

Minutes

Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

Held at:	Zoom Meeting
Date	Tuesday, 25 August 2020
Present	Councillors Danny Brook (Chairman), Laura Davison, Tim Prater, Douglas Wade and David Wimble
Apologies for Absence	Councillor David Monk
Officers Present:	Ewan Green (Director of Place), Mrs Jess Harman (Community Safety Specialist), Sue Lewis (Committee Services Officer), Llywelyn Lloyd (Chief Planning Officer) and Lorraine Smith (Economic Development Officer)
Others Present:	None

23. **Declarations of Interest**

Councillor Brook declared a voluntary announcement as he is one of the ward councillors for the town centre. He remained in the meeting for discussions.

24. **Previous minutes & actions**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2020 were agreed with no further actions required.

25. **Update on Reopening High Streets Safely RHSS**

Members noted the items that have now been delivered, the continuous monitoring items and the future interventions paying particular attention to the following:

- Eat Out to Help Out scheme – this has been a fantastic way of getting businesses up and running again following closures during the pandemic and it is hoped that it may be extended or introduced again during winter months.
- Busk Stops – officers want to maximise on the music town first anniversary and encourage musicians to come along and play at designated areas (busk stops).

- Engaging and consulting businesses – a business leaflet has now been produced which, once circulated will be a way of engaging and providing information to help those businesses that need additional support.
- Business Data – data on movement throughout the town will be taken, giving an overview of the route of footfall over the next six months.

26. **Folkestone Place Plan**

The proposed Place Plan will combine the collective roles of the Council, public/private stakeholders and local community to successfully deliver a joint ambition - a plan that everyone can get behind. There is already some great work being done and this will be a chance to add to that work but will be collected in one singular place.

Work initiated since 2019, together with key themes is covered in the attached slides. It is clear that there are changes happening in respect of the retail market and councils need to adjust to these changes by encouraging new investment and developments in the town centre, highlighting the opportunities that are offered.

Officers understand that particular attention needs to be paid to transport links and transport movement, including footfall. Paying particular attention to connectivity across the town centre and towards the harbour area, including how the train station and bus station can be used to help bring it all together. Identifying challenges and setting an action plan will help.

Progress is good and future works will only enhance and feed into other council objectives.

The council will need somebody to co-ordinate the work so a tender process will take place once a brief has been prepared, this will include workshops with stakeholders. A budget has already been identified for the work.

Updates will be brought regularly to the working group.

27. **Former Debenhams Store**

Members were updated on the possible future for the former Debenhams store. Informing that a number of options were being considered, but they are exiting proposals that will be carefully thought through.

Particular attention will be paid to how the building might be used as a multi-function space, again officers will look at each option as they come forward.

Members asked that consideration be taken into parking issues, the possible move of the bus station, inter connectivity to the town centre and that feasibility studies continue to be taken to help recognise and understand what the residents would like and need.

Although no timetable for works has been set officers are aware that issues relating the Covid 19 pandemic will need to be considered when any works do start.

28. F&H High Street Fund Update (Folkestone)

Members paid particular attention to the following:

- Funding had paused from the end of March 2020 due to Covid 19 pandemic but new applications were still coming in. The next decision panel will sit in September and members will be updated at the next meeting of the working group.
- 2 empty high street properties were now occupied following discussions and support from the council.

Council led interventions:

- It was noted that a market improvement programme will be reported to Cabinet in September
- Replacement litter bins have now been ordered.
- The We Made That study will feed into the place plan in due course.
- Heritage Signage will celebrate historic quarter of the town council and officers are working on this with KCC.
- Heritage Lighting – upgrading of lighting will take place.
- Live and Work project – private sector partner engagement with a campaign to promote Folkestone as a destination to visit, move to or work in.

Members asked that officers are mindful of affordable housing options and rough sleepers and the pressures on services. Government funding now available will help with wider support for rough sleepers, as this is an area that has significantly increased during these difficult times.

This particular issue can be a stand-alone item on a future meeting of the working group.

Further updates will be provided at future meetings.

29. Any Other Business

No further items were discussed.

A copy of the presentation for all items listed on the agenda is attached to these minutes for information.

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Folkestone Town Centre Working Group

August 2020

Agenda

- Reopening High Streets Safely
- Place Plan
- Former Debenhams update
- F&H High Street Fund update
- Live & Work Promotion
- AOB

Re-opening High Streets Safely - interventions

- Delivered to date
 - Signage
 - Business toolkit updated to include
 - Market trading – additional signage and one way system
 - Pavement Licences on website
- Continuous monitoring
 - Due to ongoing change of guidance
 - Interventions identified as required
 - Discussions of any “hot spots” in town centre
- Future interventions
 - Ongoing communications via all media routes – specific focus to Eat Out to Help Out scheme
 - Interventions to extend the usual season (music town anniversary – busk stops)
 - Business leaflet developed
 - Ongoing business engagement providing support and guidance



Shops, restaurants and other businesses across the district have been steadily reopening following months of lockdown. A huge collaborative effort by businesses, organisations and individuals is helping to welcome people back safely to our high streets. Folkestone & Hythe District Council has put in place a series of measures in support of this. We recognise the situation is constantly subject to change and we are monitoring it closely - we'll adapt plans and interventions if needed.

DOWNLOAD OUR BUSINESS RECOVERY TOOLKIT
Our business recovery toolkit has information on how to reopen and operate safely, including links to the most up-to-date government advice. Download it from www.folkestoneworks.co.uk or email ecom@folkestone.hythe.gov.uk for your copy.

DOWNLOAD OUR PRINTABLE POSTERS
Download posters to remind people of social distancing, face coverings and other guidance to print and display in your business from www.folkestoneandhythe.gov.uk/get-involved.

WELCOMING CUSTOMERS BACK
Helping customers feel welcome and safe will build their confidence about using your business. Signs and posters in your window should let shoppers know the safety measures to expect inside. More vulnerable customers may prefer information to be communicated verbally or need extra help in your shop. Social media is a great way to announce you are open. Share opening times and photos or videos of what's going on in your business - it will all help raise awareness that you are open and COVID-secure.

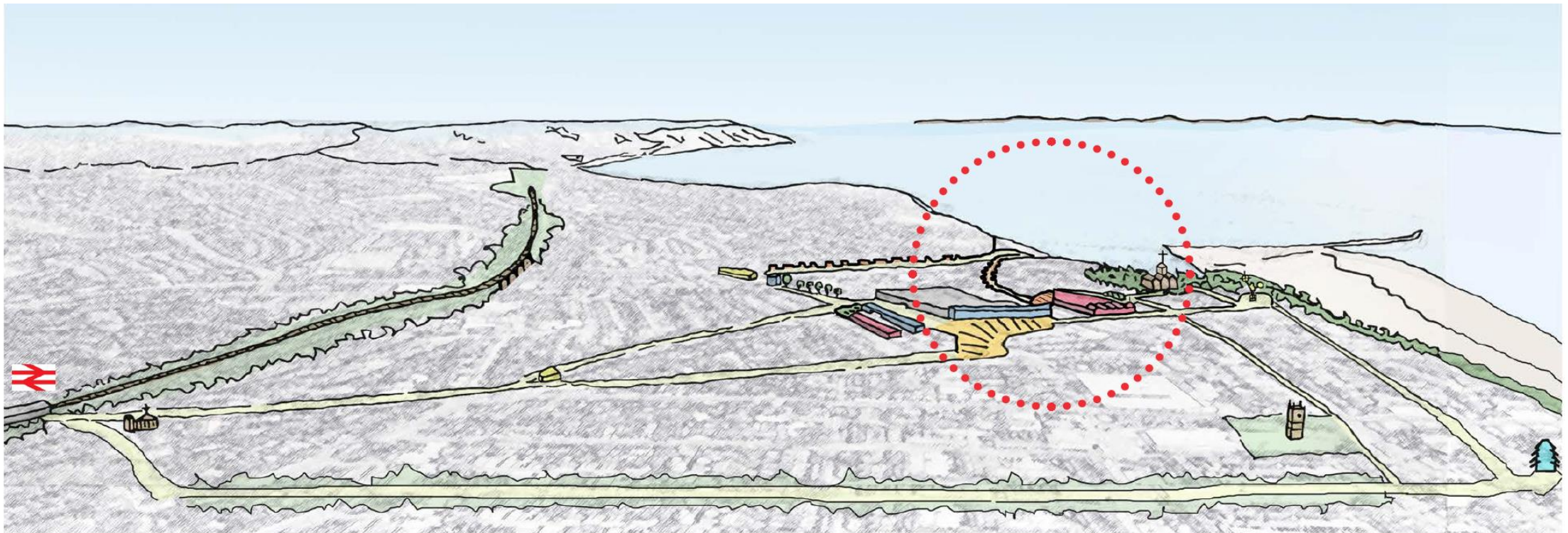
Place Plan: Objective

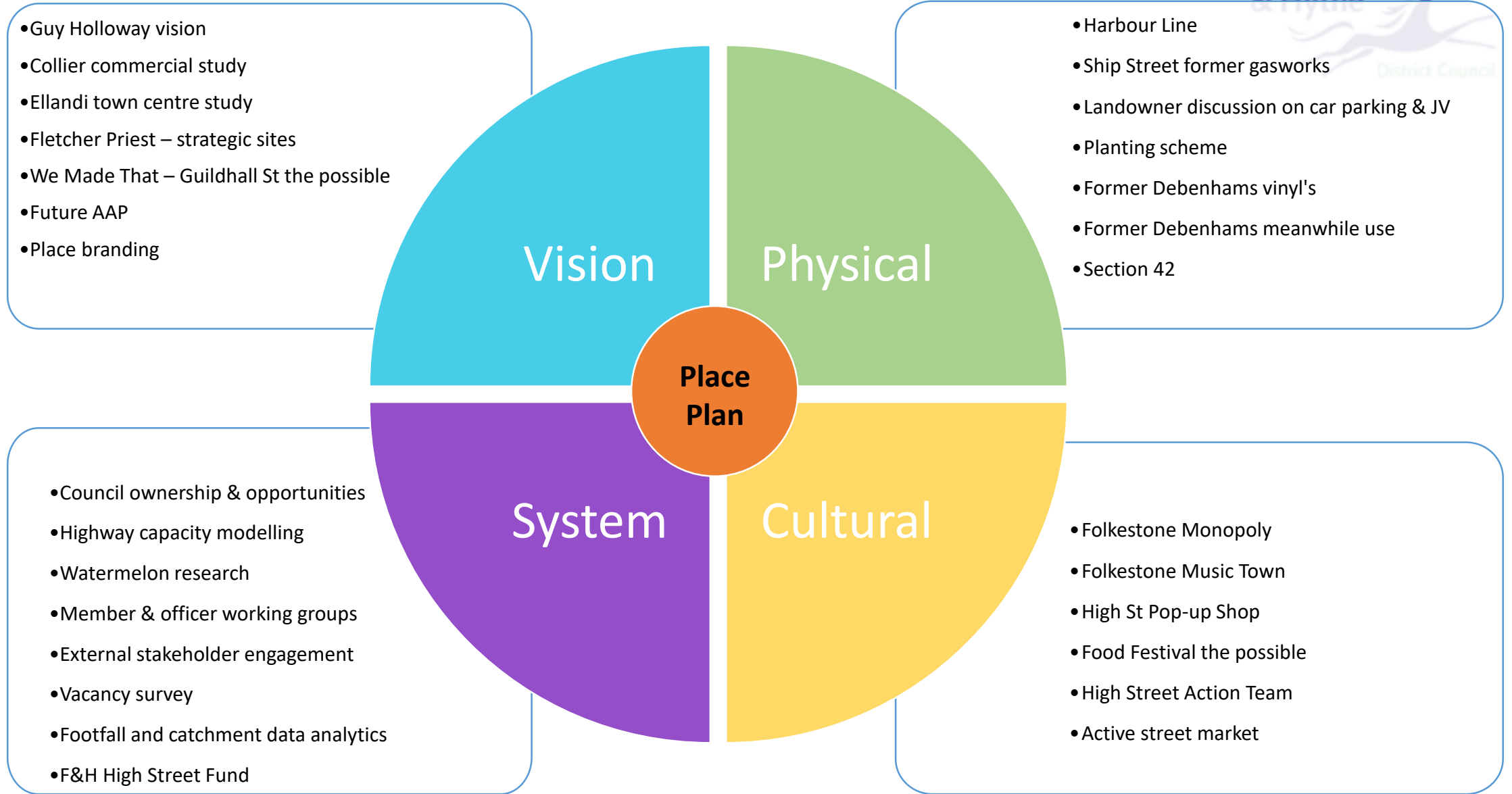


Setting an ambitious, overarching and medium to long-term direction of travel for Folkestone's Town Centre that brings together everyone's ambition – A SUCCESSFUL FOLKESTONE

The COVID 19 Pandemic has brought into sharper focus the need to have a plan which facilitates not only a economic recovery but also the strengthening of the social, environmental, creative and heritage assets which make Folkestone unique.

The proposed Place Plan will combine the collective roles of the Council, public/private stakeholders and local community to successfully deliver our joint ambition - a plan that we can all get behind.





Place Plan



- A collective vision for the Council and wider stakeholders
- Building on the great work to date by the Council and other stakeholders
- Recognising the Towns inherent strengths and positioning Folkestone for the future
- Key themes to cover:
 - Key Investment/development opportunities – setting an ambition
 - Establishing a civic ‘heart’ & purpose – “One public estate”
 - Creating great animated public spaces for residents and visitors
 - Create a broader leisure offer ‘for all’
 - Encourage TC living as a vital component of a vibrant mixed use with a strong night time economy
 - Create an exemplar in sustainability and reap the benefits of compact growth
 - Foster a dynamic/flexible employment and residential environment transitioning away from a solely retail lead economy
 - Deliver a shift in transport movements & maximise accessibility
 - Future town centre animation, markets, management and maintenance
- Identify the challenges, issues and the potential solutions
- Setting out how the many different parts of the Council all play a role in the future of the town centre.
- Reviewing and testing existing plans to ensure that impacts of COVID 19 and market trends are recognised
- An Action Plan for Folkestone Town Centre
- Support the Place Campaign to promote Folkestone

Former Debenhams Development

Site purchased March '20

Main focus based on the following type of end scheme:

- Medical provision
- Pharmacy
- Residential
- Leisure use (cinema)
- Mixed use blended space

Ongoing discussions with CCG to deliver new medical facility

Potential for meanwhile use of existing art deco space as scheme development is developed and matured – (minimum 3 to 5 year timeframe)

Final scheme opportunities to be explored

Competition to re-name the building

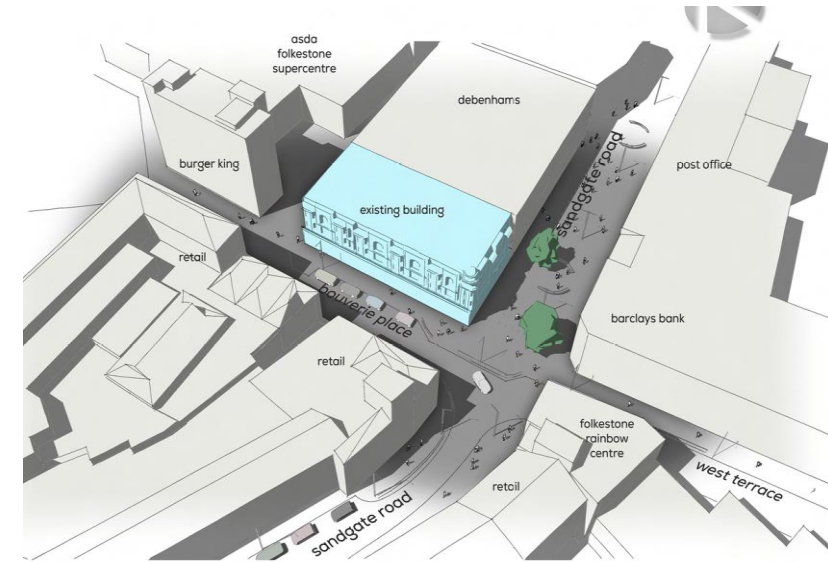
Medical Facility



Existing medical provision is a known challenge – scale, capacity and quality of facilities.

Positive partnership emerging with CCG and local GP practices in part of the former Debenhams building.

- Outline business case agreed by CCG - in principle agreement
- Next stages are detailed design, planning and final approvals from partners.
- Facility would plan to open mid 2023.



'Meanwhile Use' & Major Scheme

- An interim use for the non medical facility (larger building) whilst the major scheme is developed
- Positive use of the space ahead of major investment and redevelopment
- Could be 3-5 years....market interest will guide this
- Has to add value and quality to the town centre offer
- Has to be financially acceptable to FHDC
- Potential that the space isn't utilised
- In parallel the work to bring forward the major scheme will start....feasibility to establish options then market testing

FTC High Street Fund Applications

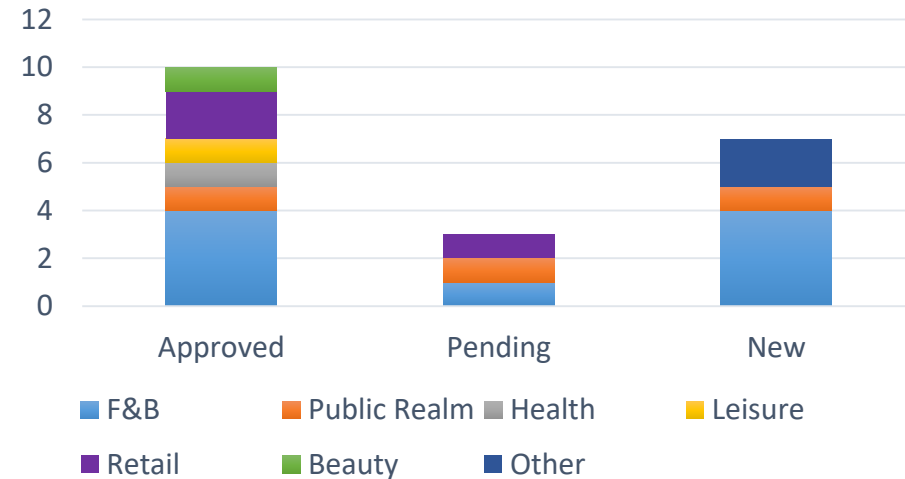


Application Summary

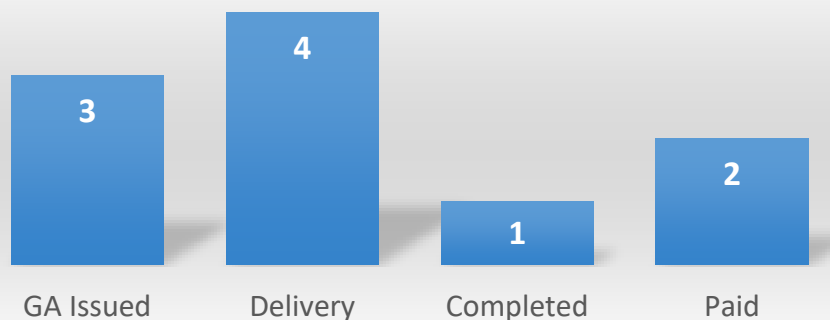
	Volume	£ Grant Sought	£ Grants Agreed
Approved	10	£246,035	£190,733
Pending*	3	£75,250	
New	7	£105,400	
Total	20	£426,685	
Withdrawn	1	£5,350	

* Applications reviewed at last decision panel but require additional information or suggested change

Sector Spread



Project delivery phase



Commentary

- 2 empty high street units now occupied
- Applicants engaged during lockdown to understand COVID-19 impact
- Next decision panel end September
- Volume of new enquiries post lockdown

FTC High Street Fund- Council Delivery

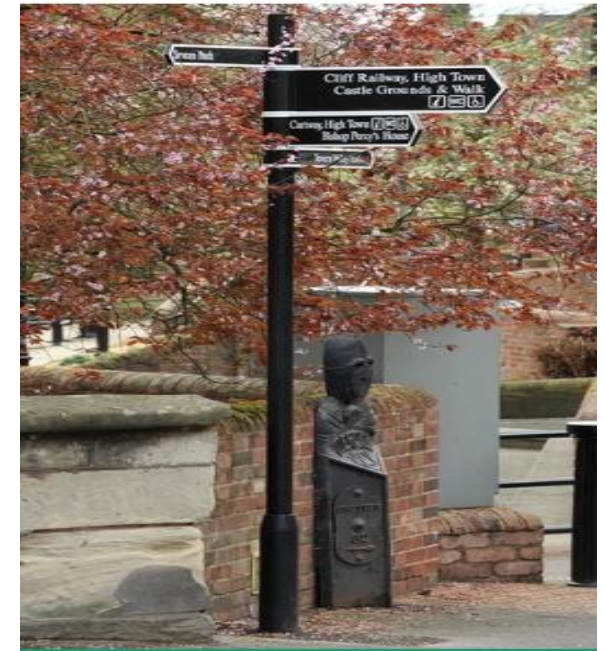
Interventions update

- Market Improvement Programme
- Sandgate Rd Planting
- Heritage Signage & Street Lighting (in conjunction with Folkestone Independent Retail Group)
- 48-66 Sandgate Road (former Debenhams site) vinyls (in conjunction with Folkestone Independent Retail Group)
- Replacement Litter Bins
- Enhanced Maintenance Programme
- We Made That – Guildhall St study

FTC High Street Fund- Heritage Signage Example

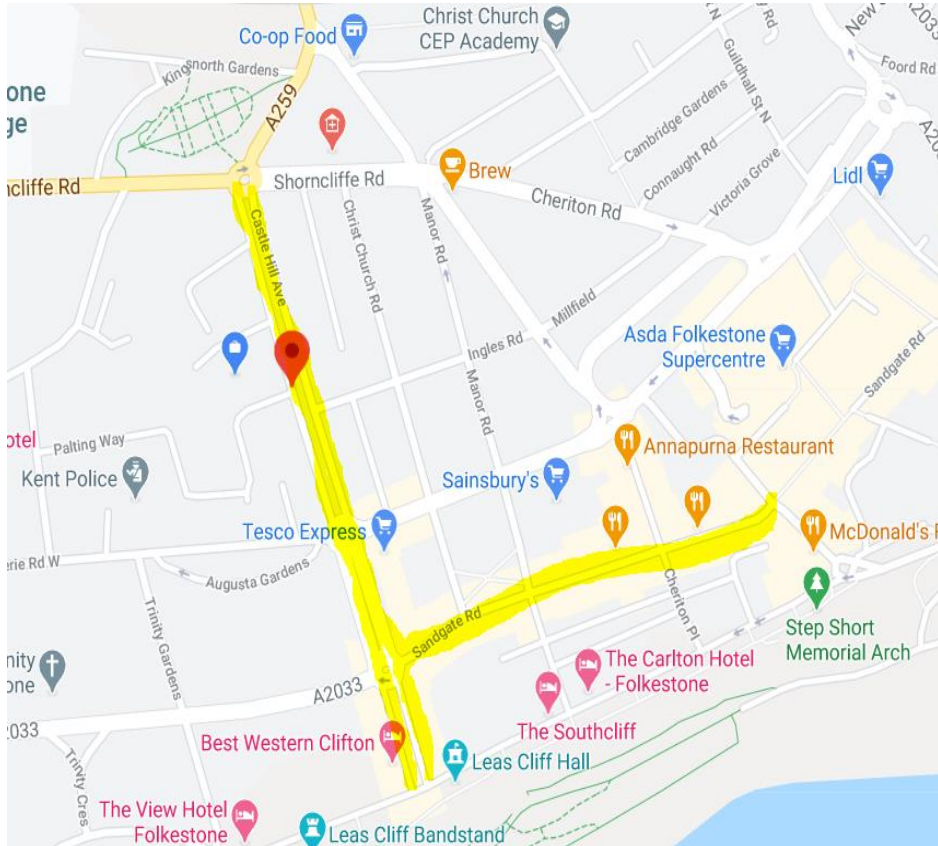


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FTC High Street Fund- Heritage Lighting Example

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Folkestone Live & Work Project



- Private sector partner engagement
- Study and baseline of
 - Available co-working facilities
 - Accommodation providers
 - East Kent coastal comparisons
- Communication campaign via place brand : <https://www.folkestoneandhythe.co.uk/>
 - Promoting Folkestone as a weekend destination
 - 48 hours in Folkestone



Adobe Acrobat
Document

AOB

- Further Updates
- Future Themes

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