



HEXHAM VISION AND TOWN PLAN

The Hexham Vision 2020 and Town Plan document, prepared by a series of working groups, which began in 2013, contained recommendations for development priorities for the town to be pursued up to 2020. The approach and ideas it contained were taken up by the Town Council and have guided the Council's own thinking over the last few years. They were followed up by Town Council working groups which also included representatives from other organisations in the town. As the end of the initial period approaches the Council has considered whether the time has come to produce a new plan.

The Council has reviewed the original recommendations, assessed the progress that has been made and considered what further steps could be taken. This evaluation is set out in the attached table. On the basis of this assessment, carried out in its Town Plan Committee, the Council has concluded that many of the ideas contained in the original plan have been followed up and are being taken forward in other initiatives, above all in the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan (final adoption delayed by the Covid-19 situation). In other cases set out in the assessment it has either not been possible to make progress or the recommendations remain current. The Council has therefore decided that at present the further steps set out in the assessment will guide the Council in its work in the months ahead.

Vision and Town Plan: Progress and Next Steps.

1. Economy, Arts and Heritage

	HTP Priority	Progress	Next Steps
1.1	Hexham Neighbourhood Plan	This was due to have gone to a town-wide referendum on 23 April 2020. Due to Covid-19, this will not now take place until May 2021. However, as a plan which has been approved by the Town Council, County Council and an independent examiner, it will be given full weight in new planning procedures as if it had already been approved by referendum. This is particularly important for new housing developments in the town. A budget of £1000.00 has been agreed for 2020/2021.	Once a new date for the referendum is known (provisionally 6 May 2021), factual information on the HNP will be delivered to every residential property in Hexham. Town Council to work with NCC to develop Town Centre Recovery/Regeneration Plan. Town Council to work with NCC and HCP to deliver High Street Heritage Action Zone (HSHAZ) project by 2024.
1.2	New Town Centre events etc	The promotion of Hexham Abbey as a tourist and information centre in conjunction with the town's venues, events and activities features high in the public's reactions having a score of 80%. A new post of Events and Lettings Manager was established at the Abbey in 2019 and the Council supports the idea of joint activities such as the Christmas lights switch-on event last year, followed by an inaugural Festival of Flame at the Abbey.	Council to develop a Tourism Strategy for the town in partnership with all stakeholders. Collaboration with the Abbey and HCP will continue to promote tourism and organise events in the town. The Council will promote its Tourism Support Fund budget. The Council will work with HCP to improve the Visit Hexham website and the Hex-Press newsletter. The Council will support the work of the new Hexham Cultural Partnership created in the HSHAZ framework.
1.3	Totally Locally/ Hexham Shop Local	The promotion of the scheme known as Totally Locally was supported strongly by both the residents and by the Council. It was recognised	The Town Council will seek to encourage and develop its relations with the business community.

		<p>that the Council is not able to offer any lead in this project and that the key activity was to get together a select group of interested and active partners.</p> <p>It is noted that Hexham BID was launched in 2016 but wound up in 2018.</p> <p>In early 2020 an initiative called Hexham Shop Local was relaunched by some traders and a Hexham Business Group is in the process of being created.</p>	
1.4	Access to Town Centre	<p>Accessing the town centre from the Wentworth Car Park scored 85% in the residents' survey of 2014 and also featured highly in the working group's discussions. Members felt that while improved transportation would be ideal the costs involved would make this an unworkable idea. It opted for improved signage and improved visual appeal on the entrances and exits from the town's car parks.</p>	<p>A bus service already covers most of the town but with new parking facilities foreseen for the "bunker site", ways and means to improve services from the lower town to the centre will be explored.</p> <p>The Council will work closely with NCC on signage and access.</p>
1.5	Tourist accommodation	<p>While the promotion of tourist accommodation is still felt to be a priority by both the working group and the residents (68%), the group felt that there was little that they could do to improve the situation. In their opinion the increased number of tourists visiting as a result of better parking, signage, website, etc. continues, then the accommodation will follow.</p>	<p>The recent sale of the land adjacent to Tesco known as the bunker site and the application by the developer to provide budget travel accommodation, additional car parking and a fast-food outlet will address this requirement. The development of a tourist strategy (see 1.2) will also assist.</p>
1.6	Vision Statement	<p>Adopt a simple vision statement which will encourage participation in the arts to flourish at every level:</p>	<p>The Town Council will support and encourage all those groups who wish to safeguard, celebrate and enjoy the wide range of historical monuments, locations, artefacts and traditions which make up the rich heritage of the town and its environs.</p>

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2. Health and Wellbeing

	HTP Priority	Progress	Next Steps
2.1	Regeneration of existing housing estates	Hexham Community Partnership's Number 28 regeneration project is working well in cooperation with Karbon Homes.	Progress will be made seeking to extend the No. 28 remit and actions to other parts of the town subject to funding being secured. HCP is organising volunteers and a new approach to "caring" in the town through the Hexham Community Together group.
2.2	Dementia Friendly Hexham	The staff of the Wentworth Leisure Centre have completed dementia-friendly training. Members of the Karbon Homes Older Persons Housing team are dementia-friendly champions. Some staff and Councillors had dementia-friendly training in February 2020.	As evidence steadily accumulates and is pulled together, there will be a point at which the town can apply for recognition as a dementia-friendly community. This will then trigger further interest and wider involvement.
2.3	Fitness of older residents	Changes to the regional management of the Wentworth Leisure Centre have caused a delay in progress on this. Contacts to be established between the Wentworth and local residential/care homes can be made quickly once regional approval is confirmed.	Support for the fitness of older people became available early in 2015. Consideration is now to be given on how to support the fitness of older people who live alone and are thus isolated. NHS has sponsored group walks to improve both physical and mental health.
2.4	Amenities at Tyne Green	With 85% support (high/medium priority) for this amounting to the highest priority for the HWB working group, further progress is evident. After discussions with County officers, NCC is applying to 'Parks for People' for substantial funding to improve the Tyne Green Leisure Park. This may be a two-year process, and the application will be strengthened with evidence of community action. There is agreement among the Friends of Tyne Green that the paths require	A 20mph speed limit is being introduced. The Council will work closely with NCC to further improve amenities at Tyne Green.

		<p>improvement and a speed limit should be imposed.</p> <p>Opportunities and costings for fitness equipment (a trim-trail) at Tyne Green were explored and outdoor gym equipment paid for by the Town Council with the help of a grant from the County Council was installed in June 2019.</p> <p>Tyne Green Parkrun was launched in 2019.</p>	
2.5	Frailty among the Elderly	This is currently a national initiative and the Council must await further information before any progress can be made.	

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3. Built Environment and Transport

	HTP Priority	Progress	Next Steps
3.1	Hexham Market Place	The residents' survey of 2014 showed divided opinion between refurbishing or redesigning Hexham's Market Place. Consultation on possible options in 2019 showed continued divided opinion.	The Town Council will work with NCC to explore options for the improvement of the Market Place and its links with the rest of the town as part of a town centre recovery/regeneration plan.
3.2	Hexham Bus Station	The new bus station opened in 2016.	The Town Council will work closely with NCC and developers to ensure the best solution for the old bus station site.
3.3	Slower Speed areas	The introduction of slower speed areas was included by the Town Council in the town's priorities for the NCC Local Transport Plan 2015 and 2020.	The Town Council will continue to press for appropriate speed limits throughout the town.
3.4	Supply of affordable housing	Currently developers, with the agreement of the County Council, are able to reduce the proportions of affordable housing that are planned in Hexham housing developments. The way forward on securing increased availability of affordable homes for local Hexham people is clearly in the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for Hexham.	A housing needs assessment carried out in 2016 for the Hexham Neighbourhood Plan concluded the greatest need in Hexham is for affordable housing for all ages. The Town Council will take this on board in implementing the HNP. The Council will also explore with NCC the best use of the former Middle School site.
3.5	Improve walking and cycling	Plans for the increased safety of cyclists and pedestrians across the Hexham Tyne Bridge and at the busy junction with Ferry Road have been included by the Town Council in its priorities for the County Council's Local Transport Plan. The rebuilding of the High School and its amalgamation with Hexham Middle School has raised safety fears for those walking and cycling	The Town Council will discuss potential plans with NCC.

		to school especially along Hencotes and West Road.	
3.6	Brownfield sites and housing	Data has been assembled and fed into NCC Local Plan operations.	This data is being used to check the assumptions within the NCC draft Local Plan relating to housing and employment land.
3.7	Additional: Sustainability	The Council adopted a Sustainability Policy in July 2015, revising and readopting it in November 2018. An Action Plan was adopted in September 2019 and a budget of £3000.00 was agreed for 2020/21.	The Town Council will progress the Sustainability Action Plan.