnshire) which has been awarded £3.9 million of Town Deal Funding which involves the engagement of people to upskill them, the shop front scheme and bringing Shodfriars Hall (located in the Market Place) back into use as a cultural centre. The project is focused on Boston's diverse historic environment, as well as newer and prominent buildings.

The Town Deal is an unprecedented opportunity to improve the prospects of Boston. Many organisations, businesses and residents have been involved to firstly identify the possible barriers to sustained success such as skills and enterprise and then to define projects to make a critical difference now and to harness future investment. The Town Deal is not only an enormous achievement for Boston but also testament to the overwhelmingly powerful collaborative work that is already making great things happen. This is just what was needed, especially after such difficult times, to enable our beautiful, heritage-packed place to be proud, to flourish and to thrive.

Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council

Transforming Hinckley town centre and High Street

Hinckley is a vibrant Market Town in the East Midlands, with strong local heritage serving a catchment area of 500,000 people.

The borough council has spearheaded a £200 million major transformation and cultural led regeneration programme for the town centre in recent years.

This has resulted in significant capital investments increasing the retail and cultural offer of the town centre.

Key achievements include; the award winning £80 million Crescent retail and leisure complex, hosting Cineworld and Sainsburys as key anchors; and supported by a new bus interchange facility and 560-space shoppers car park; new Cultural Enterprise Centre, a £8 million transformation of a former hosiery factory; a £15 million new leisure centre; and a £23 million new media campus for the local Further Education College.

The council is now embarking on a major public realm improvement scheme as part of a £1.5 million Heritage Action Zone programme in the town centre.

Working with a very proactive Town Centre Partnership (supported by the Hinckley BID, local retailers, the night-time economy and county council), the town supports a comprehensive events programme throughout the year. The partnership has engaged in the Digital High Street programme in partnership with Loughborough University and has worked hard with the local independent shops to facilitate initiatives such as click and collect and online and social media promotion.

The council continues to support a vibrant market that operates three days per week, which significantly increases footfall to the town centre.

A unique aspect of the town is that it comprises a significant number of independent shops. 80 per cent of the retail units in the town centre are independent shops.

A new Town Centre Strategy is about to be launched which sets out a framework and vision for the town centre over the next 10-15 years.

A brief summary of the key outcomes from the work this council has facilitated and also directed invested in is set out below. The overall economic impact has been significant with GVA generated of £180 million.

The Crescent

- Regeneration of former run-down bus station site.
- 200,000 sq. ft. additional retail and leisure.
- £80 million investment.
- New bus station.
- 560 space car park.
- New cinema



The Atkins building

- Regeneration of a listed former hosiery factory in the heart of the town centre
- Creation of 45,000 sq. ft. Cultural Enterprise Centre.
- Stimulated £22 million new media campus for local Further Education College.
- Comprising creative studios and serviced office space, an art gallery, café and function rooms.



New Hinckley Leisure Centre

- Redevelopment of former council office site,
- Creation of an award winning £15 million state of the art new leisure and wellbeing centre.
- Secured annual footfall of over 800,000.
- 2,000 weekly participants.
- 6,000 gym members.
- 8,000 over 60's enjoy a free swim session.



HAZ Public Realm Scheme

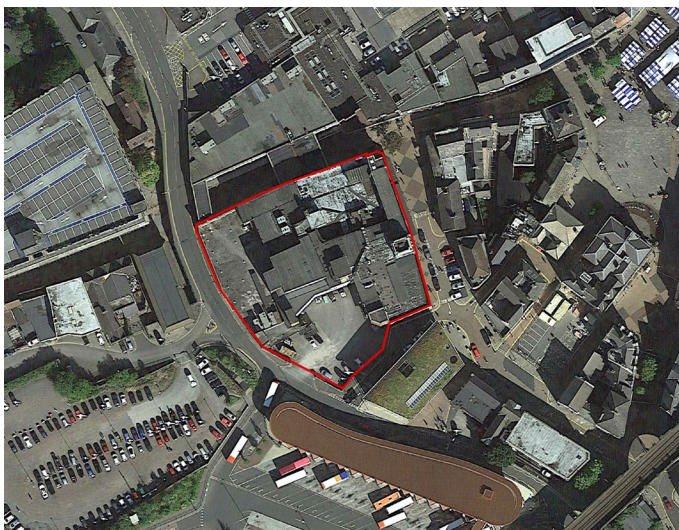
- £1.5 million transformation of a key link to the pedestrianised high street from the town's central park and leisure centre.



Mansfield District Council

Mansfield Connect

Mansfield's former Beales department store was purchased in early 2022 by Mansfield District Council to provide a new multi-agency hub. This forms part of the council's ambitious, long-term, town centre regeneration plans. Known as "Mansfield Connect" the project comprises a new headquarters for the council, integrated with public, educational, enterprise, health and wellbeing services, alongside space for private sector retail.



Re-developing this prominent but challenging site within the town centre will result in:

- **A greater diversity of uses in the town centre:** breeding a new confidence in the town, attracting new uses to increase activity, with a focus on cultural, residential and leisure to complement existing retail and service offers.
- **A re-shaping of the town centre for the 21st century:** driven by new infrastructure and facilities for the public, fostering a sense of ownership by residents taking pride the town's history and shared future ambition.

- **Increased town centre green space and an improved public realm:** extending dwell time, improving perceptions and enhancing the experience for residents, visitor and businesses.
- **New, high standards of design, amenity and accessibility:** ensuring investment creates a healthy, safe and attractive neighbourhood, supported by walking and cycling infrastructure, and enhancing people's overall ability to access the town centre.
- **Improvements to the brand and identity of the town:** bringing better public and event spaces, entertainment and leisure opportunities, educational opportunities and business start-up space, combined with wider investment in historic shop fronts re-energising the high street.
- **Economic growth and prosperity:** attracting new investors into the town centre.



The primary source of funding for this project is planned to come from the Levelling Up Fund and preparations are well underway to prepare a Round 2 submission. The project complements the innovative programme of investment across the town from Seven Trent Water, under its Green Recovery Sustainable Flood Resilience programme, which will see investment in a range of public spaces.

Mansfield Connect is key to the regeneration of the town centre, which is experiencing significant challenges, exacerbated by the impact of Covid, such as:

- The Mansfield catchment area has a population of 325,134. The town retains just 24 per cent of the millions available to spend on comparison goods. The rest is spent within the wider catchment area or leaking out.
- Footfall has declined by 30 per cent in 9 years.
- Retail unit vacancy rates are at 16 per cent, compared to a national rate of 12.5 per cent.
- Some key large buildings are vacant and proving difficult to repurpose.

Mansfield District Council is working collaboratively with partners and stakeholders in developing the concept and its desired ambitions. The partners committed to the project are:

- The Department for Work and Pensions
- Nottinghamshire County Council
- Vision West Nottinghamshire College
- Nottingham Trent University
- NHS health partners
- The local community and voluntary agency

The renewal and reinvention of the town centre forms a key part of the wider council strategy "Making Mansfield: Towards 2030" and Mansfield Connect offers a positive response to the conclusions of the High Street Task Force visit in 2021.

North Northamptonshire Council

Kettering High Street Heritage Action Zone

The Kettering High Street Heritage Action Zone project, a £4.65 million partnership between North Northamptonshire Council and Historic England, is working to reinvigorate parts of Kettering town centre to improve the look of its street scene, showcasing the town's heritage. The works are part of the £95 million government-funded High Streets Heritage Action Zone programme, which is being delivered by Historic England with local partners, to unlock the potential of high streets across England, fuelling economic, social and cultural recovery.

Aimed at kick-starting wider regeneration, improving footfall and attracting new business, the public realm works include new street trees being planted to enhance the existing planting and biodiversity within the town centre and create links to the town's Meadow Road park. Replacement pavement and road surfaces, new seating and bins have been designed to improve functionality and accessibility for users and compliment the town's rich heritage, encouraging visitors to spend more time in the town centre and look up at Kettering's fine historic buildings.

The council and Historic England partnered with Influence, as landscape architects, and BSP Consulting to design a look that took inspiration from Kettering's rich heritage. Despite being hampered by Covid lockdowns, the project team worked closely with the town's Civic Society to develop a design and undertook an online public consultation on two designs, which resulted in over 700 responses. To further assist in public engagement, Trago overlaid the final drawings onto drone footage to create an immersive "fly through" of the design.

The first phase of improvement works is currently under way with Balfour Beatty, and their subcontractors, working onsite along the High Street and surrounding streets with works due to be finished by Summer 2022. The contractors are working closely with retailers and visitors to keep them safe and minimise disruption during the works and are now getting compliments on the quality of the workmanship. Balfour Beatty are also testing new technology on site to help reduce the project's carbon footprint and emissions, essential due to the town centre setting.

This partnering approach and confidence in the team's ability to deliver has resulted in Historic England recently granting the council another £650,000 to extend the scope of works, bringing the total of the project from £4 million to £4.65 million.

As part of the project, grants are being made available to shop owners to restore their storefronts, whilst significant funding is also provided for conversion of vacant historic buildings and repair works. Much of this work involves local skilled tradespeople, further supporting the local economy.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

Abbey Street Development - Town Centre Case Study

The largest town in Warwickshire, Nuneaton has a proud history and distinctive role in providing a focus for business and leisure activity for residents and visitors. However, latterly, the town centre has faced a series of challenges with residents commenting that it has a “tired” feel and lacks a “buzz”.

Retail has declined and key anchor stores have been lost. There is little in the way of leisure, entertainment and night-time economy, causing many residents to travel elsewhere for those purposes. The combined impact of these issues, even prior to the pandemic, has been a decline in footfall.

Land values are low, making development unattractive. There is minimal residential accommodation and a shortage of flexible office accommodation and small manufacturing workspaces, limiting the potential for business diversification.

Our vision is “to transform the town centre into a distinctive and vibrant hub of activity offering high quality opportunities where people can live, work and visit.” The retail offer will be strengthened by consolidating it across a smaller area, re-purposing the under-utilised retail space, addressing the lack of diversity and promoting enterprise and business growth. There will be provision of training and higher education opportunities, with spaces for community groups as well as greening and cleaning the town centre.

This development, part of the wider Transforming Nuneaton Programme, sits on a site of 2.3 hectares. It provides for:

- 145 room “Hampton by Hilton” hotel
- Cinema
- Leisure offer
- Residential apartments

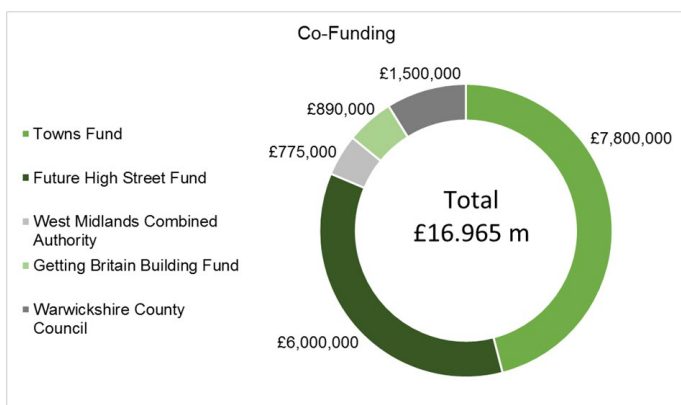


- Digital innovation and skills centre
- Food hall
- Offices
- Retail units
- Multi-storey car park

The creation of a new plaza at the heart of the development, delivering good quality public realm, will strengthen the links between the town’s prime retail location, and Abbey Street, an area with declining footfall.



For this key regeneration project, we are acting as both funder and developer. The total cost is £70 million, with co-funding from:



We are delivering this project with Queensberry Real Estate, our development partner, North Warwickshire & South Leicestershire College and the Hilton Group.

As part of this development, we acquired the Heart of England Co-op Society’s Head office, which includes a historic Art Deco building and land adjacent to a key route to a new plaza. Sympathetic restoration of this building has been undertaken to ensure the preservation of original features. Work includes;

- A new thermally efficient roof.
- Replacement windows in keeping with the original style.
- Structural repairs.
- Retaining of original features, for example the parquet flooring.

A new retail unit has been created on the ground floor, let to luxury fashion retailer LABEL. A lift has been installed to improve access, with modern staff facilities provided. The building provides 4,200 sq ft of flexible open plan character office/workshop space over 3 floors, suitable for a range of businesses.

Due to market failure, the council has taken the lead to make this development a reality and bring real transformation to the town. We have built effective collaborations with partners to agree a shared vision, attract significant funding, and develop a cohesive approach across a range of partners. It is intended that the regeneration and diversification of the town centre creates a hub of community life with a distinctively local flavour, as small independent businesses and alternative community uses increasingly take the place of national retail chains, offering a range of services to those of all ages across our borough.

West Lindsey District Council

Thriving Gainsborough 2024

West Lindsey District Council is using Gainsborough's strong heritage links to help with the growth and regeneration of the town centre.

This £18.9 million Levelling Up Fund programme, has been co-produced with our communities, politicians, local businesses, and third-party investors. It builds on the momentum created by previous interventions and implements further impactful and transformational change.

The intention is to directly address the most pressing systemic challenges and market failures that continue to hold the town and our communities back, while ensuring that the town plays an active role in reducing carbon emissions.

Through a series of aligned interventions, it will establish the physical, economic, social, and environmental conditions required to address economic decline and the acute deprivation experienced across several wards.

The Levelling Up Fund investment will act as a visually impactful enabler and catalyst for clean and organic economic growth, attracting private investment and providing all residents with accessible employment and training opportunities. Re-establishing local pride and nurturing interest from outside the town are also central to our aspirations.

Our interventions include:

- Construction of a four-screen cinema, two retail and one restaurant unit in the town centre via development of an existing dilapidated site
- Redesigning the Market Place with the aim of re-establishing the area as the town's thriving heart
- The extension of the Townscape Heritage Initiative, involving the refurbishment of our heritage buildings and shop fronts
- Creating a green public realm – a new pocket park along the riverside and improvements to the existing greenspace found along the river
- The implementation of a wayfinding strategy for our enhanced townscape that is more coherent and accessible
- The refurbishment of the bus station, further supporting our enhanced townscape
- Delivery of quality residential space within the town centre- extending our Living Over the Shop programme

We have already secured £10 million from the Government's Levelling up Fund to deliver the Thriving Gainsborough Programme.

This follows the success of the council's strategic Invest Gainsborough prospectus, launched in 2016. It was created to reverse the decline of Gainsborough Town Centre and was supported by an £18 million public sector fund. This included a heritage-led master plan to act as the catalyst for the wider renaissance of the town. It addressed the market stigma of Gainsborough and attracted public sector investment from the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Homes England, and Lincolnshire County Council.

The wider 'Invest Gainsborough' programme launched in 2016 and has delivered the following:

- Hotel and restaurant complex at a key gateway site, with public funding support
- A council led shop-front grant scheme available to property owners to restore shopfronts as outlined in the Heritage Masterplan. This has successfully attracted new businesses and it has been praised as an 'exemplar approach' by Historic England.
- A £20 million 'exemplar' affordable housing scheme to be delivered in Gainsborough by Acis. The site is currently a brownfield site and West Lindsey District Council, has been awarded £2.1 million by the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) to enable the development.
- A Living Over the Shop (LOTS) scheme across the wider town centre, through a £4 million investment the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP)
- Opening of Gainsborough Central Station – now offering hourly service to Sheffield from the town for the first time in 26 years.



Warwick District Council

Transforming Royal Leamington Spa

Responding to the profound changes facing town centres, the three tiers of local authorities in Royal Leamington Spa are coming together to create a Transformation Framework. This will transform the whole of the town centre by promoting and securing investment of at least £500 million from a variety of sources. This will see the town centre once again become the thriving heart of the local community. The framework will have multiple aims: tackling climate emergency issues; promoting health and well-being; whilst creating a wonderful place to live, work and visit.

January 2022 saw the coming together of elected members for the inaugural meeting of the **Royal Leamington Spa Town Centre Transformation Board**. The cross-party board representing district, town, and county councils will meet regularly to oversee the preparation of the Transformation Framework. They will be aided by an Advisory Group consisting of key town centre organisations and representatives formed to provide regular insights from their wide-ranging areas of expertise.

We'll be working with our private sector partners to encourage re-use of vacant larger floor spaces. This will present challenges and opportunities as we look to repurpose former retail units no longer required to a more mixed-use and diverse set of applications, including housing and workplaces.

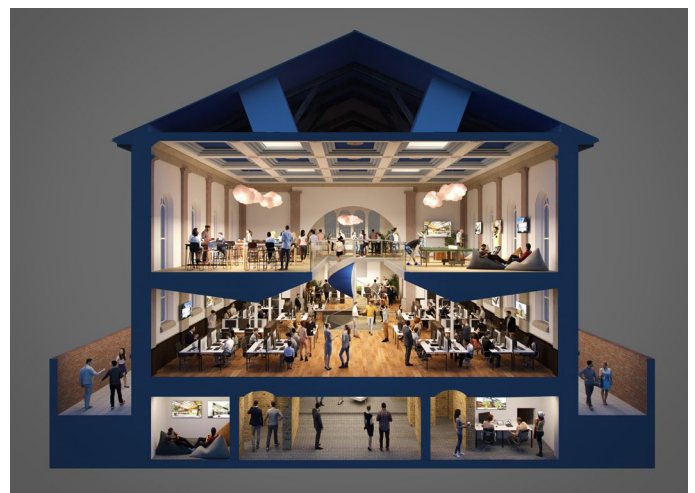
We'll also be taking to opportunity to maximise the potential of canal and riverside locations and the town's extensive parks.

There is a key challenge around envisioning 'high streets' as public spaces rather than through-traffic routes. These routes are used for events through the year such as Christmas markets; re-imagining these spaces, in particular space in front of the Town Hall, offers the opportunity to change the way the town centre operates.

In August 2020, Warwick District Council bid to the Future High Street Fund and secured £10 million alongside a further £10 million in match funding for the town centre.

Projects include:

- Rejuvenating parts of the established Creative Quarter to deliver new floor space in the town centre, supporting the town's digital creative industries. There are a significant number of studios looking to locate into the town centre or to grow on from their existing spaces, with Leamington being one of the UK's top gaming company hotspots. One example of this type of reusage is occurring at the Grade II listed former United Reform Church.
- Work is underway in preparation for the Commonwealth Games this coming summer with Royal Leamington Spa hosting the Lawn Bowls events. Victoria Park in the town is the venue for these events and has secured significant legacy improvements. The railway station forecourt is also being improved to better welcome arrivals.
- Work is already underway in the Old Town to re-imagine how the central Bath Street can operate, to improve air quality and the physical environment, and support diversification of businesses.





East of England

Brentwood Borough Council

Chelmsford City Council

Colchester Borough Council

Dacorum Borough Council

Great Yarmouth Brough Council

Stevenage Borough Council

Watford Borough Council

Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

West Suffolk Council

Brentwood Borough Council

High Street Happiness in Brentwood town centre

Brentwood High Street has held up reasonably well during the pandemic but it is in need of regeneration. Brentwood became famous for The Only Way Is Essex TV series but there is a strong desire to move well beyond that image and find a new identity for Brentwood.

The council has strong ambitions around place leadership. In 2021 Brentwood Council purchased two assets from a private fund, one of which was the Baytree shopping centre in the middle of Brentwood, off the High Street. As owner of the centre the council now has the autonomy to progress an ambitious project for regeneration in the centre of town, which will include a cinema, not seen in Brentwood for nearly 30 years, residential space, leisure space, improved public realm and flexible evolving retail space in Phase 1.

Phase 1 will deliver around £15 million of additional investment to the town centre over the next three years.



Phase 2 will see further enhanced public realm space, residential and/or a hotel; Phase 2 is anticipated to commence in 2030 when vacant possession can be obtained. A formal detailed planning application will be submitted later this year for Phase 1 with an outline planning application for Phase 2 being submitted at the same time.

However, physical space isn't everything. There's no point in regeneration if people don't feel safe in a town centre, the offering isn't right and the 'vibe' isn't what people want. With this, Brentwood is embarking on a project, not just of physical regeneration and place shaping but changing the culture and the feel of the place – not an easy task.

To encourage the support and participation of our communities, we've held two public and business engagement 'High Street Conferences' so far this year. One focused on reassurance and education, and the second was called "Your place, Your say". We want to listen to what Brentwood people want Brentwood to be and be known for.

We're also actively looking at alternate uses for underutilised spaces (such as our multistorey car park) with a focus on creative, events and opportunities for young people. We're partnering with local businesses and community groups to collaborate on this project. To help do this, we're developing and deploying an app to allow local people to vote for options of the type of developments, amenities and facilities they want to see in the town. This means we can deliver, with our partners, what our residents and businesses want – rather than what the council assumes is needed.



We see the whole piece as a 'Happiness Project'. People are happier not just when the physical place looks nice, but it is one in which they feel safe and unthreatened, it has a range of stimulating cultural and retail offerings that are inclusive and the people around them are happy. High Street happiness is a holistic and multifaceted challenge that requires optimism and significant effort. In Brentwood, we're giving it a go.

Chelmsford City Council

Tindal Square, Chelmsford: Using public realm to re-shape city centres

The success of city centres depends on many factors, some within the control of local authorities and some not. The most successful places rely on a mix of investment from the public and private sectors.

Chelmsford city centre is no exception. During the pandemic, like all city centres, business suffered. Alongside national changes to retailing, the city centre saw a significant decline in footfall and shop closures.

As part of the City Council's Economic Renewal Plan, we recognised that a continued investment in public realm was central to increasing business confidence, as we moved out of the pandemic. This was identified as critical to create a more flexible and resilient city centre that could evolve and adapt to the new challenges it faced.

The Tindal Square Public Realm Improvement Scheme represented the next stage in the city council's public realm programme, where in the last 7 years over £10 million has already been invested.

However, as the most complicated and largest single investment, at £3.8 million, it was important to clearly set out the benefits to businesses and the public. Public consultation demonstrated that businesses and the public fully supported the scheme.

In summary, the scheme delivers:

- The removal of motorised traffic in front of Shire Hall, a Grade II* listed building
- The creation of a 3,000 m² high quality public space with new seating, space for external dining, 10 new trees and the infrastructure to enable future events
- A pedestrian priority shared space that allows for cyclists to pass through the space
- A new accessible entrance to Shire Hall, one of the city's most important historic buildings which has been vacant since 2012

During the pandemic, the city council developed the detailed design for the scheme and tendered it for construction. Alongside that, a funding package was developed to deliver the scheme in the most cost-effective way possible.





This included a successful application to the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, which secured £750,000 from the Getting Building Fund.

The remainder of the funding was secured using planning contributions from development (S106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy), totalling close to £3 million.

In developing and delivering the project, the city council has worked hand in hand with Essex County Council, the highway authority. The partnership approach has demonstrated a good example of both authorities utilising public realm to deliver shared economic, sustainable travel and place shaping objectives.

Now on site, the project is scheduled to be completed in October 2022.

Colchester Borough Council

Grow-on Space and Digital Working Hub for Colchester

Colchester Borough Council will shortly deliver a ground-breaking and iconic new facility, which will quickly take a key place in Colchester's enterprise and innovation eco-system.

The scheme originated in 2017, responding to a significant market failure in suitable, affordable accommodation for small local creative and digital businesses wishing to 'grow on' or upsize from the start-up phase.

The chosen site for development is a former bus garage last used in 2017, selected due its proximity to an established and very successful creative business centre for start-ups. The bus garage had no suitable alternative uses, and strong scope for town centre regeneration.

The scheme creates a new 4-story building comprising 12 units for businesses and a ground floor café. The total lettable space is 799m² and Gross Internal Area 1254m².

Ten new businesses and 86 NET jobs will be created within 15 years. The £5.6 million project is funded by £3.7 million from the Local Growth Fund (LGF), £0.9 million council match funding, and £0.9 million Towns Fund.

Whilst Colchester's town centre is faring better than many others, patterns of how people use town centres are changing, notably through the decline of traditional retail. The scheme helps diversify the range of town centre uses, building on an established hub. It creates higher-skill, higher-pay jobs at a key location, readily accessed through active and sustainable transport links, reducing car use.

As well as completing the Queen Street frontage of the core regeneration zone, the scheme removes an eyesore former industrial building, and acts as a catalyst to create an attractive new public space – John Ball Square – showcasing an ancient monument with part of the town wall repaired and revealed.



To realise this vision, the council worked closely with the South East Local Enterprise Partnership through the Local Growth Fund (LGF), our in-house delivery partner Amphora, our project architect, and the county council. We also engaged Historic England and key stakeholders including the Colchester Civic Society and the local creative sector.

A key challenge faced was around securing full planning permission by March 2021. We had to negotiate with Homes England on the building massing and design due to the setting of the historic wall; reducing the size of the building even slightly would have reduced the economic outputs and thus benefit to cost ratio below required minimum.

Through the Town Deal programme we've expanded the scheme to include a digital working hub, adding significant features and benefits. We've upgraded the IT and connectivity specification including the latest 10 gigabit broadband and 5G. We also secured a flagship local enterprise as the managing operator; AIXR who are regionally and globally significant in the development of virtual and augmented reality. Coupled with the additional digital investment secured through the Town Deal, the centre will provide strong distinctiveness strengthening Colchester's economic aspirations which major on digital and tech investment.



Dacorum Borough Council

A new Place Strategy for Hemel Hempstead

The Hemel Place Strategy will set out a new vision for Hemel Hempstead and will incorporate proposals for the regeneration and management of the town via a wide range of ambitious projects. This includes transformation of the centre, the town's greenspace, canal side regeneration, and the next chapter in the role of Maylands Business Park as a dynamic engine for economic growth for Hertfordshire.

At the heart of the strategy there will be a place shaping approach to knit together all the exciting developments emerging in Hemel in order to shape the town as one place, now and in the future.

The Hemel Place Strategy will comprise ten key themes, including a 'meanwhile' strategy that will help testing ideas, generate opportunities and gather feedback from the local community. Another key theme is health and wellbeing, ensuring every resident in the town has good access to employment, green spaces, cultural and leisure facilities, good quality housing, as well as an attractive, accessible and safe public realm which encourages active travel.

Delivery of the Hemel Place Strategy will be led and governed by the new Hemel Place Board. This is a partnership of key stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors which have a strong presence in Hemel Hempstead.

The Board will provide strategic direction for the growth of the town and the content of the new Place Strategy.

The town centre strategy will be a vital part of the town's economic recovery from Covid and it will be an essential component in shaping the future of Hemel in line with Dacorum growth and infrastructure strategy to 2050.

The key objective of the town centre strategy is to transform the town centre in a vibrant and busy cultural quarter with a mix of uses and activities including workspace, restaurants and bars, cultural facilities, retail and a range of housing tenures and types.

It also aims to promote ambitious new growth and regeneration, including the refurbishment of vacant or partially vacant buildings and establish the town centre as a desirable place to live and improve the connection between Hemel station, the town centre and the old town through clear, safe and attractive routes.

It will include a set of key priorities, a clear action plan and different routes for delivery. The Hemel Place and Town Centre Strategies are at an early stage of development and the next steps are consolidating the vision and the branding strategy as well as preparing the community engagement process that is expected to start in June 2022.

Hemel Place Board



Andrew Percival
Board Independent Chair



Great Yarmouth Borough Council

Market Place regeneration and Fitness & Wellbeing Centre

Changes in the way we live are unavoidable for any town centre, but for a seaside town like Great Yarmouth there is a risk of that being compounded alongside changes to people's holiday patterns – although as the last two years have shown, cheap holidays abroad can be far from guaranteed.

The Norfolk town is pushing back with significant investment in its town centre and a “second high street” on the seafront Golden Mile, with the aim of shifting how people think about the main shopping area and extending the season on the seafront.

With funding from the Future High Streets Fund and a Town Deal, its historic marketplace – a place of trade for well over 800 years – is being transformed. The tired 30-year-old covered market is being replaced with a distinctive new £4.8 million wooden canopy, described as “like a cathedral” by one trader. The new structure will provide modern facilities, covered seating for eating and drinking, and improve accessibility. After years of dwindling stall numbers, there are now four times as many people interested in opening up in the new structure as there are spots available.

Next to the market, a former department store is set for transformation into a £16 million university and library learning centre. The aim is to drive educational aspiration – a third of adults in the area have no formal qualifications.





With a £39 billion offshore green energy industry on its doorstep, the town needs to encourage training to capitalise on the potential for economic growth, with the added benefit of generating new social uses for the town centre.

The surrounding area, bounded by the Great Yarmouth Minster and home to 15 listed buildings, is part of a Historic England High Street Heritage Action Zone that is helping restore the physical fabric of the town centre and encourage further new uses – such as over-shop residential. Working with DEFRA and Trees for Cities, 500 new trees are being added to the market and the wider urban area, and a significant public realm project will see the whole marketplace renewed to provide a safer, cleaner, and greener environment and encourage in the ‘pedestrian pound’ and private retail investment.

The public realm work includes wayfinding to better link the town centre to the seafront, another key shopping and leisure area in Great Yarmouth. Here, a £2.7 million lottery-funded project has already brought the Venetian Waterways network of canals, gardens, and a boating lake back into full boom, and work is starting on a £16 million restoration of the Grade II* listed glass and iron Winter Gardens in one of just five Heritage Lottery Horizon projects. The aim is to create a year-round visitor attraction, with a high-quality restaurant, and education and community activities.

Close by will be the council’s £26 million new fitness and wellbeing centre, that includes a confidence swimming pool and gym, a gala-ready pool, fun slides and splash pool, climbing wall, and flexible indoor courts. The centre is majority funded by the council itself, with support from the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and Sport England to help combat low health outcomes: the borough has fewer active adults, higher smoking rates, and more preventable deaths than the national average. The design includes expansive glazing and a link through the building connecting the beach and seafront, creating a new public area to actively draw people into the centre and encourage them to be more active and healthier.



Stevenage Borough Council



Transformational regeneration of Stevenage town centre

Stevenage, Hertfordshire, is experiencing transformational change. A £1 billion regeneration programme led by Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) is delivering a mixed-use town centre reflecting the aspirations of its people, businesses, and recognising its new town heritage and spirit.

The regeneration of Stevenage town centre will deliver a refreshed and reinvigorated environment, bringing residential, leisure, commercial space, evening economy, active travel plus arts and culture thus diversifying its current use. The transformation has been designed with local communities, following extensive consultation, and initiatives such as Stevenage Works are helping to provide local jobs and skills, and help fund and provide volunteers for community projects.

SBC has built on existing attributes within the town, including excellent transport links. The opening of the new bus interchange in spring 2022 will seamlessly connect all transport hubs – including the railway station with the recently opened fifth platform. These enhancements to connectivity will also work alongside proposals to enhance our existing 45km of cycle network.

The town secured £37.5 million of funding through Towns Fund, for a package of projects that will boost the local economy. The projects will deliver a wide range of benefits for local people, including a state-of-the-art Sports and Leisure Hub and a New Town's Heritage Centre. Responding to national trends, SBC understands the importance of introducing a mixture of uses into the town centre.

SBC has built partnerships with private investors for major commercial and residential development with Mace and Reef Group. Development has already been delivered, such as a £50 million upgrade to Queensway North, with mixed-uses including a gym and restaurants.

The council is bringing change now, demonstrating its commitment to the town and building confidence in what is to come. Already the Town Square – home of the iconic Clock Tower – has new paving, bespoke lighting and the restoration of heritage building frontages based upon original features. Market Place has a new garden play trail to improve accessibility and boost footfall. The council is adapting to the changing economy with the introduction of Co-Space, a flexible working facility.

The regeneration requires working in close collaboration with businesses; Stevenage is home to a wide range of international sector-leading companies and hundreds of ground-breaking STEM organisations. The town continues to be a focal point for the life sciences industry with leading companies expanding to Stevenage. Stevenage is a place where business wants to be, and we have recently welcomed the start of development of a £65 million European headquarters for Autolus. Strong partnerships established by SBC present a unique opportunity for existing and new business, the current investment will continue to be a catalyst for further growth.

Post pandemic uncertainty has required SBC to confidently narrate the story of the regeneration against a backdrop of a changing retail landscape. There is a need for a consistent pace of delivery, instilling confidence in the future, and working collaboratively with stakeholders. The local authority has been the driver in bringing forward this transformation, leading public sector intervention to attract private investment.

Change is happening now and delivery of several key projects is underway. The tangible success on the ground, combined with the funding secured, represents partnership working that is critical to the ongoing town centre regeneration.



Watford Borough Council

Watford: No ordinary town

With the heart of a city, but the community spirit of a village, Watford is no ordinary town. We are a community that unites behind big ideas and, by embracing these unique qualities, Watford Council has developed an ambitious, visionary programme that goes far beyond the scope of traditional regeneration projects, to deliver something truly transformative for our town.

Watford is a town of many faces. It's home to one of the country's longest high streets, a regional shopping centre, and also an iconic 1930s Town Hall, library, college and a major cultural venue. It's also a business hub, for companies ranging from multinational blue chips, to local start-ups.

The vision for the Town Hall Quarter was born through a shared desire to improve the public realm, provide quality housing, support business, celebrate local culture and conserve our heritage. It presents an exciting, once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform an under-utilised part of the town centre, and reinvigorate the High Street with a renewed purpose and increased footfall.

This major transformation programme will introduce 350 new homes, a hotel, commercial premises and bring far reaching improvements to the public realm. All this underpinned by a commitment by the council to transform our historic Town Hall with a £24.8 million investment. Plans include opening a modern museum beyond its distinctive heritage walls; launching an innovation and incubation hub to nurture small businesses; and refurbishing our live-music venue, the Colosseum, to attract both residents and visitors to the town centre.

All this has been made possible by transforming the way in which the council itself operates. We reduced council office space by 75 per cent and leveraged the opportunity provided by the pandemic to find new, collaborative ways of working to allow staff to continue to deliver the best-possible service to our residents, whilst achieving a healthy work/life balance.

Sustainability remains at the heart of every project and the Town Hall Quarter is no exception. The driving force behind the reimagining of our Town Hall and refurbishment of the Colosseum is the duty to protect our heritage buildings and ensure they are as sustainable as possible.





£3.7 million of decarbonisation funding has been awarded and work is underway to future-proof these much-loved landmarks.

Watford Council is partnering with Mace to manage the Town Hall and Colosseum refurbishments and is seeking a joint venture partner to deliver the regeneration of the Town Hall Quarter. Alongside the new homes, commercial and retail space will also be created as part of the £150 million place-shaping programme, in a scheme that will span the next decade.

It is undoubtedly a challenging and ambitious programme for a district council, but it is one that underpins and embodies everything that Watford stands for. We are unashamedly determined in our ambition for our town and know that in the Town Hall Quarter we are building a legacy that will stand testament to our proactive approach to always exceed expectations and deliver the very best, for our residents, businesses, visitors and our community.



Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council

Hatfield's One Town Centre

One Town Centre is seen as the flagship regeneration development for Hatfield town. Following years of decline and failed regeneration attempts, the concept of regenerating a significant proportion of the town centre was seen by many to be a pipe dream.

The scheme will deliver 71 apartments over 3 buildings, 1200m² commercial space, a new town centre plaza, public realm and parking.

With a Gross Development Value of £23 million, the scheme has received investment from both the public sector through circa £5 million Homes England and One Public Estate funding, as well as our development partner, Lovell Partnerships.

The site encompasses the eastern quarter of the town centre and provides a main pedestrian and vehicular route to the town. The former inward facing town has been opened through the connectivity and public realm the new scheme includes, as well as the design of the buildings and placement of active frontages.

The ground floor commercial units are flexible in design and planning has been sought for a wide range of uses, ensuring that when the units come to market, they are adaptable for the interest sought. The public realm not only reflects the new environment, but also links into the recently redeveloped town square to ensure continuity. Pre-pandemic comparison spend increased by 38 per cent as did footfall (Experian, 2018).

The town centre is within the setting of a Grade I listed heritage asset, and early designs faced unresolvable objections from Historic England. This required redesign and extensive engagement with consultees, which did set back the progress of the development. Work has commenced onsite and is scheduled for completion June 2023. Further developments, including 80 new homes at Link Drive are also underway, which will contribute to the vitality of the town centre.

The developments have only been made possible by the production of the Hatfield Renewal Framework, which shows opportunity sites to be developed in the future. Rather than a detailed masterplan, principles of development and approximate time scales outlined the council's vision and strategy for the town's next 30 years.

Key to these proposals saw the consolidation of the town's surface level car parks into one location through a multi-storey car park (MSCP). Partly funded by the Herts Local Enterprise Partnership, the award-winning car park provides a new link into the town centre, through the newly refurbished town square. The MSCP has enabled development to take place on now-redundant surface car parks. By July 2021, the council had completed construction of its MSCP, and construction commenced onsite for a large residential development on one of the car parks.

Post-pandemic recovery looks optimistic for the town. Decisions to re-locate library services and community uses into the centre of the town has ensured occupancy rates and a source of attraction. The public realm refurbishments have benefitted the businesses which operate outside of their unit, and together have made the town more resilient to economic fluctuations.

West Suffolk Council

Regenerating a Bury St Edmunds heritage building

In 2020 West Suffolk Council began working on a major investment in the heart of Bury St Edmunds town centre.

Barnes Construction is carrying work on the council's behalf to protect and keep the historic front at 17-18 Cornhill the site of the former Post Office. The rest of the building, including parts which were added on at a later stage, will be demolished and replaced with two ground floor commercial units and 12 flats above.

Once completed later in 2022, the scheme will bring the site back into economic use and deliver new homes. It will also protect the Cornhill front which is in a conservation area while making it more accessible.

The investment needed

The council has agreed to invest £8.4 million, which includes the £1.6 million purchase. The Leader of West Suffolk Council, Councillor John Griffiths, has also secured an additional £160,000 through Suffolk Public Sector Leaders from the business rates retention pool. On top of this the council, following work with the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, has secured £2.75 million of

government investment into the project. The money gives more cost certainty given the challenges to construction following Covid and other external influences.

Public backing

In 2017, the council, working with partners, led on shaping a masterplan – a vision for how growth could happen in Bury St Edmunds town centre. That masterplan saw two stages of public engagement which generated 8,000 public comments.

Many of those comments referred to widening Market Thoroughfare and making improvements to St Andrews Street South to better integrate the arc and the Cornhill and Buttermarket as one coherent town centre and ensure maximum footfall between the two areas.

At the same time, the Post Office decided to relocate its business from 17-18 Cornhill and the council was able to move swiftly to secure the acquisition of the site to give it control over the site's future.

Then in summer 2018, the council held a public exhibition of early designs. These received overwhelming support.



Improving the town centre

This is an investment in the long-term future of the town. It's not just an investment in the town centre as a place of economic, but also cultural, leisure and social activity. In other words, we anticipate that although there may be change in how we use them, our high streets are still places to which people will go, as well as places that people will live and work in. The ambitions of the public and the council, as set out in the masterplan, is to better unite the arc and the historic town centre so that they're easier for visitors to enjoy and explore. We're doing this by creating a lighter, brighter wider walkway at Market Thoroughfare and adding a new commercial front onto St Andrews Street as part of a wider ambition to change the feel of the street so that it becomes more of an attraction in its own right.

Working in partnership

The council has worked with representatives of a number of key town centre groups including:

- The Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership
- The Bury Society
- Bury St Edmunds Town Council
- Bury St Edmunds Town Trust
- Our Bury St Edmunds Business Improvement District
- Suffolk County Council

The South

Cherwell District Council

Eastbourne Borough Council

East Hampshire District Council

Gravesham Borough Council

South Somerset District Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Winchester City Council

Woking Borough Council

Cherwell District Council

Castle Quay redevelopment

The transformation of Banbury and creation of a truly 21st century destination has been a priority for Cherwell District Council since it acquired Castle Quay Shopping Centre in 2018.

Decisive political leadership to purchase Castle Quay from an external landlord has allowed us to quickly transform the centre into a game-changing mixed-use development combining new leisure attractions, vibrant restaurants and bars, welcoming public space, a new canal-side, hotel, and supermarket to support the town's existing retail and attract more visitors to the town. The council has invested £70 million in this redevelopment.

The first phase of the development opened in August 2021 and included a 117-room Premier Inn and a 30,000 square foot Lidl. Construction work was able to safely progress during the period when Covid put so much economic activity on hold. Both are performing exceptionally well, with footfall high throughout the week at Lidl and guest numbers consistently strong at Premier Inn.

In April 2022 The Light will be opening. It's a 55,000 square foot entertainment space over three floors, which will include a premium 7 screen cinema, 10 lane bowl, retro arcade, and a wide range of exciting leisure offers as well as a stunning terrace with restaurant and bar.



The Light is a true reflection of the council's ambition to revive the canal-side and will anchor Waterfront's leisure offer. The Waterfront will also include three further restaurants, which are set to open by early summer. With further planned regeneration, hundreds of new homes will also be created in the town offering the chance to live, work and relax in the middle of a vibrant, modern town centre.

The council has also breathed new life into the town centre's former BHS store, investing in the creation of a unique food, retail and leisure destination that brings the community to the canal-side as well as increasing footfall to the town from visitors from all over the region. Global street food menus are delivered by the very best local traders sourcing ingredients as close to Banbury as possible. There is also a dedicated flexible space where workshops, events and activities for the community run throughout the year.



We know that in the future town centres will not just be about shopping. Active asset management is ensuring that new uses, services and brands are added to the centre creating a mixed-use destination that is less dependent on the challenging national retail landscape.

The council has unlocked the town's potential by bringing a much-needed leisure and night-time economy to the town and re-connecting the waterfront with other parts of Banbury. The development of Castle Quay Waterfront will sustain and revitalise Banbury for businesses, residents and visitors and really consolidate the town's place in the wider regional economy.

This investment has provided us with a key strategic site to kickstart our ambitions for a wider canal-side development, involving numerous partners to deliver a mixed-use town centre regeneration programme that will see Banbury as a destination of choice. This is an example of place-shaping at its best.



Cherwell District Council

Reimagining Bicester

Bicester is a market town in Cherwell District in north east Oxfordshire, with twin railway stations offering travel into London or Birmingham in under 90 minutes, plus a junction of the M40. Bicester has been identified as an Eco Town, Garden Town and Healthy New Town and has ambitious targets for the growth of the town in a form which creates a vibrant place where people choose to live, work and spend leisure time in sustainable ways.

Cherwell District Council is committed to delivering improvements to Bicester's town centre, ensuring that it serves the needs of residents, existing and new, and visitors alike. An established place-shaping team supports economic prosperity and is actively working to enhance Bicester's experiential offer (with significant tourism anchors such as Bicester Village to the south of the town centre and Bicester Motion to the north), serving the significant growth as a Garden Town and visitors as part of a strategic tourism spine. It was recognised that Bicester's town centre needed improvement pre-Covid; the pandemic has only served to accelerate changes in shopping habits and placed additional pressures on businesses.

The need and opportunities for recovery are greater than ever. The "Reimagining Bicester's Town Centre" work began in June 2019 with an initial workshop and was facilitated by retail guru Bill Grimsey. Terms of reference were written and a Town Centre Task Group, made up of volunteers from key stakeholders, was formed. Its first task was to produce an Outline Plan to set out aspirations for the town centre.

Bill encouraged us to take this initial step unconstrained by budget or resource; it simply needed to be geared to what Bicester actually required. The Outline Plan includes six 'foundation stones' which are instrumental in ensuring that Bicester's town centre is futureproofed and sustainable (both economically and environmentally) and is in alignment with the Garden Town programme bringing further growth to the town.

The foundation stones pave the way for a delivery vehicle, such as a Business Improvement District or Community Improvement District, in order to provide focussed resource; recognise the need for an investment mechanism; establish the town centre's role in the strategic tourism spine; identify the need for a community hub and unified standards in communication and brand identity; and recognise a role for planning policy in supporting the future prosperity of the area.

The improvements to Bicester's retail centre are very much ongoing, with the next stage to produce a fully-costed business plan in order to translate the aspirational outline plan into deliverable action. The potential for this historic market town is huge, and Cherwell District Council's aspirations match that. However, the challenge of funding such improvements is significant, and the improvements must be sustainable. As such, the delivery team is constantly horizon scanning for capital funding opportunities, beginning with circa £6 million to revamp the Market Square into the community hub previously mentioned.

The fact that Bicester has Garden Town status is of fantastic benefit, and has allowed Cherwell District Council to push forward with work for the future of Bicester's growing population and those who visit this remarkable town.



Eastbourne Borough Council

Eastbourne town centre

In recent years, Eastbourne town centre has seen unprecedented transformational change. Significant public and private sector investments have revolutionised the appearance of the area and enhanced the retail and leisure offer for residents and visitors.

Working in collaboration with key partners and stakeholders, Eastbourne Borough Council has enabled and realised opportunities for economic growth and prosperity.

Some of the regeneration projects that have brought about this once in a generation change are:

The Beacon Shopping Centre

An £85 million private investment by L&G in 'The Beacon' to provide 22 new shops, 7 new restaurants and a multi-screen cinema. By using its CPO powers, the council were able to facilitate this development which has totally transformed the retail and leisure offer in the town centre.

The benefits of this project include:

- 700 FTE new jobs
- 77 per cent of people employed were local and 22 per cent from Eastbourne
- 5 apprentices
- 60 NVQ starts and 29 completions
- 13 work experience placements



Eastbourne Town Centre Movement & Access Package (Phase 1)

Alongside 'The Beacon' development, Eastbourne Borough Council has worked in partnership with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) to deliver significant improvements to the public realm. The £8.85 million investment included relocating bus stops, widening footways, new paving, landscaping and seating and new modern street furniture including bus shelters, signage and lighting.

The results of this creatively designed scheme have been outstanding. The area has been transformed from what was known locally as 'diesel alley' into a wide, open and high-quality streetscape to complement The Beacon. It also includes a large open space in the heart of the town centre for public events, resulting in a new sense of place.

Benefits of this project include:

- 26 FTE jobs
- Improved connectivity between town centre and other key destinations
- Long-term sustainability with use of high-quality materials
- Attractive and welcoming public realm, supporting social interaction
- Improvements to safety and security (new lighting)
- Reduced conflict between vehicles and pedestrians
- Increased levels of walking (health benefit valued at £13.8 million, over 15 years)
- Reduced air pollution and noise from traffic

ESCC has also successfully secured £3 million from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) to deliver Phase 2a of the project. The scheme centres on providing greater priority and accessibility for pedestrians along the middle section of the Terminus Road corridor and will see the provision of a new civic space in the heart of the town centre that will enable relocation of tourism and leisure events currently taking place on the seafront, enhancing the town centre experience for residents and visitors.



We are also working to achieve a continuous pedestrian route through the town centre from the railway station to the seafront. The Eastbourne Levelling Up Fund bid includes £7.6 million plans to transform the seafront end of Terminus Road into a vibrant, pedestrianised cultural district, including new green energy infrastructure, with excellent independent cafes and restaurants serving high-quality, locally sourced food and drink all year round.

This project builds upon work already underway to establish this part of the town as FOOD STREET. The aspiration is to create a vibrant independent food and drink economy in an area that has traditionally struggled, but which is now establishing a reputation as a distinctive and rapidly regenerating destination location that can capitalise on its close connection to the seafront.

East Hampshire District Council

Futureproofing Whitehill & Bordon's new town centre

East Hampshire District Council has formed the Whitehill & Bordon Regeneration Partnership. Working alongside Hampshire County Council, Enterprise M3 LEP, Abri, Homes England, Defence Infrastructure Organisation, and Barratt/David Wilson Homes to transform Whitehill & Bordon.

The partnership is delivering 3,350 new homes and jobs which are predicated on delivery of a high-quality new town centre to drive house sales and attract new residents and jobs to the town.

Whitehill & Bordon has the most deprived ward in East Hampshire, in the third decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 and the bottom 10 per cent in the country for crime, and education, training and skills.

School readiness is significantly below the national average. A key tenet for the partnership is that existing Whitehill & Bordon residents must benefit from regeneration as much as people moving into the new homes.

The army left the former garrison town in 2015 freeing up over 100 hectares of previously developed land. There are two existing retail centres in the town, one is a local centre, and the other will become the gateway to the new town centre.

We are building a new town centre from scratch at a time of fundamental change in retail. The Whitehill & Bordon Regeneration Partnership has taken a radical new approach to creating a futureproof, green, healthy and connected new town centre.

It is planned around the way our children and grandchildren will live, integrating leisure, education, health and wellbeing into its design. The town centre will be a bold and inviting destination that welcomes innovation and embraces its local heritage and natural environment.

The new town centre is already taking shape. A new secondary school; leisure centre with six-lane swimming pool and fitness centre; The Shed – an indoor market offering artisan food, arts & crafts, creative workspaces and local entertainment, all opened in the last eighteen months.





A new Future Skills Centre is training local young construction apprentices who are benefiting from the construction jobs across town.

Attractive army heritage buildings are being retained, including the Sergeants' Mess which will offer entertainment and retail, and the parade square, bordered by the Sandhurst Block, is home to a drive-in cinema.

The planning application for the next phase which includes the Sergeants' Mess, new shops, cafes, landscaped squares, and a supermarket is currently being determined. An application for a new health and wellbeing hub will follow later this year.

In line with the green, healthy and connected town vision, the partnership is installing a green loop. This 7km loop provides a safe, high quality, and well-signed walking and cycling route encircling and connecting the new town centre to the exceptional natural green spaces, residential and employment areas across town.

A comprehensive funding package was brought together to deliver the new town centre which included Local Growth Funding via Enterprise M3 LEP, as well as private sector and public sector investment from across the partnership.

Gravesham Borough Council



The Charter Development in Gravesend

The Charter is a neighbourhood of 242 new homes in Gravesend town centre, on the site of two large surface car parks. The Charter is in the Heritage Quarter, and within easy reach of town centre, green spaces, river and rail links. It is due to complete in summer 2023.

Rosherville, Gravesham Borough Council's (GBC) property development company, was formed to deliver this pioneering development with developer Reef. This Build to Rent scheme is council funded, supported by a long-term appraisal, and access to local authority borrowing.

Changing shopping trends and the pandemic pose fundamental questions about the future use and character of Gravesend town centre.

Creating a healthy community

The Charter is part of GBC's plans to support a sustainable mix of uses, stimulate wider regeneration and enrich the local economy. It has created jobs and will bring footfall to support businesses.

It contributes to GBC's commitment to be a carbon zero authority by 2030, creating well insulated homes, efficient in energy demands and running costs. The sustainability credentials include green energy production, photovoltaic panels, and whole house ventilation.

Streets link to the High Street and connect with green spaces and attractions like the borough market and LV21, a lightship transformed into a floating art space. The Charter continues Gravesend's relationship with the Thames – with Town Pier, set to become a gateway to London, within walking distance.

The Charter is part of GBC's holistic approach, combining community initiatives with a strategy for place-led, quality and sustainable regeneration.

Our town centre programme has included re-invigorating the 1980's St George's shopping centre. Phase 1 saw improvements to make the centre more user-friendly. The recently opened Council-led arts centre turned a vacant unit into a community hub in the heart of the centre.

Phase 2 will enhance the setting of St George's church, creating a civic and cultural quarter, breathing new life into the town's day/night economy.

We recognise partnerships are essential. We're working with strategic partners like Homes England to deliver on shared ambitions and unlock challenging Brownfield sites. The financial investment and expertise partners bring is vital to Gravesham's regeneration.

We are forging stronger relationships with the private sector. Albion Waterside and Clifton Slipways are partner-led landmark projects due to start this year.

There are challenges – changing the future use and character of town centres; the viability of developments; and adapting wider infrastructure. However, there is also no lack of opportunity.

Gravesham has excellent connectivity, proud urban areas and some of Kent's best countryside. At a recent developer forum Gravesham was described as a 'sleeping giant.'

Our Corporate Plan articulates our vision and our regeneration programme aims to optimise the economic, social and environmental outcomes of projects.

The Charter is part of delivering a Gravesham to be proud of!



South Somerset District Council

Regenerating Chard town centre

Chard demonstrates all the hallmarks of an industrial town albeit set within the beautiful hills and rolling countryside of South Somerset.

The strong manufacturing presence in the town has provided generations of near-full employment. However, this can limit expectations for better employment prospects. The presumption of readily available, but low paid, work can perpetuate low educational attainment, limit local aspiration for change and constrain social mobility. Those in greatest need and reliant on public transport are further disadvantaged by the erosion in public transport in rural communities as public subsidies are curtailed.

Chard's key strengths are its strategic location, exceptional community spirit and fabulous green spaces. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) has invested in regenerating the town centre, focusing on factors that create a sense of 'place', infrastructure and public realm improvements, community engagement and access to skills and employment.

Public consultation is at the heart of the Chard Regeneration programme, with public feedback clearly setting our direction. A community engagement event was held for residents in 2018 and received hundreds of letters, comments and emails in response.

There was a strong desire to see a new leisure centre in the town and further consultation helped shape plans for the site. A further engagement event was attended by over 500 local residents.

Construction of the leisure centre started in March 2020, opening in November 2021 at a cost of c. £16 million. The centre includes a five-lane adult swimming pool, a beginners' pool, cafe facility with a children's soft play area and gym with additional studios.

Since opening, the take up of swimming classes and sessions and membership of the gym/fitness classes has exceeded all expectations and delivered additional footfall into the centre of Chard.

The image below shows the site of the leisure centre before construction.



In addition to the fantastic new leisure facility, Chard has been designated as a High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ), attracting c.£2 million in funding – £1 million from Historic England and £1 million from SSDC – to support three key strands of work:

- public realm
- building/shopfront improvement grants
- community engagement

This is supported by Culturally Chard, a consortium of local organisations led by Chard Town Council and Somerset Art Works and including Chard Museum, Holyrood Academy, Chard Town Team, Chard Carnival Committee and Chard One Team.

We have worked closely with Historic England to ensure any public realm improvements are sensitive to the character of the town, as the majority of it is a conservation area.

Our key partner, Chard Town Council, has contributed its own funding to the public realm projects, as well as taking the lead in commissioning new wayfinding and street lighting and supporting community engagement.

Chard Museum is leading important HSHAZ community engagement projects, including heritage walks, a book of the history of street names and a project that will uncover the history of high street businesses.

Many of our partners in Chard, such as housing associations and educational establishments, already work towards improving outcomes for young people and families. Last year, SSDC opened an 'Opportunities Hub' in Chard library – a place where residents can go to access support in skills' development, vocational training and qualifications and find access to employment.



Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council is nearing the completion of a £20 million project to develop a 'cultural and learning hub'. Working with Kent County Council and with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and local businesses/residents, the project delivers a ground-breaking cultural/community space and visitor destination that will open in April 2022.

'The Amelia Scott' (named after the local social reformer and campaigner for women's suffrage) celebrates the rich heritage and the contemporary life the Borough by bringing together a museum, exhibition space and library, with tourist and citizen information and community services in one new integrated hub.

The project has not been without its challenges. We have had to grapple with supply chain issues, a global pandemic and a shortage of lorry drivers alongside all the challenges associated with restoring a listed building – at times it has felt as if we were only missing a plague of locusts!

Once completed, The Amelia Scott will be a showcase for learning, culture and the arts attracting around 500,000 visitors and 18,000 learners each year. It will also play a pivotal role in the recovery of Tunbridge Wells as a destination of choice, attracting local and international visitors to the town and supporting local shops, restaurants and other venues.

It will celebrate our diverse community, assist local employers to attract and retain staff as well as support our strong and vibrant creative economy. With its motto 'inspiring learning, enriching lives' we hope to inspire a new generation to learn about their history and be equipped to contribute to our future.

The Amelia Scott will also provide a base for wider activity operating across the Borough including in schools. The project is already having a transformative effect on the Town – one local shopkeeper refers to it as 'her cathedral' – giving her hope for the future vitality of the town as it emerges from the shadow of the Covid Pandemic.



A number of formerly closed shop units are being brought back into use including the buildings formerly occupied by Patisserie Valerie, BHS and Maplin. Whilst it was conceived a good decade before the pandemic, it could not be opening at a better time.

The project sits alongside a number of other initiatives including:

- Public realm: we have introduced 'shared space' down the central spine of the town which, together with Covid-inspired schemes such as Parklets, makes the area more pedestrian friendly
- BID: the council set up a Business Improvement District three years ago which has played a key role in responding to the pandemic (and, in more normal times, in promoting the town and delivering events).
- Culture: the council has supported the conversion of a former church into a community theatre, delivered cultural/community space as part of new developments and overseen the conversion a toilet block into NME's 'best small music venue'.
- Planning: the council has made use of Article 4 Directions to protect office space and is working on a Town Centre Plan to masterplan the town centre for a post-Covid world.
- Events: we support a number of events including a Christmas Ice Rink, 'Pub in the Park', an annual 'Mela', regular jazz evenings on the Pantiles and a literary festival which all attract significant footfall.
- CoWorking: we are supporting the conversion of offices to co-working space including a significant part of the Town Hall. This will mitigate the threat of local employers downsizing and support both the establishment of new businesses and local businesses that rely on footfall.

Winchester City Council

Central Winchester Regeneration

Winchester City Council is delivering on its Central Winchester Regeneration (CWR) vision – an ambitious, forward-thinking revitalisation of Winchester city centre – to create a new mixed-use quarter at the heart of one of the UK's oldest and most cherished cities.

The vision, as set out in the agreed CWR Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), is for a vibrant, mixed-use destination for residents and visitors to enjoy.

The opportunity, which overlooks Winchester Cathedral, totals **3.68 acres** and the development proposal for the site comprises:

- **180,000 square foot** of residential space (40 per cent affordable housing)
- **80,000 square foot** of mixed-use space
- **25,000 square foot** allocated for retail, food & beverage

The project is being delivered in line with the council's target for the Winchester district to be carbon neutral by 2030 and is centred around a sustainable transport strategy that will reduce reliance on car journeys through, and into the city centre by promoting a pedestrian and cycle friendly environment.

At the heart of the proposal is the creation of a new, on-street bus solution to give more people better connectivity to the city centre. Part of the planned public realm improvements, this solution was agreed to enable development to come forward on the existing bus station site. The plans also complement the city's sustainability ambitions through the choice of building materials, the measures to minimise energy use, and re-use of buildings, where appropriate.

Winchester is a significant urban centre in the south of England with a population of over 125,000. It is predicted to grow by a further 5.5 per cent by 2030. More than five million people visit Winchester annually, injecting over £322 million into the local area, while the city is home to 8,860 businesses.



Winchester is seeking to diversify its offer, remaining sensitive to the heritage of a historic city while catering to the needs and lifestyles of a new generation. This includes encouraging a more dynamic mix of uses which are attractive to students and young people, including a range of housing types, creative/maker spaces, workspace, curated retail and hospitality offerings.

The revitalised quarter will also offer flexible office spaces for hybrid and co-working to support Winchester's eclectic, thriving community of entrepreneurs and start-ups, providing an environment where individuals and businesses can flourish.

This is an exciting regeneration project that will reinvigorate the whole city and help it meet the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century and beyond, while contributing towards a strong and sustainable future for the wider district and its people.

The Central Winchester Regeneration Opportunity follows extensive consultation with hundreds of local residents, groups and key stakeholders. The SPD was published in 2018 to ensure that there is a clear framework for the development of the site. The Council is working with advisors JLL to identify a development partner to deliver the vision.

Woking Borough Council

Victoria Place: a tale of contemporary town centre regeneration

Victoria Place is a bold, once-in-a-generation residential, retail and leisure development. The centrepiece of a wider town centre regeneration, the ambitious project has transformed the outdated western quarter of Woking Town Centre into a vibrant, cosmopolitan destination.

In 2006, Woking Borough Council (WBC) commissioned a report into the borough's economic development. It identified the need for a clear vision for Woking town centre that would increase residential occupation, deliver employment, attract academic and business occupiers and create more leisure, food, and retail opportunities to better meet the needs of residents, employers and visitors.

The creation of a joint venture company between shopping centre owner, Moyallen, and WBC, called Victoria Square Woking Limited (VSWL), was crucial to success.

The first regeneration phase included enhancement works to Jubilee Square, improvements to Woking Library and entrance, and creation of additional retail and restaurant units.

Further phases followed with improvements to the public realm and pedestrianisation of more parts of the town centre. In addition, WBC promoted new office construction with private developers and encouraged businesses to relocate to Woking.





Before construction works could commence existing amenities required relocation. As part of the development:

- Woking Fire Station was relocated and replaced with a new state-of-the-art station built featuring affordable residential accommodation.
- Woking Market was moved to create a contemporary street food-style market sparking an explosion in tasty independent eateries.
- Transport improvements saw better integrated cycle, bus and train travel, along with wider highway infrastructure improvements.

In 2017 construction works commenced on the £700 million transformational development. The regeneration centrepiece features:

- 429 build-to-rent apartments
- 189-bedroom hotel
- A new 1,500 space car park
- 17,300 m² of retail and leisure space
- Two new public spaces and medical centre.

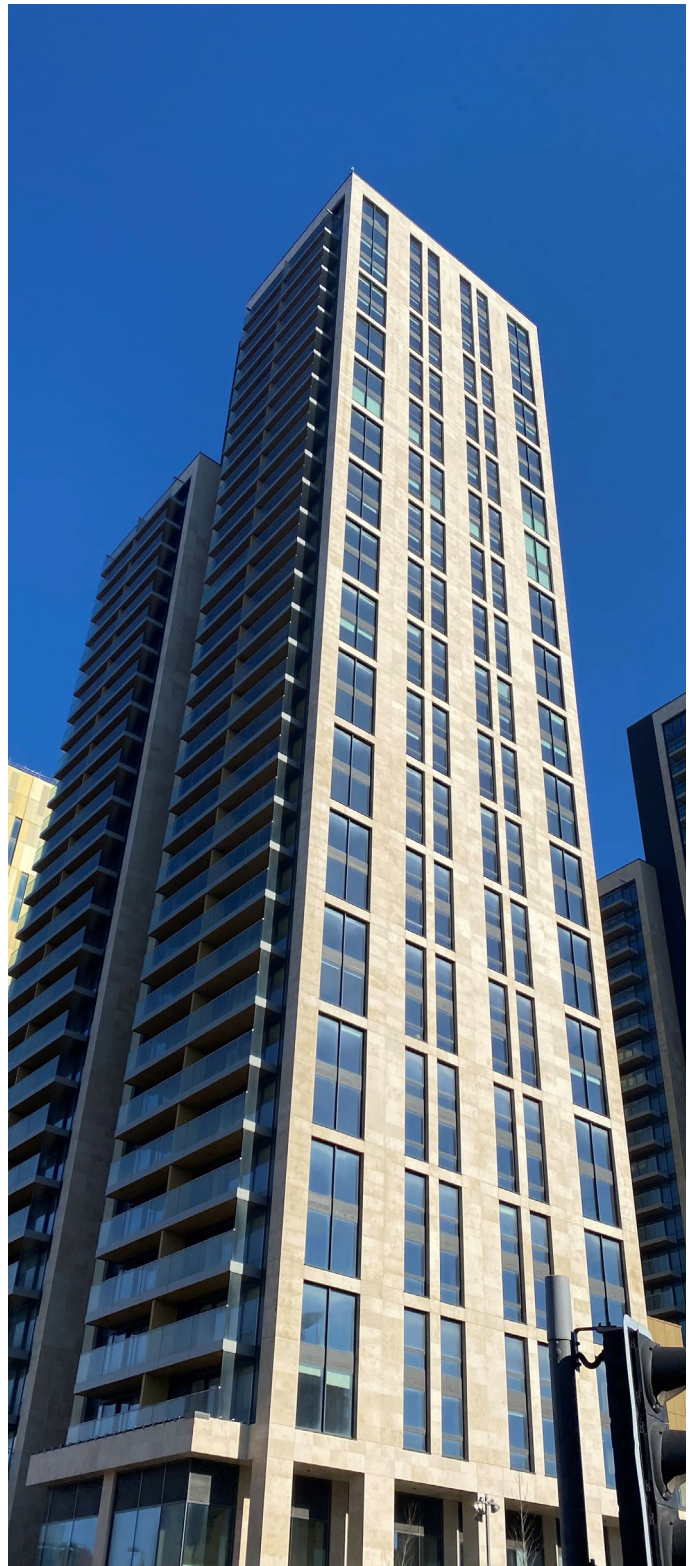
Covid and its impact on an already weakened retail sector has been and remains a major challenge. The closure of Debenhams has a negative impact on the town where repurposing of large retail units proves expensive and challenging.

Covid also had an impact on the construction with resourcing challenges resulting from lockdowns and absence rates. These remain but resilience, patience and partnership has led to success despite these challenges.

The Victoria Place development and wider public realm improvements have transformed Woking Town Centre. Key successes include:

- 429 homes to go towards meeting Woking's housing need.
- An enhanced retail offer, with high-quality high-street brands opening new stores.
- A growing culinary reputation with recognisable brands, such as Gordon Ramsey Street Burger, Cote, itsu, Loungers and Gail's, joining established independents. The first of Gordon Ramsey's Culinary Academy has also opened in Woking.
- WWF-UK has relocated its national headquarters to a purpose-built sustainable building in Woking.

- Premium hotel brand, Hilton, to open 189-bedroom 4* hotel featuring largest conference facility in Surrey.
- Internationally acclaimed performing arts school, Italia Conti, is incorporating its sites at Barbican, Clapham and Guildford in one amazing new home in the heart of Woking.
- Ambassador Theatre Group, Trafalgar Entertainment, and Stagecoach relocated their businesses to Woking.
- Two new public spaces featuring extensive and engaging public art.
- The successful relocation of Woking Market.
- A new state-of-the-art fire station.
- A new leisure and family entertainment complex- Woking Superbowl.
- Creating over 1,000 new job opportunities, in addition to the employment opportunities offer by business relocations.
- New 1,500 space car park offers improved visitor experience.
- Improved public transport and cycle connectivity.
- Enhanced public realm throughout Woking Town Centre.
- Attracted major developers and investors to Woking.





www.districtcouncils.info

E: DCN@local.gov.uk

[@districtcouncil](#)

T: 0207 664 3048

18 Smith Square

Westminster

London SW1P 3HZ