



# MASTERPLAN 2026 to 2031

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# THE BIDEFORD MASTERPLAN.



Bideford's built environment tells stories at every turn. Its heritage is visible on every street and hidden details await those with the knowledge and determination to truly appreciate the beauty and quality of the town's architecture. But sometimes stories also need refreshing. Bideford's tales of days gone by now need a new chapter writing, one which celebrates the town's essence and builds on it to provide new opportunities for residents to improve their lives. This masterplan lays out a series of realistic and deliverable interventions to improve access to work and skills, provide more integrated healthcare and help residents thrive and enjoy life. Beyond that, the masterplan, alongside the Regeneration Strategy, is a call to the wider community, to the public sector and to the private sector to help us to deliver. So please, come and get involved. Discover a new Bideford, then help us to shape it.

THE BIDEFORD  
REGENERATION BOARD

# THE BIDEFORD MASTERPLAN. OUR MISSION AND VISION

**O**ur mission is to revive Bideford town centre as a place of energy, where our green spaces are well-loved and well-used and there is improved access to our beautiful riverfront. Our vision is for a town of events with an evening economy which is flourishing again. A town with people living and working within it, generating positive footfall and security. A vision for a town that is for every day and every season that residents can be proud of and where visitors want to keep returning. A place where partnerships and communication play a crucial role in collectively shaping the local agenda.

Crucially, this vision champions the opportunity for the town and community to turn towards the water. From live music, to markets, to restoring the tidal fountains, the waterfront needs to return to becoming the true jewel in the town's crown – an asset to be looked at with envy. The development of Brunswick Wharf in East-the-Water will also be an important step towards achieving that goal, creating an interplay between the two sides of the river and generating additional footfall and vibrancy for the town centre.

Bideford is at a crossroads. With the Appledore Maritime Innovation Centre two miles downstream due to open in 2026, the Appledore shipyard resurgent after its purchase by Navantia and new investment in clean offshore energy off our shoreline, a vibrant local cultural scene and even the growth of a dynamic local seaweed industry, this historic waterfront town is on the way to becoming a centre for creative thinking, future skills and entrepreneurship.

To unleash our own entrepreneurial spirit and enable higher-skilled, higher-paid jobs we also need to provide places for that work to take place. That

**This vision champions the opportunity for the town and community to turn towards the water**



means a mix of co-working and serviced offices providing vibrant and diverse work and meeting spaces, unleashing opportunity for our dynamic small business community. And alongside those, spaces where people can learn the skills which take them into those jobs, whether in the maritime industry, creatives sector (including AI), professional services, hospitality, or retail, providing a route for our young

people to first become aware of and then aspire to good local jobs and to stay within our area. This must be the way to make the most of our local talent and assets.

Bideford has long had a strong independent retail offer, bringing character and interest to our streets. But retail by itself is not enough to stimulate the footfall and vitality our town needs. Our independent traders need to be cherished and promoted as offering a level of customer service and quality not to be found online. However, the spread of the existing retail zone needs to be reduced in order to allow the town to evolve and to create space for new

## Bideford by the numbers

**18,000**

Population. Up 10% between 2010 and 2021\*

**23%**

of the population have level 4 qualifications

**8,200**

Population employed. Up 10% between 2010 and 2021\*

**95%**

of households have high-speed internet

\*2021 Census

experiences and a good quality residential offer.

Housing will play an important role in Bideford's evolution, allowing more people to live in good

# THE BIDEFORD MASTERPLAN. OUR MISSION AND VISION (Continued)

conditions right at the heart of the town's energy and making the most of first and second floor spaces which sit empty despite the ongoing housing crisis.

Bideford was once known far and wide for its range of evening options, and our vision is that the town will once again provide a place where people can come together to spend time in a range of hospitality settings, with food, drink and laughter sitting comfortably alongside a range of experiences. From bouldering to art exhibitions to events at the Pannier Market – we need to bring back the sense of Bideford being a great place for both a night out and a day out with friends, family or colleagues!

The designation of Heritage Harbour status for Bideford and the River Torridge in 2024 embodies the exciting opportunity the town faces – blending pride in a rich heritage with a determination to shape a town for an innovative future, a town which plays its part for current and future industries and can attract investment into higher level skills and jobs to help the wider region to thrive.

Heritage Harbour status also evokes the town's long-standing creativity and ingenuity which needs to be fostered, supported and brought to the fore. Our vision is for a town where art and heritage are interactive and part of everyday lives, including within the town's public realm. A Bideford with a cohesive, sustainable arts,



## WHY BIDEFORD?

### 4 Amazing Schools

Three primary schools and one secondary school including sixth form.

All rated **GOOD** by Ofsted

### 2 Nationally Recognised Cultural Organisations

Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations:  
**The Burton at Bideford** and **Museum and Libraries Unlimited**

### UNESCO Biosphere

Set in the heart of the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, an **environmental designation** shared with the Serengeti and Hawaii

### A Walker's Paradise

Linked to the famous **South West Coast Path** and the locally celebrated **Tarka Trail**

culture and heritage identity. And a Bideford with an improved arts infrastructure – from artist studios to makers' spaces, and a renewed aspiration to provide an extension to The Burton at Bideford. To truly achieve that we need to come together to shape a dynamic Creatives and Community quarter, with The Burton at its heart.

All of this requires old buildings to have new lives, celebrating their heritage and stimulating pride in our beautiful architecture and its stories rather than frustration at its condition.

Bideford cannot shy away from long-standing deprivation issues – but nor should it accept them. Regeneration proposals will therefore place widened opportunities at their forefront. Stimulating improved employment must also come with improving access to the jobs created. The development of a health and wellbeing hub is central to that, allowing coordinated multi-agency partnerships to improve lives and widen participation within our community.

Nor can all of this be possible without considering transport. Parking plays a major role within that. But parking must not impact negatively on people's experiences, either by being too expensive or simply in the wrong place. Distances should be easily walkable and provide a positive pedestrian environment which does not involve dodging cars at every step. Electric charging needs to be easily and conveniently available. Cars will remain important during the course of these 5 years, but public transport, although not within the control of the Regeneration Strategy, must also be improved. This strategy calls for a direct connection to Tiverton Parkway station to enable a journey time of 3 hours from London to Bideford and fully unlock the entrepreneurial and job creation potential of the town.

Our vision is for a town where people young, old and everywhere in between feel at home and feel proud to be part of our community. A town with a plan that people want to be part of.

Welcome to the Bideford Regeneration Strategy – come and get involved!

# THE FIVE PILLARS

## PILLAR 1

*A Thriving Bideford Quay*



### AMBITION

- Create a central point of focus for the town with flexible public spaces and a food and drink offer
- Protect future flexible uses for Bideford Port
- Create improved visual impact while preserving car parking and ease of access
- Enable improved access to the water for leisure and wellbeing
- Celebrate local maritime heritage alongside an innovative vision of the future through public art
- Strengthen links between the west and east side of the water

### PROJECTS

- Create a public walkway and flexible food and drink offer on Bideford Quay
- Establish a landmark watersports centre
- 'Sea Change' project for public realm
- Connecting town and quay
- Review crossing points and the pedestrian experience at either side of the Long Bridge

## PILLAR 2

*A Dynamic Market Complex*



### AMBITION

- Development of "The Market Complex".
- To re-establish a clear purpose for the Pannier Market and a reason for the community to use it

### PROJECTS

- Development of the Bideford Market Complex as a bustling events space
- Part-pedestrianisation of Market Place

## PILLAR 3

*Unleashing Bideford's Entrepreneurial Spirit*



### AMBITION

- Provide a high-quality central office space to develop a local small business working hub in the heart of the town
- Develop a stronger working network for local businesses
- Work with partners to provide an improved skills offer within the town centre
- Improve footfall in the town centre during and after working hours

### PROJECTS

- The New Jobs centre
- Bringing energy to the high street
- The Old Library co-working space
- A new life for vacant buildings
- A high-profile skills centre in the heart of the town
- Bridgeland Street – exploring the feasibility of creating a one-way street

## PILLAR 4

*Creative And Community Vibrancy*



### AMBITION

- Create a defined Creatives and Community Quarter surrounding The Burton at Bideford, including The Pill and Rope Walk
- Support Burton at Bideford expansion ambitions and wider impact
- Provide a focal point for the creatives sector in the wider region, improving working spaces and productivity
- Create a performance venue with flexible community spaces
- Strengthen the town's heritage and innovation brand identity

### PROJECTS

- Burton at Bideford expansion
- High-profile Maker's Space
- Develop a Creatives and Community Quarter branding / design feel
- The Barrel House cinema, performance, community space and radio studio
- 'Sea Change' project for public realm

## PILLAR 5

*Opportunities For All And Unlocking Our Talent*



### AMBITION

- Provide improved housing options to support people to live in the town centre
- Bring targeted units back into active use
- High profile skills provision relevant to local employers provided within the heart of Bideford
- Provide better integration for health and well-being services

### PROJECTS

- Multi-agency health and wellbeing hub
- A space for our young people
- Engage first and second floors as residential opportunities
- Community infrastructure
- Provide a safer and easier crossing from the town centre towards Bideford College and the Community Hospital
- Review crossing points to improve access between Victoria Park towards the town centre

# THE BIDEFORD REGENERATION BOARD: MISSION AND REMIT.

The Bideford Regeneration Board was created in 2022 to support the town as it emerged from Covid and the resultant economic shock. Its fundamental founding principle was the ambition to create a shared vision for shared delivery of actions to support regeneration in a world where working together was only going to become more important. The Bideford Regeneration Board has been at the forefront of recent activities and strong foundations have been laid. The Discover Bideford platform has been established; events such as eat: Bideford have brought thousands of residents and visitors into the town; the Launch Bideford entrepreneur programme and social entrepreneur courses have helped new and expanding independent businesses to establish themselves in the heart of the town, such as Devonshire Cork & Vine.



## But now is the time for more.

In 2025 a new Board came together, refreshing the membership after an open call for new Members to bring together skills in strategy development, finance, governance, marketing, education and place-making to complement the strategic partners of Bideford Town Council, Torridge District Council, Devon County Council, Bideford Bridge Trust, The Burton at Bideford and TTVS.

That new board has set itself a clear mission which is presented through the Bideford Regeneration Strategy 2026 – 2031 and which this masterplan is at the heart of delivering:

- To regenerate Bideford, working with partners, including the private sector, to boost skills, housing and higher-paid, meaningful employment that inspires and retains our local talent.
- To create leadership and make things happen whilst also being committed to ongoing wider engagement and openness.
- To cherish and promote heritage but make it future looking, finding new purposes for old buildings and spaces to bring pride and energy to the town.
- To work together to create a healthy and thriving place and community.
- To allow the character of the town to come to the fore, in particular through arts, culture, heritage and creativity to bring fun, learning and interest into people's lives.
- To shape a town that is sustainable, both environmentally and for cyclical financial sustainability through investment.

More widely, the regional development of clean energy and maritime-related industries along with agritech opportunities provide a once in a lifetime opportunity for Bideford. This spatial masterplan seeks to provide clear frameworks and ambitions to enable the development of projects to support these core needs and address known challenges.

# THE PURPOSE OF THE MASTERPLAN



Growth and change can only happen with a coordinated plan involving the alignment of a wide range of partners who will deliver it. A range of foundation-level activities have taken place through the Regeneration Board, but the time is right for far greater ambition and collective delivery.

In 2025 Hardisty Jones Associates were commissioned by Torrington District Council on behalf of the Bideford Regeneration Board to develop a Regeneration Business Case for Bideford. To support this, OCR Architecture were appointed to provide an overall spatial strategy by creating an independent longlist of options for the 'Bideford Regeneration Masterplan Strategy.'

Those original expert documents have been honed and refined to provide this published and adopted Bideford Masterplan – a document to foster change and growth for the good of the local economy, community and environment.

The masterplan is structured around two core elements – the underpinning frameworks of how people move and flow around the town, how the core public realm spaces of the town 'work' and then how future development should improve and enhance experience of the town. Those frameworks then align with the core Pillars of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy to address existing challenges and create the desired impact.

## Key Objectives

- To shape a town which our community recognises and can be proud of, addressing the frustrations many feel and enabling more people to shape the town's future.
- To reconnect the town to the River Torrington visually, spatially and economically.
- To make the most of under-utilised assets which need a new lease of life, such as the Pannier Market.
- To create opportunities for all and to use the built form to provide the infrastructure which unlocks our talents.
- To support the local entrepreneurial and independent spirit, shaping spaces for higher-skilled, higher-paid jobs that benefit a wider community.
- To create vibrancy through arts, culture, heritage and the creatives sector within the town and community's everyday lives.
- Making good quality housing available, in particular using currently vacant space.
- To have high environmental standards and improve a sense of the UNESCO Biosphere coming into the town through public realm.
- Creating a high quality, safe environment with public art enhancing an attractive public realm.

# THE BIDEFORD OF 2025

**B**ideford is a town with rich heritage but a struggling present. It was a historic port with a prosperous trading heritage, shaped by its strategic location on the tidal reaches of the River Torridge. But in modern Bideford the beautiful river frontage is segmented off from the core town centre, with the bustling Quay road and the Quay car park separating activity from the waterfront.

Set within the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve the town is surrounded by rolling countryside and serves as the main economic, social and cultural hub for the surrounding District. The town itself has a population of 19,490 (Census, 2021) yet serves a far larger community, also providing the key transport hub for the wider region.

The town centre comprises a series of smaller, ad hoc roads. The High Street leads directly up a steep hill away from the Quay and from that branch the key retail streets, notably Mill Street, a bustling, pedestrianised area full of independent retailers as well as food and drink options which connects to the similarly focused Cooper Street, leading back down to the Quay. Grenville Street

branches off the High Street towards the Pannier Market – a beautiful Grade II Listed building with stunning views over the river and down Bridge Street – to the Old Library and the Grade I Listed Bideford Bridge. But the dispersed nature also adds to the challenge, with a lack of definition or easily identified quarters, as well as outdated wayfinding and signage.

Large parts of Bideford town centre are within the Conservation Area and are covered further in the Bideford Conservation Area Appraisal 2009. At every turn the town centre is dotted with key heritage buildings whose scale speaks of the town's former glories as a bustling port at the heart of both the country's shipbuilding industry and as a significant

component of international trade routes. But the disparate location and functions of the buildings have contributed in part to a lack of use and maintenance over time as the buildings have often fallen into out-of-area ownership and use patterns have changed. A new lease of life is needed, with support from Historic England and National Lottery Heritage Fund. Plans need to align with Architectural Heritage Fund ambitions to see heritage buildings play a pivotal role in new local economies.

The Independent Commission on Neighbourhoods (ICON) classified Bideford North, which includes the town centre, as a mission priority ward for the government. The town centre also supports the surrounding wards, including Bideford South and East

which was listed as 241st worst for barriers to opportunity and 863rd worst for economic growth. The town centre needs to provide the drive to address those.

This masterplan has the community at its heart. Although the neighboring villages of Westward Ho! and Appledore have a distinct tourism focus, Bideford's function is not principally to serve visitors. That said, efforts to create a better place for our own local community, with

better visual appeal and public art offering, a wider array of places to spend time and money and an improved atmosphere will inevitably create a positive impact on attracting visitors into the beautiful town centre.

The town's quirky charm is undeniable. So too is the need for investment to realise potential gains for both the public and private sectors from early intervention. This masterplan serves as a key first step to addressing those issues, providing focus, clearer identity and the collective sense of momentum that the town and local community deserve and serving to provide direction for investment from a range of partners – existing and future.

**This masterplan has the community at its heart, providing focus and a collective sense of momentum.**



# STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



A range of stakeholders have been engaged in the formulation of the Bideford Regeneration Business Case, both directly and through four workshops.

■ A town and community consultation workshop with the Bideford Regeneration Board, including students of Bideford College, Bideford Town Council, Torrridge District Council, Burton at Bideford, the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, and the Bideford and River Torrridge Heritage Harbour.

■ A workshop with several Members of Torrridge District Council, including the Chair of the Council and the Lead Member for Culture & Community.

■ A workshop with Officers of Torrridge District Council including those responsible for Communities & Place, Economic Development, Community Engagement, Planning, Car Parks, Arts & Culture, and the Harbour Master.

■ A workshop with national strategic and funding bodies including the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), Crown Estate, Historic England, Arts Council England, Homes England, and Devon Highways. The Bideford Bridge Trust and Chair of the Torrridge Place Board also attended this workshop.

This masterplan also builds on key existing documents:

- North Devon and Torrridge Local Plan 2014 - 2031
- North Devon and Torrridge Economic Strategy 2024 - 2029
- Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (2023)
- Bideford Regeneration Strategy 2025 – 2030
- Torrridge Estuary Strategy 2025 - 2030
- Bideford Public realm assessment, 2025
- Bideford Cultural strategy, 2024
- Knowing Bideford community engagement, 2020 ([bit.ly/KnowingBideford](https://bit.ly/KnowingBideford))

# PLANNING CONTEXT



**W**ith regards to wider planning policies and guidance future developments and proposals will need to

be cognisant of the National planning policy framework (NPPF) and North Devon and Torridge Local Plan to inform decision making against the Local Plan. Within the adopted Local Plan Bideford is described as: 10.98 The town's location and form, with regard to environmental and historic assets, act as both a constraint and opportunity for development, for marine related activities, tourism and recreation. The River Torridge, the Bideford Long Bridge, the quay, historic buildings, narrow streets and topography all play a role in defining the character of Bideford. The issue of flood risk is significant in and around the town centre and has implications for regeneration opportunities, the delivery of which are sought in support of a more vibrant town centre. Torridge District Council is pursuing the redevelopment and revitalisation of key town centre sites to improve the character of the town, increase investment into the area and improve the local economy and generate social and community benefits.

• 10.101 A key contributor to the town's aspirations will be providing opportunities that facilitate an increase in employment and skill levels, extending quantitative and qualitative choice to the town's residents and to the surrounding communities which are dependent on Bideford to provide economic support. Developing the area's economic base, with a focus on high skill and better

waged jobs will be achieved by: delivering serviced employment land, providing support for appropriately located business development and through a business orientated expansion of training facilities.

- Policy BID: Bideford Spatial Vision & Development Strategy seeks to support and focus growth in Bideford with section 1, D, E, F and G in particular felt to support the projects identified within this document & Bideford Regeneration Business Case.
- Creation of cultural and community facilities is highlighted in Policy ST12: Towns and District Centres of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan. The need to expand the variety of uses within the town is indicated in the Bideford Spatial Vision and Development Strategy including social and community facilities. There is significant importance place on local heritage assets as highlighted in Policy ST15 Conserving Heritage Assets of the North Devon and Torridge Local Plan including; "increasing opportunities for access education and appreciation of all aspects of northern Devon's historic environment, for all sections of the community".

This document (Bideford Regeneration Masterplan) aims to inform emerging local plans to ensure that the Council can deliver on their ambitions. With a focus on availability of sites, policy alignment, readiness to deliver and journey to net zero. This, tallied with the current calls for housing and industrial sites, should position the Council well for any evolving landscape that looks to promote a more prosperous Bideford.

# LOCAL CONTEXT

## Heritage (land-based)

The Conservation Area appraisal for Bideford (dated 2009) acknowledges and explores the more granular level of the conservation with particular reference to key historic buildings. Key to this are the Listed buildings within the town centre. However, the Architectural Character Survey map clearly shows that only a small number of these are of outstanding quality (red). Within the Conservation Area there are significantly more Listed buildings of which the majority contribute positively (blue) but do not meet the outstanding threshold.

Continued and further preservation of these assets must be at the centre of any plans, maximising the benefit of the quality of these buildings and the stories that they tell.

The 2024 designation of the Bideford and River Torridge Heritage Harbour is indicative of that and should be woven into the town's visual narrative, including through wayfinding signage and public art.

### GRADE I LISTED:

- Bideford Bridge
- The Royal Hotel

### GRADE II LISTED:

- Lavington United Reformed Church
- 27 Bridgeland Street
- Masonic Hall & caretakers house at rear & garden walls
- 31 Bridgeland Street
- 74 & 74a High Street
- Northdown Hall
- 28 & 28a Bridgeland Street
- Church of St Mary
- 4 & 4a Bridgeland Street
- 59, 60 & 61 The Quay
- Bridge Buildings



## Heritage (water-based)

Bideford is steeped in maritime history. As one of the only protected harbours along the north Devon coast, it has played a critical role in history far beyond our own waters. Shipbuilding has been at the heart of the access Bideford and north Devon have enjoyed to trade routes with Europe and North America.

However, the decline in foreign trade and shipbuilding which began in the 1930's has continued to change the public experience and perceptions. The tidal nature of the estuary creates a range of usage challenges for modern day shipping, although none are insurmountable and a new strategic approach has been set out in the Torridge Estuary Strategy (2025 – 2030).

Whilst the port may not ever be as pre-eminent as in days gone by, it does have the opportunity to become the centrepiece for Bideford once again, and a place to be cherished and enjoyed.

Bringing our heritage story to life through signage, as well as incorporating it into public realm and public art, are important first steps. By doing so, regeneration activity will enable interventions to feel truly of the place and will ensure that the local community and visitors alike can be both engaged and informed, with the town's spirit and energy coming to the fore.



CREDIT: BIDEFORD & RIVER TORRIDGE HERITAGE HARBOUR: PHOTOGRAPHER G HOBBS

# LOCAL CONTEXT. EAST-THE-WATER WATERFRONT

## Brunswick Wharf

Brunswick Wharf sits on one of Bideford's most significant waterfront sites, and its redevelopment marks an important moment for the town. Set along the River Torridge, the project will re-open a stretch of waterside that has long been under-used, creating new opportunities for people to live, work and spend time beside the estuary once again. The location has a rich maritime past, and the plans aim to acknowledge that heritage while shaping a place that feels relevant for today's community and visitors.

At the heart of the scheme will be new homes with views across the river, alongside a cluster of small commercial spaces designed to support independent businesses. A new restaurant, public square and riverside walk will help reconnect the area to the town centre, encouraging both footfall and a renewed sense of connection with the water whilst also acknowledging the railway heritage centre and tarka trail in East-the-Water. While the development is modern in its design and purpose, it is rooted in the history of the wharf and the role it once played in Bideford's trading story.

Environmental considerations form a key part of the vision, with energy-efficient buildings, renewable technologies and support for active travel all included within the proposals. These features aim to ensure the site serves the long-term needs of the community while reflecting the natural setting of the Torridge estuary.

Brunswick Wharf has the potential to become an important focal point for Bideford once again, and aims to add to the exciting developments happening across the water, a place shaped by its heritage but designed for the town's future.



# LOCAL CONTEXT. EAST-THE-WATER WATERFRONT

## The Royal Hotel: A Historic Gem at the Heart of Bideford's Future

The Royal Hotel stands as one of Bideford's most compelling yet under celebrated stories. A landmark where history and hospitality converge. The Royal enters a new chapter under a young and passionate new ownership team with deep roots in hospitality. Their vision reflects both respect for the hotel's rich heritage and bold commitment to its future as a premium destination with a strong connection to the local community.

A Grade I Listed building with origins stretching back to 1688 as the Colonial House, the building has witnessed centuries of Bideford's evolution, from mercantile prosperity and civic use to the rise of the region's tourism industry with the arrival of the railways. Its historic "Green Room" is famously reputed to have hosted critical military planning sessions during the Second World War, including discussions ahead of the D Day invasion, in which notable officers have quoted "More secrets have been discussed in this hotel than the world will ever know."

As the largest hotel in the town and a significant economic and cultural asset for Bideford, development of The Royal adds to the town's thriving hospitality ecosystem alongside venues such as Number 8, Mill St Brasserie, Le Petit Monde and Bellunos, whilst new openings such as The Patch are celebrating and rejuvenating the town's heritage to create the next generation of stories.



# DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The development framework works in conjunction with the public realm framework to improve, promote and enhance the public and visitor experience within the town centre.

The dispersed nature of the town centre and lack of identity across the urban realm does not encourage a critical mass of any particular offering. This dilution means that there is not a concentration of people or uses and a loss of vitality.

The development framework seeks to address this by focusing economic activity into zones with similar uses. This creates distinguishable quarters that provide different experiences and encourage increased footfall, which in turn positively impacts dwell time and economic opportunity.



## Retail Quarter

Mill Street is already the focus of the town's independent retail offer and has a strong character. The area needs to be further celebrated and elevated as the shopping quarter.

Other commercial units are strung out along The Quay, lower parts of the High Street, Cooper Street, Allhalland Street and Bridgeland Street. Developments at the Old Library will create a direct positive impact on businesses in Allhalland Street to serve the needs of the gym and workspace users, whilst proposals at the Barrel House would have a significant uplift on redevelopment of units on Cooper Street and The Quay to compliment the strong existing mixed offer of retail and hospitality.

## Creatives and Community Quarter

Whilst local retail areas are relatively clearly identified, community and cultural/creatives zones are spread out over the existing town centre without any particular focus.

In order to assist navigation within the town centre, it is proposed that local planning policy and design guides are used as tools to help influence and consolidate sectors and uses that work symbiotically.

However, the current arrangement of services and uses across the town does not lend itself naturally to zones or quarters being created. This is in part due to the disparate nature of the sprawling centre but also a lack of incentives or concentrated effort to centralise these uses. The approach to bring together similar uses and offerings is likely to take time to realise but can be promoted through key projects, such as the Maker's Space to bring attention to the Creatives focus as well as The Barrel House (formerly Caesar's Palace nightclub) to provide an outlet for performance and visual arts.

## Carbon Neutrality and Torrridge District Council Green Agenda

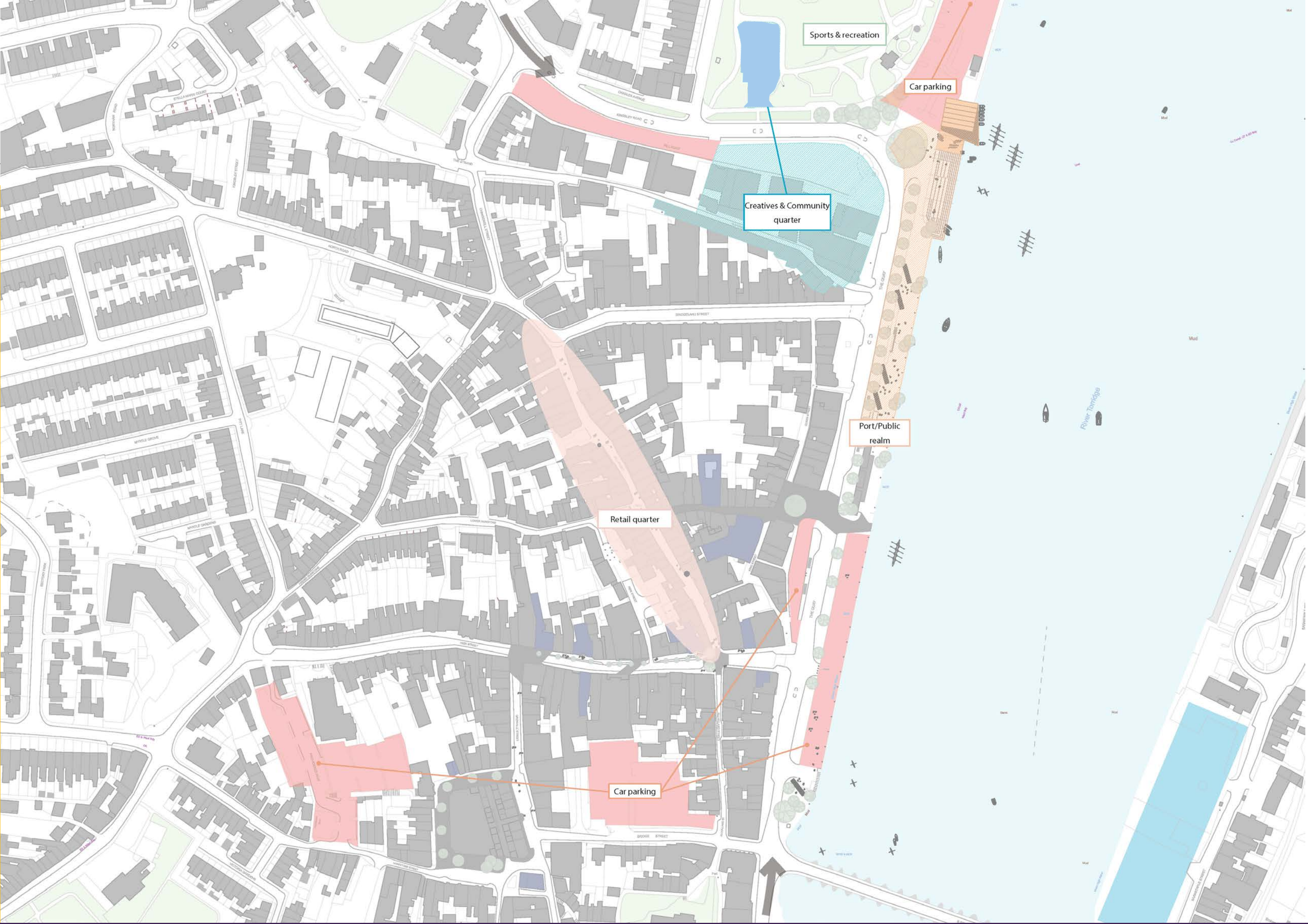
Torrridge District Council has declared a Climate Emergency and is a signatory to the Devon Climate Declaration, demonstrating a strong commitment to achieving net zero by 2030. This is strengthened by Bideford's position within, and partner work with, the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere.

Low carbon, innovative building technologies and solutions should be encouraged to help drive up standards across the town centre and wider sphere of influence. Development and refurbishment of existing buildings should be favoured over new build construction and where new buildings and facilities are required, best practice Net Zero build considerations should be promoted. In addition, any opportunity should be taken to add to the green infrastructure or improve biodiversity in green areas.

# SHAPING THE FUTURE

## Development framework

The plan outlines the overview of the development framework proposed. The development picks up the newly proposed quarters and shows how the public realm interventions connect these quarters to enable connectivity throughout the town.



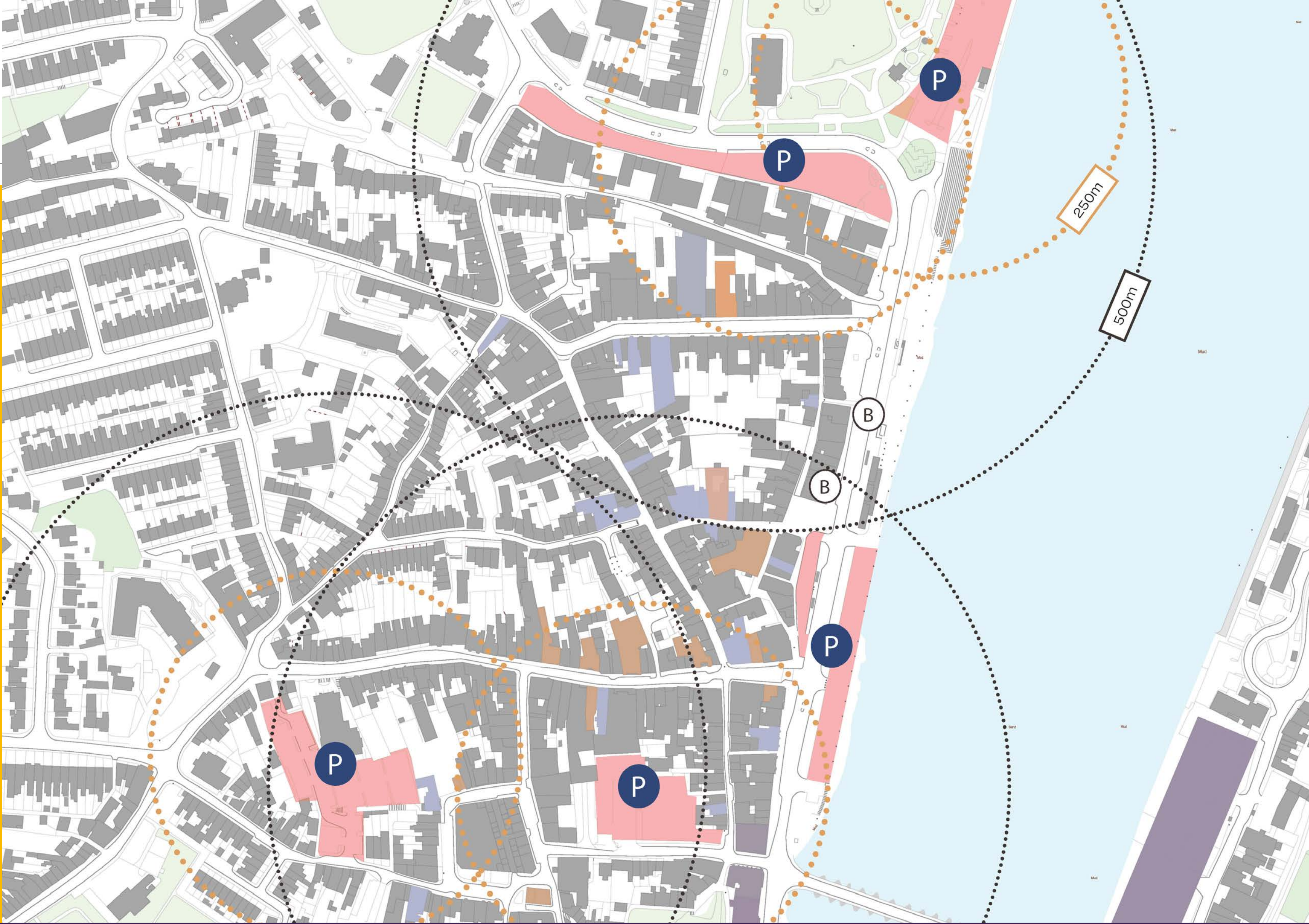
# SHAPING THE FUTURE

## Existing Town Centre Structure

The plan outlines the key issues and opportunities within the current urban fabric.

Empty properties are a reality of modern high streets, breaking the sense of vibrancy and appeal but also creating a clear opportunity for new growth.

- Developments by others
- Empty Properties
- Night time economy
- Car parks
- Bus stops
- 250m diameter / Approx. 3 min walk
- 500m diameter / Approx. 6 min walk



# MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK



## Pedestrian & cycling movement

Much of Bideford's vitality lies in a strong connection to the water. Encouraging pedestrian movements to and along the waterfront is a priority, as is ensuring better movement across the town overall.

Bideford is set on a hillside and many of the key arterial roads have steep gradients. The reality is that this cannot be changed, but creates an unavoidable challenge to develop or re-purpose buildings higher up those hills. The proposed interventions are therefore aimed at providing key, focused areas that will help draw people through and across the town.

It is also important to improve links to the Tarka Trail and provide better pedestrian and cycle routes into the town, linking to Brunswick Wharf, The Royal Hotel, the Railway Heritage Centre and wider East- the-Water. In line with the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), efforts should also be actively focused on improving the safety and ease of accessing the town centre from both Abbotsham Road (including the Hospital and Bideford College) and from Victoria Park and The Burton at Bideford.

Bideford can be confusing for many people to find their way around. Public art, creative wayfinding (not just traditional signage) and digital mapping are all key to improving how people find their way around the town. Key public spaces also need to be enhanced by creating sub-areas of planting and seating for rest and enjoyment.

The proposed new developments at the quayside and in the town centre should all be designed to improve accessibility for the elderly and people with disabilities as well as having safety at their core.

## Vehicular movement

The masterplan does not look to alter significantly the existing highways network and where adjustments are suggested these are intrinsic to an associated project that overwhelmingly enhances the vibrancy and success of the town centre as a whole.

Part-pedestrianisation of Market Place around the Pannier Market should be explored with the aim of preserving the heritage assets whilst providing a better environment for pedestrians to engage directly with the proposed Market Complex and its surroundings.

This masterplan cannot ignore the challenges facing the High Street itself. Set on a steep hill, its main function is too frequently to serve as a cut-through from The Quay towards Old Town and Abbotsham Road, meaning that the most visible part of the town centre becomes an unappealing place either for investment or to spend time. Crossing at the bottom of the High Street can feel dangerous and intimidating, and the poor visual appearance of the street itself as a result adds to the sense of decline. Work needs to be undertaken to create a more attractive pedestrian experience whilst still allowing for deliveries, disabled parking and some short-stay drop off spaces. A careful balance needs to be established with traders and Devon Highways to improve the user experience as well as safety and dwell time.

## Parking

Bideford is well served by car parks, all within a short distance from each other. Smaller, more ad-hoc facilities are distributed across the wider area and there is a lack of resident parking.

The Masterplan looks to re-imagine the waterfront as a key asset. The existing car parking at The Quay is an essential, centrally located facility which provides excellent, easy access to shops and businesses. At the same time it constrains usage of the quayfront. Regeneration should therefore focus on the area to the north of the Lundy building, along Fisherman's Wharf, to bring energy and improved public access and make the most of the beautiful waterfront and views of the rolling hills opposite.

Some alterations and widening to the entrance at Riverbank car park would be necessary to facilitate the proposed Watersports centre, however that would not decrease overall parking spaces or worsen the existing provision.

It is important that all parking provision is safe, well lit and clearly designated. This is vital to improve perceptions of safety, meet residents' requirements and to support visitors to the town. Safe, pleasant spaces will allow for a stronger night-time economy and will support events at the Market Complex or on the Quay to bring long-term vitality.

New developments will seek to bring additional people into the town centre. Where possible the use of public and active transport should be maximised but it is recognised that Bideford plays a central role in a rural community and that for many years to come car journeys will still dominate. Parking provision will need to reflect that.

## Public transport

Active travel should be promoted across Bideford town centre and the wider area and provision for easily accessible e-bike and scooter hire should be explored.

Whilst the town and its hilly nature can be seen as a barrier to pedestrian movement, introduction of electric bike and scooter hire will further encourage and facilitate movement throughout the town centre and result in less reliance on car travel.

Although some feasibility work has been undertaken on the potential for a future railway connection, the timescale for that is beyond the scope of the Bideford regeneration strategy and masterplan, so has not been factored into consideration at this stage. However, feasibility should be established for a Falcon bus service to Tiverton Parkway, linking Bideford to London in 3 hours.

The River Torridge itself is an asset that could be better utilised for travel between key town centre locations such as a Watersports centre and Brunswick Wharf. It could also provide the ability to move between Bideford and Appledore and Instow, creating an exciting and distinctive inter-connection for both work and leisure. There are real challenges to this, with the tidal waters being the foremost, but explorations should be undertaken to establish the feasibility of a water taxi / ferry service, especially during summer months.

# MOVEMENT FRAMEWORK

## Movement framework

The plan outlines key arteries leading into and through the town.

As can be seen major roads wrap through the town providing good access by car but this also inhibits connection to the river and the ability for pedestrian flow through the town.

- Primary vehicular movement
- Secondary vehicular movement
- Pedestrian routes
- Ⓟ Car parks
- Ⓟ Bus stops
- 250m diameter / Approx. 3min walk
- ⋯ 500m diameter / Approx. 6min walk

“Encourage pedestrian and cycle movements in the town centre whilst encouraging less vehicular movements.”

NORTH DEVON AND TORRIDGE LOCAL PLAN



# PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK



The public realm consists of the publicly accessible spaces that can be found in and amongst the urban fabric. Some of these are deliberate and have historically been planned as part of the town's evolution, whilst others have formed over time through natural adaptation. These spaces incorporate streets, squares and other inactive spaces. They are more than simple channels for the movement of cars and pedestrians. The quality of these spaces helps to project an area's vitality and friendliness.

Bideford's public realm has no overarching theme or inter-connection, with spaces being functional rather than pleasurable places to spend time.

Creating attractive, safe and welcoming places within the town centre must be a key role for the Masterplan. To ensure this, the areas that sit outside of project-specific interventions should undergo a series of upgrades to bring them in line with the new design standard.

The public realm framework is focused on delivering high-quality spaces that enhance the character of the town and

positively contribute to town centre vitality and appeal and increase adwell time. The idea is to draw people into and around the town with visual cues and links to encourage movement

The existing north-south axis along The Quay is a critical route, yet has many barriers to being a successful public realm. It is therefore a priority area for public realm improvements and much of the masterplan is focused around this. Spreading out from here, other public realm nodal points reinforce and strengthen the proposals. These mainly filter back into the town centre and towards Mill Street.

Areas for consideration:

- Jubilee Square
- End of Rope Walk / Bottom of Bridgeland Street
- Mill Street Baptist church area
- The Quayside
- Bridge Street
- Area around the Pannier Market

## Green Infrastructure

Bideford's town centre is served by a large park. Victoria Park is located to the north, on the periphery of the centre, and is the only green space within easy access of the centre. It has recently received investment of over £150,000 to create a destination play facility which draws visitors from across the wider region. The space overall is well used by sports teams including Bideford Rugby Club, a bustling Park Run and is busy with families and activity throughout the year, especially in the paddling pool on hot days! The town is also proud of the achievements of Bideford AFC and is well served by two bowls clubs.

The Kenwith Valley Local Nature Reserve, to the west of the town centre, is a wildlife haven featuring wildflower meadows, a freshwater lake (complete with viewing platform) reedbeds and woodlands spread over 292 acres. It is home to birds, mammals, mature trees and wildflowers and its network of paths is well used by the local community for dog walking as well as nature appreciation, providing an oasis of tranquility nestled behind Northam Road.

The town centre itself is characterised by dense urban area with very limited green space either public or private beyond that stated above, whilst connection to wider green spaces is achievable, these are beyond the town centre and in most cases only reachable by car.

Whilst green spaces are scarce in the centre, the opportunity does exist to provide greater inter-connectivity through green infrastructure interventions. This could be further expanded by providing more targeted tree planting along roadsides and leftover spaces to improve the visual appearance of the town as well as addressing issues such as air quality and urban heat spots.



## Connection to Water

Stakeholders and members of the public have been clear that the waterfront is a key feature of the town which is currently under-exploited. The connectivity between town and river needs improvement, both to enhance the visual appeal and to provide better physical access to the water.

The masterplan proposes developing this under-utilised gem as an asset for regeneration, emphasising both the heritage of the waterfront and its modern day uses, and ensuring that these are incorporated into new developments.



## Section 106

Torrige District Council has a Section 106 fund for Green Infrastructure Projects linked to sports and recreation, open space, and play areas. The fund does not currently apply to public realm projects. The criteria for spending these monies should be reviewed, to consider whether they could be used for public art and public realm developments to provide ongoing investment into the town's wellbeing.

# PUBLIC REALM FRAMEWORK

## Shaping the future

This plan outlines the key issues and opportunities within the town's current urban fabric.

Empty properties are a reality of modern high streets. These destroy vibrancy and appeal but also present an opportunity for growth from new openings and also meanwhile uses to test new ideas and short-term projects. Parking and public transport are also vital for enabling easy access and dwell. They need to allow the town centre users to reach where they are heading, ideally within a 5 minute walk. But the parking also needs to support longer dwells, creating a balance between “popping in” and spending both time and money in Bideford.



# THE FIVE PILLARS

This spatial masterplan has laid out the inherent framework upon which we can collectively build the town's future. Both need and opportunity have been quantified and explored for potential impact and also deliverability to create a range of projects. These interventions, also linked to the key objectives of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy, are brought to life through the 5 Pillars below to deliver on the vision and mission of the Bideford Regeneration Board.

## PILLAR 1

*A Thriving Bideford Quay*

### AMBITION

- Create a central point of focus for the town with flexible public spaces and a food and drink offer
- Protect future flexible uses for Bideford Port
- Create improved visual impact while preserving car parking and ease of access
- Enable improved access to the water for leisure and wellbeing
- Celebrate local maritime heritage alongside an innovative vision of the future through public art
- Strengthen links between the west and east side of the water

### PROJECTS

- Create a public walkway and flexible food and drink offer on Bideford Quay
- Establish a landmark watersports centre
- 'Sea Change' project for public realm
- Connecting town and quay
- Review crossing points and the pedestrian experience at either side of the Long Bridge

## PILLAR 2

*A Dynamic Market Complex*

### AMBITION

- Development of "The Market Complex"
- To re-establish a clear purpose for the Pannier Market and a reason for the community to use it

### PROJECTS

- Development of the Bideford Market Complex as a bustling events space
- Part-pedestrianisation of Market Place

## PILLAR 3

*Unleashing Bideford's Entrepreneurial Spirit*

### AMBITION

- Provide a high-quality central office space to develop a local small business working hub in the heart of the town
- Develop a stronger working network for local businesses
- Work with partners to provide an improved skills offer within the town centre
- Improve footfall in the town centre during and after working hours

### PROJECTS

- The New Jobs centre
- Bringing energy to the high street
- The Old Library co-working space
- A new life for vacant buildings
- A high-profile skills centre in the heart of the town
- Bridgeland Street – exploring the feasibility of creating a one-way street

## PILLAR 4

*Creative And Community Vibrancy*

### AMBITION

- Create a defined Creatives and Community Quarter surrounding The Burton at Bideford, including The Pill and Rope Walk
- Support Burton at Bideford expansion ambitions and wider impact
- Provide a focal point for the creatives sector in the wider region, improving working spaces and productivity
- Create a performance venue with flexible community spaces
- Strengthen the town's heritage and innovation brand identity

### PROJECTS

- Burton at Bideford expansion
- High-profile Maker's Space
- Develop a Creatives and Community Quarter branding / design feel
- The Barrel House cinema, performance, community space and radio studio
- 'Sea Change' project for public realm

## PILLAR 5

*Opportunities For All And Unlocking Our Talent*

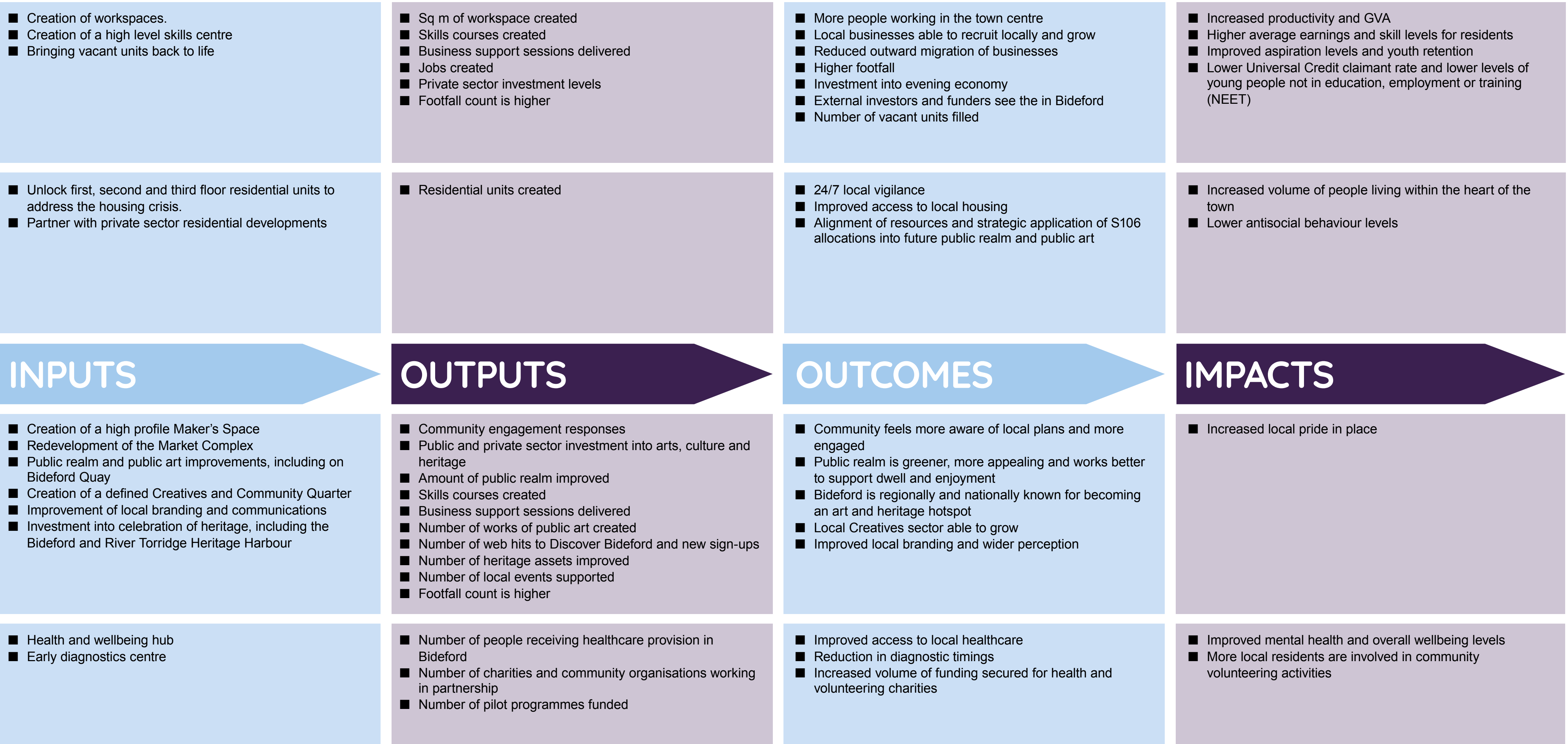
### AMBITION

- Provide improved housing options to support people to live in the town centre
- Bring targeted units back into active use
- High profile skills provision relevant to local employers provided within the heart of Bideford
- Provide better integration for health and well-being services

### PROJECTS

- Multi-agency health and wellbeing hub
- A space for our young people
- Engage first and second floors as residential opportunities
- Community infrastructure
- Provide a safer and easier crossing from the town centre towards Bideford College and the Community Hospital
- Review crossing points to improve access between Victoria Park towards the town centre

# THEORY OF CHANGE



# PILLAR 1. THE QUAYSIDE



## Ambition:

- Create a central point of focus for the town with flexible public spaces and a food and drink offer
- Protect future flexible uses for Bideford Port
- Create improved visual impact while preserving car parking and ease of access
- Enable improved access to the water for leisure and wellbeing
- Celebrate local maritime heritage alongside an innovative vision of the future through public art
- Strengthen links between the west and east side of the water

## Key Projects:

- Create a public walkway and flexible food and drink offer on Bideford Quay
- Develop a watersports centre, working with key partners
- ‘Sea Change’ public art programme to elevate the visual impact of the riverfront
- Connecting the town and quay
- Improve the pedestrian experience at either side of the Long Bridge

## Why:

- The town and community enjoys greater connectivity with Bideford’s essential asset, the River Torridge
- There is improved access to the water and visual connection with the river
- Bideford’s maritime heritage is celebrated in a way which signals future opportunities
- Bideford is established as a public art destination which supports the growth of the creatives sector



# PILLAR 1. THE QUAYSIDE. (Continued)

## A public walkway and flexible food and drink offer on Bideford Quay

Bideford Quay – the most picturesque car park in the South West – is surely one of the most beautiful spots for fish and chips in the country! A core objective of the Bideford Masterplan is to reconnect the town and community with the River Torridge. Its large tidal range creates an array of challenges, from safety to visual to perception. The riverside was traditionally a source of the town's wealth as well as a place to meet, and there is much that can be done to re-establish that link.

The Quay provides a stunning setting for large events such as eat: Bideford but on a day-to-day basis it creates an unappealing visual impact - half car park, half cluttered tarmac storage area, separating the town centre from the water. In recognition of its setting within the North Devon UNESCO Biosphere, there are major opportunities to create a more flexibly designed offer to incorporate both commercial and community activity.

Flexibility is crucial. Bideford must remain a working port whilst the car park provides a valuable service to the town and a cycle lane passes through the space. The quayfront of Fisherman's Wharf is actively used, but the wider potential for the good of the local economy and community is far from maximised.

Improved landscaping and areas of seating will increase user dwell time along this key location, while consideration for waterfront safety as well as access and use needs to be a part of the design.

Despite the tidal nature of the Torridge, the waterfront is a constantly alluring place. The creation of a food and beverage offering will provide animation to those using the space. Careful selection of kiosk or container style interventions could also enable improved and safer storage for existing commercial users whilst creating a better experience for Lundy visitors on the MS Oldenburg.



# PILLAR 1. THE QUAYSIDE. (Continued)

## A Landmark Watersports Centre

To truly connect to the water, we must first provide access to it and a way to do so safely. Bideford quayfront is actively used by the Reds and Blues rowing clubs, the Bideford canoe club and providers such as Skern Lodge. But there is no focus or support for that activity.

The masterplan therefore proposes a landmark watersports centre which will create a high profile, welcoming visual impact as well as providing a range of functional uses.

The idea is to create both a community and commercial offering which will help to drive people and activity back to the water's edge. An upper floor restaurant/bar space with a balcony space to maximise the views of the river would pair with a more functional lower level. At quay level the space could provide storage and facilities such as a wash down area and showers.

This could be run either as a commercial or community venture depending on levels of interest from local clubs. It should be developed through partnerships to strengthen the local offer and enhance the impact of events such as the Bideford Regatta.

In addition, a review of public facilities on the Quay should consider redevelopment of the Lundy building, both to improve the offer there and address inter-connected issues such as antisocial behaviour.



# PILLAR 1. THE QUAYSIDE. (Continued)

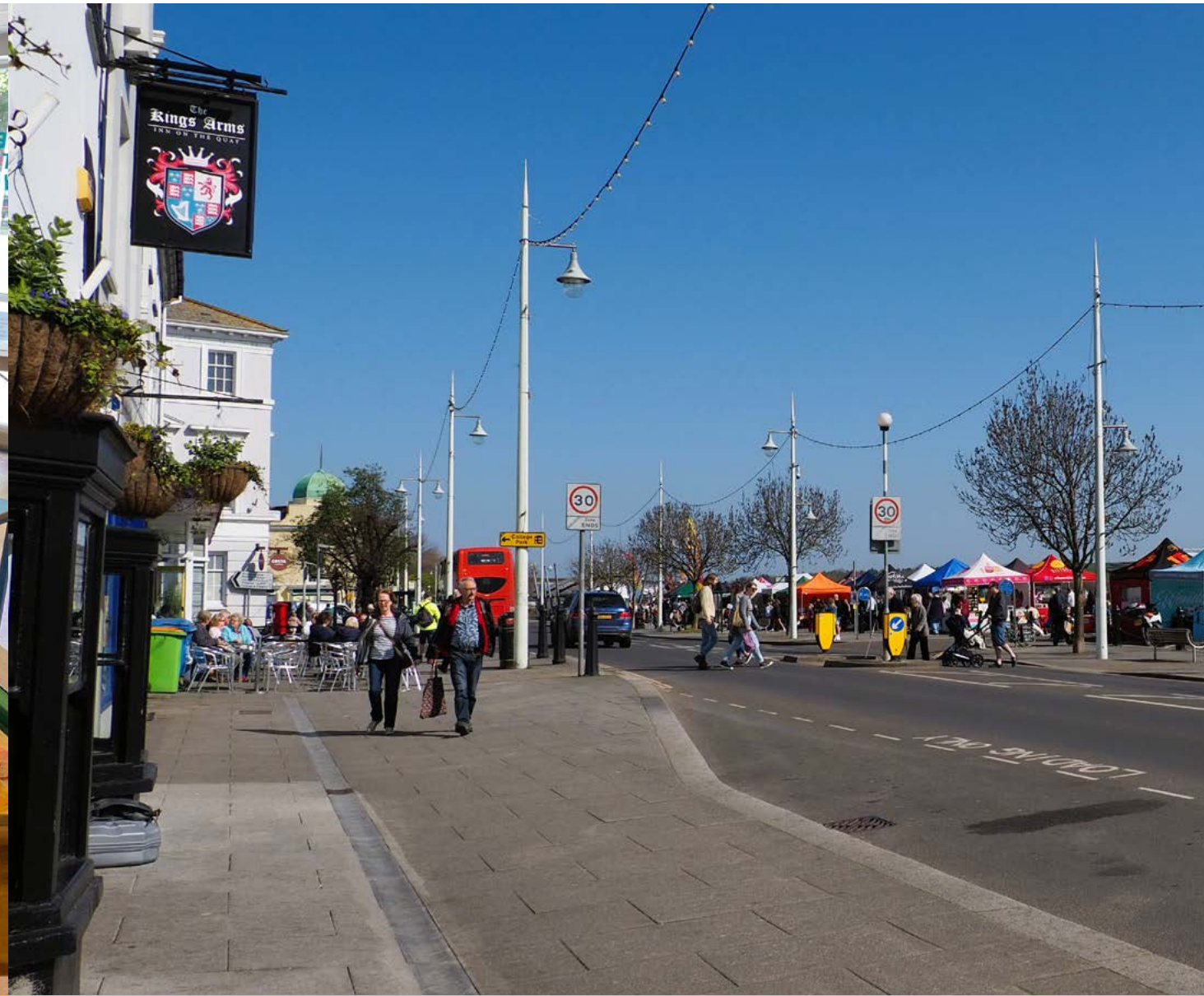


PHOTO: NAME HERE

## Sea Change

Underpinning Bideford's growing, dynamic blue economy, the town has a long maritime heritage. Sea Change aims to bring that past and future to life through a programme of public art and public realm development, reorienting the town once again towards the sea and estuary as a source of inspiration, pride and employment.

Developed as a partnership between industry, Torrington District Council, North Devon+ and The Burton at Bideford, the Quay is at the heart of this plan to create opportunities to interact, educate and enjoy being in the town.

This campaign of work will project Bideford as an artistic hotbed and bring in national artists who will work alongside local talent to celebrate local materials and develop both heritage and future-oriented themes.

## Connecting town and Quay

The town and Quay too often feel like two completely separate places rather than part of a bigger whole.

The public realm proposal for the quayside will include some alterations to allow the free and easy flow of pedestrians back to the town. Careful consideration should be given to surface treatment and the use of colour to connect the area and potentially slow traffic to 20mph.

Work should also be undertaken to improve the connection between the Tarka Trail, the redeveloped Brunswick Wharf, and the Quay as well as crossing experience for pedestrians and cyclists at either side of the Long Bridge.

## Improve the pedestrian experience at either side of the Long Bridge

Development of Bideford Quay and Brunswick Wharf should stimulate an increased flow of people between the two sides of the river. The pedestrian experience at both sides of the Long Bridge is therefore crucial.

Work needs to be undertaken to improve a range of aspects, from visual appeal to wayfinding to safety to ensure pedestrians are able to move across the bridge with ease and then continue their journeys onwards, including into the revived town centre and into East-the-Water, including into The Royal Hotel.

# PILLAR 2. THE MARKET COMPLEX



**Ambition:**

- Development of the Market Complex
- To re-establish a clear purpose for the Pannier Market and a reason for the community to use it

**Key Projects:**

- Development of the Bideford Market Complex as a bustling events space
- Part-pedestrianisation of Market Place

**Why:**

- The town's evening economy is boosted
- New food and drink businesses are supported and given a kick start
- Longstanding issues of a lack of high-quality event space are addressed



# PILLAR 2. THE MARKET COMPLEX. (Continued)

## Development of the Market Complex

The Bideford Market Complex is a Grade II Listed landmark with immense potential to become a thriving cultural, social, and economic hub for the town.

Its architecture and central location offer character and charm, but the decline of traditional retail, the concentration of shopping on Mill Street, and the market's location at the top of town have contributed to reduced footfall, a sense of separation, and an overall decline in impact on the wellbeing of Bideford.

At the same time, there is a pressing local need: Bideford currently has no large, purpose-equipped events venue. The Market Hall is already licensed for alcohol consumption and approved for hosting dance, film, and live music events—yet its infrastructure requires significant revitalisation if it is to fulfil its potential as the heart of the town's cultural and social infrastructure.

## Phase 1: Securing the foundations

Over £1.4m has already been secured through the Torridge Community Regeneration Partnership and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). This funding addresses the historic fabric of the building, ensuring its preservation while paving the way for modernisation. Planned improvements include flexible staging and acoustic enhancements, allowing the Market Hall to host conferences, trade shows, and cultural events at a scale currently unavailable in North Devon. This directly supports the North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy, which aims to bring larger conferences and events into the region.

## Inspiration from elsewhere

Successful examples exist across the South West:

**The Cheese and Grain, Frome** – now a nationally recognised venue attracting touring bands, comedians, and shows.

**The Buttermarket, Redruth** – revitalised into a multi-purpose cultural and social hub.

Both have moved beyond the traditional “market” identity, adopting clear, modern branding. In Bideford, shifting from “Pannier Market” to the Bideford Market Complex acknowledges the heritage while clarifying its role as a forward-looking community and events centre. are to everyone's long-term benefit.



## Strengthening the offer: Butcher's Row and beyond

The small starter units in Butcher's Row are a distinctive feature of the complex, offering accessible opportunities for new businesses. Recent success stories, such as Devonshire Cork & Vine, and Jack in the Box, demonstrate the potential. By offering a flexible retail and hospitality model—wine bar, café, and retail combined—they have drawn significant footfall, generated social media buzz, and set a standard for the kind of dynamic, customer-focused businesses that can thrive here. There is also the possibility of further, complimentary, businesses adding to the success. Devonshire Cork & Vine is expanding and diversifying. There is a definite buzz around Butcher's Row that continues to grow, and with careful appointments will become a vibrant offering to visitors.

This approach strengthens the case for positioning the Market Complex as a regional foodie destination, encouraging both churn and innovation while driving wider economic benefits across the town.

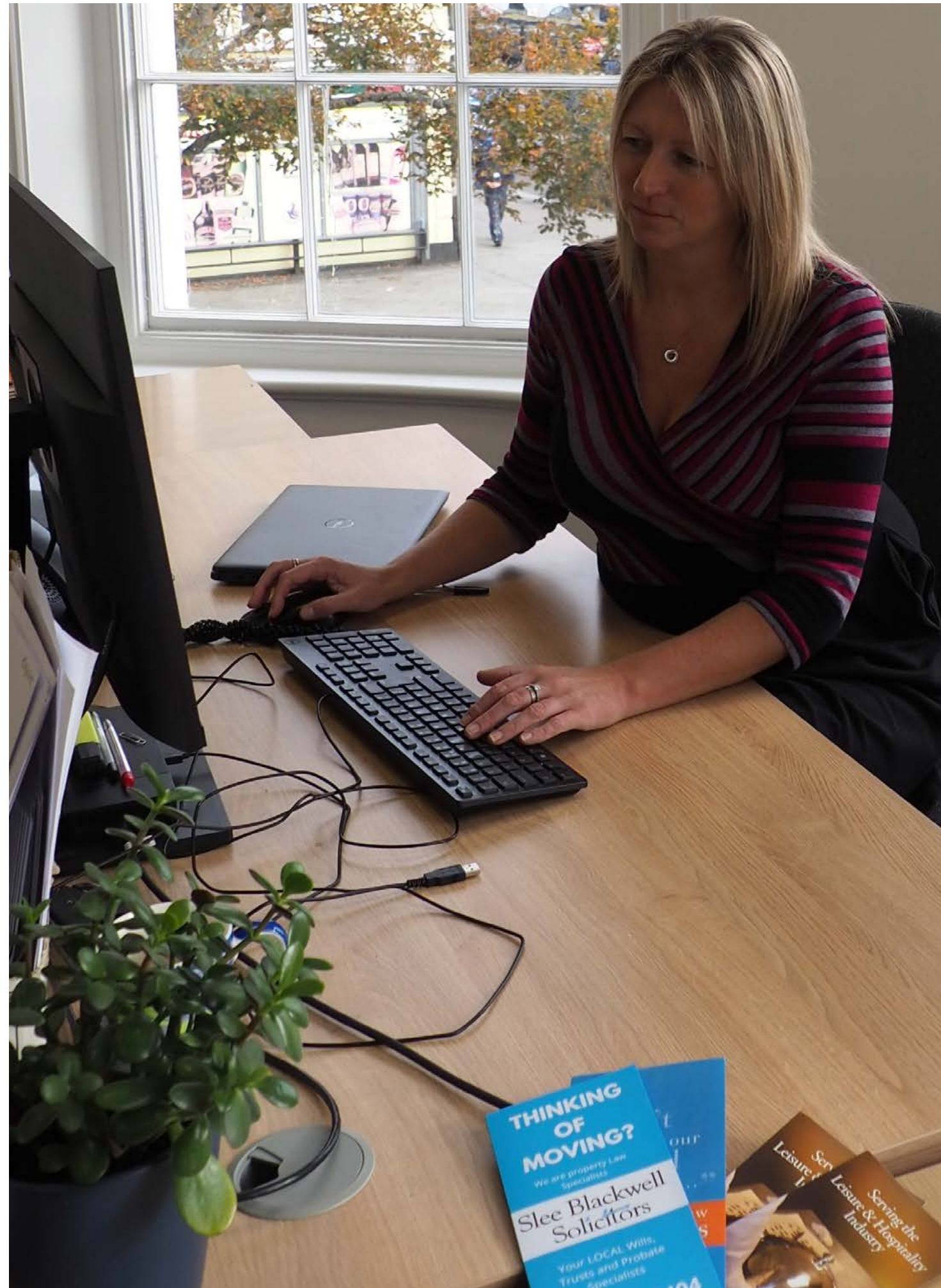
## Part-pedestrianisation of the Market Place

As part of the regeneration of the Pannier Market feasibility work and consultation should be undertaken to explore the benefits and implications of part-pedestrianising the surrounding Market Place. The ambition would be to enable overspill for the shops and hospitality providers surrounding the Market Complex, improving the general environment and creating a more appealing place to draw people up the hill.

The current traffic flow creates a narrow path along the top of the market but also divides it from the Honestone car park. Both worsen the pedestrian experience. The short-term car parking around the market could also be reprovisioned to support accessibility.

Over the last few years, large-scale highways projects have taken place in Exeter and Newton Abbot which have caused significant disruption and friction with local traders. Local traders need to be at the heart of shaping any new proposals from the outset to avoid unforeseen negative impacts.

# PILLAR 3. ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT



## Ambition:

- Provide a high-quality central office space to develop a local small business working hub in the heart of the town
- Develop a stronger working network for local businesses
- Work with partners to provide an improved skills offer within the town centre

## Key Projects:

- The New Jobs centre
- Bringing energy to the high street
- The Old Library gym and co-working space
- A new life for vacant buildings
- A high-profile skills centre in the heart of the town
- Bridgeland Street – exploring the feasibility of creating a one-way street

## Why:

- Increased productivity and GVA
- Higher average earnings and skill levels
- Improved aspiration levels and youth retention
- Increase footfall from more people working in the heart of the town, with resulting local spend
- Generate a greater need for evening economy businesses to open
- Bring key heritage buildings back to life with a new economic and community purpose, bringing pride back to the town
- Lower Universal Credit claimant rate and lower levels of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)



# PILLAR 3. ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT. (Continued)



## The New Jobs Centre

Northbank House, the former Tax Office and current home of the Job Centre, is a project which is deliverable in the short to medium term as a headline project for the Bideford masterplan.

Similar to the PZ360 development in Penzance, the New Job Centre proposals would use an existing office block, currently vacant at first and second floor levels to create a dynamic office and co-working environment in the heart of Bideford. Node at Roundswell is demonstration of the vibrancy of the local small business community. The New Jobs Centre would aim to create a similar working community but in the heart of the town centre, supporting the local residential growth and avoiding a continued outflux of local workforce and businesses. At the same time it would provide a great space for people who currently work from home as well as access to the local economy despite working on a regional, national or even international level.

Improving the offer for small businesses is a critical aspect of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy, providing good quality office space with a strong sense of community and access to business support and funding advice to drive the entrepreneurial spirit of the town and wider community. The New Job Centre will be at the heart of that drive.

## Bringing energy back to the High Street

The High Street is the most visible part of Bideford's town centre yet is also the hardest to improve. Buildings are all in private ownership, and many long-term vacants are owned by people or entities outside of area. Many of the units themselves are too large for use by modern independent retailers and the space is unappealing to those national chains whose decisions are based purely on algorithms. The parking bays below Mill Street and Allhalland Street are useful to let people either drop off or park for a few minutes but create a poor, and sometimes dangerous, pedestrian experience, whilst those spaces along the right-hand side make it hard to cross the road. Beyond that the lack of water supply prevents easy provision of hanging baskets as has been done elsewhere in the town.

The High Street plays a pivotal role in connecting The Quay with Mill Street and the proposed Market Complex, and as such it is vital that this is seen as an attractive proposition.

Reducing the parking at the lower levels and improving the planting needs to be proactively explored, as does working with partners such as Historic England to find a new lease of life for long-abandoned buildings, many of which have rich heritage.

## The Old Library co-working space

The Old Library occupies a prime, highly visible site at the end of the historic Old Bridge. Torridge District Council has secured Planning approval to convert the building, along with the under-utilised Town Hall, into a multi-purpose gym, working with Active Torridge.

As part of the funded project the currently unused ground-floor spaces of the Town Hall have been assigned as a small co-working space. Plans were initially explored in 2019 but could not be developed at the time as the project would have needed a wider redevelopment.

The project aims to be open and operational by 2027 to give the beautiful Grade II Listed building a new lease of life and deliver on the ambition of providing a range of workspaces to build the local economic community in the heart of the town.

# PILLAR 3. ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT. (Continued)

PHOTO: MONKEYBUSINESSIMAGES



## A high profile skills centre in the heart of the town

Bideford has ambitious plans for future economic growth and raising skill and productivity levels needs to be at the heart of that. All of the town's schools are now rated as Ofsted "Good" and the town has a flourishing tutoring scene, including a town centre provision, as well as adult education from Learn Devon. North Devon College provides a local Further Education offer in nearby Barnstaple, and works with the wider region's business community.

But to truly deliver on local ambitions further skills provision is required. A visible skills presence also raises awareness of the skills and sectors they deliver for, supporting the ambitions of the Bideford Regeneration Strategy and the wider North Devon and Torridge Economic Strategy to raise aspiration levels and, in turn, impact on social mobility and make Bideford a place our younger demographic can be proud of and where they will want to stay and work in impactful careers.

This masterplan has not specifically identified locations for that skills input as the precise nature of space required will depend on the subject requirements and scale needed. However, the Bideford Regeneration Board stands ready to support high-quality proposals that come forward.

The merger process between Petroc and Exeter College presents a moment for regional reflection and opportunity. That is furthered by the Devon and Torbay CCA taking adults skills budget responsibility with a regional overview of skills requirements and funding. Those partners need to be brought together to work for the good of the community and local economy in Bideford, whilst also seeing the potential positive impact for the wider regional economy.

## A new life for vacant spaces

Whilst many of the vacant buildings sit in private ownership various approaches have been assessed to see which model(s) could be suitable to bring these buildings back to life. Many of the buildings are also listed, creating additional challenges.

A full audit has been undertaken to identify the ownership of long-term vacant units, and introductions can be provided where required.

A new approach requiring partnerships is at the heart of this masterplan, with Torridge District Council working together with owners, investors and key bodies such as Historic England, Architectural Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and Homes England to protect abandoned buildings and provide them with a new lease of economic life and vibrancy.

The Launch Bideford scheme has demonstrated the impact of bringing units back to life through partnership working, allowing short-term rentals of empty spaces to test new businesses and models which can then seek longer-term impact. Devonshire Cork and Vine is an ideal example of a new business testing a model and finding instant success, generating energy and future opportunities to expand into new premises to fulfill the need and interest.

If the current owners of long-vacant buildings are not able to be encouraged to invest in the building fabric and bring them back into use, discussions with community ownership groups or local charitable trusts such as the Bideford Bridge Trust to take ownership should be considered.

## Bridgeland Street - exploring the feasibility of creating a one-way system

Bridgeland Street is one of the most architecturally significant roads in the entirety of Devon. Anyone driving up or down the street would struggle to experience that, with the on-street parking combining with the relatively narrow highway to create a near-constant state of congestion, especially in the evenings.

The Barnstaple with Bideford and Northam Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) advocates for feasibility work to be undertaken to establish whether more space could be created for footways and pedestrians without reducing loading of access for businesses. This Masterplan supports that.

# PILLAR 4. CREATIVE AND COMMUNITY VIBRANCY



## Ambition:

- To create a defined Creatives and Community Quarter surrounding The Burton at Bideford, including The Pill and Rope Walk
- To support The Burton at Bideford expansion ambitions and wider impact
- To provide a focal point for the creatives sector in the wider region, improving working spaces and productivity
- To create a performance venue with flexible community spaces
- To strengthen the town's arts heritage and innovation brand identity – "Sea Change"

## Key Projects:

- Burton at Bideford expansion
- High-profile Maker's Space
- Develop a Creatives and Community Quarter branding / design feel
- The Barrel House cinema, performance, community space and radio studio

## Why:

- Increased local pride in place
- Support the local creatives sector to become more competitive through improved workspaces and profile locally
- Increase the number of people working and enjoying time in the heart of the town
- Create wider opportunities for enjoyment and wellbeing through art, cinema and theatre, as well as providing social bridging spaces which bring people together for fun



PHOTOS: MAGIC PAWLOWSKI, JUM WILEMAN

# PILLAR 4. CREATIVE AND COMMUNITY VIBRANCY. (Continued)

PHOTO: JIM WILEMAN



PHOTO: NAME HERE

## Burton at Bideford expansion

The Burton at Bideford attracts over 160,000 visitors to the art gallery and museum every year. But space is confined and large amounts of the permanent collection lie in storage with no space for exhibition or celebration. Additional space is urgently needed in order to achieve more and engage more with a wider audience and demographic.

The Bideford Cultural Investment Plan outlines the case for this and The Burton could be at the forefront of cultural shift. It is recognised by significant national bodies that culture plays a key role in ensuring the vitality of a healthy and sustainable community. Development of the physical offering of The Burton must go hand in hand with a more visible public art offering, looking at interactive art trails around the town, along with exhibitions in the park and the river.

## High-profile Maker's Space

Rope Walk is an iconic street full of character, hidden from immediate view but looming over the Pill and connections to the Quay. It is synonymous with the old collar factory building that creates a beautiful architectural presence but also a reminder of sad decline.

Rope Walk's proximity to the Burton at Bideford, Bideford Blues, Bideford Reds and Space\* youth services creates a true alignment opportunity for it to be at the heart of a future Creatives and Cultural Quarter, celebrating its former role as a maker's space to then transform into a modern Creatives' Maker's Space.

Recent work by MHCLG for the Community Regeneration Partnership identified Bideford and the surrounding villages as a fascinating example of high-volume, low productivity creatives activity. There are a lot of solo makers working across a range of medium with huge potential for impact by providing a dedicated space for activity, but also to facilitate business support and improve access to funding and skills inputs.

## Develop a Creatives and Community Quarter branding / design feel

The creation of a Creatives and Community quarter needs to be reinforced by a shared branding, creating a real sense of togetherness and shared ambition.

## Use Public Art, improved signage and digital tools to bring to life the town's Heritage Stories and Future Ambitions

Sea Change is again at the heart of this collective vision for the town. That vision needs to be adopted as a movement across the town to strengthen the sense of local branding and also to reduce the current piecemeal nature of storytelling and heritage celebration across the town.

Sea Change also needs to embed itself in regional consciousness, working with other local clusters, funders and skills providers such as the University of Plymouth, in order to learn, connect and bring further attention to the resurgence in Bideford.

# PILLAR 4. CREATIVE AND COMMUNITY VIBRANCY. (Continued)

## The Barrel House cinema, performance, community space and radio studio

Up Close Theatre is leading an ambitious, community-driven project to transform the former nightclub on Jubilee Square into a vibrant, multi-purpose venue. Initial plans include two performance and cinema spaces, a recording studio with community radio facilities, rehearsal rooms, and flexible spaces for local community groups and events.

The name “The Barrel House” pays homage to the building’s past and its original role in Bideford’s maritime heritage. While Up Close Theatre is driving the project, the council’s regeneration group is providing a supporting role, helping guide the development to help it align with the town’s wider regeneration plans.

Bideford has long lacked a dedicated theatre, and while cinema has previously been shown in the local school, the town currently does not have a purpose-built cinema. The Bideford Film Society will be an active user group in the development, bringing premium film programming to the town. The Barrel house will complement these offerings by providing a high-quality, flexible venue inspired by successful projects such as the Biscuit Factory in Reading, where previously neglected buildings were transformed into thriving hubs of arts, entertainment, and community activity.

Although still in its early stages, the project is poised to make a major impact. With the right support, Up Close Theatre will progress feasibility studies, engage closely with the community, and develop a financially sustainable plan designed to deliver long-term benefits.

The Barrel House will also revitalise Jubilee Square. An active frontage will create a more welcoming public space, and add to Bideford’s growing creatives and cultural reputation linked to the creation of the new Creatives Quarter.



# PILLAR 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL



## Ambition:

- Provide improved housing options to support people to live in the town centre
- Bring targeted units back into active use
- High profile skills provision relevant to local employers provided within the heart of Bideford



## Key Projects:

- Multi-agency health and wellbeing hub to bring together NHS, TTVS, local charities and the Department for Work and Pensions to address multiple needs in one place
- A Space for our young people
- Engage first and second floors as residential opportunities
- Community infrastructure
- Investigate the potential to reprofile the junction of Abbotsham Road, High Street, Old Town and Honestone Street to provide a safer and easier crossing from the town centre towards Bideford College and the Community Hospital
- Review of crossing points to improve access between Victoria Park and Morrisons towards the town centre, including the potential for a zebra crossing and widening of the central island

## Why:

- Improved mental health and overall wellbeing levels
- Provide better connections and support for the young people of the town to make the town centre a more appealing and enjoyable place for all
- Create a standard of housing that is appealing and accessible to all, supporting people to live and thrive in the town centre
- Remove or reduce some of the worst traffic and pedestrian challenges in the town
- More local residents are involved in community volunteering work

# PILLAR 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL. (Continued)

PHOTO: HIRAMAN



## Multi-Agency Health and Wellbeing Hub

The NHS 10 Year Health Plan sits alongside recent investment from the Community Regeneration Partnership (MHCLG) into Bideford Hospital to create a unique moment of opportunity for the town's complex health needs.

At the heart of the vision for improving healthcare opportunity is the creation of a Health and Wellbeing Hub. Funding has been secured through the Community Regeneration Partnership to deliver it at Bideford Hospital, with partners including NHS, TTVS, charities and Torridge District Council coming together to shape the offer. The ambition is for a hub that brings the broader local offer into one building, enabling closer working relationships and meaning people in need can get help in one place with easy, rapid referrals without the confusing labyrinth that puts many people off from engaging in the first place.

During a 2025 pilot project for People Experiencing Homelessness (PEH) in Bideford one of the key findings was the difficulty for many people in accessing and engaging with mainstream primary care services and the need for a single, accessible location where health, housing, mental health and substance misuse services could be delivered in an integrated manner.

Delivery of the hub will also sit alongside the creation of a community diagnostics centre to catch early symptoms and avoid the issues of delayed diagnosis due to barriers connected to distance, a major boost for residents.

## A Space for our young People

The Pearl Exchange in Bude stems from an inspirational story to create a truly inspirational flexible community space for young people aged 18 – 35. The charity provides a creative, collaborative space to support young adults through creative practices, but also counselling and wellbeing. Crucially, it also connects people to make them feel part of a community which inspires them and makes them want to stay in the area. Retaining this demographic is key to building our skilled workforce of the future, and the Pearl Exchange has had a demonstrable impact on retaining professionals in the area. It provides a place to be, to share and to receive support, as well as to connect to other young people through activities such as sessions in the Bude Sea Pool. Work should be undertaken to understand whether there is need and value in providing a similar open space for the town's young adults.

Space\* youth centre does amazing work to support the town's young people, and is itself constrained. But when you step from the structure of school or youth centres like Space\* into a big wide world of responsibility and disconnectedness there is nowhere to call their own.

It is therefore enormously important to explore with the wider community what and where are the right spaces for employment and leisure which make our next generation want to stay.

## Engage first and second floors as residential opportunities

We are living through a housing crisis in a town that seeks additional footfall and a 24/7 presence to support both vibrancy and safety.

The upper floors of retail units present a major opportunity to achieve both goals. The privately-owned spaces on the High Street provide two and in some cases three floors of undeveloped potential. Within the conservation area there are significant challenges to overcome, in particular with the need to create separate entranceways. But for the heritage to be vibrant again collective solutions need to be found between the key partners and building owners.

This is seen as a key component that is not about driving sub-standard living arrangement, but working with the existing fabric of these properties to ensure they are brought back into occupancy.

# PILLAR 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL. (Continued)



## Community infrastructure

Bideford is a hot bed of community activity, with local groups meeting all over the town for all sorts of interests and purposes. In our surrounding rural communities those groups would meet in a well-equipped village hall, with local trustees constantly fundraising to improve the facilities and offer. But Bideford doesn't have any form of collective meeting place.

That sense of social infrastructure, defined by the Bennett Institute as “physical and community facilities which bring people together to build meaningful relationships” is crucial to address issues identified in the Onion Collective’s 2019 analysis of Bideford. That report found a lack of “social bridging”, creating a stark series of communities within the wider one.

However, evidence demonstrates that communities need to be at the heart of shaping that infrastructure, that when it is imposed it is inherently wrong. This aspect is therefore crucial but needs collective development! Central to that must also be a realisation of the challenges of providing community spaces. The management and financial models are key to make sure any space is well run and that it creates a revenue stream to become financially sustainable.

## Provide a safer and easier crossing from the town centre towards Bideford College and Bideford Hospital

The junction of Abbotsham Road, High Street, Old Town and Honestone Street is a regular cause of congestion, impacting on traffic coming up from the Quay and frequently blocking the High Street itself, especially at the start and end of the school day.

With over £5 million having been secured in 2025 for improvements at the hospital it is essential to remove barriers to future use, removing barriers to healthcare and also improving the daily experience for the younger members of our community. The Barnstaple with Bideford LCWIP includes a desire to explore improvements to this known pinch-point in the town.

## Review crossing points to improve access between Victoria Park and the town centre

Proposed as part of the Barnstaple with Bideford LCWIP this review would focus on strengthening the connection between key assets such as Victoria Park and The Burton at Bideford with the town centre. Both of these are large attractions into the town but too frequently those visitors do not then carry on into the heart of the town, extending their dwell time, enjoyment and spend. Often that is because signage and awareness of the town's offer is poor, but the road also acts as a natural barrier, in particular to families. A percentage shift would have a big impact on town centre footfall and vibrancy.



### **For Further Information:**

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To discuss specific opportunities or to arrange a visit, including with any of the key organisations or clusters listed:

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