



Farnborough Town Centre Strategy

Policy and Project Advisory Board Meeting 8th June 2022

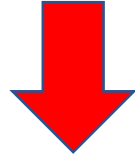
PREPARED BY

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Purpose of the strategy

- To help shape the future of Farnborough Town Centre – pulling together a variety of strands of work.
- A positive response to the changing nature of town centres and use patterns accelerated by the COVID 19 pandemic
- Focus on how to manage and instigate positive change so the town meets the needs of local people and visitors for the long term.
- To maximise the benefit the Civic Quarter will bring to Farnborough Town centre.
- To Demonstrate the Council's commitment to securing a prosperous and sustainable future for Farnborough
- To guide the process and identify next steps

Part of a Process



Taking the lead

Establish the facts
Land ownership and negotiating position
Due diligence
Acquisition of interests - Options
Planning context
Agreeing terms

Making a plan

Develop a Town Centre Strategy
Hard and soft
Future uses
Concept plan
Key development principles
Flexibility
What is right to make Farnbrough an attractive offer
Indicative Phasing and timetable

Enabling Delivery

Review market conditions & viability
Identify Delivery options
Select preferred option
Market testing
Procurement of a development partner (if appropriate)
Legally binding agreement

Implementation

Programme of actions agreed with Delivery Partner/vehicle
Masterplanning
Prospectus
Funding
Planning
Phasing
CPO?
Delivery
Review

Farnborough Today

- A medium sized town, within easy access of larger order centres
- A young town, with a need to cater for families and younger people as well
- as national issues around an ageing population
- A strong employment location, with specialities around aerospace, gaming, high tech manufacturing and emerging technologies
- Excellent quality higher education, offering a highly skilled local workforce to support business development
- A historic place, but without a historic town centre
- A place with ambition and recognition of the need to change and regenerate
- An actively and directly involved public sector, as evidenced by land ownership, and appetite for direct involvement
- A developing pace, with active projects such as the Civic Quarter

The Town Centre today

- Punches below its weight
- Does not offer the environment or mix that will serve the aspirations of its current and future immediate catchment.
- Offers limited arts and cultural activity.
- Is not “instagrammable” – something younger populations seek
- Does not offer an immediate welcome to those who might visit.

Welcome to Farnborough.....




What stakeholders told us

Good



A word cloud on a light green background. The most prominent words are 'BusinessPark', 'parking', 'station', 'supermarkets', 'airport', and 'VueCinema'. Other visible words include 'garden', 'residential', 'vacancy', 'pharmacy', 'busses', 'colleges', 'DIY', 'schools', 'Eclectic', 'independent', 'international', 'Abbey', 'Transport', 'homewares', 'gym', 'PlayCentre', 'eyesore', 'facilities', 'dark', 'transient', 'Kingsmead', 'no', 'heart', 'linkages', 'range', 'impression', 'quality', 'underused', 'novariety', 'night-time', 'economy', 'Poor', 'deserted', 'navigation', 'health/wellbeing', 'retailers', 'dated', 'youth', 'appeal', 'connectivity', 'Nothing to do', 'Wetherspoons', 'warmth', 'restaurants', 'intimidating', 'takeaways', 'facelifting', 'Sustainable Travel', 'Demolition', 'heritage', 'community/education space', 'walking/cycling', 'safety', 'Shopping Centres', 'USP', 'carparks', 'Branding', 'Hotel', 'identity', 'EV charging points', 'Skateboarding', 'Car Dependency', 'Approaches', 'Culture', 'gateways', 'Restaurants', and 'Signposting'.

Bad



A word cloud on a light red background. The most prominent words are 'range', 'impression', 'no', 'heart', 'linkages', 'night-time', 'economy', 'Poor', 'deserted', 'navigation', 'health/wellbeing', 'retailers', 'dated', 'youth', 'appeal', 'connectivity', 'Nothing to do', 'Wetherspoons', 'warmth', 'restaurants', 'intimidating', 'takeaways', 'facelifting', 'Sustainable Travel', 'Demolition', 'heritage', 'community/education space', 'walking/cycling', 'safety', 'Shopping Centres', 'USP', 'carparks', 'Branding', 'Hotel', 'identity', 'EV charging points', 'Skateboarding', 'Car Dependency', 'Approaches', 'Culture', 'gateways', 'Restaurants', and 'Signposting'.

Needs improvement



A word cloud on a light yellow background. The most prominent words are 'Approaches', 'gateways', 'Culture', 'walking/cycling', 'safety', 'Shopping Centres', 'USP', 'carparks', 'Branding', 'Hotel', 'identity', 'EV charging points', 'Skateboarding', 'Car Dependency', 'Approaches', 'Culture', 'gateways', 'Restaurants', and 'Signposting'.

"Farnborough is a place you got to for what you need, not what you want"

"Farnborough needs to elevate its brand and connect with its history"

"The exhibition centre alone brings between 170,000 and 250,000 visitors per year - if the town centre had the right offer, the benefits to Farnborough could be multiplied"

"There is nowhere to buy menswear, other than sports or outdoor clothing - You cannot buy a suit or a pair of chinos in Farnborough, so you go elsewhere or online"

"If we do not provide a range of facilities that can attract under 40s, the town centre will struggle to compete against other urban centres in Surrey, Hampshire and Berkshire".

A vision for the future

Farnborough Town Centre - where people choose to go for what they want and need, and find a whole lot more...

- An offer that will make Farnborough attractive – more of a mix of uses, broader leisure, cultural and community offer, something for everybody, a day through to night time economy
- About place, space and activity, developing pride, loyalty, a sense of ownership and an identity
- A place where people live and work, celebrate, socialise and play
- A place of education, Leisure, culture, performance, trade, service and business
- A linked up place, integrated with its surroundings
- An active sustainable environment where people want to spend time
- A greener place

What Amazon Can't Do

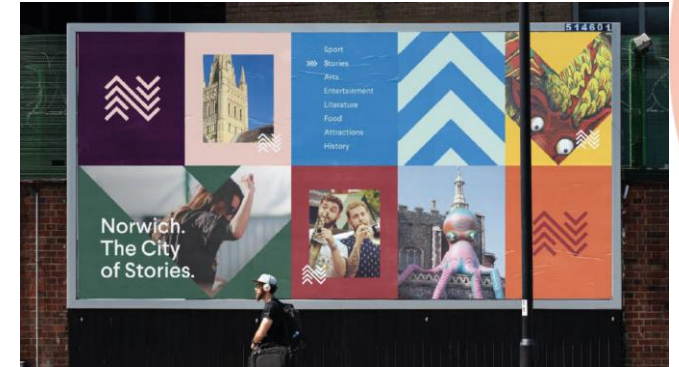
5 key themes



Theme 1: Identity, Branding and Events

| Key issues | Objective | Ideas for Action | Lead and potential organisations involved | Measuring success | Delivery mechanisms and indicative timetable | Longer term aspirations |
|---|--|--|--|---|--|---|
| <i>Need for a clear and recognisable identity</i> | To generate loyalty, a sense of pride, <u>ownership</u> and inclusivity, and to increase town centre footfall and dwell time through diversification of attraction | Develop a brand for Farnborough Town Centre | RBC Town Centre Management team, plus Culture/Libraries at HCC | Use baseline survey on perceptions of TC, linked to scoring, and repeat each year, e.g. Town Toolkit EXAMPLES OF MEASURING SUCCESS , or alternatively engage a local task group of business and resident representatives to endorse processes and actions. e.g. of good practice: Peoples Panel (dudley.gov.uk) | Lead by RBC Town Centre Manager. Seek sponsorship from local business community. | Generate a level of interest that will enable the development of the town centre as a Business Improvement District, which can levy a charge on businesses to fund an ongoing active programme e.g. of good practice: Hinckley Shops, Pubs, Businesses, News & Events (hinckleybid.co.uk) |
| <i>Making Farnborough special and distinctive</i> | | Work with local design students, possibly by way of a competition | Involve the schools and colleges, particularly Graphic design students – Competition? | | Seek involvement from education establishments – a real life project – secure design work at no cost | |
| <i>USP</i> | | Build on Aviation history – Public Art? | FAST – to help reflect the Aviation history in the branding | | | |
| <i>Enlivening the town</i> | | Develop and market a programme of town centre events and a stronger cultural offer – at least 2 events per month, some incorporating day and evening elements, with different activities to attract a variety of age groups. Market the programme using the branding material, and via Social Media. Involve local businesses and community representatives. Speciality markets and festivals etc. Develop a prospectus for Farnborough, setting out the ambitions of the Council and the development/regeneration programme. | Invest in town centre management and involving the community, this will pay back investment in the longer term E.G of good practice Town Centre Engagement Officers - Doncaster Council | Explore existing community organisations to partner with for some events – e.g. Local Running Groups – TC half marathon? or dance troupes, Local Music business – live music in the town event etc., busking pitches, Build on Heritage – museums, TC exhibitions? Borrow ideas from elsewhere – e.g. soap box aeroplane race through Queensmead Town Centre Curry/fusion food night – with concession stands and music? | | |
| <i>Making reasons for people to visit</i> | | | | | | |
| <i>Creating a dynamic community related programme of activities</i> | | | | | | |

Theme 1: Identity, Branding and Events



Theme 2: Environment, Safety and Wellbeing

| Key issues | Objective | Ideas for Action | Lead and potential organisations involved | Measuring success | Delivery mechanisms and indicative timetable | Longer term aspirations |
|---|---|--|---|--|--|---|
| <p><i>Creating an attractive and active town centre environment</i></p> <p><i>Greening the streets – providing important shade for climate change comfort, and opportunities for natural drainage,</i></p> <p><i>Seating and gathering places – public and associated with cafes, restaurants etc</i></p> | <p>To develop a town centre that is a place to spend time, not just shop or access services. A place that contributes to a feeling of wellbeing and provides access to cultural experiences.</p> | <p>Linked to identity and branding, but with a Greener aspect – More planters, more seating, Green strips in open areas, Fountain, water feature?</p> | <p>RBC and HCC and Developers/ development partnerships</p> <p>Building on the work being done for Farnborough Civic Quarter.</p> | <p>Measuring social media activities</p> <p>No of Instagram posts (Currently 123k compared to 234k for Farnham, 112k for Camberley, 167k for Bracknell, 638k for Guildford)</p> <p>No of followers on social media (Farnborough TC site 991 followers 25.4.2022)</p> <p>Via town centre satisfaction surveys</p> | <p>Via Development briefs, use of any available s.106 money from development, or development of policies whereby any development within the TC or the adjacent areas makes a financial contribution to TC management and improvement.</p> <p>Explore Sponsorship opportunities.</p> <p>Develop a detailed Public Realm Masterplan, either as part of a wider TC masterplan, or as a standalone exercise.</p> | <p>A well maintained town centre where the feeling of green space, beauty, and sense of place and wellbeing extends throughout the Civic Quarter and the Town Centre evenly – building on the proposed park and square in the Civic Quarter, via a new events space at its linkage with Queensmead, and through to Princes Mead, the retail parks and in front of Sainsbury's.</p> <p>Linked places where people can sit and people watch or socialise in a friendly enjoyable environment.</p> |
| <p><i>A safe and attractive place – Extending CCTV to improve security and feeling of safety, linked to evening activities and lighting</i></p> | | <p>More trees, Greener areas in car parks, better defined walkways etc. Needs a more detailed public realm masterplan to set out a comprehensive scheme.</p> <p>Incorporate new green focus in Meads redevelopment site where it intersects with Queensmead by Starbucks</p> | | | | |
| <p><i>Developing beauty, through the design of new buildings and spaces, improvements to the existing public realm, and the introduction of public art, opportunities for public performance and heritage</i></p> | | <p>Secure Public Art for key entrance to the town centre – Queensmead – linked to access gateways and wayfinding</p> <p>Secure opportunities for open air public performance and gatherings</p> | | | | |
| <p><i>Developing an “Instagrammable environment” Where people want to see and be seen</i></p> | <p>Make the town part of the experience of living and socialising in Farnborough</p> <p>Make the town comfortable and accessible for all people.</p> <p>Change perception so that when people think of Farnborough Town Centre, they think of an enjoyable place to visit rather than just a functional one</p> | <p>Consider introduction of heritage trail through town centre, linking e.g. paving which tells a story in engraved pictures and captions.</p> <p>Consider incorporating art into new construction.</p> <p>Consider incorporating green walls and roofs</p> <p>Develop a “Selfie Trail” or “Selfie wall trail” Slough selfie trail goes live as part of Christmas ceremony Royal Borough Observer (windsorobserver.co.uk)</p> <p>The Bournemouth & Poole Selfie Wall Trail - Bournemouth</p> | | | | |

Theme 2: Environment, Safety and Wellbeing



Theme 3: Access, Gateways and Wayfinding

| Key issues | Objective | Ideas for Action | Lead and potential organisations involved | Measuring success | Delivery mechanisms and indicative timetable | Longer term aspirations | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Poor access on foot and by bicycle, and for people with disabilities – often through car parks</i> | <p>To make the presence of the town centre obvious from the outset</p> <p>To provide clear easy access routes and links, and to identify key gateways positively, linked to branding</p> <p>To develop pride and a sense of place and ownership</p> <p>To support the changes needed in how people get to the town centre, as part of the actions to mitigate climate change</p> <p>To minimise the negative impact of extensive surface car parking on the visual amenity of the town centre.</p> <p>To improve health and wellbeing though walking and cycling.</p> | Develop a detailed wayfinding plan, and link the signage and route marking to the town centre branding. | <p>RBC and development partners in liaison with HCC – NB suggestions accord with the key principles set out in HCC latest draft LPT4, regarding improving accessibility to a wider variety of sustainable and healthier modes of transport other than the car.</p> | <p>Town centre footfall</p> <p>Satisfaction surveys</p> | <p>Working with HCC on developing a Transport Plan for Farnborough</p> <p>Some elements linked to delivery of Civic Quarter and associated changes to A 327</p> | <p>Less car dominated environment and accessibility, with better delineated pedestrian and cycle routes, and clear gateways and pathways through and around the town centre.</p> | | |
| <i>Poor sense of arrival and lack of welcoming, easily identified gateways</i> | | Break the barriers that are created by the existing road network – particularly across the A325 between Oak Road and Briarcliffe House, between Asda and the Civic Quarter, and across the A 327 between the Business Park and the Town Centre | | | | | | |
| <i>Lack of wayfinding both within and to the town centre, particularly from Station, Business parks, nearby residential areas</i> | | Create Better delineated , if possible, more direct, and pedestrian and cycle friendly crossings at the locations identified above and across Victoria Road. Wayfinding related to the station and the town centre at the junctions of Victoria Road with Elm Grove Road and the A325 roundabout | | | | | | |
| <i>Blockage and disincentive to access and finding the town centre created by the existing road network</i> | | <p>Design and install clear gateway indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• where Briarcliffe house and the proposed Civic Quarter intersect with Queensmead,• at the entrance on Victoria Road leading to Sainsburys,• as part of any new development of the Meads vacant site,• where Princes Mead meets the retail parks – the existing entrance is only apparent once you have arrived at it. <p>See spatial concept plans.</p> | | | <p>Need some short term changes to secure early confidence – in particular improvements to key gateways – especially where these are in public control.</p> | | | |
| <i>Car focussed</i> | | | | | <p>Development of a wayfinding plan – short term.</p> | | | |
| <i>Easy to drive away from!</i> | | | | | <p>Overall delivery medium term.</p> | | | |

Theme 3: Access, Gateways and Wayfinding



Theme 4: Activities

| Key issues | Objective | Ideas for Action | Lead and potential organisations involved | Measuring success | Delivery mechanisms and indicative timetable | Longer term aspirations |
|---|--|---|---|--|--|--|
| <i>Farnborough is primarily a "shopping" town, with additional attraction provided by Vue Cinema. There is a need to diversify the offer to generate greater footfall and dwell time, and to attract a younger age group.</i> | | Build on the proposals for the Civic Quarter so that a wider mix of uses is present throughout the town centre Creation of a Leisure, Cultural and Civic Hub linked to play, indoor and outdoor leisure activity, performance, art, health and fitness and community participation space. Concentrate commercial/competitive leisure: Welcome Gravity (gravity-uk.com) , Savills UK Competitive Socialising and Emerging Concepts in Leisure , What is Competitive Socialising? (homeleisuredirect.com) and flexible leisure space around the Vue cinema and within and approaching The Meads, possibly table tennis tables in the mall space | | | Largely linked to delivery of development projects. | |
| <i>The development of a cinema in Farnham is a threat to Farnborough, as this will impact on the wider catchment available for Vue</i> | To broaden the purpose and attraction of Farnborough To secure a sustainable and flexible offer for the long term | Work with developers of Princes Mead to secure active ground floor frontages, active links and a high quality built environment. Introduce space for community activity, e.g. within Council led development; within the new leisure centre which should ideally be designed to accommodate multiple activities Blog Archives - Everyone Events; Bracknell Leisure Centre - Everyone Events; and as part of the public realm – outdoor Events Space at the entrance to Queensmead, and its junction with the access to Princes Mead. | RBC, through preparation of development briefs for The Meads and adjacent vacant land, in conjunction with land owners. Through the planning process and working with developers who bring forward proposals for Princes Mead. Through the development partnership for delivery of the Civic Quarter. | Town centre satisfaction surveys The ability to attract competitive/commercial leisure operators Number of events hosted in Farnborough per annum. | Short term development of Masterplans for Town Centre sites, and policy context for developments Short term – introduce leisure in mall space in The Meads – collaboration with Table Tennis England Home - Table Tennis England Short term: provide busking locations, enable pop up venues/activities/ performance opportunities, work with local colleges, charities etc to instigate immediate range of activities Short term: Explore potential for charitable delivery of multi-function ambitious skateboard/climbing facility such as that in Folkestone. Longer term collaboration and partnering with the Private sector where appropriate | For Farnborough to be recognised within the region as a location that offers unique leisure destinations, has an active cultural and live music scene, including the ability to host medium sized bands, and for Farnborough to be identified and used as a place to eat, with an evening economy offer that spans age groups and a quality range from fine and speciality dining to fast and street food. |
| <i>Additional activities identified to be developed include Leisure (especially given the timing of demolition of the existing leisure centre), commercial leisure, Culture, Community, Restaurants, particularly more quality dining, Living in the town centre, and events (see Identity branding and events above)</i> | To appeal to all sectors of the population, specifically including attractions for families and young people To lengthen the day, with a range of uses and activities that stretch from day to evening, and to enable a vibrant night time economy To create momentum that will attract an upward spiral of investment | Introduce flexible space for local commercial uses in Council led development, to enable new young businesses to have representation, and to try out new concepts. Adopt a lettings policy for Council controlled space that encourages and enables new and specialist operations to be represented. Explore the opportunity for pop up events/performance space, open mike nights in the town centre, pop up food offers – to enable targeted food based festivals | Through working with the Arts Council, HCC and Hampshire cultural Trust on the cultural offer. Through partnering with an events management company to make best use of the new Leisure Centre for community and cultural use, and as a live music/performance venue | | | |
| <i>Key is an offer that includes speciality, local and service based activities – What Amazon Can't Do</i> | | Enliven the public realm around the skatepark to incorporate family orientated activities, seating café and natural surveillance to create an attractive welcoming environment. FS1 - Skate Park Climbing Centre Boxing Club Develop digital and virtual experiences alongside physical leisure and community activity. | | | | |

Theme 4: Activities



Theme 5: Development

- The Civic Quarter – Maximising the benefit:
 - developing a circular route through the town,
 - making sure the links are as good as they can be,
 - a catalyst for expanding the cultural and community activity throughout the town centre
- Better pedestrian and cycle access across A325 and A327
- Working with the owners of Princes Mead:
 - better linkages
 - enabling circular route
 - “Street” based redevelopment – longer term
- New development – vacant site:
 - green space to provide a balance the Civic Quarter
 - active frontages
 - high quality living in the town centre
- Key entrance – southern end of Queensmead:
 - reconsider servicing
 - create space for activities, exhibitions, outdoor performance
 - key Gateway feature - a real welcome

Theme 5: Development



Examples of early wins and “meanwhile” uses

- Redecorate the hoardings– local design competition, schools, colleges, art groups etc
- OR create a heritage trail/exhibition on the hoardings, e.g. using images from the FAST archive, displaying key historical aviation achievements and their contribution to the UK
- Provision of new seating in the town centre
- Time limit the servicing southern end of Queensmead, create exhibition/activity space
- Identifying busking locations in the town centre, auditions process and busking programme
- Allowing themed pop-up hot food/local produce providers in Queensmead one day month, possibly
- Design competition for branding Farnborough, with entries voted on by the public
- Exploring opportunities to use coloured/dynamic lighting for areas of the town centre
- Extending the CCTV to cover all Queensmead to improve security
- Discussions with landlords of Princes Mead, The Meads and Queensmead to secure permission for meanwhile uses or false shop fronts in vacant shops
 - student exhibitions
 - makers spaces
 - artist studios
- Temporary exhibition of a large physical attraction, such as an aircraft, within the town centre
- Movable mini forest of potted trees in Queensmead, linked climate change benefits of tree planting.

Process for delivery

- Strategy is part of the first stage in a process:
 - Policy Development
 - Public Realm Strategy
 - Wayfinding Strategy
 - Farnborough Transport Plan
 - Design Principles for Town Centre Living
 - Completion of draft Cultural Strategy
- Detailed masterplan in collaboration with owners of Princes Mead, Queensmead, The Meads
- Expanded focus on Town Centre Management
- Progressing development – Council Partnership led: Civic Quarter; Privately led: anticipated proposals for Princes Mead
- Short-, medium- and longer-term activities over a period likely to extend to circa 15 years

Organisational implications

- Achieving the objectives will require:
 - Adequately resourced Town Centre Management and promotion function
 - Adequately resourced development team and pro-active planning team
 - Dedicated bids manager – to maximise securing of all available funding
 - Ongoing pro-active approach to developing new partnerships, collaborative working with landowners, and taking a direct lead in securing the right outcomes
 - Being flexible, in the pursuit of clear objectives
- The Council's commitment and leadership is necessary to secure success through good governance. This will create the right environment to attract investment and growth.

Conclusions

- The Strategy sets the overall direction of work required to secure a sustainable and vibrant town centre for Farnborough through 5 key themes
- It is ambitious, but deliverable in the local economic context, and given the extent of development opportunity and interest that already exists
- The strategy is high level and unites a variety of aspirations
- It starts a process which will raise expectations, require funding, but will reap long term financial, economic and social rewards
- Commitment will provide confidence for investors and development partners – The Council has a plan and knows what it wants to achieve. It is committed to putting in place the work required to get there.