

BASINGSTOKE TOWN CENTRE

VISION

INTRO

The Media Story:

Retail chains collapsing, job losses, empty streets – our high streets are dying because of the rise of online shopping, compounded by lifestyle changes as a result of the pandemic.

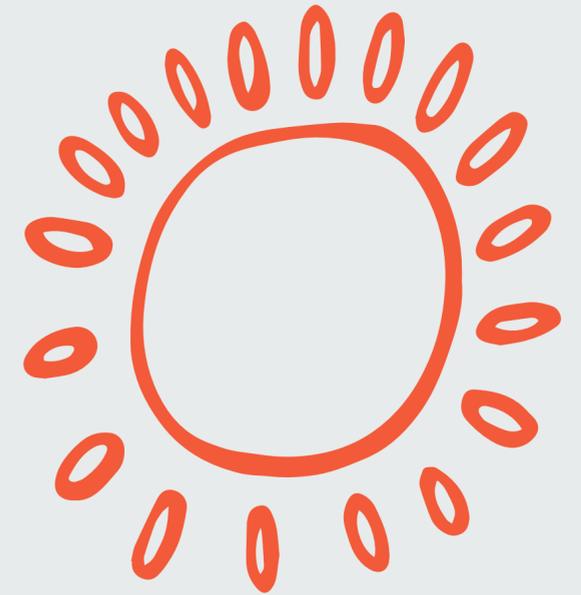
The Real Underlying Story:

The UK's town centres were traditionally the heart of our social lives – places to live, work, enjoy culture and leisure and come together with friends, family and our wider community. However, over decades many have become home to overly dominant shopping centres; overtaken by chain retailers and with leisure and social activities pushed to out-of-town complexes. As a result, the real social importance of our town centres has often been forgotten – the green spaces, generous public realm for social interaction, entertainment, nightlife, leisure, non-retail workplaces and homes.

The Opportunity:

The pandemic has accelerated societal shifts and in many ways provoked permanent changes to our lifestyles. It has dramatically highlighted how social capital, community cohesion and access to green space are essential to wellbeing and happiness for everyone. Now is the time for town centres to react, to rethink and optimise to address these evolving societal trends and meet the needs of the populations they serve.

Many, including this team, believe the future is bright for our town centres – to once again be the beating heart of the communities they serve. The decline of physical retail is demonstrative of changing consumer behaviours – with the effects of the pandemic and increasing climate and ethical awareness meaning shoppers are valuing small business, localism, sustainability and transparency more than ever. In addition to this, it's time to get 'experiential'. Consumers are eschewing 'goods' in favour of experiences; something that's reflected in the buoyancy of leisure, sports, travel, café culture and events. Every crisis is an opportunity – and by working on a new town centre vision at this pivotal moment in time, Basingstoke has the opportunity of a century.



BASINGSTOKE

Basingstoke has a history of welcoming innovation and enterprise, from the start of the 20th Century when Thomas Burberry established his 'brand' to the growth town period of the later 20th Century. And it is now embarking on a new and exciting period of growth in the 21st Century.

Basingstoke has outgrown its original status as a 'market town' and needs to now position itself differently and with authority. The town is heading for a catchment of 200,000 and its town centre must reflect this.

This Vision seeks to guide this new era for Basingstoke, but in a human centred way. Our approach recognises that the future of the town must be dictated by those who know it best, the people who live and work there, who use and rely on it. It does not seek to impose a top-down template of growth but is built from the bottom-up. This vision comes from extensive engagement with residents and businesses, and it puts people at its heart. It is 'for the people of Basingstoke, by the people of Basingstoke'.

2020 was an extremely difficult year for every town centre, and Basingstoke has its fair share of challenges. Local people want the town to be brave and bold in meeting these challenges and in setting out a clear vision for its future growth. Growth that is inclusive, driven by and with its population and workforce.



BACKGROUND

Basingstoke has outgrown its original status as a 'market town' and is heading for a catchment of 200,000. This scale alone sets it apart from market towns like Newbury, Aldershot and even Winchester, and it is more comparable with Reading and Southampton.

Studies warn of huge retail job losses in England after the pandemic. The impact of Covid-19 has been felt by all town centres, but Basingstoke is more vulnerable than many and therefore needs to respond more urgently and more radically.

A KPMG report has ranked Basingstoke the 3rd most vulnerable place post- Covid-19, and that its job provision could be more significantly affected by the shift to home working. A more creative and dynamic town centre is needed to persuade the new 'entrepreneurs' that Basingstoke is the place to set up their businesses.

Basingstoke town centre is dominated by retail, and by Festival Place and The Malls in particular. It is overly reliant on 'chain' retail and its cultural and leisure offer is considered to be relatively weak. It is a long way from being the experience-led place that Basingstoke's population want it to be and that is the societal direction of travel.

Basingstoke has relied heavily on access by car, for retail, for business and for leisure. As it transitions towards a greener and more sustainable economy, the town needs to ensure that this historic strength does not become seen as a weakness. It needs to become a town which is welcoming to pedestrians and cyclists, prioritises bus and rail use, and encourages innovative approaches to business and personal travel.



KPMG 2021 Report

“Locations will need to offer more to attract both companies and people to their area. Those that succeed will be likely to have a range of cultural assets as well as easy access to green space, which will serve to boost the quality of living in the area.”

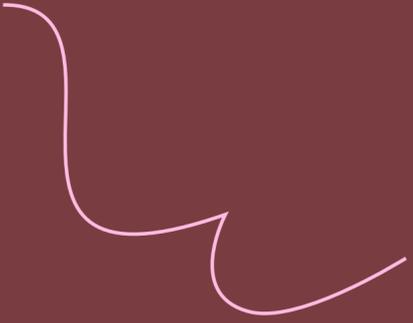
BACKGROUND

Between 15th February and the 19th March 2021, over 3300 people spent over 1660 hours to explain what they love about Basingstoke town centre and how they would like to see it evolve.

The aim of this public survey was to understand in greater detail how Basingstoke is perceived and used by those who live, work and visit the town centre, and to discover how people would like their town centre to improve. It was also important to understand if and how this has changed post-Covid. It was an incredibly valuable process, building on the results of the Horizon 2050 surveys. The results have produced real insight into the views and opinions of local citizens and their ambition for the future of their town.

Whilst the survey captures a present picture of public sentiment, it is also future focused. Respondents were asked to describe and explain what positive visions they have for the future of Basingstoke town centre. Respondents were asked, 'How can the town centre work better physically, socially and environmentally?'; 'What is it about Basingstoke that should be enhanced?'; 'What is missing from the town centre?'; and importantly...

The survey has been augmented by a series of group, and one-to-one engagement sessions. Armed with this knowledge, a Vision for Basingstoke has been created that is based on the experiences and insights of the people who know it best. This Vision for Basingstoke Town Centre should inform the town centre masterplan and all major thinking and initiatives that involve the town centre.



What kind of town do you want future generations to inherit?

SURVEY FINDINGS

CURRENT TOWN CENTRE:

There is a dichotomy in that the overriding sentiment is that Basingstoke's population love their town but not their town centre.

- Only 44% agree that Basingstoke is a town centre full of interesting places to eat and drink
- Only 34% agree that it is a town centre with great arts and cultural attractions
- Only 29% agree that is a town centre with a good range of events and festivals
- Only 20% of people agree Basingstoke has interesting shops
- Only 15% agree is it a town centre with interesting markets

FUTURE TOWN CENTRE:

The top four priorities that respondents would like to see in the future are:

- More local and independent shops
- More local and independent cafés and restaurants
- More cultural space
- Better open space to hold events and festivals
- More planting, street furniture and green space



**91% of survey respondents want change.
3% said the town centre is fine as it is.**

SURVEY RESPONSES

FUTURE TOWN CENTRE:

Comments from respondents:

“It needs to be made more of a ‘go-to place’. At the moment it feels that you only go if you have to”

“Make it more child friendly”

“Encourage small businesses with local and sustainable products”

“Better places for teenagers to hang out”

“Better local markets”

“A cleaner, greener more relaxing experience”



SURVEY RESPONSES

TOP 5 ASSETS:

War memorial park

Eastrop Park

Festival Place

Top Of The Town

The Anvil

TOP 5 DISLIKES:

Not enough green/open public space

Lacks character

Not enough choice of shops

Too many chains

Too few eating/drinking options

“Over the long term, places with strong, distinctive identities are more likely to prosper than places without them. Every place must identify its strongest, most distinctive features and develop them or run the risk of being all things to all persons and nothing special to any”.

-

ROBERT MERTON SOLOW
NOBEL PRIZE WINNING ECONOMIST

WHAT MAKES BASINGSTOKE DISTINCTIVE TO YOU?

Identity comes from a combination of:

- **APPEARANCE:** how the town centre looks.
- **ACTIVITY:** what people can do in the town centre.
- **AWARENESS:** how people perceive the town centre.

Residents and businesses state that Basingstoke town centre suffers from a lack of identity. When asked in the Horizon 2050 survey to describe what makes the borough unique, residents struggled to answer.

Basingstoke is fortunate to have a variety of assets with positive identities: Basing View, Top of the Town, The Anvil Concert Hall, Festival Place, Eastrop Park. But these sit in isolation.

The town needs to combine these assets into a positive town centre identity, to be proud of its market town heritage and its growth town qualities. It cannot continue to be a town centre defined by the words 'shopping centre'.

What makes Basingstoke distinctive to you?

Comments from respondents:

“The history and old town.”

“Cultural destinations in town centre - Anvil and Haymarket.”

“Local history. Burberry was founded in the town centre.”

“The cultural heritage. This is something that I think needs to be embraced to a greater extent. The majority of people in Basingstoke haven't an idea about the history of the town.”

“Develop a clear identity rather than the current fragmentation.”

WHAT DOES BASINGSTOKE TOWN CENTRE NEED?

Identity

LISTEN

- To cater for the needs of its population which have been clearly stated.
- To actively engage and positively respond to new and young voices.
- To not impose large scale planning on its population again but rather listen and empower.

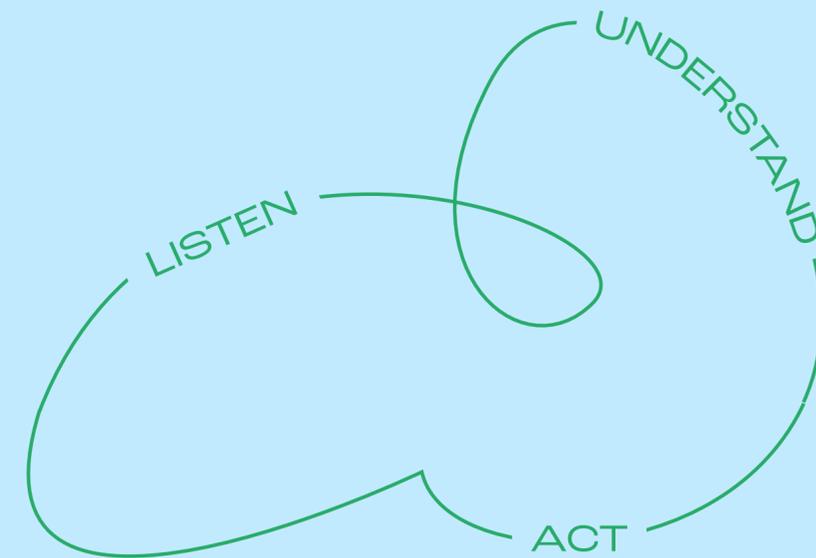
UNDERSTAND

- Basingstoke is no longer just a market town and needs the scale of meeting / social spaces to reflect this.
- The growing need for green space as more people live and work in the town centre.
- The critical importance of a visible and diverse cultural offer to support business growth, filling the gap created by retail shrinkage and creating identity.
- That as demand for retail space falls, health, community and education uses are needed to support town centres.
- The importance of skills and education in driving economic growth. To tackle the issue of not having a University and make it a positive feature.

ACT

- To be brave and proactive. Not to wait and have to react to a worsening shopping centre / retail landscape.
- To continue talking but importantly the action to start now. Strategies need to be backed up with a demonstration of commitment.
- To start to deliver and show progress quickly, and not create a grand plan that sits in a drawer.
- To ensure that all action is 'on message' and reinforces the Vision.

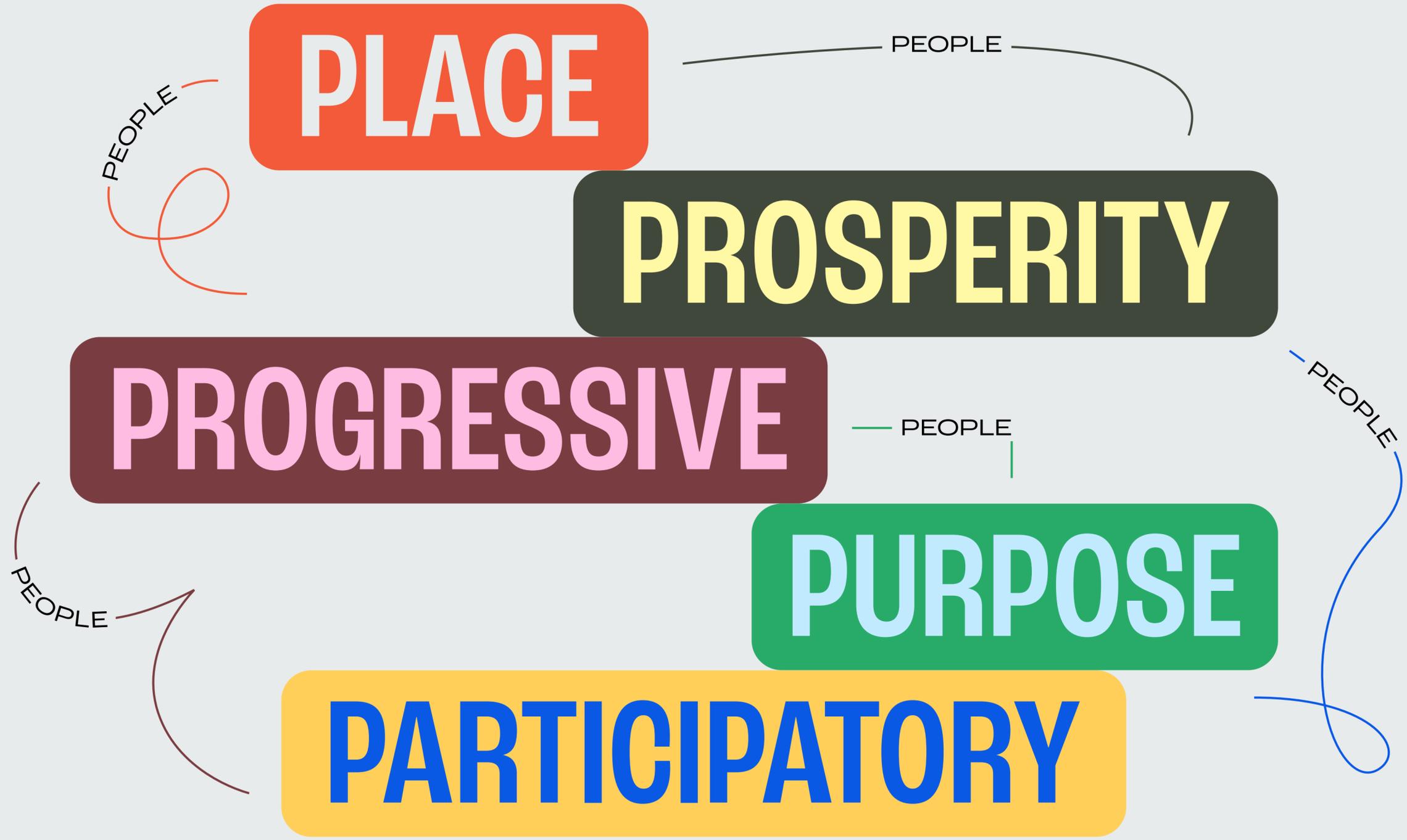
WHAT DOES BASINGSTOKE TOWN CENTRE NEED?



VISION PRINCIPLES

Basingstoke Town Centre will be a place that prioritises people, encouraging active participation by all, and generating prosperity for all through progressive and purposeful actions.

VISION PRINCIPLES



VISION PRINCIPLES



PLACE

Diverse; distinctive; multifunctional; cultural; designed for its residents, workforce and visitors well-being; recognised as the focal point of the town and has a distinct identity.



PROSPERITY

Entrepreneurial; economically vibrant; committed to building skills and life long learning; supportive of start ups, scale ups and a green economy.



PROGRESSIVE

Where you can test your ideas; where sustainable ideas can flourish; where public led experimentation is welcomed and celebrated. A place that is stridently evolving.



PURPOSE

Always puts sustainability, ethics, responsible businesses, social inclusion, health, well-being and PEOPLE first.



PARTICIPATORY

A place where its citizens have a real say and are always listened to. A town centre that has a wealth of activities and opportunities for all.

PEOPLE

- People are to be at the heart of the Vision.
- A town centre that encourages connections with other people - a place where people meet and interact.
- A place where the use of the word “festival” starts to enjoy the “celebratory” ambience of a festival.
- A place of fairness and social justice.
- A place that prioritises the health and well-being of its residents.
- A place where everyone has a voice.
- A place that gives people ‘permission’.
- A place that is safe and welcoming.
- A place that is relaxed...a town centre that has unbuttoned its shirt.
- A place where people participate in decision making.



PARTICIPATORY

A participatory town is a place where its citizens have a real say and are listened to. A town centre that has a wealth of activities and opportunities so that involvement and interaction are the default. A place where people feel heard, seen and catered for.

Glarus¹ in Switzerland has been named ‘the most democratic town in the world’. The town has adopted a system of ‘direct democracy’ where citizens of all ages are encouraged to participate in the decision making and planning of their town. Using this bottom-up, inclusive approach and being responsive to resident input means locals feel an enhanced emotional as well as physical connection to their place. It builds huge civic pride and gives ownership back to the people who use the place most.

Other examples include Stroud² as ‘best place to live in the UK’ 2021, partly because of its participatory opportunities, and Gothenburg³ which has been voted the most sociable city in the world due to its value placed on socialising and social priorities – putting the community first clearly pays off.

The extensive community response to the engagement that underpins this vision clearly demonstrates that the people of Basingstoke not only want a voice, but already have strong views on what their town centre needs to offer them. It’s clear that residents and businesses want to participate, and there are real signs that younger generations are becoming more aware of societal issues and inequalities and

are embracing activism and change as a result. If Basingstoke is to retain and attract the more dynamic and entrepreneurial young talent, they have to believe that they have a say in the place they live and work. As it stands, in 2019 Basingstoke and Deane⁵ scored 4/10 as a place for young people. Improving on this is both essential and very achievable – with participation as a priority.

Since the Covid-19 pandemic people are craving social contact, interaction, and to get together and participate in experiences with others. The pandemic has highlighted the problems behind the internet and ‘social’ media – people still need places to meet, relax, and have fun – together! Communication is key to success, a town that encourages its residents, workers and visitors to participate in decision making and being an active part of the community will thrive off the energy of people coming together and joining in.

Participation is essentially about developing stronger community ties and building social capital. Social capital (which has been shown to directly affect both physical and mental health) is generated passively in a truly participatory place. This means one where people feel they can influence events, are well informed, and have access to decision makers.

Participation and the effect it has on community and generation of social capital cannot be underplayed in creating a healthy, happy and future-facing town centre.

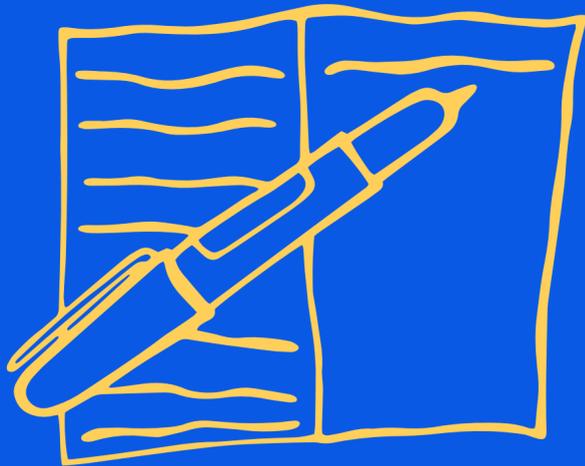


Links to further reading

1. <https://www.democracy-international.org/cool-and-calm-direct-democracy-switzerland>
2. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/stroud-best-place-to-live-in-the-uk-2021-zq8jgxtc>
3. <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/friendliest-cities-world-a7602196.html>
4. https://www.hostelworldgroup.com/~/_/media/Files/H/Hostelworld-v2/press-release/GOTHENBURG%20IS%20THE%20MOST%20SOCIAL%20CITY%20IN%20THE%20WORLD.pdf
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/newsbeat-46815257>
6. <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/ex/sustainablecitiescollective/what-age-friendly-city/908736/>
7. <https://www.arup.com/perspectives/cities-alive-urban-childhood>

PARTICIPATORY

- A place to live, work, play, debate, enjoy culture, to meet with others, and enjoy humanity.
- A place to do everything - from studying, to starting a business, buying a home, and starting a family.
- A place where citizens of all ages, can really participate in the decision making and planning of their town.
- A place where young people feel welcome and can see opportunity.



PURPOSE

Purposeful places are grounded in a common mission: to meet the needs of citizens now without compromising the ability for future generations to flourish. They operate and thrive off a clear set of values and goals developed by local people, which in turn create a strong foundation for decision making and act as a blueprint for the present and future success of a place.

There are no set rules or guidelines to dictate what a 'purposeful place' will look like, but most will be built on principles of sustainability and climate action, health and well-being for both citizens and the local environment, reduced inequalities, and a prosperous local economy that works for everyone – regardless of background, ethnicity, or health. A purposeful place is not a static one, and must move and grow with the times, continuing to ask the questions:



Purpose is powerful and will not only allow local people to flourish but will also attract progressive and purposeful businesses and residents - which in turn contributes to increasing local prosperity. Individuals, families and businesses are attracted to places which have a strong ethos and are guided by diverse and inclusive values. Social purpose and not only being increasingly respected by people, but also demanded – from the activist Gen Z to a more and more socially and environmentally engaged older generation. Leading with purpose is essential to develop buy-in from an enlightened public; a public who are increasingly alert to empty rhetoric and not afraid to challenge decision making at any level.

What do we believe in, how we achieve it, & how do we maintain it?

The city of Bristol is an exemplar of a place which leads with a clear and defined purpose. After winning the European Green Capital Award in 2015, the city created the Bristol SDG Alliance,¹¹ a taskforce built on the UN Sustainable Development Goals, made up of local key anchor institutions. The Alliance led to the formulation of Bristol's One City Plan,⁸ a roadmap looking to the year 2050, mapping key challenges the city will face in the coming years and how the people of Bristol can tackle them together. Bristol used the Sustainable Development Goals as a springboard to help develop the city's purpose - a mechanism to create a strong foundation for decision making, which in turn has helped create a clear path for Bristol's future. The city of Amsterdam is a great European example of a place with strong purpose. By embracing the

'Doughnut Economic Model',¹² designed by economist Kate Raworth, the city made a public commitment to building back purposefully after the Covid-19 pandemic and implementing a model which meets humanity's needs without exhausting the planet.

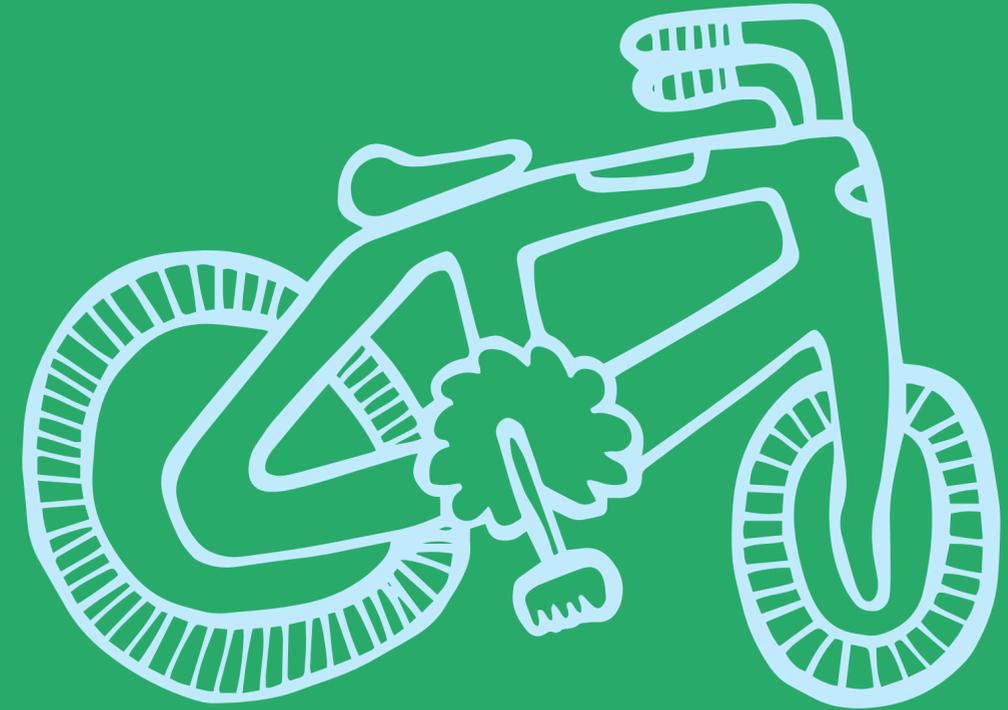
Leading with purpose should be seen as essential to building and maintaining a successful town – and every place has an opportunity for being purposeful in the world. It's hard to argue against the benefits of being purposeful - it cuts across and benefits diverse communities, all ages, all walks of life. Basingstoke, by embracing purpose within its vision, can be at the forefront of a movement that will only grow as new generations increasingly question the actions of every organisation, every person, every brand in our society.

Links and further reading:

1. Ben Page, Can business be good and make money? The Good Business Festival Journal, November 2020
2. Centre for Local Economic Strategies, A Green Recovery for Local Economies, CLES, 2020 ; How we built community wealth in Preston, CLES 2018
3. David Hieatt, Do Purpose, Do Books 2014
4. Democracy Collaborative, The Cleveland Model: How the Evergreen Cooperatives Build Community Wealth, Democracy Collaborative, 2014
5. Kate Raworth, Doughnut Economics, 2019
6. RSA, Seizing the moment: building local bridges to the future, RSA, November 2020
7. <https://news.bristol.gov.uk/news/bristol-launches-first-ever-one-city-plan>
8. <https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/urbanization/how-to-make-a-city-great>
9. <https://earthwatch.org.uk/news/blogs/365-thriving-cities>
10. <https://www.cisl.cam.ac.uk/resources/sustainability-leadership/leading-with-a-sustainable-purpose>
11. <https://www.swidn.org.uk/news/what-is-the-bristol-sdg-alliance>
12. <https://www.kateraworth.com/doughnut/>

PURPOSE

- A town centre that prioritises walking and cycling.
- A town centre that promotes physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
- A place that is demonstrably tackling climate change.
- A place that prioritises repurposing and re-use.
- A place that puts people ahead of 'shareholder value.'
- A place that develops a distinct identity for itself.
- A place that delivers distinct town centre homes that provide an alternative to the current offer.



Today more than ever, consumers are putting their faith in brands to stand for something. To do the right thing. To help solve societal and political problems. Whether people are shopping for soap or shoes, they're weighing a brand's principles as much as its products. Opting out of taking a stand is no longer an option for brands."

- Edelman report 2018

PROGRESSIVE

There is no precise science in measuring how progressive a town, city, or country is, but contributing factors include: gender equality in jobs and education; approach to environmental issues including carbon emissions, air pollution and recycling; religious and LGBT tolerance; affordable housing provision; access to healthcare; and inclusivity.

Fintech company Bankrate have developed a study that ranks the UK's largest cities by considering seven factors that point towards a city having a 'progressive' mindset. The seven factors include gender pay gap, recycling rates, voter turnout, number of vegan or vegetarian restaurants, number of registered ultra-low emission vehicles, number of women in government and search trends for progressive terms such as "LGBTQ+" within the city. In 2020 the city of Bath topped the rankings for its high recycling rates and voter turnout. In second place was Bristol, scoring well for vegan restaurants and ultra-low emission vehicles, whilst Leicester found itself in third place gaining high scores across all contributing factors, with a particularly high number of women in local government.

THE UK'S MOST PROGRESSIVE CITIES 2020

- 1 Bath
- 2 Bristol
- 3 Leicester
- 4 Cambridge
- 5 Exeter
- 6 Oxford
- 7 Newcastle upon Tyne
- 8 Norwich
- 9 Leeds
- 10 Brighton & Hove

So, what does ‘progressive’ mean for Basingstoke?

It means prioritising health, the environment, inclusivity, and young people. It means bringing health care back into the town centre, making it as accessible as possible. It means reconnecting Basingstoke Town Centre with suburban and rural areas of the borough. It means greener public transport and new models of development that promote and prioritise walking, cycling and healthy lifestyles.

Learning from elsewhere, in Oxford, consultations for a Zero Emission Zone are taking place whereby petrol and diesel vehicles will be banned from parts of the city centre. 45% of consultation responses have called for the zero-emission zone to cover a wider area than just the city centre. Whilst in the North East, York has announced plans to ban private car journeys from the city centre within the next three years to cut carbon emissions and encourage more sustainable modes of travel to and within the town centre.

Prioritising the environment also means moving towards a closed loop model of production and consumption, one that reduces waste and creates jobs.

For example, in Berlin, the city administration have repurposed an entire floor of an ailing department store and opened their own store named B-Wa(h)renhaus, selling second-hand furniture, clothing and electronic goods in an effort to reduce waste. The store also offers small IT repairs and workshops for local residents on how to recycle food and clothing.³

The future direction of low carbon mobility is likely to reduce the requirement of town centre parking, leaving some town centre multi-storey car parking structures redundant, and providing opportunity for adaptive reuse as a more sustainable alternative to demolition. We are beginning to see examples of this elsewhere. In Ilford, Essex, food hall operator Mercato Metropolitano are in planning stages to transform a neglected surface car park in the town centre into a covered community food market, featuring a large hydroponic rooftop farm.⁴ In Peckham South London, Peckham Levels, occupying seven floors of a disused multi-storey car park, is now home to over 100 local businesses - from designer-makers to social enterprises, coding academies, and food and drink start-ups.

Progressive means providing support for small, independent businesses who face increasing rents and continuing Covid-19 restrictions at a time when large online companies are making unprecedented profits. It means promoting ethical trading, start-ups, young and female entrepreneurs.

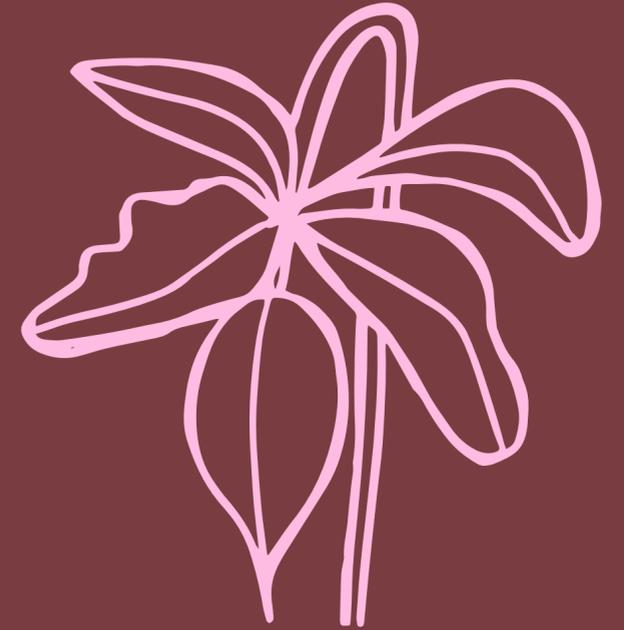
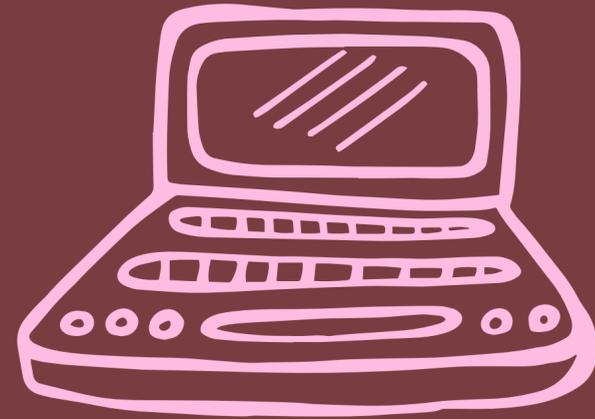
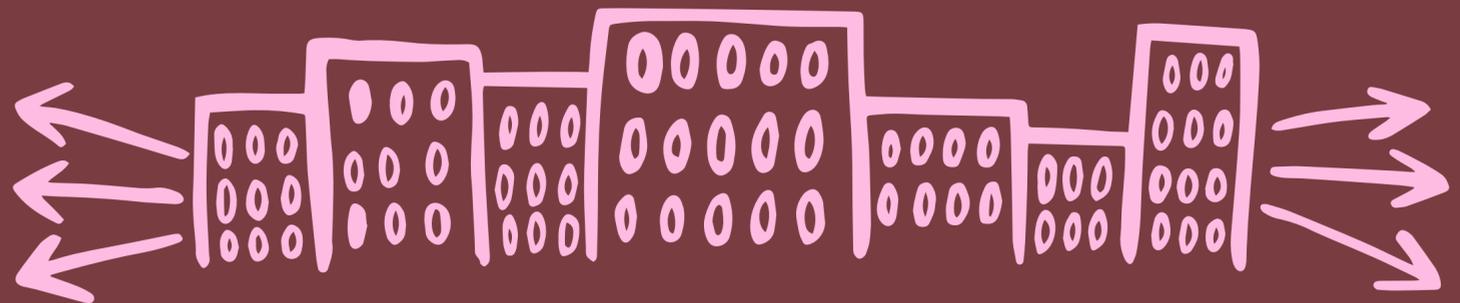
Progressive means investing in high quality, affordable, sustainable town centre homes for all. It means learning from exemplar town and city-centre council-led housing schemes, such as Goldsmith Street in Norwich.⁵

Links and further reading:

1. <https://www.bankrate.com/uk/mortgages/uks-most-progressive-cities/>
2. <https://futurecitiesandenvironment.com/articles/10.5334/fce.50/>
3. <https://www.berlin.de/senuvk/umwelt/abfall/re-use/de/re-use-store.shtml>
4. <https://www.redbridge.gov.uk/regeneration-and-growth/regeneration-and-growth-areas/ilford/the-spark-ilford/mercato-metropolitano/>
5. <http://www.mikhailriches.com/project/goldsmith-street>

PROGRESSIVE

- A place to test ideas (that can also benefit outlying areas): 'New ideas are born here.'
- A place that embraces technology and is at the forefront of the digital revolution.
- A place that is respected for being purposefully brave and bold.
- A place that is future facing in terms of movement/transport.
- A place that embraces the town's planned population/housing growth.
- A place that understands and is at the forefront of societal directions of travel, and puts this understanding into action.
- A place that thinks progressively about education and training.



PROSPERITY

The vibrancy of a town centre remains one of the most visible indicators of an area's wider economic prosperity. Currently, Basingstoke's identity is dominated by its shopping centres and accessibility by car, but for long term success it must switch to a more diverse and forward-looking approach.

A prosperous society is concerned not only with income and financial wealth, but also with the health and well-being of its citizens, with their access to good quality education, and with their prospects for decent and rewarding work.

Recent evidence suggests that those towns that recognise this, and that take this wider view of 'prosperity', have suffered less from the impact of Covid-19.

Having said this, economic prosperity, including job security and income, still tops the list of 'factors that matter most to the public'. And long term economic prosperity is highly dependent on skills and innovation.

This requires a 'Total Place' approach, considering buildings, spaces and people. It also requires 'Continuity of Vision', giving small businesses the confidence of long-term support.

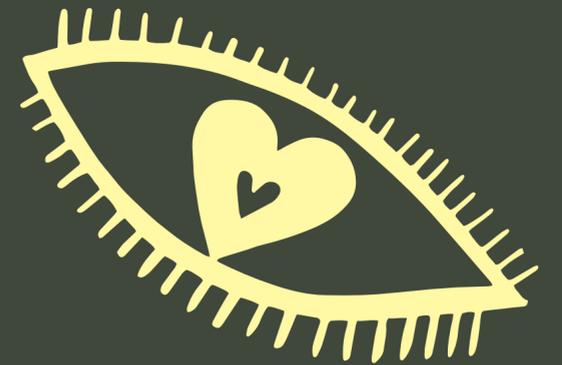
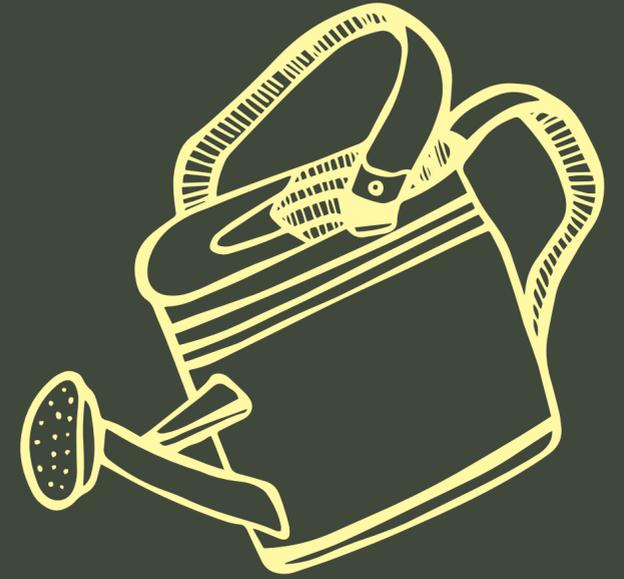
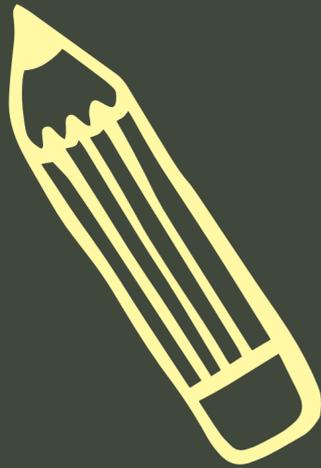
Entrepreneurial people are attracted to town centres where innovation is highly visible. Basingstoke must enable this by creating prominent hubs for such businesses and bringing entrepreneurial activity out into its public realm, creating the collaborative, physical environment where innovation can thrive and be celebrated. In the absence of a University, Basingstoke town centre needs to maximise the research and development opportunities generated by the new hospital and by BCoT.

Links and further reading:

1. <https://enterprisem3growthhub.co.uk/innovation>
2. <https://www.pwc.co.uk/industries/government-public-sector/good-growth.html>
3. <https://www.centreforcities.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-02-21-High-streets-and-town-centres-in-2030-Centre-for-Cities-submission.pdf>
4. <https://li.com/reports/uk-prosperity-index-2021/>
5. <https://www.centreforcities.org/reader/fast-growth-cities-2021-and-beyond/what-needs-to-change/>
6. <https://cp.catapult.org.uk/news/hubs-of-innovation-playbook-for-place-leaders/>
7. Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity <https://www.cusp.ac.uk/about/>
8. Good Growth for Cities <https://www.pwc.co.uk/government-public-sector/good-growth/assets/pdf/good-growth-february-2021.pdf>
9. <https://historicengland.org.uk/content/docs/research/towards-better-valuation-culture-and-heritage-capital-approach/>

PROSPERITY

- A place that actively supports start-ups, scale-ups and established 'good businesses', through training, financing and peer networks, as well as physical premises.
- Emphasise the history of entrepreneurship through the Thomas Burberry story - Great brands can start in Basingstoke.
- A place that creates the 'buzz' can attract new businesses, by promoting cultural and leisure activity in streets and public spaces.
- Innovation requires interaction and collaboration. Basingstoke needs to break the physical and cultural barriers between businesses and between people.



PLACE

Media reports would have us believe that we're witnessing the death of our urban centres and high streets, but this is far from the case.

Covid-19 has accelerated societal shifts in the way we shop, consume goods, access services and the way we work. These shifts are allowing town centres to resume their long held role as a fundamental part of how we experience the places we live. They are once again becoming socially important – as a destination we seek out to come together and enjoy the things that have allowed the human race to prosper. Things like our desire to form social connections, build relationships, come together creatively to develop ideas, and helping each other to stay healthy and happy.

What were previously emerging societal trends have been hugely chivvied on by the pandemic to become a new (and desirable) way of life for many people - so we must act on them now. The shift is marked by an appreciation of independent spirit, permanently altered patterns of living and working, recognition of the value of green space and a new found appreciation of public spaces that are designed to enable outdoor socialising, foster community spirit and – let's never forget this one – fun for everyone.

This clearly points to places where retail is just part of the mix along with “healthy” green spaces and generous public realm for social interaction, entertainment, nightlife, leisure, non-retail workplaces and homes.

Basingstoke Town Centre is dominated by shopping malls that are in turn dominated by multiple retailers. These shopping malls effectively overshadow the green spaces, the social spaces and the cultural offer and have left precious little opportunity for independence, diversity and opportunity for start ups or culture to thrive. Basingstoke Town Centre is not the multi-dimensional forward-facing place that it could be – the place that its residents and workforce want it to be. Basingstoke Town Centre needs to be a place that “gets” that people have and continue to be less interested in physically shopping in favour of spending their precious free time enjoying experiences; something that's reflected in the general market buoyancy of leisure, sports, travel, café culture, experiential and events.

The concept of “place”, (and related thinking such as placemaking and placebranding) is one of the defining discussions of our age - what makes our towns and cities places that contribute to fulfilling, purposeful, prosperous and happy lives?

If Basingstoke Town Centre is to be a place that serves the desires of its people over the next decades, and the huge societal shifts that they will bring, the actions of placemaking must be at the forefront of how it acts. Placebranding – done correctly – can help to guide and promote a place as somewhere that's distinctive - worth a visit, worth considering to live, to work, and to establish a business.

**“A good city is like a good party – people stay longer than really necessary, because they are enjoying themselves”
– Jan Gehl**

PLACE

- A town centre that is the 'focal point of the town.' Put the town centre first as THE place for major leisure, health, education and all significant retail and office space.
- More town centre social spaces - a place that has social sustainability at its heart.
- A place that dials up its independent spirit, ending the domination of the Malls/Festival Place.
- A town centre that embraces its parks and green spaces.
- A place that puts more emphasis on culture.

- A place with identity through culture, design and landscape.
- A place that puts people first.
- A place that celebrates its heritage, whilst intelligently and thoughtfully making new history.
- A town centre that people feel connected to, both physically and emotionally.
- A town centre with accessible healthcare for all.
- A town centre that is walkable and permeable.



PLACE

Physical connections at three levels:

1. THE TOWN CENTRE

Connecting areas of the town centre - connecting the dominant shopping centre to the attractions that surround it and that should form part of the town centre - The green spaces, Top of The Town, The Anvil, The Rail Station, and Basing View.

2. THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

Connecting the town centre to the residential community immediately around it - breaking the inner ring road, and removing the subways - learn to love walking and cycling.

3. THE TOWN

Connecting the town centre to the wider residential area – learning to love public transport (MRT and other options), walking and cycling.

Emotional connections at three levels:

1. IDENTITY

People becoming proud to be associated themselves with the town centre.

2. EXPERIENCE

Making it a place people enjoy being in – that they want to come to even if there is no specific reason.

3. PURPOSE

Show people that the town centre stands for more than creating profit. Social purpose. Environmental challenges.



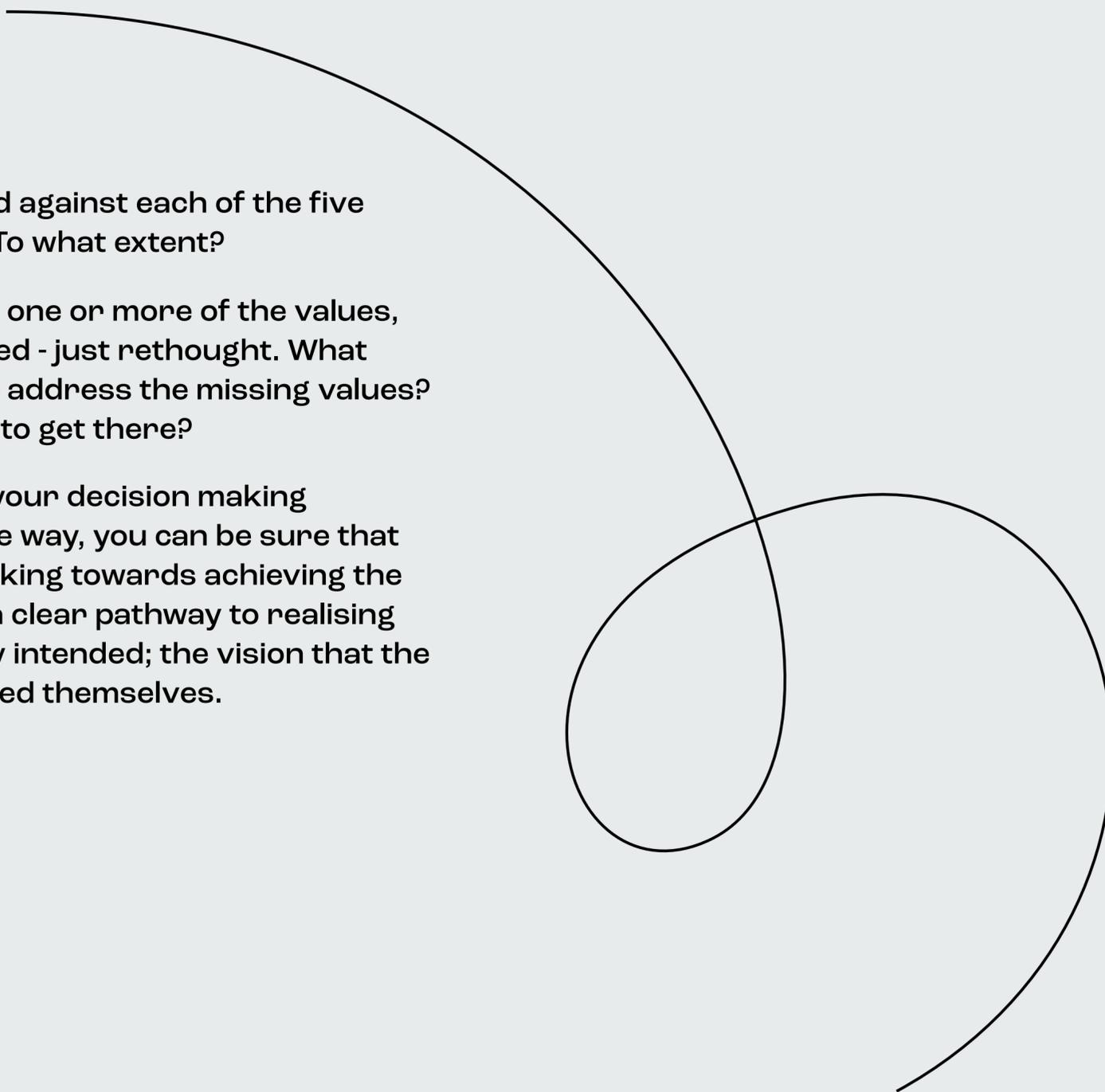
A VISION FILTER

The vision filter is an invaluable tool that turns the ideas and values behind the vision into a practical decision making framework. The filter is the vital missing link that helps you to make sure the vision is used and enacted at every stage of the project, by everyone involved - and is never left aside to gather dust on a shelf.

Here's how it works:

- The filter is a set of five values that underpin the vision as a whole.
- In order to realise the vision, all of the values must be met.
- This means referring back to the values at every single stage of decision making - from large-scale development, procurement, investment and comms strategy to events and recruitment, all the way down to selecting street furniture, materiality and photography.

- Any proposal must be tested against each of the five values - does it meet them? To what extent?
- If the proposal doesn't meet one or more of the values, it doesn't have to be scrapped - just rethought. What adjustments can be made to address the missing values? What can we add or change to get there?
- By using the vision filter as your decision making framework every step of the way, you can be sure that every action you take is working towards achieving the vision. It provides you with a clear pathway to realising the vision as it was originally intended; the vision that the people of Basingstoke outlined themselves.



FOR BASINGSTOKE

Core Value 1

PARTICIPATORY

PARTICIPATE VALUES

Engaged: maintaining a dialogue with our communities
Responsive: a 'bottom up' approach to change
Inclusive: places and homes for all

Core Value 2

PURPOSE

PURPOSE VALUES

Sustainable: demonstrably committed to tackling climate change
Ethical: independent, local, responsible
Evolutionary: committed to continuous change

Core Value 3

PROGRESSIVE

PROGRESSIVE VALUES

Social: where people meet and interact
Healthy: physically and mentally
Relaxed: friendly and welcoming to all

Core Value 4

PROSPERITY

PROSPERITY VALUES

Entrepreneurial: welcoming and supporting start ups
Innovative: at the forefront of new technologies
Skilled: commitment to life-long learning

Core Value 5

PLACE

PLACE VALUES

Distinctive: celebrating market town heritage and growth town heritage
Liveable: a place people want to live
Cultural: a destination day and night

WHAT'S

Whilst there are some long term major urban design and infrastructure challenges and interventions needed to fulfil this vision, it is important that Basingstoke's town centre starts to evolve quickly and create momentum.

This can take place in many ways.

People can be welcomed by making the town centre more convivial through more events, experiences and activities, by creating more opportunities to relax and socialise via introducing parklets and greenery into the town centre.

Innovative wayfinding could encourage people to find the existing parks, heritage buildings and the cultural venues.

Purposeful independent retailers and eateries can be placed at the forefront of the marketing of the town.

Town Centre buildings could be re-purposed as attractive places for vibrant and forward thinking start up and scale up businesses, creating a visible entrepreneurial and "new ideas" culture in the town centre.

Basingstoke's residents and businesses should of course be at the heart of the decision making process, and at the heart of delivering change.

All this should take place whilst referring to the 5 Vision principles "P's" (Place, Prosperity, Progressive, Purpose, Participatory) so as to start to create an identity for Basingstoke Town Centre.

NEXT?

HemingwayDesign

info@hemingwaydesign.co.uk

www.hemingwaydesign.co.uk

15 Wembley Park Drive

Middlesex

HA9 8HD

NEW Masterplanning

office@newmasterplanning.com

www.newmasterplanning.com

107 Bournemouth Road

Poole

BH14 9HR

Illustrations by Basingstoke artist

Kev Munday

www.kevmunday.co.uk