

## Torquay Town Centre Community Partnership and Town Centre Focus Group

### Brief History

Torquay Town Centre contains both quiet residential suburbs and a significant proportion of the major hotel accommodation in the resort, as well as being largest retail centre of Torbay. A large proportion of the area consists of open space. This includes coastline, parks, and recreation grounds, at the walled gardens of Torre Abbey, the rock-faced Royal Terrace Gardens and the private gardens and terraces of numerous hotels. Many of the major buildings are set against a backdrop of mature trees.

### Key Aims and Aspirations:

1. Improve the Town Centre retail, service and leisure experience to improve footfall and provide employment opportunities by:-
  - Becoming the premier leisure destination both night and day
  - Creating a more diverse late night offer. Whilst we recognise the value of our late night economy we would like to see a broader offer than is currently available. This could be achieved by encouraging and providing a range of activities for all age groups such as late night shopping and regular food /music activities to encourage residents/visitors to stay on in town.
  - Encouraging leisure and sport into our Town Centre and to provide a variety of undercover attractions for tourists and residents.
  - Encouraging more people to live and work within the Town Centre
  - Providing more eating and outside sitting areas.
  - Providing adequate well maintained, accessible and convenient parking facilities
  - Creating better connectivity and providing more pedestrianisation.
- Encouraging sympathetic development providing the size and kind of premises which modern day High Street names consider attractive, whilst at the same time creating suitable premises for small independent retailers and other uses such as gyms and cinemas.
2. Make more of and protect the Town's heritage assets by:-
  - Protecting the green and open public spaces from Cary Green, the Pavilions, Promenade to the end of the Princess Gardens and the 'Sunken Gardens', In addition the Royal Terrace Gardens (Rock Walk) which are all covered under one listing with English Heritage. Torre Abbey and its Meadows should continue to be protected by covenant from future developments. Included earlier in document.
  - Maintaining Victorian facades where possible to keep the character of the Town.
3. Make provision for cyclists in and around the Town which would complement cyclist tourism
4. Make access to public spaces easier for the disabled.
5. Protect and maintain our beaches – Torre Abbey Sands and Beacon Cove.
6. Protect the marine environment and develop a sustainable Maritime Economy

## **Key Sites**

Retailing is in the throes of a revolution which has seen high streets up and down the country lose market share year on year. The results are there for all to see, empty shops, derelict buildings, shoppers getting into their cars to go out of town, or not going out at all but shopping online.

“High Streets and town centres that are fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century need to be multifunctional social centres, not simply competitors for stretched consumers. They must offer irresistible opportunities and experiences that do not exist elsewhere, are rooted in the interests and needs of local people, and will meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.” Action for Market Towns, Twenty First Century Town Centres (2011).

The concept of ‘healthy urban planning’ is being promoted by the World Health Organisation to draw attention to the need for planners, public health professionals and others to work together to plan places that foster health and well-being.

Physical activity, especially walking, has many important health benefits for older adults and the built environment plays a crucial role in encouraging healthy activity for this growing segment of the population. Current UK estimates from the Office of National Statistics (ONS 2011) see the proportion of over 60s rising from 23% to 31% by 2058. Torbay already has an over 60s population which exceeds the 2058 ONS national estimates with 31.4% of its population currently over the age of 60 (2011 census) – placing Torbay 45 years ahead of the rest of the country.

Torbay has the potential to act as a leading example of how the design of buildings and public spaces can facilitate beneficial activity for its aging population as well as improving the health of the wider community. The comprehensive review of Torquay Town Centre and planned growth within the Bay offers a unique

opportunity to integrate design guidelines which encourage healthy behaviour and increase accessibility, not just for older adults, but for all residents and visitors no matter what age or ability.

Further reference: World Health Organisation Healthy Cities Movement Universal Design Principals Training Tools for Accessible Towns.

## **Castle Circus and Union Street**

Potential site for redevelopment to create a focal point of the Town and could include a supermarket/superstore, multi storey car park, plus residential development to increase footfall and act as a catalyst for regeneration of the wider area, encouraging other businesses offering a fresh bakery, butchers, fishmongers, greengrocers as an alternative to this proposed development to be re-established in this area. Redevelopment would be subject to taking into account the listed building status of some of these buildings. We would also want to encourage better pedestrian facilities with possibly wider pavements and better links to the Union Street development.

The cinema also needs upgrading and possibly relocating. However, if the cinema is relocated we need to be mindful that this will create a large empty building in an area of the Town already facing many challenges and would suggest the possibility of a much needed community centre being established here. Relocate Job Centre and Magistrates Court to out of Town centre location. Thus making room for landmark retail store and unique indoor attraction to help revitalise this end of Town. The Town Hall has been identified as a potential Art Centre. Key will be the preservation of the architecture of this building.

A new Library is required: a modern facility is fundamental to giving the town the correct image; a similar development to Paignton Library would be welcomed, as not just a modern library but a centre offering community facilities such as meeting rooms, and education facilities.

**Temperance Street** - This is an opportunity to have this area developed as a major shopping area for the town, to take in former works site, and multi storey car park. Suitable uses could be anchor store, quality office space, leisure facilities such as cinema, indoor sports facilities embracing modernisation of multi - storey car park on Lower Union Lane and could extend to Temperance Street car park, also including some residential.

**Union Parade and Pimlico** - These areas to be developed predominantly for retail, commerce and town centre shopping. Opportunity for a major demolition/redevelopment programme as The Hogs Head and surrounding buildings have little architectural merit and we would welcome a landmark building here to encourage further exploration of the Town; possibly a multi-use community space incorporating a new library, council offices and possibly a gym. Support the creation of an indoor attraction for example promoting the Town's connections with people like Agatha Christie or Isambard Kingdom Brunel. Place canopies over large stretches of the pavement and open spaces in the Town, possibly an atrium over the pedestrianised area of Union Street, to make Torquay the place to shop no matter what the weather.

**Market Street and Indoor Market** - Create premises as a form of innovation centres to support fledgling retailers to establish their first business. This could in turn be reinforced by significant Town centre residential development and cafe culture. Encourage more residential homes to be created in this area with at least two bedrooms to encourage families to bring life back into the Town out of trading hours.

**Melville Hill Community Group; Marvellous Melville** -

Melville Hill should be recognised as a place of historic charm, with a mix of both private and quality rented housing that is affordable. New developments should include up market, and contemporary schemes that introduce a wine bar and café culture enhancing the neighbouring business and tourist district. The area should become suitable for people of all ages with Community facilities. There must be no further agreements for Houses of Multiple Occupation or the sub division of existing properties to form single person dwellings

**Fleet Street and Swan Street** - Create a water feature to replicate the Fleet. Create a glass canopy to enhance the street scene achieve connectivity with the Harbour providing outdoor eateries/ cafe culture/leisure and bijoux shops – The Fleet Walk shopping experience. Whilst the Victorian warehouse buildings of Swan Street offer potential for residential and retail which would retain the exteriors of the existing buildings.

**The Strand, Torwood Street and the Harbour side** - Aspiration for improvement of this key stretch of Torquay Harbour which could include redevelopment of The Strand buildings, including Debenhams and the Amusement Arcade. Combination of luxury apartments, improved retail, hotel, small restaurants would be welcomed whilst protecting outlook from the Terrace. Make Torquay Inner Harbour accessible to local people by giving it official community asset status.

Upgrade the area of public space on the harbour side of the Strand to allow for a range of different activities, and a higher quality environment with better provision of seating and better management of spaces including attractive signage to guide people to the waterfront. The Old Opera House has been suggested as an alternative site for an Art Centre of for performing arts. Could alternative uses be found for some of the Night Clubs here in order to dilute the heavy concentration of these in this key part of the

Town Centre? The Terrace car park is a potential development site with its spectacular views but there would be the need to retain adequate car parking for the harbour area.

**Pavilion/ Torquay Marina Car Park:** The Marina Car Park has the potential for a quality development as this has the best views of the harbour which are currently not exploited. However, the height of any development needs to be considered so that this in itself is not detrimental, and thus become a contentious issue to local residents. In addition the groups have serious concerns about incorporating development of the Pavilion into the large hotel scheme on the Marina car park and would support further investigation for the re siting of the Pavilion to another location which may then enable a lower rise less intrusive development on the Marina car park. A possible option would be to relocate the Pavilion on to a constructed island (with bridges) in the inner harbour, around which boats could still move/moor.

The point of the development would be to: Protect the Pavilion and make it the centre of a revitalised harbour area; provide a waterside dining/entertainment environment unique in the UK that would encourage a more mature and upmarket night time economy and provide the type of retail experience during the daytime best described as "Totnes by the sea." If the Pavilion were moved this would allow a larger footprint for the developer of the hotel/spa to build a wider but lower development that could include a children's play area or be the site for an open air public performance space.

- Presentation Pack by Mark Hoyle and Brian Roberts on behalf of Torquay Town Centre- [Protecting The Future Of Torquay's Historic Waterfront Public Assets \(Pavilion, Princess Gardens, Cary Green\) 4 November 2013](#)
- Presentation Document to Steering group by Mark Hoyle and Brian Roberts on behalf of Torquay Town Centre [Proposal to Re-locate Torquay Pavilion](#)

**Princess Theatre/Princess Pier:** Potential to redevelop/extend the theatre to enable it to attract West End Shows whilst not expanding out into the Gardens which should be protected.

**Rock Walk :**To provide access to those with disabilities a cable car/ funicular railway from the bottom to the top of Rock Walk would be welcomed in addition to it creating a revenue generating opportunity. Would support a **high level walkway** from Rock walk to a feature development on Princess Pier incorporating a ferry terminal.

**RICC/Balloon Site/Marina Car Park:** There is a chronic shortage of play and recreational facilities within 200 metres of the sea front and we have identified these sites for such a facility

**Area along SW Coast path just beyond Imperial Hotel (Peak Tor):** To capitalise on our fantastic coastline, explore the possibility of an open air theatre here to rival the Minnack in Cornwall

## Green space Audit

Greenspace name/location	Map ref	Details of the land ownership and access	Why does your community wish to identify this area in the Torquay NP? Do you have any plans for improving the area?	If the greenspace is demonstrably special and holds a particular local significance to the local community do you wish it to be considered for the new Local Greenspace designation?
Cary Green		Council	Local Amenity, starting point of Agatha Christie mile. Plans to set up a 'friends' group. Regular functions are held here during peak tourism times – TORQEAT, Agatha Christie Festival etc. This piece of landed was gifted by the Cary family and has a covenant which protects it for use and enjoyment by the public.	Yes. This space represents the nearest green space for the Melville Hill, Warren Road area of the Town Centre and we are aware that this community have stated the importance of this space to them. The fountain, water and grassed area are used and enjoyed by many people both resident and holidaymaker, young and old throughout the early spring and summer months. It is a highly valued public amenity.
Promenade to the end of the Princess Gardens and the 'Sunken Gardens',		Council	Key part of our tourism offer and was identified in the combined TTCCP and TCG submission for the TNP	Yes This whole area is covered and protected under one listing by English Heritage. It represents a key asset to our tourism offer with its spectacular advantage points for panoramic views of the Bay. This whole area is used and enjoyed by many people both resident and holiday maker, young and old throughout the year.
Royal Terrace Gardens (Rock Walk)		Council	As Above	As Above
Abbey Park and Meadows		Council	Already a friends group. Old Balloon site identified in the combined TTCCP and TCG submission as a possible site for a children's' play area, once funding has been found.	Yes. Part of this area fronts the historic Torre Abbey and this vista is an important one to retain. The park is home to several public amenities, bowling, golf, tennis courts
Remainder of Old Maids Perch		Council	Local Amenity. An important viewing area and the site of some memorial benches	Yes. This area should be retained as a permanent viewing space. This area has become more built up recently and it is therefore important to retain some outside sitting spaces for all to enjoy.
Small park on Castle Road adjacent to Kaplan Language school Name not Known		Council	Local Amenity. Situated close to several language schools and provides a place for students and others to sit in this largely built up area	Spaces, such as this provide important natural breaks to the built environment

### Housing Sites

T807	Conway Court	14
13030	Melville Place	10
13002	111 Abbey Road	8
13058	42 Warren Road	7
	Rock House	14
	Laundry Site	29
	Maycliffe Hotel	11
	Temperance Street	65
13229	Shedden Hill Car Park	50
13221	Pimlico	50
R149	Lower Union Lane Office Block	30
T766	Abbey Hall, Rock Road	30
13003	Fleet Walk	25
	Roebuck House	20
TM003	Lower Union Lane	20
T884	Adj Union St	15
<b>Total</b>		<b>398</b>