Torquay Neighbourhood Plan:

Torquay Town Centre Community Partnership

Brief History

Compared to many of Britain's towns, Torquay Town Centre is relatively modern. Its rapid growth in the nineteenth century was due to the Napoleonic Wars which prevented Britain's affluent from travelling abroad. The town became popular as it was already known by the wives and relatives of officers of the Channel Fleet, and the Bay's mild winter climate attracted many visitors who came for health reasons.

In the 1840's the age of the railway brought an era of prosperity and many homes and large hotels were built in Torquay. The town's character greatly benefited from then becoming a summer holiday resort. Indeed, by the late nineteenth century, Torquay was one of the richest towns in Britain. However, since the 1950s, tourist patterns have changed and the town centre is now faced with a range of social and economic challenges.

Map of area to go here.

Picture of Belgrave Road area – hotels to go here

Picture of TC shops to go here

Picture of green space here – Rock Walk or Torre Abbey Meadows.

Today this area contains both quiet residential suburbs and a significant proportion of the major hotel accommodation in the resort, as well as being largest retail centre of Torbay. A large proportion of the area consists of open space. This includes coastline, parks, and recreation grounds, at the walled gardens of Torre Abbey, the rock-faced Royal Terrace Gardens and the private gardens and terraces of numerous hotels. Many of the major buildings are set against a backdrop of mature trees.

For more information on the history and nature of the area visit the links below

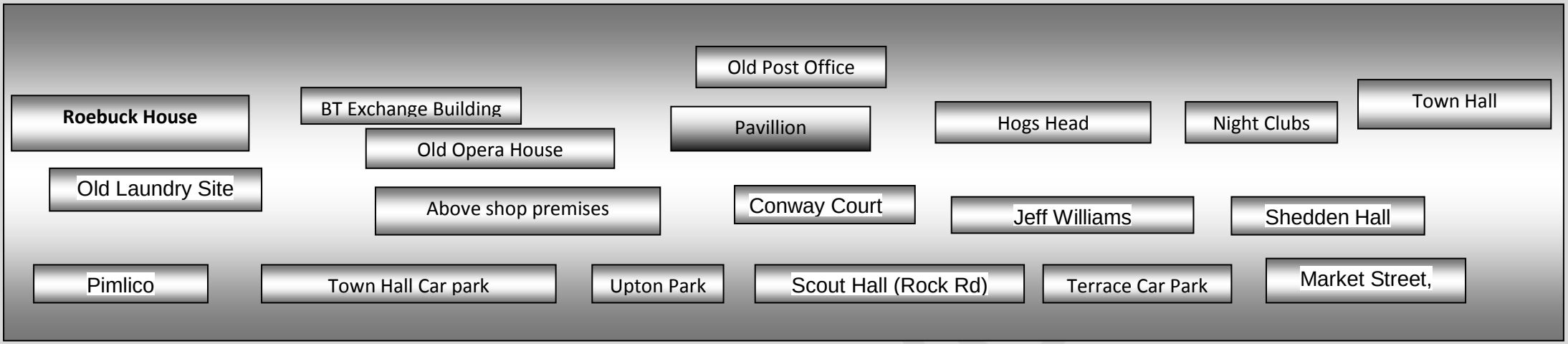
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Torquay

http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/yourservices/planning/archaeologyandconservation/conservationareasappraisals.htm

Torquay Town Centre Community Partnership Aspirations

- Improve the Town Centre retail, service and leisure experience to improve footfall and provide employment opportunities.
- Protect and maintain our beaches – Torre Abbey Sands and Beacon Cove.
- Protect the marine environment
- Protect green and open spaces and coastline as mentioned above – the Park, Promenade, Royal Terrace Gardens, and Cary Green. Torre Abbey and its Meadows should be protected by covenant from future developments

Housing, Economy, Retail and Leisure



Housing

Some of the above sites, we know have the support of the local communities for developments already proposed and the TTCCP believe that it is important that the planning department when considering applications should engage with the local residents to ensure that their views are considered. At the same time, we are mindful that many of these sites sit within conservation areas and any development needs to take account of this. Thus any development should be sympathetic to its surrounding area whilst not being so restrictive that developers are deterred from making the investment and regenerating these sites identified above. The CP believes that some sites on the above list will more than meet housing requirement and negate the need for building on green field sites here or elsewhere in the Bay. We would support re-instatement of houses that have been sub divided into HIMO's to encourage families back into the Town Centre. Housing around the Town centre is predominantly Victorian – consisting of large villas, terraced houses. Many large hotels have undergone conversion into high quality apartments particularly in the Shedden Hill end of Warren Rd and St Lukes area. This needs to be replicated in other areas such as Belgrave Road where those businesses/hotels who want to apply for change of use can do so provided that any conversions are of a similar high quality – not HIMO's. Any new development should be of high quality, provide parking and if designed for families should also provide some outside leisure space.

Commercial, Retail & Leisure

We believe that we should focus on creating a unique shopping experience with more emphasis on independents offering interesting arty. bijou, niche, boutique type shops rather than big chains. We would welcome a mixture of retail, residential, office and sports facilities in our Town Centre. We feel that The Torbay Lifestyle Team and gym, currently situated at Barton, would be better placed within the Town Centre possibly within one of the buildings mentioned above such as 'The Hogs head'. With any regeneration it is important that we retain buildings of architectural merit and work to restore those that have been neglected such as the Old Opera House.

A new Library is required: a modern facility is fundamental to giving the town the correct image and the cinema also needs upgrading and possibly relocating. However, if the cinema is relocated we need to be mindful that this will create a large empty building in an area of the Town already facing many challenges and would suggest the possibility of a much needed community centre being established here.

We would like to see more regular events to create a vibrant lively town centre – markets, music, food etc. Make better use of the bandstand with regular musical events involving school bands and choirs as well as other musical groups. We need to explore ways to encourage leisure and sport into our Town Centre and to provide a variety of undercover attractions for tourists and residents.

We need to create a more diverse late night offer. Whilst we recognise the value of our late night economy we would like to see a broader offer than is currently available. Late night shopping would be of benefit for residents and visitors. We would like to see more done to encourage this

Pavilion:

The Community Partnership has serious concerns about development of the Pavilion and large hotel on the Marina car park and would support further investigation for the re siting of the Pavilion to another location which may then enable a lower rise less intrusive development on the Marina car park. A possible option would be to relocate the Pavilion on to a constructed island (with bridges) in the inner harbour, around which boats could still move/moor. The point of the development would be to:

Protect the Pavilion (i.e. proper repair with new skeletal steelwork) and make it the centre of a revitalised harbour area rather than just being a poor excuse for a hotel reception.

Provide a waterside dining/entertainment environment unique in the UK that would encourage a more mature and upmarket night time economy.

Provide the type of retail experience during the daytime best described as "Totnes by the sea."

We don't think one person in Torquay would want to see the loss of the Pavilion building yet a few seem happy to see it compromised by a large hotel adjacent to it. If the Pavilion were moved this would allow a larger footprint for the developer of the hotel/spa to build a wider but lower development that could include a children's play area. Alternatively, site the hotel on the island and leave the Pavilion and car park where it is. Perhaps the car park could be topped with a play area feeding off the Pavilion or be the site for an open air public performance space.

Roebuck House

should remain a commercial premise – residential use would not work here – no parking, no outside.

Upton Park:

Torre & Upton CP's aspirations for this area are shared.

Town Hall Car Park:

Opinion appears to be divided as to the best use for this site. T&UCP have suggested a landmark retail store and the TC project group a supermarket/superstore. The CP feels that alternatives should be considered such as a Town Square with all the associated activities and benefits that this could bring including a large screen TV to broadcast major events and to provide other marketing opportunities alongside it. It will therefore be necessary before any decision is taken to have full and wide consultation. *Also see thoughts about alternative site for supermarket under transport heading

Old Opera House:

Also identified by TAA as potential site for a dedicated Arts Centre.

Area along SW Coast path just beyond Imperial Hotel: To capitalise on our fantastic coastline, explore the possibility of an open air theatre here to rival the Minnack in Cornwall.

ERTC/Balloon Site/Marina Car Park:

There is a chronic shortage of play and recreational facilities within 200 metres of the sea front and we have identified these sites for such a facility

Town Hall:

We are aware that Torbay Action for Art (TAA) have identified this site as a potential Art Centre and the Town Centres group have suggested a Hotel. We feel that both ideas have some merit and should be given equal consideration. The important thing here will be to preserve and protect the architecture of the building

Theatre:

Support extension of theatre within existing footprint.

Night Clubs:

Are there viable, alternative uses for some? - these are big spaces

Rock Walk:

To provide access to those with disabilities a cable car/ funicular railway from the bottom to the top of Rock Walk would be welcomed in addition to it creating a revenue generating opportunity.

Hogs Head and surrounding buildings:

Have little architectural merit and we would welcome a landmark building here to encourage further exploration of the Town.

Melville Hill Community Group

Melville Hill should be recognised as a place of historic charm, with a mix of both private and quality rented housing that is affordable. New developments should include up market, and contemporary schemes that introduce a wine bar and café culture enhancing the neighbouring business and tourist district. The area should become suitable for people of all ages with Community facilities. There must be no further agreements for Houses of Multiple Occupation or the sub division of existing properties to form single person dwellings.

Transport

Traffic does not flow naturally into the Town Centre and we would welcome changes to road layouts to include reversal of traffic flow on some roads to facilitate easier access into the Town Centre

Improvements to Torquay station are necessary to make it DDA compliant and it is also felt that it would benefit if it were not on a branch line as this results in poor connection times from Newton Abbot.

We support the relocation of the coach terminus to Torquay train station – a much better location to arrive at. (Would also free up existing site for supermarket) A regular bus service from here into the centre would be welcomed.

Support the full pedestrianisation of Fleet Walk to encourage a cafe culture. We note that the current closure does not appear to have created any significant disruption to existing services. This would also then enable the investigation into exposing the Fleet in part to create an attractive water feature and to create a glass canopy to enhance the street scene that we have alluded to earlier in this document.

Parking charges need to be assessed to determine whether or not they are having an impact on visitors to the town and sea front. We would welcome the introduction of reasonably priced residents permits with easy payment options. We accept that charges are necessary but they should be seen to be fair.

TTCCP would support the introduction of charging points for the growing number of electric cars/bikes now being driven around.

Approved