

# Helensburgh Making Places *(March19 Final Draft)*

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## 1. Introduction

Helensburgh Making Places is an economic regeneration project seeking to provide a joined-up approach to making Helensburgh an attractive and welcoming place in which to live, work, visit and invest.

Through joint funding from Argyll and Bute Council and Scottish Government, designers and community engagement specialists, icecream architecture and Willie Miller Urban Design were selected to deliver the project, commencing in May 2018.

Underpinning this project was the ambition to engage with as many members of the Helensburgh community as possible. A series of public engagement events were held over the summer months of 2018 with a view to arriving at a widely endorsed vision articulating ambitions for the future of the town and reflecting the aspirations and concerns of all sections of the community.

The final outputs of this project are intended to inform policy change, strategic decision making, and the forthcoming Local Development Plan ensuring a strong connection between grassroots and high-level decision making.

## 2. Helensburgh Now

Helensburgh sits on the Firth of Clyde, three miles ‘across the water’ from Greenock, while Loch Lomond is four miles north-east of the town. In many ways, Helensburgh sits at a key junction, less than an hour from central Glasgow whilst providing ready access to Argyll and the Isles.

The town boasts great proximity to the water and the outdoors, as well as strong assets in its built heritage. With a population of 15, 610, Helensburgh is the largest town by population in Argyll and Bute. Helensburgh and Lomond has seen a significant rise in the number of people of pensionable age, with an increase of 644 individuals between 2011 and 2016. Residents of working age have reduced by 445 over the same period. The number of children has also dropped by 282 over the period (Nomisweb.co.uk)

According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2016, 8% of the population of Helensburgh and Lomond live within areas in the most deprived in Scotland. These areas are within Helensburgh Centre and Helensburgh East.

The potential for growth in the area - especially with the Ministry of Defence Maritime Change programme - is highlighted in the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report (MIR) (under consultation) with Helensburgh and Lomond being designated as a Growth Area.

Town centre regeneration across Scotland is ever-evolving and should be a continuous process. Helensburgh has always had a strong connection with the industrial heritage of Glasgow, with many of the historic properties within the two conservation areas having been built by people wishing to make a home overlooking the Clyde.

It has in the past had strong maritime links to its neighbouring settlements. These are now in a state of flux, considering not only the future of its pier but also how it can innovatively think about its future maritime connections. Just as significant as the water-based connections, are the rail and road connections both into and out of Argyll. The rail links provide good access to both Glasgow and Edinburgh for employment and training opportunities. The road and land connections for cars or cycling also play a key role in residents and visitors accessing neighbouring communities and HMNB Clyde. In addition they allow for ease of access into the surrounding natural landscape.

HMNB Clyde has been a significant influence on Helensburgh over the last 50 years. The current programme of new investment through the Maritime Change Programme will see an increase in personnel and capital investment in Helensburgh and its surrounding areas. Helensburgh has the opportunity to maximise the positive economic and social impact that this will bring. Be this around logistics, employment opportunities, business opportunities or investment in amenities.

For a time there was a lack of investment in the town centre which saw a decline in the upkeep and maintenance and with its identity, but in the early 2000s, the Shetland Partnership created a series of plans and investment ideas. These resulted in the commencement of a series of ambitious projects, such as the £7m CHORD investment, a consolidated council building that focused on the refurbishment of East Clyde Street and the renovation of a highly prominent dilapidated building. This investment has been a catalyst for change, and indeed the town centre has begun to diversify

through private sector investment, bucking the trend of other Scottish town centres. For example, it has a burgeoning reputation for good quality and award winning food and drink establishments.

The town now boasts a Digital Arts Centre at the Tower, which includes a Cinema, the Submarine Centre and Helensburgh Heroes, an exhibition that celebrates famous local people has established itself on Sinclair Street. There is an ongoing programme of public art in the town centre in the form of the innovative Outdoor Museum. The Council has made further investments in the new Hermitage School and Hermitage Park which includes a new passive house amenity space. In addition Hill House has begun a process of refurbishment to secure it as a local and national asset. New houses have been built in the town and on the former greenbelt. The John Muir Way has also established itself in the town as the start or end point of a number of long distance active travel routes, which include the Argyll Kayak Trail.

These changes and investments are happening in the context of the HMNB Clyde expansion which promises a significant number of new jobs and an influx of people to the town over the forthcoming years with over £1.3bn of capital investment and £19b in revenue over the next decade. Creating a lasting and beneficial partnership with the MoD is important, with key priorities already being outlined as transport, economy, housing and education.

Within this picture of opportunity, the future delivery of new sites for business and housing in the Green Belt will be vital, and the first of these is currently under construction. Argyll & Bute Council is also advancing a bid for a 'Rural Growth Deal' which could also be significant by creating a business hub for mixed use, high specification industrial/business sites allowing non-secure MoD functions or supply chain businesses to be sited off-base, with the added benefit of providing employment opportunities and specialist engineering training.

Change in Helensburgh is set to continue with a planned waterfront development which will deliver a new leisure facility, swimming pool and comfortable and accessible public space. This new community facility has the potential to be a significant attraction for the town centre and a huge positive for people considering Helensburgh as a place to live and also to visit.

Helensburgh needs to build on opportunities through a blend of public and private investment. Responsibility has to be placed on private owners to maintain their properties. New businesses and services need to be attracted to the town centre, and at the same time, existing organisations have a crucial role in seeking to improve the towns offer. Creating a vision for Helensburgh and a positive attitude for business and community life is a fundamental need for the future.

*Images of developments to be added*

### 3. What is Making Places?

The Making Places Initiative is a Scottish Government scheme, launched in September 2017, with the aim of helping communities to understand and develop a future vision for their place. Specifically, the programme provides funding to:

1. Assist with building capacity in communities;
2. **Support participative design events;**
3. Enable the delivery of projects.

Within this remit, Helensburgh Making Places sits in the second category. This project has undertaken to engage widely across many community groups and individual voices to evolve a community endorsed Vision for Helensburgh which can inspire any group working in Helensburgh, helping them to gather funding or explore new approaches, to getting a project off the ground and successfully implementing it.

#### [MAKING PLACES SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT](#)

### Why Helensburgh Making Places?

Helensburgh has in the past ten years seen a significant amount of development and diversification of its offer. Colquhoun Square, the waterfront and Sinclair Street have seen extensive urban realm works. The food and retail offer in Helensburgh is considered to be more diverse than other comparable towns with many independent traders. Alongside these, significant developments such as Hermitage Park, the restoration of Hill House, the new Outdoor Museum, the Mackintosh Rooms, the opening of the Tower Digital Arts Centre and Cinema and the opening of Helensburgh Heroes make Helensburgh a town that is heading in the right direction.

Helensburgh has a wide disparity in socio-economic backgrounds. A large proportion of the town is perceived to be relatively affluent, but there are also distinct areas of disadvantage with little connection between the two. This project seeks to address this through the engagement of diverse networks to break down societal barriers and move towards a more inclusive decision-making process which can solve the town's issues including disadvantage and deprivation.

Helensburgh is the closest town to HMNB Clyde which is currently the subject of a programme of expansion. This expansion will see an increase in the number of naval personnel based there for the duration of their career. Argyll and Bute Council recognise the ambition of service personnel to live near their place of work and propose to work collaboratively to enhance the local area and ensure that the town not only welcomes and integrates naval families but also encourages and supports their long-term settlement in the area.

## Who is Helensburgh Making Places for?

This document is the result of continuous engagement across the Helensburgh community during Summer 2018. The team has worked with many groups to establish a widely agreed Approach, Vision and set of Opportunities for Helensburgh which build on its strong position in Scotland.

The final document is designed to be accessible and usable for all within the community, providing a body of evidence to help interested groups to progress opportunities and work towards seeing the shared aspirations realised. It should form a joint starting point for developing plans based on the opportunities that exist in Helensburgh. It should also provide the evidence and information needed to support the appropriateness and fit of future projects.

Frequently, community groups and not-for-profit organisations can access a wide range of funding sources. Support and training on how to access external funds may be available from the Local Authority and Third Sector organisations (see Appendix). Funders will often look for applicants to demonstrate need or demand for their project, and it is the intention that the data provided within this report could provide an evidence base for this.

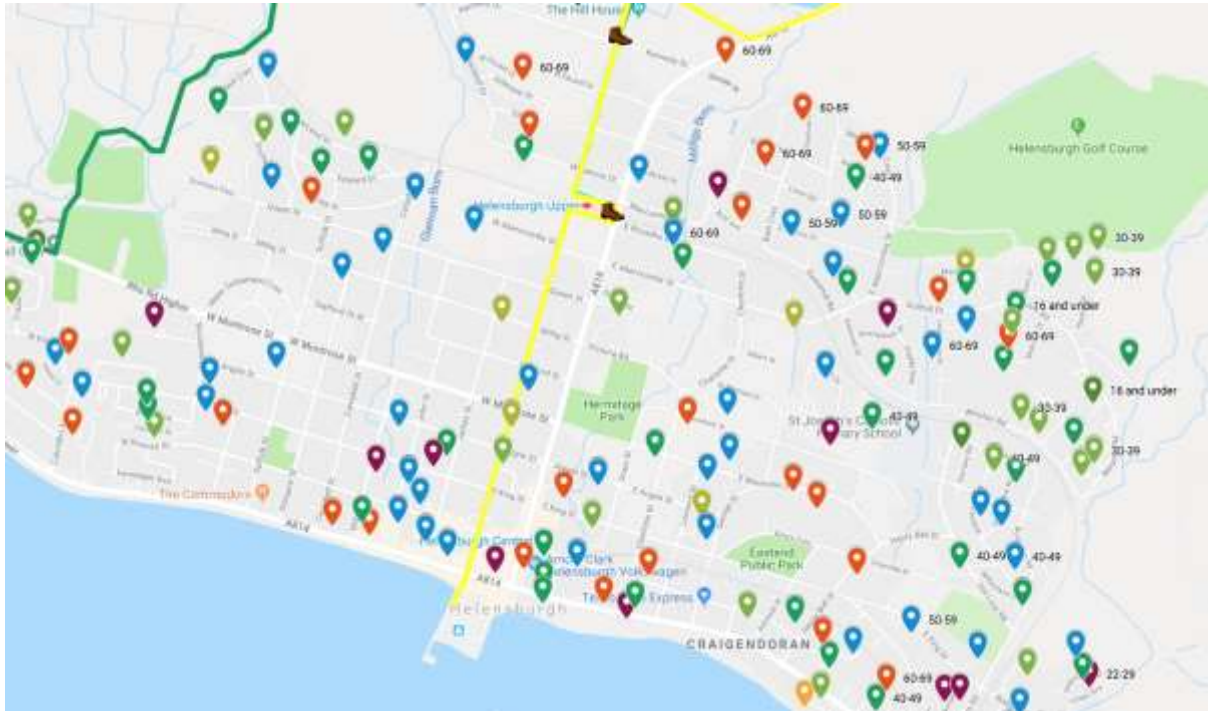
## 4. Method

We have adopted a variety of processes to understand the current opinions and needs of Helensburgh. The processes undertaken were: a Baseline Review, the Place Standard and the Ideas Bank, which resulted in the Themes, Vision and Opportunities.

### Timeline (To be replaced with graphic)

○	1st May	<u>Argyll and Bute Council Officer Presentation (with housing and planning officers)</u>
○	22nd May	<u>On-Street Consultation - Collecting feedback and responses to the Place Standard and feeding it the ideas bank.</u>
○	24th May	<u>Helensburgh and Lomond Youth Forum Workshop - Highlighting young people opinions in the places standard categories</u>
○	29th May	<u>Public Workshop</u>
○	4th Jun	<u>Helensburgh Community Council Workshop</u>
○	6th Jun	<u>HMNB Clyde visit- Group meetings and ad-hoc chats through cart engagement</u>
○	8th Jun	<u>Naval Families Workshop - Mapping and highlight key issues</u>
○	9th Jun	<u>Helensburgh and Lomond Grey Matter Workshop</u>
○	13th Jun	<u>Public 'Vision and Ideas Bank' Meeting- Presentation garnering feedback on the collation of the ideas</u>
○	27th Jun	<u>Helensburgh and Lomond Chamber of Commerce meeting</u>
○	1st Jul	<u>'Street Food Sunday' Public Event - presentation of the themes</u>
○	17th Jul	<u>Stakeholder Meeting - presentation of the themes and opportunities</u>
○	8th Aug	<u>Final Presentation of Approach, Vision and Opportunities</u>

458 responses | 10 events | 11 groups | 400 face to face



*Map showing the location of Helensburgh Making Places survey, in central Helensburgh area.*



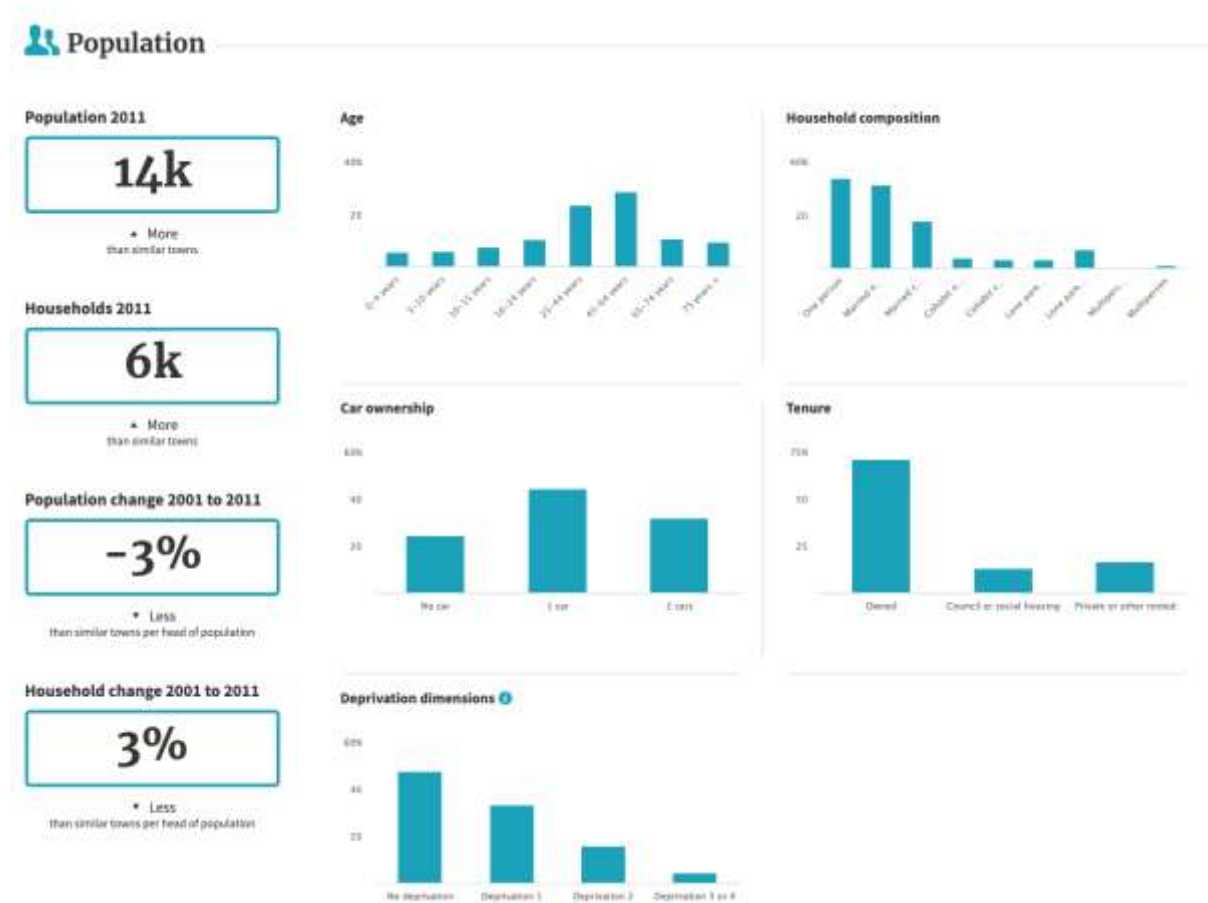
# Baseline Review

A three stage baseline review was undertaken that firstly looked at the overall context of Helensburgh, then looked at the top priorities as highlighted through the engagement and finally undertakes a literature review of key reports and documents that enhance the overall understanding of the context.

## Overall the baseline summarises:

Helensburgh is growing from its 1776 foundation as a tourist centre into a busy suburban town with a thriving community and unique attributes, including: fantastic natural heritage, an inspiring volunteer network, and its relationship to the UK Naval programme.

It has had some decline in population but has a good diversity of job opportunities including administrative and defence. The town has also seen an influx of high quality restaurants servicing the commuter population. Local businesses of note include GSS Marine Services operating from Rhu Marina and the innovative Helensburgh and Lomond TV.



Use of broadband and mobile technologies can help to promote places, events and culture to local people and creates significant opportunities for Helensburgh to attract and foster people working from home (or shared workspaces) but serving wider markets.

HMNB Clyde is the biggest single-site employer in Scotland. In 2017 6,700 were directly employed on the base. However, its local economic significance is less than it might be as the base is self-contained. Therefore there would seem to be a case for forging stronger links between the base and the surrounding local area.

Recent years have seen significant upgrades in the facade of Helensburgh, with widened pavements, the refurbished Colquhoun Square, more parking bays and new street furniture.

The town is the starting and finishing point of both the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail the John Muir Way and the Three Lochs Way. There are also ambitions to develop the cycle connection from Helensburgh to Dumbarton. There is potential for linking up individual paths and creating new circular routes based on Helensburgh featuring wildlife habitats and striking views of the Clyde Estuary.

There is an opportunity to promote the offer of Helensburgh in a holistic manner, linking with green networks, tourist attractions, business development and family spaces. Groups including Helensburgh and District Access Trust, the Central Scotland Green Network Trust and Helensburgh Community Planning Group have achieved or begun great work in this direction. Taking into account the proximity to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, Helensburgh is an enviable position to be sited amongst such stunning scenery.

Restrictions on the Green Belt have been recently relaxed and therefore more development is now taking place and there is increased need for single living accommodation and naval family homes. (North Star, Rettie & Co., Research Resource, 2018). The Maritime Change Programme will see 8,200 service personnel and families living in the local area and 1000 construction jobs created. The Programme is envisaged to require investment of £1.3 billion, and this investment “could generate and support demand for 26, 000 jobs through the supply chains” (2.3). This may be a liberal estimate, however, as clearly with increased investment in HMNB Clyde, there are far reaching opportunities for the supply chain as: encompassing main contractors, subcontractors, service providers and construction will increase.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2016) identifies three datazones in Helensburgh and Lomond as being within the 20% most deprived in Scotland. These are within Helensburgh: in the East and in the Centre. One of these datazones has the highest rate of income deprivation in Argyll and Bute (34%).

*Link to full Baseline (appendix 1) to be included*



- When considering **walking and cycling**, barriers such as infrastructure maintenance were common points of consensus. There were a total of 332 comments (from answers to all questions) to this effect which equates to 15.9% of overall feedback.
- There was a polarised range of responses to **public transport**. Bus travel was often regarded as offering a poor/slow service, including inconvenient routes and lack of clarity on availability. Trains were praised by some for their fast and frequent service but dismissed as unreliable and expensive by others. Twenty-four people asked for the reintroduction of the ferry service to Greenock.
- **View to traffic and parking** were polarised. The highest percentage of comments were considered to be negative (26% of comments) but the second largest percentage results showed that the traffic and parking situation is generally good (21% of total comments). 9% of comments claimed that there was not enough car parking while 2.2% of comments wanted to see more enforcement of existing parking controls and 7.6% wanted free parking. 11.6% of comments complained about people not following rules or paying attention to traffic regulations.
- When considering **public spaces**, 46% of comments were positive and focused particularly on the town's grid layout, attractive street trees and the CHORD scheme but with many reservations about maintenance of the new pavement surfaces and its slippery characteristics in wet conditions. Most of the negative comments were about a range of things from street cleanliness lack of maintenance, parking, and the CHORD scheme, to lack of flowers and too many charity shops. There was also a particular set of comments about the condition of East Clyde Street and the train station, both of which were thought to be letting the town down.
- **The response to green spaces** generated largely positive comments that praised good parks and nice walks, especially Hermitage Park, the waterfront and Kidston Park. Duchess Woods was also mentioned as was John Muir Way, Three Lochs Way and the tree-lined streets in the town. People have high hopes for Hermitage Park once it reopens. Negativity was mainly around ongoing construction and lack of green in Colquhoun Square and the waterfront.
- Within the **play and recreation section**, positive comments were noted in relation to the re-opening of Hermitage Park, the esplanade and wider network of paths and long distance routes. Negative comments focused on the condition of the swimming pool, the lack of local soft play provision, all-weather facilities and the need for a skate park.
- While most ratings for **facilities and amenities** were towards the positive end of the scale, many noted room for improvement. This mainly related to the lack of indoor, affordable spaces to hire for meetings or activities. Concern was also raised around the availability of commercial units for new retail ventures in the town centre.
- Comments relating to **economy and work** split between those noting the town's proximity to the Greater Glasgow area, HMNB Clyde and employment through Argyll & Bute Council as positive aspects, and those remarking that jobs available in Helensburgh itself often lacked diversity or are low-skilled, and that the local economy didn't take advantage of sports or associated leisure opportunities a seafront location can bring.

- **Comments around Homes** in Helensburgh suggested that the building stock could be diversified with regards to social housing to increase the diversity of stock (e.g. larger 3-4 bedroom flats) and affordability, whether for rent or young first-time buyers.
- Many respondents noted that there is a range of different spaces and opportunities to **meet people** in Helensburgh, but there is no community hub open and accessible to all.
- Helensburgh's **identity**, and people's sense of **belonging** elicited mixed response. Some remarked on the variety of groups and associations available, and the strong community spirit that is welcoming and friendly, whilst others noted a conflicting identity (commuter town or visitor) town that doesn't promote its assets or famous individuals enough, and suggested there is a disconnection between HMNB Clyde and Helensburgh's communities.
- Respondent's perception of **feeling safe** garnered a relatively high rating, with negative comments focused on the lack of an obvious police presence, anti-social behaviour and poor street lighting.
- **Care and maintenance** of buildings within Helensburgh attracted the most negative comments, particularly the adverse impacts this brings as a result of the blight on the town centre and dangerous buildings (resulting in road closures and gap sites for example). There was also some dissatisfaction with the poor condition of some pavements and streets.
- People's ability to influence **decision making** in the town to help change things for the better elicited many negative comments noting a lack of any meaningful dialogue regarding important decisions in the town, meaning good initiatives often falter.

From the varied responses across all fourteen Place Standard questions an analysis process was taken to determine the most prevalent issues and opportunities mentioned through the consultation:

1. Counting the prevalent words that have been used throughout the comments;
2. Determining if those comments associated with the words are positive, negative or neutral;
3. Grouping of those words into common themes

From all the processes undertaken, we engaged with 458 respondents via the general survey, 28 respondents via the naval families survey and 400 people via face to face events. In total, over 5000 comments have been gathered and documented.

**Common Words:** *Parking, Shops, Pool, Council, Pavements, Colquhoun Square, Pier, Housing, Buildings, Spaces, Hermitage Park, Traffic, Waterfront, Community, Children, Walk, Young, Bins, Train, Car, Green, Volunteers, Maintenance*

We were able to identify that feedback around the waterfront was most prevalent, making up 20.8% of mentions in all comments.

Common themes from both the Naval Community (*via on base consultation, sessions with support officers and through a survey distributed to Naval Personnel*) and overall survey responses were

around access to affordable housing, access to amenities and making the most of Helensburgh's green spaces and its connection to the landscape.

In comparison to the overall respondents, the naval community highlighted public transport as being an issue, with accessibility, frequency and reliability being the main concerns as well as the requirement for improved linkages to HMNB Clyde.

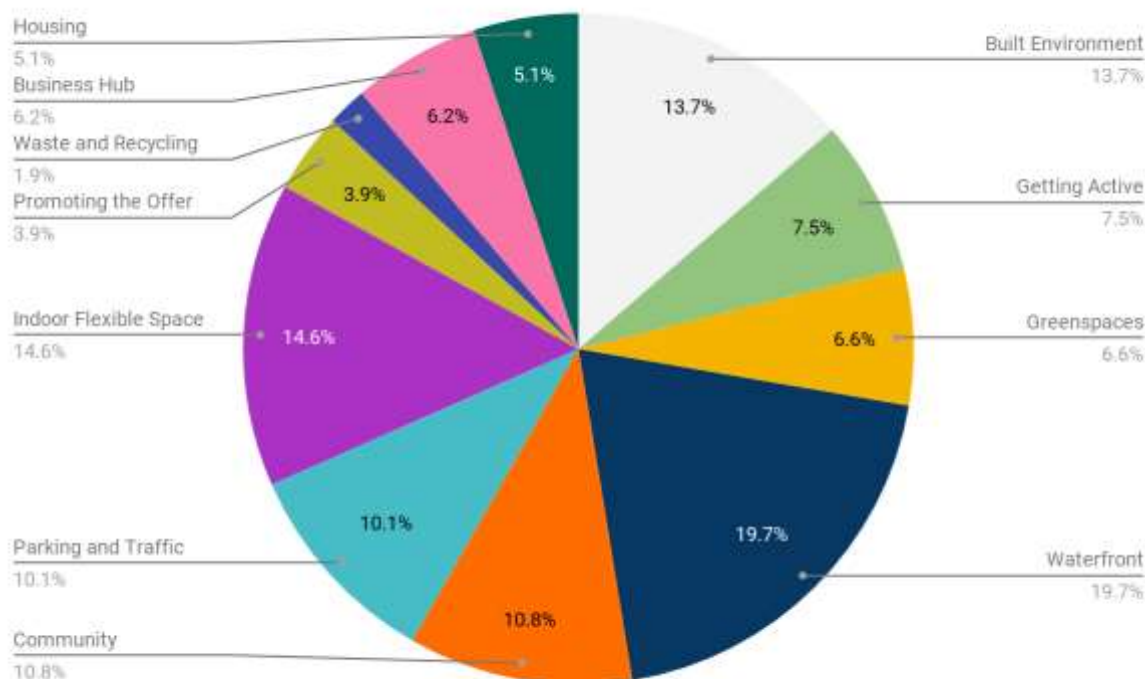
## Ideas Bank

Throughout the consultation, (whether via the Place Standard Survey, or through feedback received in discussion or writing) ideas and suggestions have been compiled into an ideas bank. This is an unedited list of comments, thoughts and ideas which have then been used to enhance our understanding of the priorities and opportunities, and to provide paths to solutions. They were initially grouped under the Place Standard headings, but as common themes became apparent they were reduced into the **4 themes for Helensburgh**: *Green Helensburgh, Learning Helensburgh, Welcoming and Connected Helensburgh, and Enterprising Helensburgh*.

The Ideas Bank was '**sense checked**' and refined into the three core opportunities below in Visioning Events on the 13th June and 1st July, with over 200 members of the public.

## 5. Priorities

Throughout the engagement, 5055 comments and ideas emerged. To allow prioritisation of the most critical messages, we analysed both the common words as well as the sentiment and context of the phrase. We also reviewed these in light of any baseline information available. The following topics are those most frequently mentioned.



The main priority has been highlighted as the waterfront with . 20% of feedback  
 Top priorities being the built environment and indoor flexible space. (14% - 19% of feedback)  
 Additional priorities are parking traffic, community participation and getting active with the (7-14% of feedback) and green space, housing, business hub, waste and recycling and promoting the offer. (0-7% of feedback).

Feedback on the priorities as highlighted within the above chart are summarised further as follows.

### The Main Priority: Waterfront

*'Waterfront', 'seafront', 'ferry', 'beach' and 'pier' were the most commonly used words during the Making Places research whilst also featuring highly as underused assets in the baseline review.*

**The waterfront was a recurring theme; it is a great asset to the town which should become a hub of activity that serves both a recreational purpose and a practical purpose for people moving through the town.**

The waterfront and the esplanade that forms a major part of it should form the backbone of Helensburgh's identity. It should be the Town's key selling point and the principal amenity or attraction. There is a need to consider the future of its maritime connection, be that via the wooden pier, the waterfront development, walkways, kayak and cycleways or through other access points to the water. Walkways and cycleways need to be connected up, and signposting into the town's amenities, inclusive of parking, should be considered. The beach itself needs to be made more attractive, and at the very least free from litter and pollution.

The presence of traffic along Clyde Street remains a barrier between the seashore and businesses. Along the waterfront, there is varying degrees of repair to both the buildings and the public realm with some critical areas of blight, that impacts on the perception of the town for both visitors and residents. There is a need to create activity and excitement as part of the waterfront experience, and a need to think innovatively not only about recreation but also about all the associated health benefits for residents and visitors to the town.

The pier condition could mean that there are major considerations when considering it as an opportunity, however it should be considered that the pier not only be looked at as a mooring for boats. Access to the water is limited due to the lay of the land and tidal impacts. Relatively low tides and the specific local timing of high tide makes access to the water more difficult. There is also current litter issues on the beach that makes the beach feel unattractive.

In response to using the pier for water transport, the requirement of dredging and ongoing pier maintenance were raised as red flags, as without adequate provision vessels will not be able to use the pier. Local heritage society, Helensburgh Heritage Trust details that even the PS Waverley requires a certain level of dredging to remain in operation, due to its size. Furthermore, feedback on the Helensburgh Waterfront Masterplan has raised dredging as an issue, despite noting it is outwith the remit of that project (2018: pp.46).

## Top priorities

### Built Environment and Indoor Flexible Space

The built environment of the town is generally considered to be of high quality, with good building stock and interesting architecture. However, maintenance needs to improve. Better utilisation of vacant buildings including above ground floor level, and overcoming the barriers created by alleged absentee landlords requires urgent attention. There is a need to tackle areas of blight within the town centre, particularly in relation to vacant and derelict land and problem buildings. Finding sustainable solutions to these issues would increase the attractiveness of the town and may also bring the opportunity of introducing new spaces to the town. While being an important issue in itself, the condition and upkeep of buildings often dovetails with other priorities, whether that is providing suitable spaces for new enterprises, or impacts on traffic due to road closures caused by unstable/dangerous structures.



The wider context demonstrates a drive for change to help owners look after buildings. March 2018 saw Helensburgh host Scotland's first Listed Property Owners' Forum, exploring national changes to VAT and planning rules that could make it easier for owners to update and conserve their properties. It is on this basis that these proposals are put forward to address concerns around building use and maintenance, and to suggest innovative approaches to more fully realise the potential within Helensburgh's existing building stock.

Helensburgh town centre contains seven character areas. Understanding the essential components of these areas is a positive way of thinking about their future in terms of use and building form but the presence of the Upper Helensburgh Conservation Area is an inescapable and significant source of the town's character. This Conservation Area is not part of the town centre, but its character permeates the central area through the street grid which links down from the high ground of this prestigious residential area through the town centre to the shoreline. A significant part of the character of the Conservation Area lies in the spatial arrangement of non-formal elements - individual houses, gardens and walls - set within the formal pattern of the street grid. While the street grid is common to all the character areas, the placement of buildings in plots and different uses creates a series of very different character areas.



While Helensburgh benefits from recent investment in infrastructure enhancements, and terrific projects including the Hermitage Park Regeneration, one key element of feedback through the Place Standard process was that affordable indoor space for meetings or activities is a less developed aspect of the town, especially for younger people and families. Creating new indoor facilities for leisure, enterprise, childcare and lifelong learning is therefore necessary. These should be accessible in the broadest sense of the word, for all ages and abilities and affordable to all. A particular noted concern relating to childcare and opportunities for young people have been with the local soft play facility

Gogglebox closing in 2015 and uncertainty around the future provision of a skate park, with no dry, indoor areas for sports.

The Monitoring Report for the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) notes that new developments should aim to “create places people want to live, work and play in” (Argyll and Bute, 2017: pp.33). This key concern around ‘play’ falls into line with a desire for more provision of indoor play/activity and accessible facilities, presented in feedback from the 2017 Place Standard exercise:

*“Helensburgh has very limited resources available to the younger generation... Leisure facilities are nowhere near the standard they should be for such a large community. Oban, for example, has a large leisure complex catering to all ages. Locals are forced to attend West Dunbartonshire Council to access leisure facilities such as gym halls to play sports such as badminton, football, netball etc. Skate parks are available in a safe environment in neighbouring West Dunbartonshire, but again Helensburgh lacks any of these facilities.”*

During the consultation the naval community particularly highlighted that Helensburgh needs to develop its shopping and amenities offer with some feeling that there was nothing to do apart from eat and drink.

In addition to recreational uses the recent Helensburgh and Lomond housing study suggests a surplus of Service Family Accommodation (SFA), while there being increased pressure on, and thus a deficit of, Single Living Accommodation (SLA) (2018: pp.90-92). Therefore there is a clear opportunity to plan for more accommodation, thinking as well about opportunities for single personnel to settle in the area.

## Additional Priorities

### Parking and traffic, Community Participation and Getting Active

#### Parking and Traffic

Parking provision in the town centre generated a wide range of responses from different groups. Opinions ranged from 'poor or inadequate provision' to 'good or satisfactory provision'. Recent audits suggest that the town does have good parking provision. Parking surveys conducted by JMP (2007) and AECOM (2018) have both concurred that there is a sufficient provision of parking within the town centre. Concerns about parking may, therefore, stem from a lack of information about the location of car parks and their current capacity.

Completed in 2015, Transforming the Town Centre - Traffic Management and Streetscape Improvements carried out “road narrowing and widening of adjoining pavements”, implemented shared surface areas, installed new street furniture, and adjusted traffic flow and parking in the centre of Helensburgh.

In the lead up to this work, the Helensburgh Traffic Management and Streetscape Report noted that “while the accommodation of vehicular traffic is integral to the economic regeneration within the town centre, it is vital to ensure that all modes of travel are appropriately considered when examining the accessibility to and around the town centre” (JMP, 2007: 1.4).

The consultation was carried out at the time when the dangerous condition of buildings on East High Street warranted the closure of that street which resulted in traffic congestion at the Sinclair Street/East Princes Street junction. Other traffic related issues included the speed of traffic through Colquhoun Square and the perceived barrier of Clyde Street between shops, bars and restaurants and the waterfront itself.

Approaching traffic management, the JMP report underlines a key point of consensus being that traffic on Sinclair Street and Clyde Street is at such a level that these streets are “perceived as vehicle dominated barriers which are difficult to cross” (2007: 11.2).

With regard to improving traffic flows, the report outlines a series of measures that could be implemented, including one-way systems, traffic calming and pedestrianisation, but puts forward community buy-in and participation as fundamentally crucial to the success of any future traffic management plan.

### Community Participation

The inter-relationships between community groups and the public's relationship with the council and other groups such as the community council were also highlighted as prominent issues. There was a sense that people do not feel listened to and do not know how to access information on how to participate in plans, projects or engagement. During the Place Standard exercise, the lowest scoring category was Influence and Sense of Control.

#### **14. Do I feel able to take part in decisions and help change things for the better?**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Count per rating:	101	65	68	96	69	36	19
%	22%	14%	15%	21%	15%	8%	4%

Total responses: **454**    Average of all ratings: **3.33**    Number of comments: **235**

There is often a perceived issue with communication and process, as the processes for engagement and feedback can carry a level of complexity that is not always easy for people to follow. This can often be the case as it needs to allow for a formal process of reporting to be adhered to. There may be opportunities for either simplifying or clarifying the process in which people can get involved with both with council and other stakeholders..

“The town has many voluntary organisations and an articulate population who are keen to have their say in Helensburgh’s future. The challenge then is to harness what are at times disparate enthusiasms into a shared vision - or mutually reinforcing set of visions - for the town” (BEFS, 2013: 5).

This challenge: one of cohesion and sharing, is a goal articulated by naval families desiring “more engagement with civilian families” (RNRMW, 2018: pp.5). It is clear then that harnessing the collective work, of some 200 voluntary organisations, and ensuring a full sharing of knowledge and skills between different groups is a broader goal perhaps best centralised in an online dashboard or a town connector to act as a forum that would support communication, and skill and knowledge sharing, between groups.

### **Getting Active**

A positive characteristic of the town was the ability of people to walk and cycle around. The drawbacks of this were poor pavements in places, poor signage, limited knowledge of cycle paths and poor connectivity between routes. There is an opportunity to address these issues and instil stronger connections to the surrounding landscape and long distance routes for walking or cycling, to improve both recreation and active travel.

## **Green Space, Housing, Business Hub, Waste and Recycling and Promoting the Offer**

### **Green Space**

Participants often highlighted that Helensburgh has excellent access to green spaces in the form of Duchess Wood, Hermitage Park and wider afield into the surrounding landscape through things like the John Muir Way. It was however noted these places are not well signposted and connected. The waterfront could also benefit from further / diversified greening. It was also highlighted that the offer will be greatly improved when Hermitage Park is fully reopened. Across both specific Naval feedback and feedback from the wider place standard survey, the green networks within Helensburgh and linking outward to Argyll and the Isles are a distinct asset. Respondents identified the scenery and landscape as a highlight, and a resource worth preserving and enhancing opportunities to make use of outdoor and natural links where possible.



### **Housing**

Housing was not often mentioned during the consultation but key comments included affordability and access to family sized homes. However within the engagement with Naval community the following issues were raised; housing prices (purchase and rent) being considered as expensive and distance from family or older relatives. In the place standard survey 'Housing' is an average to positive response. Although looking more closely at the sentiment of comments; affordability and availability of housing are key issues, as is the case in the Naval survey.

### **Business Hub**

As there are current initiatives making steps towards a business hub it was mentioned as an opportunity to provide space and support for people starting out but also businesses wishing to expand their offer. It was also noted that this could be a space for the delivery of vocational training. In terms of business opportunity and development in the area, the region has seen static employment levels in recent years, with some reporting growth, and in Helensburgh and Lomond there has been limited expansion of businesses (18%). Looking forward, 40% of businesses in Helensburgh and Lomond expected to recruit staff over the next three years (EKOS, 2015: 15).

### **Waste and Recycling**

It was noted in the consultation that litter in the town centre has become an issue with the current bins and emptying of them was not deemed to be adequate. It was felt that this was affecting the overall appearance of the town, in particular, Colquhoun Square and the waterfront. A number of participants suggested that the current litter bin provision could be revised and that local businesses could be

supported to think about how they reduce their waste. It was thought that more initiatives for recycling and keeping the waterfront clean could be considered.

### **Promoting the Offer**

Participants often noted the positive assets of Helensburgh but noted that it did not promote itself well and this could be enhanced. Although this is considered to be a low priority and was not mentioned frequently, respondents referred to it concerning other aspects such as the waterfront, walking and cycling and Helensburgh potential as a gateway to and from the rest of Argyll.

## 6. The Themes

The following themes have been identified as a result of all feedback. These themes support the vision and act as ways for new opportunities to be considered.

<b><u>Green Helensburgh...</u></b>	<b><u>Learning Helensburgh...</u></b>	<b><u>Welcoming and Connected Helensburgh...</u></b>	<b><u>Enterprising Helensburgh...</u></b>
<p>...maximises on and celebrates the synergy between the natural and built environment; its parks, its waterfront and its connection to the wider landscape.</p> <p>...is clever about how it reduces and recycles waste.</p> <p>...has clean beaches, waterways and parks.</p> <p>...promotes and supports active travel.</p> <p>...has the transport infrastructure to reduce car reliance.</p>	<p>...supports inclusive lifelong learning with multiple and diverse pathways.</p> <p>...collectively learns from the processes it undertakes and acts on these learnings.</p> <p>...has strong and diverse learning pathways for all age groups, community groups and those who wish to re-train.</p>	<p>...has a physical and digitally connected community that works together.</p> <p>...is connected physically and socially to its neighbouring communities: Rhu, Rosneath, Cardross, etc.</p> <p>...maximises on its proximity to both Glasgow and the Highlands as a gateway.</p> <p>...has a reliable and well connected transport network.</p> <p>...is connected to its past and celebrates it for the future.</p>	<p>...has a vibrant and enterprising town centre.</p> <p>...where businesses are thriving and growing.</p> <p>...makes use of the assets of the place to the best of our advantage.</p> <p>...takes an innovative and progressive attitude to opportunities.</p> <p>...boasts diversity in its job opportunities.</p>

## 7. Vision

Throughout the Making Places project, people have had high aspirations for Helensburgh and think broadly and innovatively about where Helensburgh is going. The very high level of ambition set out for the vision places the focus on Helensburgh's main assets - its waterfront and its people and can be translated into 3 vision statements as follows:

- *Helensburgh is a world-class and forward thinking waterfront town, a compelling attraction for visitors, investment and enterprise.*
- *Helensburgh is welcoming, vibrant and with a strong sense of community.*
- *Helensburgh is innovative and thriving.*



## 8. Key Opportunities

### The Helensburgh Waterline “make more of the waterfront”

*Priority - Waterfront, Getting active, parking and traffic, green space, waste recycling, promoting the offer*

The Helensburgh Waterline is the big idea for Helensburgh. A spine of activity, connecting walkways and cycleways, family-friendly cycling, a place to get good food and drink, artworks and pockets of play. It is a place for health and recreation where commerce can thrive and a pivotal connection to the attractions of the town. The beach is the natural place to access the water and the pier a place for events, retail or recreation opportunity. Water transport connections need to be re-established. Helensburgh becomes more ecologically conscious about how to deal with waste, the movement and use of cars and power.

	<b>Green Helensburgh</b>	<b>Connected Helensburgh</b>	<b>Enterprising Helensburgh</b>	<b>Learning Helensburgh</b>
<b>The Helensburgh Waterline</b>	Making the most of Helensburgh’s waterfront and celebrating its natural assets Supporting healthy and active lifestyles.	Develop the Waterfront as a walking and cycling routes through the town	Scoping opportunities for private enterprise to enliven the Helensburgh Waterline.	A space to test how initiatives can support the town and be developed up in other areas

The Helensburgh waterfront presents an exciting opportunity for Helensburgh to develop an identity as one of Scotland’s modern waterfront towns.

The Helensburgh Waterline is a zone that spans the full length of the waterfront from Rhu to Craigendoran railway station and along which activity and development is encouraged. It signposts and connects to the established and expanding features of the town and becomes a spine of action and movement for residents and visitors. It takes a new approach to a seaside town and involves moving away from nostalgia and moving instead towards a contemporary and fresh approach to what living by the sea means. It should be developed in a way that makes Helensburgh attractive for both young adults and families to maximise on the potential influx of population as a result of Maritime Change. It should support active travel to and from the base while also offering the additional amenities that all segments of the community are seeking.

Positioned in Helensburgh’s current waterfront context, it can be seen that there are a variety of feasible opportunities available. The CHORD project has enhanced the facade of the town, and the proposed Waterfront Development Plan will provide a state-of-the-art facility. From such a solid foundation there is ready potential for Helensburgh to use the benefits already evident from recent enhancements to galvanise further waterfront developments. This situation, alongside the growth of water activities in the region, provides a fertile testing ground for the new approaches detailed in the ‘Helensburgh Waterline’.





Helensburgh boasts many opportunities to connect to national walking and cycle ways, and of course the potential of reinvigorating the waterline by testing and encouraging more regular and playful ways of using the water, such as kayaking, sailing or artistic installations. Links to John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way offer abundant opportunities for both residents and tourists, creating not only active travel benefits but potential business benefits if these routes became actively promoted. There is potential for linking up individual paths and creating new circular routes based on Helensburgh featuring wildlife habitats and striking views of the Clyde Estuary.

Sitting within the Clyde Marine Region (CMR), Helensburgh has access to a unique landscape, distinct in Scotland “in terms of the amount and expanse of sea broadly contained by the mainland... [with] a complexity and variety of seascapes which, coupled with industry and coastal development have contributed to the natural and cultural landscape much appreciated by locals and visitors” (Clyde Marine Planning Partnership, 2017: pp. 10).

As well as the superb natural assets which underpin the project, the timing is appropriate given the launch of Live Argyll within the last year. This new Trust, delivering library and leisure services within Argyll and Bute, launched in October 2017 to “play an active role in enhancing the health, fitness, culture and personal well-being of the citizens of Argyll and Bute” (Argyll and Bute Council, 2017). Additionally, there are opportunities afforded by the new Helensburgh Waterfront Development, encompassing the swimming pool redevelopment, to aspire to more active lifestyles in a contemporary and attractive setting. Alongside this, Helensburgh has the opportunity to enhance its attractiveness for both new residents and tourists with its close proximity to the central belt and the outstanding environment of wider Argyll.

In addition to this, enterprise opportunities exist in being able to maximise the spend in Helensburgh of both residents within and outwith the town by encouraging them to stop rather than bypass the town. There are opportunities in the delivery of both recreational and functional access to transport on the water.

# Maximising Our Built Spaces

*Priority - Built Environment, Indoor Flexible Space, Business Hub*

Helensburgh has a diverse building stock with properties of many different ages and sizes. The town's built environment, particularly its historic buildings and special character, plays a significant role in attracting investment and presenting the Town as being open for business. At present, there are several vacancies in shop units, upper floors and some more substantial buildings in significant locations. Coupled with this is the community's desire for the improved provision of spaces for business space, co-working spaces, child care, soft play provision, community hubs and venues for young people. The upper floors of buildings must also be considered for in-town accommodation to support one bedroom accommodation to encourage singles and couples to make Helensburgh their base during their career at HMNB Clyde.

	<b>Green Helensburgh</b>	<b>Connected Helensburgh</b>	<b>Enterprising Helensburgh</b>	<b>Learning Helensburgh</b>
<b>Look After Our Buildings</b>	Directly relating potential building reuse proposals to waterfront or green projects with relevant uses	Giving priority to building reuse proposals which benefit from locations on active travel routes	Providing an improved range of entrepreneurial uses for vacant and underused buildings	Develop monitoring and feedback loops that allow for educational experiences while also providing locations for training

Helensburgh has the opportunity to

- Better understand the building stock it has and make that available to the market
- Support the repair and maintenance of its buildings now and in the future
- Make use of legislation to support in the care and maintenance of the building stock
- Consider innovative and potentially meanwhile uses for its building stock to maximise on properties that do not currently have a long term use.
- Consider uses for both ground floor and upper floor uses for both business and residential accommodation
- Have a town centre first focus to ensure that future developments that are appropriate to attract and retain people and footfall in the town centre

Undertaking a space audit of the town centre would create a useful picture of utilised, under-utilised and vacant spaces. Making this information available to residents and businesses could be a helpful step towards making better use of the town centre building stock. It would also allow for a blended approach to both business space and residential space.



There are many listed buildings in the town centre and an adjacent Conservation Area. There may be opportunity to also consider protecting the special character of Helensburgh's town centre through a conservation area. The built environment of the town *“still benefits from the legacy of the original plan. The formal grid layout of the town with its wide streets echoes the elegance of the Edinburgh new town”* (BEFS, 2013: pp.2) - providing a perfect context for creating a thriving waterfront and town centre.

Encouraging building maintenance and actively participating in bringing vacant properties into use through joint business and community involvement could create a new sense of purpose and agency in the town centre. Projects such as Govanhill Baths in Glasgow, the Partisan Collective in Manchester or the Crossroads Community Hub in Ayrshire are good project exemplars. There may also be opportunity to apply to Historic Environment Scotland for a Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme.

*Spatial analysis to be added or linked to in baseline where needed*

## Sharing the Knowledge and the responsibility

*Priority- Community Cohesion and promoting the offer*

Helensburgh has the opportunity to be a town that maximises on what it has and works together as a community. By understanding through digital and non-digital means; what there is available, who is out there to work with, what is happening in the area and how you can participate in the town Helensburgh will be able to make the most of its assets and the skills of its people.

	<b>Green Helensburgh</b>	<b>Connected Helensburgh</b>	<b>Enterprising Helensburgh</b>	<b>Learning Helensburgh</b>
<b>Sharing the Knowledge and the Responsibility</b>	Better understanding and knowledge of need leads to more and better projects.	Access to local knowledge results in more considered projects and solutions.	Better access to information and working together leads to fresh ideas for business.	Develop monitoring and feedback loops that allow for learning on the job.

Helensburgh like many communities has a plethora of opportunities, community groups, events and assets that could be better utilised. Maximising these assets requires a better understanding of them. A knowledge base for residents, community groups and decision makers in the form of a digital portal could provide evidence, collate feedback and promote what Helensburgh has to offer.

Current work that is exploring this includes **Pathways and Partnership (PaPa)**, which is a tool that has been developed by Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP). It supplies clear visual data about the “areas of work of individual services under 10 different categories of health and wellbeing” (Argyll and Bute, Community Planning Partnership Bulletin, May 2018) and the **Participatory Budget Tool - Supporting communities fund** an online tool which allowed the community to vote on projects to receive funding. Local groups and organisations were able to share project ideas via a specifically created website, explaining how they would use £2,500 per project in order to aid the local community. In April 2018, residents were then able to vote on the projects they wished to be funded. This pilot process is now being evaluated.

The Place Standard surveys revealed that the lowest scoring response was 'Influence and Sense of Control'. A better sense of what this means is provided by comments and feedback in which respondents outlined that they do not know how to contribute in public processes. Such sentiment is strongly outlined in a range of consistent commentary that there is “not enough info on how to get involved”, or “recent involvement in planning decisions were disappointing... didn’t feel listened to”. In response to this Helensburgh could develop toolkits and advice on how to participate in local groups or in a planning process ensuring that this is kept up to date and reviewed to understand where improvements could be made.

Facilitation of clear channels of communication has been a marker of success in the recent Hermitage Park regeneration project, utilising ‘user groups’ with a clear remit to report back to other groups within the town about the project’s progress and ways of getting involved.

Hermitage Park is part of a network of green spaces including the Duchess Woods Local Nature Reserve, the stalled spaces projects at the former James Street play park, links to the John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way, and Colquhoun Square. These connections provide numerous opportunities including the John Muir way recently (July 2018) securing marketing funding to support businesses that lie on the John Muir Way. This should also be supportive of working with organisations outwith the area as with the John Muir Way where 8 Local Authorities are working together in a regional approach.

To make Helensburgh a community maximising on its assets and open for community participation it could:

- Develop a digital asset map resource that is kept up to date and supports both day to day decisions and forward planning
- Develop clear support for pathways to participate
- Have a coordination role to support those that are finding it harder to connect but also to have a good overview of the current setting of Helensburgh

By creating a robust digital directory of not just the businesses but the vacant property availability, the schools in the area, the projects that are coming up, volunteer opportunities and consultations that are underway, there can be clarity and transparency in decision making.

Also, feedback has suggested that developing a post of Community Connector, perhaps attached to one of the stakeholder organisations but with the role of an impartial mediator within the town, could facilitate and coordinate the collaboration required to move collectively towards the vision.

## 9. How can we get there?

### **Collaboration**

The critical approach presented through Helensburgh Making Places is the ‘can-do’ approach. ‘Can-do’ is a proactive approach to moving forward with projects and only being limited by specific hurdles or restrictions. This approach fosters a culture of collaboration which is often critical to the successful delivery of a project.

As public finances reduce there is now more of a compelling case than ever before for the need to work together and achieve common goals for the future prosperity of the town. Local people are passionate about their town, their collective history and the need for future development to match what has been achieved to date.

Helensburgh benefits from a wide range of community groups, volunteer agencies and charities each with their strengths and skills. Collaborating with these groups will strengthen project sustainability, minimise risk and draw on the skills and services available within the town to deliver mutual benefits. There is opportunity to communicate openly, consistently, to share ideas, opportunities, skills and knowledge.

The appendix provides an overview of some of the groups in Helensburgh and useful organisations which may be of assistance.

### **Understanding What We Have**

In undertaking any projects, it is vital to gain a clear picture of what has gone before, and in the case of each of the opportunities highlighted, there is a detailed baseline that should assist communities and stakeholders in developing a clear picture of the current context.

### **Feasibility and Testing**

Exploring the feasibility and viability of a potential project is essential. A traditional feasibility study or small-scale pilot scheme to test the project in practice can allow successful tests to be scaled up.

Either approach will seek to highlight potential issues or obstacles and provide an opportunity for solutions to emerge. There may also be an opportunity to explore the phasing of a project and identify potential costs and statutory requirements. This must be a transparent process that allows people to understand where ideas are coming from but also the reason why they are, or are not, moving forward.

### **Looking Outside the Box**

Helensburgh has a strong and determined community with the abilities and skills to think innovatively about the opportunities presented in this Vision. Alongside the Council and other stakeholders, there are significant ways in which Helensburgh can think outside the box to attract investment, population and visitors. New business models, new ways for overcoming challenges and innovation in the development of the town should all be considered.



## **Funding and Income Generation**

The majority of projects will benefit from securing external funding. There is a broad range of funding sources available each with their unique requirements and eligibility.

With increasing Government emphasis on community empowerment and taking responsibility, community groups and not-for-profit organisations are able to access a growing range of funding sources. Funders will often look for applicants to demonstrate need or demand for their project, and it is the intention that the data provided within this report could provide an evidence base for this.

Even when capital funding is forthcoming the revenue implications for any project has to be very carefully considered. Detailed business cases for each project will have to be developed if external funding is to be secured, therefore each project should also think about the viability of raising funds through ticket sales, selling merchandise or some other means. There is also support from organisations like Business Gateway, Firstport, Scottish Enterprise and many others to help consider commercial or income generating ideas.

## 10. Conclusion

Helensburgh is a town that has benefited from recent catalysing projects such as Hermitage Park, the public realm improvement, The Tower Digital Arts Centre, Helensburgh Heroes and the growth of a distinct food and drink offer.

In the near future Helensburgh will see a new waterfront development of a leisure facility, the ongoing outdoor museum public art project, the potential of the Rural Growth Deal and the opportunities within Maritime Change brings for new housing models, new businesses and growth in population.

What the project has found is that Helensburgh is in a strong position; it has a robust and highly active volunteer network who have achieved a wide range of fantastic community-based projects in recent years.

Helensburgh should embrace and maximise on the opportunities that new approaches may bring; be this initiatives around bringing empty buildings back into use, reducing car reliance, encouraging waste reduction or the implementation of digital solutions.

Helensburgh has the opportunity to work together to achieve a vision of having a world class waterfront while being welcoming and vibrant with a strong sense of community.

Helensburgh should be innovative to maximise on the waterfront making it a place to support healthy and active lifestyles through walking and cycling and play, invigorating activity and events to promote recreational activity, while ensuring all opportunities for enterprise are maximised.

Building on the strong network of volunteers and community groups Helensburgh can ensure that through a strong sense of citizenship it has an identity as a place that is planning for and moving forward with the opportunities that it has.

# APPENDICES

## 1. Full Baseline + Priorities Baseline + References