5 Vision and initial proposals
Tourism is an important and growing source of revenue for East Kent which contains major cross channel infrastructure, is within 1.5 - 2.5 hours of London and is close to major tourism attractions.

Tourism is worth approximately £3.4bn to the Kent economy and supports more than 64,000 jobs. Research has shown that within the past five years the number of day visitors to Kent rose by 9%. Clearly the distribution of the economic benefit is uneven across the county but the diagram on the right gives an indication of the relative strengths of individual locations.

The combined offer of Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay supports 7.1 million visitors per annum and there is cooperation between these three towns to maximise this economic benefit. Likewise Margate, Broadstairs and Ramsgate where cooperation nets 3.4 million visitors.

The figures for Sandwich are uncertain but we are informed that 22,000 visitors sign in at the tourist information centre. Clearly these are more serious visitors and therefore the comparison between these numbers may be unfair, but nevertheless the gist of the discussion is that Sandwich is not receiving an appropriate share of the available market. Whilst this is not a tourism impact study per se we believe that with cooperation between adjacent towns to broaden the offer, and possibly providing a complementary offer to Canterbury, Sandwich would be able to improve its performance if that is wanted. It would seem to be an ideal candidate for the increasing ‘staycation’ market within the UK provided that its overnight accommodation is of suitable quality and quantity.

Places change and evolve in terms of their attractiveness to the market and this process can be directed. Faversham is growing as a tourism destination on the basis of its built heritage, its market town character, as part of the Canterbury trail with fast rail links to London. Whitstable’s rise on the basis of seafood, harbourside and restaurants has been dramatic. Visitor numbers have improved with the recent refurbishment and Margate’s art based renaissance is well underway.

With its rich heritage, river frontage and hinterland of coast and nature conservation sites, Sandwich is well placed to capitalise on growth of this sort. However it has been remarked that its hotel provision is modest from its potential demand.

Sandwich is within 45 minutes drive of nationally important tourist attraction which attract up to 15 million people.
5.1 Introduction

Movement - summary

Traffic volumes within the historic core of the town are not particularly high, now that through traffic has been taken out of the town by the A256 bypass. The busiest street in the centre is Strand Street, which carries just under 5000 vehicles per day, of which over 95% are cars. Some of the traffic through the town may be caused by vehicles travelling to and from Discovery Park but this is difficult to assess without extensive surveys, and in any event is largely limited to the peak hours. Traffic speeds are relatively low, with measured 85th percentile speeds (i.e. only exceeded by 15% of vehicles) of below 22.5mph throughout the town centre.

That is not to say there are no problems, however. The narrow streets and footways, with high kerbs and a lack of level crossing points, mean that pedestrians often feel vulnerable and intimidated, and perceive traffic speeds to be higher than they actually are. Pedestrian desire lines are poorly met in a number of locations - the zebra crossing on the route from The Guildhall to Market Street, for example - and walking routes across the town are often not clear and legible.

5.2 Draft strategy

Managing the flow of traffic through the town centre through standardised signs, signals and other street furniture has in places degraded the quality of the streetscape. This is particularly true at the Barbican, where bollards, signal posts, vertical signs and red asphalt badly mar what should be a prime piece of public realm at the town’s northern gateway. Notwithstanding this, there are calls for more signs to help drivers find car parks, which could add to the problem.

There have been a number of recorded casualties across the town over recent years, including some serious ones. The narrow streets are very difficult for long vehicles to negotiate, which has resulted in damage to a number of historic buildings. However, the new 7.5T weight restrictions at the town HGV gateways are already alleviating this particular problem, according to local press reports.

Car parking is seen as a major problem throughout the town, both for visitors and for residents. The recent parking strategy review carried out for the District Council identified some minor changes to better manage the existing stock of spaces, but did not address the overall problem of undersupply, which is likely to become worse as development takes place on peripheral sites. A lack of coach parking is also a significant problem that remains to be solved. Servicing is also a difficulty, with few designated bays.

5.3 Draft proposals

The town is reasonably well served by buses, with all of the services calling at the stops in New Street, but these can cause congestion, particularly when vehicles stop on the narrow carriageway alongside. While it would be better if the routes were not served by large buses this is unavoidable if they are to remain commercially successful. Changing to single-decker buses, which are longer than double-decker, would make it harder for them to get through the town.

Sandwich is a flat and compact town, and yet cycling is not a very popular way for residents to access the town. Sandwich is at the crossroads of two long distance cycle routes and does attract some cycle tourists, but there are no clear cycle links within the town itself, or leading to its outer residential areas. Much more could be done to make cycling an important part of the movement mix of the town.
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

Transport Solutions

Like many historic towns, Sandwich has a problem with traffic. Or more accurately, it has a problem accommodating the space taken up by motor vehicles, whether they are moving or stationary. Cars in particular, but also buses (unless full) and goods vehicles (likewise) are very space inefficient compared to people walking and using cycles. When we see traffic we generally fail to recognise how much scarce space is required to move around (usually) just one person.

Of course, the convenience and flexibility of the car is such that most people prefer to use it over other forms of transport, and were Sandwich to try to exclude it completely there is the risk that it would become less attractive as a destination for retail and leisure compared to other nearby centres, and so damaging the local economy. Balancing that effect, however, would be the fact that the quality of the environment itself would be much improved, so that people were willing to accept a slight reduction in convenience in order to gain access to it.

What is therefore necessary is to change the balance, as far is reasonably possible, to make it more attractive for people to make more short journeys into Sandwich by foot and cycle instead of by car.

We see a number of ways of achieving this, which have underpinned our overall strategy and initial proposals for a number of key spaces.

Most importantly pedestrians should be given greater space and freedom to move around the streets, without feeling that they are stepping into a dangerous place when they leave the narrow footways.
How to combine events and vibrancy with pedestrian comfort and vehicular convenience? Clearly some parts of the town are more sensitive than others.
The town’s transport system radiates from the centre focussed on the Barbican where the Toll Bridge is a key gateway. Other ‘gateways’ or key focal points such as the station and the Guildhall are important places in the town. Apart from the station and the bypass, (vital parts for the transport infrastructure), these are all historic assets, sometimes ripe for new uses. If these were connected the town system would be stronger.

We need your help...

Join the public consultation from 2 to 31 July 2016.

Visit: kent.gov.uk/sandwichtownreview or fill out a paper questionnaire whilst visiting the exhibition.

Connecting assets:

- Dover Road
- Ash Road
- Woodnesborough Road
- Ramsgate Road
- Guildhall
- Barbican
- quay

Key focal points/connections:

The town would be stronger if it was connected.
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.1 Introduction

The gateways and the principal road system could be used to define a ‘slow zone’ where traffic speeds would be limited throughout to 20mph to minimise signage for safety reasons. This would be coupled with the gateways mentioned earlier to define further zones of restraint with the intention of creating a more equal balance for pedestrians and car drivers.

5.2 Draft strategy

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5.3 Draft proposals

The gateways and the principal road system could be used to define a ‘slow zone’ where traffic speeds would be limited throughout to 20mph to minimise signage for safety reasons. This would be coupled with the gateways mentioned earlier to define further zones of restraint with the intention of creating a more equal balance for pedestrians and car drivers.

slow zone
slowing traffic and creating mutual respect amongst all users
Across the UK, and indeed Western Europe, there is a move to change the presumption for travel modes in favour of pedestrians and cyclists for health, clean air, and easing traffic congestion. Whether this is feasible or desirable is dependant on the location but Sandwich would seem to be an ideal candidate for this approach. It is relatively flat, tourism is to be encouraged, and if traffic speeds could be reduced then other mode of transport could be supported.

The Strategic Park (an initiative by Dover District Council) uses the former town walls, the ramparts and adjacent land to provide an encircling park which will make some of the connections required in an attractive, green environment; the defences which were initially used to exclude people will now be used to facilitate connections across them.

Where the park crosses existing important roads, there is a case for creating new ‘gateways’ to:

- signal arrival in the town
- perhaps indicating the slow zone
- allow pedestrians to cross
- commemorate buildings or gateways which once existed in these locations

The diagram shows that the ramparts which are the basis of the Strategic Park relied on the river for their northeast boundary. If the river was reused more strongly as an attractive cycle or pedestrian route and leisure facility, these former defensive uses would form a complete circle of connecting leisure routes.
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.1 Introduction

The Strategic Park will reuse the ancient defensive land but it will also assist in linking South Sandwich to its centre, a disconnection which was exacerbated by the line of the railway. Thus land which was originally intended to keep people out could play a role in welcoming them in.

These initiatives reveal a series of opportunities which extend into the town centre and to the north of the river; visitors/tourism parking if placed near the toll bridge would allow cars to be stored out of the town centre, but close enough to provide demand for its facilities.

opportunity spaces
from consultation and analysis
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Draft strategy

5.3 Draft proposals

The influence of the Strategic Park extends further than Sandwich town centre. The Strategic Park connects along the town wall to the nature reserve of Gazen Salts and the Quay. There are linkages to the historic core, South Sandwich, and the wider countryside which includes a plethora of nature and RSPB reserves.
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.1 Introduction

Our strategy is based on some broad based aspirations such as
- improved connections
- civilising the car
- encouraging tourism
- opportunity areas
- underlined by traffic management initiatives such as eliminating HGV’s

But ultimately the effectiveness of this approach will be demonstrated by endorsement through Policy, a partnership approach by the County Council, the District Council and the Town Council backed up by community support. The approach will be given substance by a series of ‘on the ground’ initiatives, funded by a variety of sources, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, Kent County Council, Arts Council and the Coastal Communities Fund. It is important that these projects link together or overlap so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of its parts. Neither need they be limited to physical construction. The initiatives should be accompanied by outreach and learning initiatives, arts projects, training schemes and volunteering opportunities. Indeed this approach is necessary if grants are to be obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The improved spaces could become part of a wider strategy to connect the town centre to the Quay and Town Wall Walk.
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.2 No Name Street
The heart of Sandwich; needs to work harder as public space, a tourism and trading attraction, as well as a focal point.

- creation of a social heart
- more space for people
- improved loading
- better bus stops arrangement

1. central focal point
2. seating spills out onto street
3. road and traffic improvements
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.2 Market Street

Market Street could act more strongly as a multi-use space without losing parking.

- better connected
- focal points celebrated
- traffic impact improvement
- greening

1 lively, interesting shop fronts

2 multi-use space

3 focal point
5.2 Delf Street junction
Delf Street has unused shops, under-used buildings, HSBC is leaving, yet it is attractive and important; it needs help.

- traffic impact improvement
- work economically better
- connected
- quality of space improved

1. outdoor seating area
2. spaces could be improved with art
3. people and cars share space
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.1 Introduction

5.2 Draft strategy

5.3 Draft proposals

5.2 Breezy Corner/Strand Street

A problem corner.

- traffic impact improvement
- quality of space improved
- safety
- greening

1. flush kerbs and contrast paving
2. café could spill out onto street
3. focal point could help reduce speed

Café

Highway

Marine

Framers

Barbers

Harnet Street

The Butchery

1. flush kerbs and contrast paving
2. café could spill out onto street
3. focal point could help reduce speed

- a tree or bench could help reduce speed of traffic passing junction
- sett strings or studs could be used to guide vehicles at junction to improve visibility for vehicles
- traffic flow direction
- outdoor seating area could create a space to dwell
Section 5: Vision and initial proposals

5.2 Barbican

The Toll Bridge, Barbican and Quay could become the new arrival into Sandwich. The proposals could significantly boost trade, creating a vibrant legacy, forming a cultural destination whilst better connecting to the town centre.

- improved presentation of the town
- traffic impact improvement
- connected to the heart
- trees and more space for people

1. lighting makes the space work harder

2. river environment could be better used

3. parking rearranged with free long-stay parking north of the river could absorb future car parking and tourism needs

4. pedestrianising toll bridge could create a real sense of arrival whilst solving issues of congestion, speeding and parking

5. improved multi-use public space with seating, planting and lighting could enhance the cultural centre

6. focal point could draw people into the space

7. improved public space could enhance legibility of route into town centre

8. underused building is an asset