

**BIG
BOYS**
FINE BURGER CO.

Pedestrian
Zone
10 am - 6 pm
No loading
10 am - 6 pm

**BIG
BOYS**

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
WE MADE THAT
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

fletcher priest architects
london + köln + riga

prd steer

NTIA NIGHT TIME
INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION

PLACE PLAN FOR FOLKESTONE TOWN CENTRE
APPENDIX 1 - URBAN APPRAISAL - REVISION C - 13-12-2021

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Revisions tracker

Rev.	Date	Description
-	15-02-2021	Draft issue to client team
A	09-07-2021	Revision A to client team
B	06-08-2021	Revision B issue for Cabinet
C	13-12-2021	Revision C final issue

1.0
INTRODUCTION &
WIDER CONTEXT



1.1

INTRODUCTION

About this project

Folkestone and Hythe District Council commissioned architects and urban designers We Made That, transport and movement specialists Steer, socio-economic experts PRD, architects Fletcher Priest and The Night Time Industries Association to develop a Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre.

The Place Plan for Folkestone Town Centre will define the needs of the area and suggest future improvements which may be directly delivered or brought forward as a result of developments in the area, in addition to guiding future investment requirements that appropriately address local issues. It will address key themes such as setting ambition for investment opportunities, supporting a public realm and improved animated public spaces, fostering dynamic employment environment and improving transport and movement in the town centre.

The Place Plan will acknowledge the history of the area, raise awareness of the cultural offer and growth potential of the area, including recommendations to enable business growth and economic development for the area.

The Place Plan will be guided by the views of the people who use the town centre to make sure that it serves the needs of local people. The design team is conducting public events on-line through the early stages of the project to hear from the people of Folkestone. The team will run further themed workshops to hear thoughts on specific issues and opportunities as well as further public engagement as the project progresses.

About this document

This Urban Appraisal document includes findings from desktop research of previous studies and consultation, as well as additional specific research aimed at better understanding the history, use and operation of Folkestone Town Centre. On the ground observational analysis forms a vital part of the Urban Appraisal, as it reveals more nuanced behavioural and qualitative aspects that are otherwise hard to capture. Conversations with local stakeholders from the community and the council are also summarised.

This Urban Appraisal will form the basis for the team to develop proposals within the Place Plan.

Covid-19

The research into this document was undertaken during the period of lock-down imposed by the government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This has meant that certain surveys that the team would normally undertake were not possible and it has also affected the level of insight and reflection into the findings that would have been achievable with more on-site observation. The team has sought to overcome these limitations through engagement with local stakeholders, and where opportunities exist to expand understanding through later observational work, that will be undertaken subject to contemporaneous government restrictions.

1.2 WIDER & STRATEGIC CONTEXT







Wider context




Folkestone is the largest and most significant town in the Folkestone and Hythe district. Folkestone's strategic location means that it is a key coastal gateway to Europe and has good transport connections, in particular the fast rail link to London. Arts-led development has been a focus over recent years, particularly by funding through Sir Roger De Haan's Creative Folkestone initiative and Folkestone Harbour & Seafront Development Company.




Folkestone is a gateway location to Europe, situated only 10 miles away from the port of Dover and close to the Eurostar terminal and airport at Ashford.

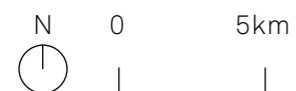
KEY

(Source: Folkestone and Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review Draft Framework)

-  Folkestone and Hythe District
-  Flood Zone 3
-  Extreme Flood Hazard
-  AONB
-  Larger International Habitats
-  Study area boundary

-  Town Centre
-  District Centres
-  Local Centres

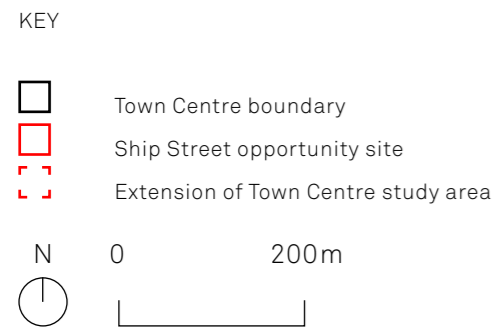
-  Railway
-  M20
-  A Roads



1.2 WIDER & STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Study area location

The town centre boundary as defined by Folkestone and Hythe District Council encompasses the historic, cultural and economic hub of the town. The proposed study area extends beyond the town centre, including a number of opportunity sites recognised in the Local Plan. The primary focus of the study is within the proposed boundary, whilst considering the spaces and activities on the periphery.



2.0 SOCIO-ECONOMIC APPRAISAL

This section focuses on the socio-economic characteristics of Folkestone town centre, exploring the challenges and opportunities associated with living, working, and visiting the town as well as Folkestone's high streets. The socio-economic appraisal is followed by a number of considerations for the Place Plan.

The research shows that Folkestone is increasingly divided and unequal. It is simultaneously home to declining high streets, severe deprivation and poor quality town centre housing at the same time as a thriving creative quarter, growing visitor economy and beautiful natural assets¹. Many of the challenges and inequalities have been exacerbated by Covid-19, which has put renewed focus on the health, wellbeing and prosperity of local communities, as well as the prevalence of low-paid jobs and in-work poverty. Considerations for the place plan include whether Folkestone can rapidly respond to these challenges and test innovative ideas in the short term, as well as the more structural changes that are needed in the long term.

Socio-economic appraisal

Folkestone was a once prosperous coastal resort. Like many similar coastal towns, Folkestone has had to evolve over the last 40 years to find a new role and purpose after the decline in popularity of British seaside towns in the mid-20th century. The town has a number of strengths and opportunities, including the high speed rail links to London and Europe and a growing creative economy. There are however, still significant challenges to overcome in order to achieve prosperity for its communities.

1. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017



2.1 LIVING IN FOLKESTONE

Population Density

Folkestone is home to around 52,400 people, making up 46% of Folkestone & Hythe District's (FHD) population². Whilst the wider district is quite rural, Folkestone town centre itself is densely populated and has some of the highest population density in Kent³. This has been driven by strong population growth in recent years driven by in-migration from other parts of Kent and the wider South East⁴.

- 2. ONS population estimates, 2019
- 3. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017
- 4. ONS Internal Migration statistics, June 2019








KEY

Population Density

Source: Data from ONS 2019, map produced by PRD

*Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2021

Density per hectare:

	0 - 1
	1 - 2
	2 - 3 (FHD average density 3.2)
	3 - 4
	4 +
	Railway
	Motorway



2.1 LIVING IN FOLKESTONE

Age profile

Currently, Folkestone has a higher proportion of working age people (aged 16-65) living in the town than the FHD and Kent averages⁵. This relatively large potential workforce means that the town has strong productive capacity that could be harnessed through the right employment and training opportunities. However, district level population forecasts to 2038 show that the working age population is likely to stagnate and there could be as much as a +53% growth in residents aged over 65⁶. To provide balance to an ageing population, Folkestone needs to attract and retain young people to live and work in the town.



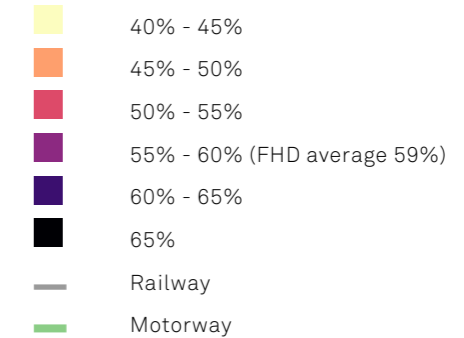
KEY

Age profile (working age)

Source: Data from ONS 2019, map produced by PRD

*Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2021

% working age:



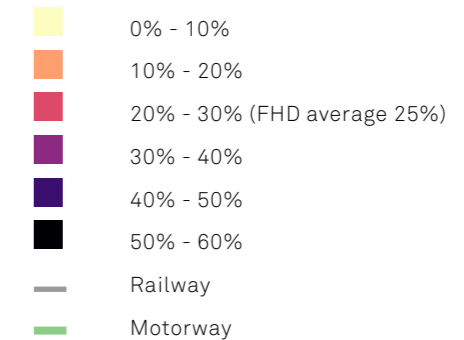
KEY

Age profile (over 65s)

Source: Data from ONS 2019, map produced by PRD

*Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2021

% of population over 65



5. Folkestone Central Ward Profile, 2018, Kent County Council

6. Housing Led Population Forecasts for Folkestone & Hythe District, 2019, Kent County Council

2.1 LIVING IN FOLKESTONE

Deprivation (IMD) & Covid-19 Impact

Folkestone is a divided town. There are pockets of severe deprivation around the centre and north-east of the town. Four areas are in the top 10% most deprived in the country and struggle particularly with low incomes and high unemployment and crime. In Folkestone Central and Harbour wards, 30% of children live in low income households compared to 20% across FHD and 18% nationally⁷. On the other hand, communities living on the coast to the south-west of the town are some of the least deprived nationally, which is resulting in a stark disparity in health, wellbeing and quality of life outcomes between local people. For example, the life expectancy between least and most deprived is 6.9 years lower for men and 3.7 years lower for women⁸.

Deprivation and poor health in Folkestone have meant that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on the town. This follows research from early on in the pandemic suggesting that those living in the most deprived parts of the country would be twice as likely to die from Covid-19⁹. The most recent government data published in February 2021 shows that FHD has the second highest Covid-19 death rate in the country¹⁰.

7. Children in low-income families local area statistics, 2018/19, DWP
8. Folkestone and Hythe Health Profile, 2018, Public Health England
9. British Medical Journal, June 2020
10. UK Coronavirus Statistics Dashboard, UK Government, February 2021



KEY

Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2019

Source: Data from ONS 2019, map produced by PRD

*Contains OS data © Crown copyright and database right 2021

■ Top 10% most deprived	■ 60-70%
■ 20-30%	■ 70-80%
■ 30-40%	■ 80-90%
■ 40-50%	■ Top 10% least deprived
■ 50-60%	
— Railway	
— Motorway	

2.1 LIVING IN FOLKESTONE

Housing

There are challenges of living in Folkestone related to poor housing and low educational attainment. Whilst out of town housing is set in the beautiful coastal landscape and often built to a high standard, the town centre struggles with the quality and availability of housing¹¹. The rates of statutory homelessness are above the national average¹² and housing in the town centre is often poor quality. There is a high proportion of private rented housing in the town centre (52%) compared to district (20%) and county (15%) levels¹³, with safety, quality and overcrowding issues. On the other hand, comparatively cheaper house prices in the town compared to surrounding areas are increasingly attracting young workers and young families on starter salaries to come and live in Folkestone¹⁴. Data shows that housing affordability levels in Folkestone (ratio of house prices to income) are the lowest in Kent¹⁵. Ensuring housing continues to be affordable in order to attract young people, but is safe and good quality is a priority for the town.

Skills & education

The skills levels of the population are comparatively low compared to the rest of Kent, the South East and England averages. Data is only available at FHD level, but shows a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications and a lower percentage with degree-level or above than those comparators. The Coastal Community Team Economic Plan suggests that this is also a major challenge for Folkestone town residents¹⁶. There is opportunity to improve attainment by capitalising on the recent investment in Folkestone College and the increasing focus on skills and vocational qualifications amongst local FE providers¹⁷. Although there is no HE provision in the district, improving links with the two nearby universities in Canterbury will help provide pathways for young people into higher education.

Participation & integration

Many of these challenges with housing and education have contributed to the lost sense of belonging and civic pride in Folkestone town centre¹⁸. The 2020 Core Strategy Review highlights a need to increase shared feelings of identity and community cohesion in Folkestone, referencing a study on social capital by Kent County Council which found Folkestone Central Ward had one of the lowest social capital scores (defined as formation of networks and trust between people) in the county¹⁹. However, this study was from 2009, and whilst challenges may still remain, Folkestone has seen its social capital go from strength to strength in recent years. This is particularly associated with the growing creative sector, and the town now has a wide range of community groups and volunteer groups centred around arts, heritage and culture²⁰. As outlined in the Core Strategy Review, supporting increased community participation and volunteering is essential for creating local prosperity and enabling a greater sense of ownership and social integration.

Opportunities

Folkestone's location in a unique and attractive natural coastal environment also provides an opportunity to improve the health and wellbeing of deprived residents and recover from the pandemic through a focus on more active and outdoor-based lifestyles. Building on the town's history as a seaside retreat, Folkestone is well-placed to increase local access to the coastal wellbeing through better links between the town, coast and deprived communities.

The growing creative sector can also play a role through existing assets such as the Sidney De Haan Research Centre for Arts & Health, which is focused on how the arts can support health and wellbeing.

11. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

12. Folkestone and Hythe Health Profile, 2018, Public Health England

13. Folkestone Central Ward Profile, 2018, Kent County Council

14. East Kent Growth Framework Evidence Report, 2017, Lichfields

15. House price affordability ratio, ONS 2020

16. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

17. Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review, 2020

18. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

19. Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review, 2020

20. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

2.2

WORKING IN FOLKESTONE

Employment sector profile

Folkestone town contains 1,640 businesses providing 21,300 jobs. The economy of the town has struggled in recent years with the number of jobs decreasing by 2% between 2014 and 2019 - a loss of around 300 jobs. Whilst employment in some sectors has grown, this growth has predominantly been in often lower paid, lower skilled sectors such as warehousing and logistics and hospitality, leisure and recreation. As a result, people working in Folkestone struggle with low incomes. Data is only available at district level, but it shows that people working in FHD have lower weekly earnings than Kent, South East and national averages²¹.

Specialist economies

The sector profile of employment in Folkestone shows jobs are predominantly concentrated in the public admin, education and health sector. This is driven by employment in local primary and secondary schools, as well as the Royal Victoria Hospital. The retail and hospitality sectors are also dominant and make up higher proportions of the local economy than the national averages. This reflects the role of Folkestone as a predominantly retail and visitor orientated town.

Although it is still showing up as a relatively small sector in the data, investment in Folkestone's creative quarter has supported a growing creative and media sector in the town. Local charity 'Creative Folkestone'²² has heavily invested in refurbishing dilapidated buildings along the old high street enabling artists, makers and creative businesses to access affordable studios, shops and offices in the town centre.

Creative sector

Creative Folkestone has been very successful, and has supported the growth of a cluster which is attracting workers, businesses and visitors to Folkestone²³. Whilst the nature of creative employment and businesses often means they don't show up in national statistics, the creative economy in Folkestone is becoming increasingly recognised locally and nationally as a key cluster in East Kent²⁴ - according to a report by the South East Creative Economy Network, over 900 jobs have been created in the Quarter²⁵. Creative activity has also been underpinned by a strong community, education and wellbeing focus, with Creative Folkestone investing in learning spaces and programmes, as well as ongoing events.

Sector	Folkestone Town			FHD	England
	2019 Jobs	% jobs	LQ	% of total	% of total
Public Admin, Education, Health	6,275	29%	1.19	26%	25%
Financial and Professional Services	2,910	14%	0.99	10%	14%
Business Support Services	2,750	13%	1.55	13%	8%
Retail	2,700	13%	1.37	10%	9%
Hospitality, Leisure and Recreation	2,665	13%	1.25	13%	10%
Construction	735	3%	0.69	5%	5%
ICT, Media and Creative Services	655	3%	0.51	3%	6%
Manufacturing	580	3%	0.35	5%	8%
Wholesale	500	2%	0.60	2%	4%
Motor Trades	450	2%	1.11	2%	2%
Transport	445	2%	0.69	5%	3%
Other Services	335	2%	0.89	1%	2%
Warehousing and Logistics	230	1%	0.55	1%	2%
Utilities and waste	80	0%	0.36	2%	1%
Agriculture and Mining	10	0%	0.03	2%	1%
Total	21,320	100%	1.00	100%	100%
<i>Creative Sector*</i>	660	3%	0.60	3%	5%

Source: ONS BRES, 2019. LQ represents concentration compared to England average, where a value above 1.0 means the sector is more specialised locally than in the national economy.

*a cross-cutting sector. Definition from DCMS.

21. Median weekly full-time earnings – workplace based, ONS 2020

22. Creative Folkestone <https://www.creativefolkestone.org.uk/>

23. South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan, 2014

24. East Kent Growth Framework Evidence Report, 2017, Lichfields

25. Towards a national prospectus for the creative economy in the south east, SECEN Prospectus

2.2

WORKING IN FOLKESTONE

Challenges

To achieve significant growth and scale in the creative sector however, a number of challenges need to be overcome. Beyond the creative quarter, the town centre isn't a very attractive and supportive environment for business growth, with lower-than-average business survival rates²⁶. Despite demand, Folkestone also has a limited offer of high-quality space for businesses, particularly for businesses to start-up in and scale²⁷. There are also still skills gaps preventing residents from accessing opportunities in the creative industries and other priority sectors, and there are limited pathways into secure, well-paid employment for local young people²⁸. Many young people rely on part-time, often seasonal work in the visitor economy, and youth unemployment is as high as 5% in some parts of the town centre, compared to 3% in FHD and 2% in Kent²⁹.

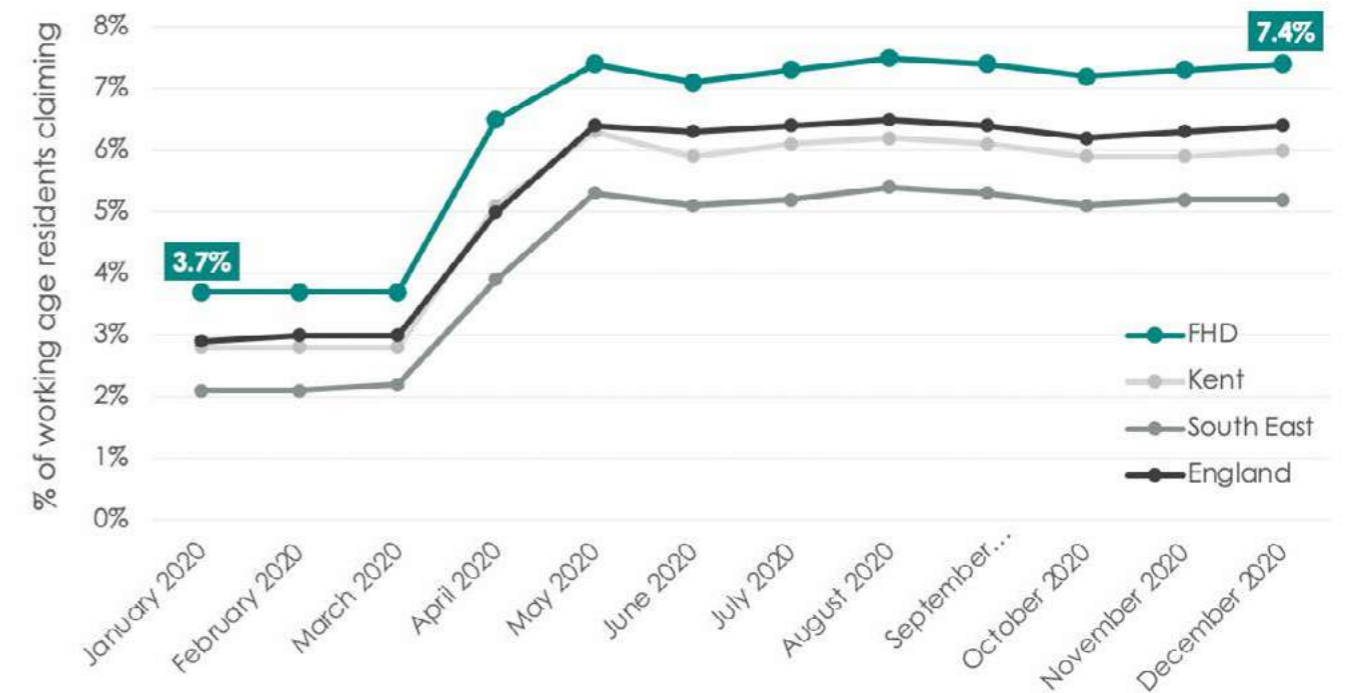
Investment through the Community Works programme³⁰ in skills, training, work experience and business support in the most deprived parts of Folkestone has been successful in connecting local residents to economic opportunities over the last five years. However, the programme only has funding to run until 2022 and the impacts of the pandemic have worsened economic inequalities in the town.

Folkestone's economy is reliant on the sectors facing some of the biggest challenges due to Covid-19, including wholesale and retail, hospitality, leisure and recreation and accommodation and food. The latest data shows that 13% of those eligible are on furlough in FHD and 4,900 people (7% of the workforce) were claiming universal credit or jobseekers' allowance (up 100% from January 2020).

The majority of the district's claimants are in Folkestone town centre. Changes to the criteria for claiming support during the pandemic (now open to

more people who are in-work) has shone a light on the challenges of low paid work and in-work poverty in Folkestone.

Whilst the unemployment rate in the town has remained fairly consistent in 2020, the sharp rise in claimants (in post-Covid changes to Universal Credit) suggests the jobs in the town aren't providing the income needed to live without additional support. There has consistently been a higher proportion of the workforce claiming support in the district than the Kent, South East and England averages.



Source:Source: ONS Claimant Counts, 2020

26. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017
27. Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review, 2020
28. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017
29. Folkestone Ward Profiles, 2018, Kent County Council
30. <https://folkestone.works/folkestone-community-works/folkestone-community-works/>

2.3

HIGH STREETS

High Street challenges

High streets and town centres across the UK have been facing considerable challenges over the past two decades, primarily driven by the significant changes to the retail sector. In 2020 these complex challenges were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. The already changing role of the high street was further challenged by national lockdowns, business closures and new patterns of work. This has accelerated a number of the key drivers of change on the high street and placed unprecedented pressure on local economies like Folkestone.

Folkestone serves as the primary town centre in FHD and is characterised as a major commercial, cultural and tourism centre³¹. The main shopping areas and shopping centre offer convenience retail, high street chains and food and drink outlets. Whilst Folkestone does serve communities in the town and surrounding villages, the town centre is generally regarded as relatively poor quality³² and struggles with competition with larger centres such as Canterbury and Ashford as a result - 11% of comparison retail spending by Folkestone residents is drawn to Canterbury and 6% to Ashford. There is also an over provision of convenience retail space and of low quality, 'value' retailers, such as discount stores, in the town centre, and this lack of diversity is further contributing to expenditure leakage³³.

In addition, the town centre struggles with high retail vacancy rates (14.7%)³⁴ and poor public realm. Reports suggest that the town is often perceived as unsafe and unpleasant due to crime and anti-social behaviour³⁵ and declining footfall rates in recent years confirm that the main shopping area is becoming increasingly underutilised³⁶. Guildhall Street particularly struggles with this issue and has a cluster of vacant units³⁷. The recent closure of the Debenhams store (previously the main anchor tenant and occupier of the largest retail unit) has further exacerbated the challenge of attracting people back into the centre.

Creative quarter

There is however, an increasingly strong identity around the Creative Quarter, which is home to small, creative and independent shops and predominantly attracts visitors. There has also been a rise in retailers aimed at tourists in the Harbour, such as artisan food and beverage outlets. Considerable private investment in the Creative Quarter and Harbour has resulted in a marked difference in quality between these locations and the main shopping area, and Folkestone is increasingly becoming a 'town of two halves' as a result.

31. Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy Review, 2020

32. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

33. Shepway Town Centres Study, Peter Brett Associates, 2015

34. Folkestone Town Centre Future High Streets Fund Expression of Interest, Folkestone & Hythe District Council

35. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

36. Folkestone Town Centre Future High Streets Fund Expression of Interest, Folkestone & Hythe District Council

37. Shepway Town Centres Study, Peter Brett Associates, 2015

2.4 VISITING FOLKESTONE

Visitor numbers

Folkestone is already an attractive place to visit. Beautiful beaches, strong heritage and excellent transport links to London and Europe have supported a growing visitor economy in recent years³⁸. The Creative Quarter and its associated calendar of festivals and events have put Folkestone on the map for its arts and culture offer, whilst the Coastal Park on the south-western edge of the town is one of Kent's most visited free attractions³⁹.

Station usage data shows there were over 1.8 million entries and exits made at the two stations in the town in 2019/2020. This was a 19% increase on 2015 levels and a 65% increase on 2010⁴⁰. However, much of this growth has been driven by rising passenger numbers at Folkestone West, with numbers at Folkestone Central stagnating around the one million mark. Ensuring Folkestone Central remains the primary station for the town will be essential for safeguarding the future and vitality of the town centre.

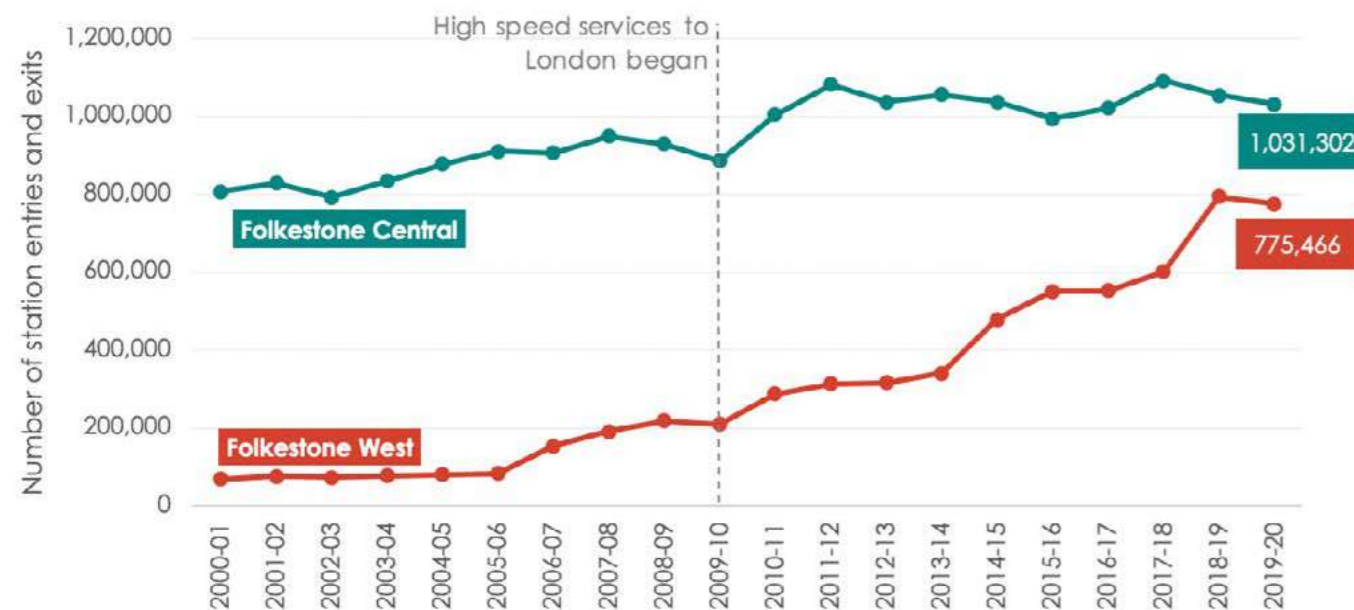
Attracting visitors

Recent investments, such as the redevelopment of the seafront, have the potential to attract even more people to the town, grow the visitor and wider economy, and ultimately support Folkestone to become a more prosperous place. However, there are a number of challenges currently inhibiting this growth, not least the detrimental impact that Covid-19 and its restrictions have had on the leisure and tourism sectors.

In order to attract visitors back to Folkestone when it is safe to do so, accessibility challenges related to poor pedestrian connectivity around the town need to be addressed, particularly between the town centre and train station which currently makes for an unattractive arrival for visitors. In addition, the lack of high quality tourist accommodation⁴¹ and evening economy are limiting visitors to shorter, day-time trips. Investing in a thriving leisure and evening economy offer will not only help to attract more visitors, but also support the diversity and vitality of the high street.

Coastal identity

Finally, whilst the seafront redevelopment will address the poor quality built environment along the coast, the beach has lost its identity as the heart of Folkestone due to its disconnectedness from the rest of the town⁴². Better connecting the town centre, beach and Creative Quarter will create a coherent and unique offer that will enable Folkestone to stand out as a visitor destination.



Source: Station Usage Estimates, 2019/2020, Office of Rail and Road

38. East Kent Growth Framework Evidence Report, 2017, Lichfields
 39. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017
 40. Station Usage Estimates, 2019/2020, Office of Rail and Road
 41. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017
 42. Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2017

3.0
AREA APPRAISAL



3.1 STUDY AREA

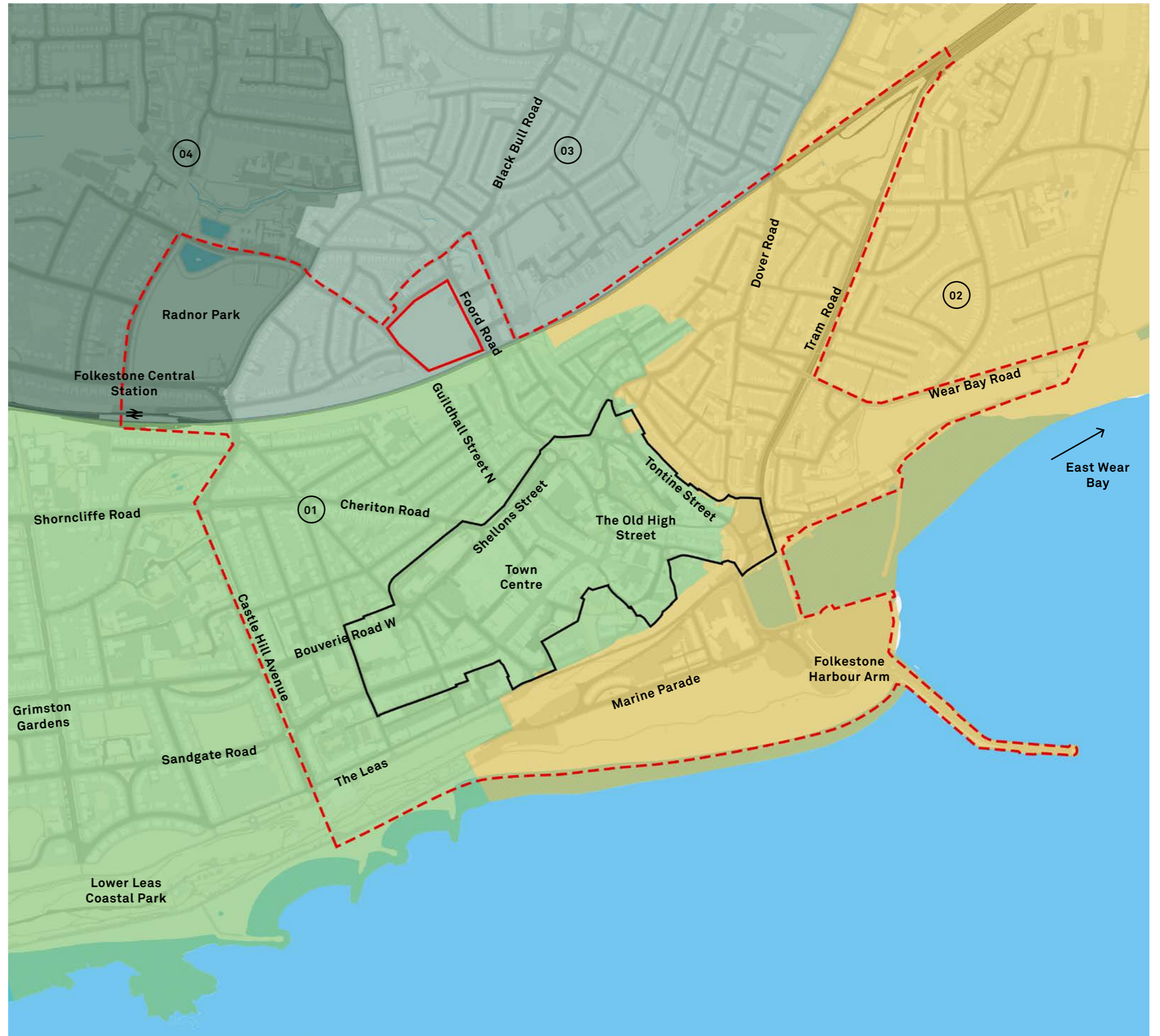
Wards

The study area encompasses 4 wards. The town centre falls into Folkestone Central Ward and the sea front and harbour area into Folkestone Harbour Ward.

1. Folkestone Central
2. Folkestone Harbour
3. East Folkestone
4. Broadmead

KEY

- Folkestone Central
- Folkestone Harbour
- East Folkestone
- Broadmead
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Policy designations, frameworks & site allocations

Designated employment sites are clustered around the old station at the northwest corner of Folkestone, correlating with sites for potential development. There are several large sites allocated for residential development which all lie outside of the central Town Centre area.

Residential Allocations

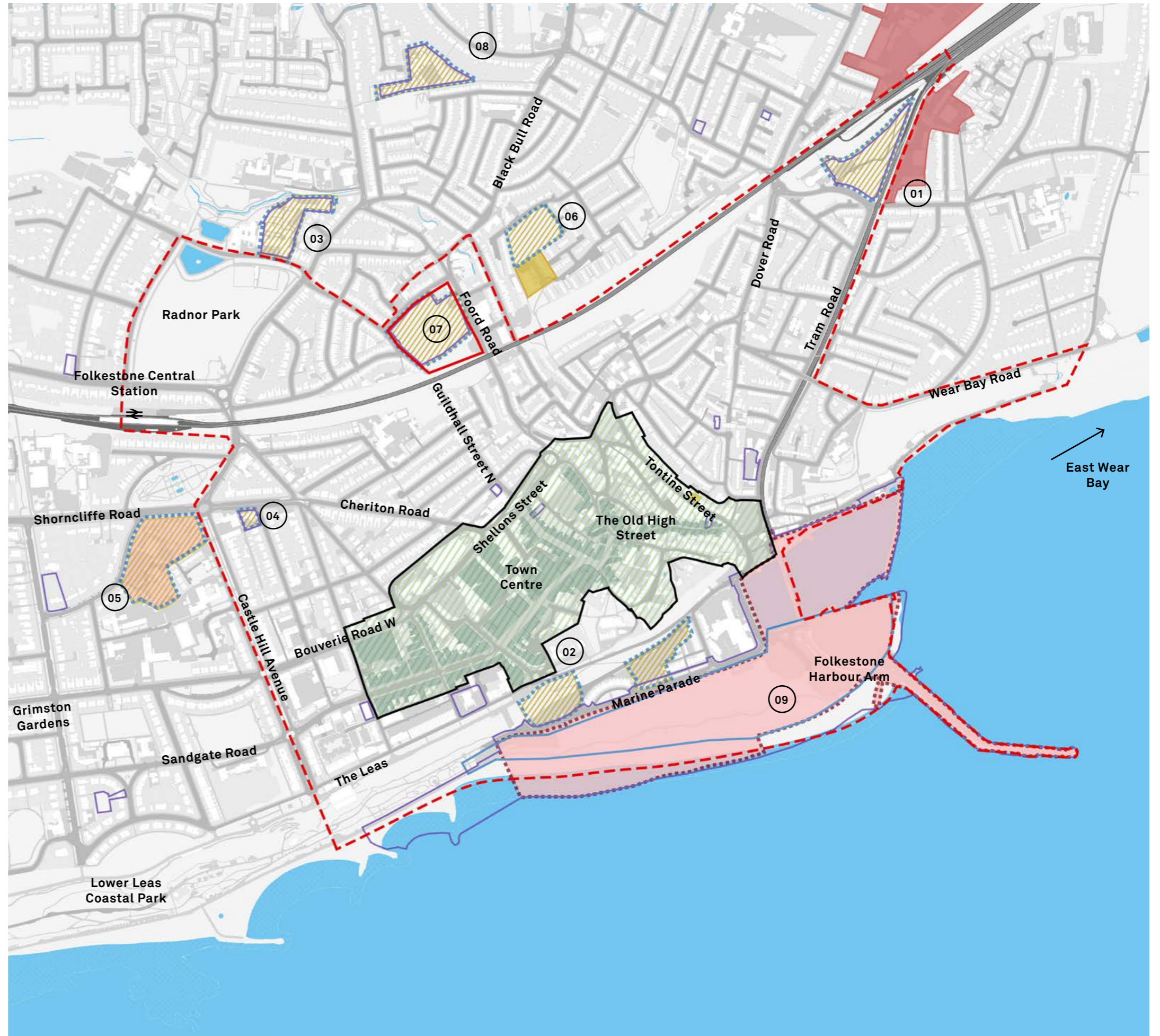
1. East Station Goods Yard, Southern Way - capacity of 40 dwellings and Class B1 (office) / B8(storage and distribution) commercial floorspace
2. Rotunda and Marine Parade Car Parks, Lower Sandgate Road - capacity of 100 dwellings
3. Royal Victoria Hospital- capacity of 42 dwellings
4. 3-5 Shorncliffe Road - capacity of 20 residential apartments
5. Ingles Manor, Castle Hill Avenue - capacity of 46 dwellings and commercial office space
6. Land at Shepway Close - capacity of 35 dwellings and 0.15ha of public open space
7. Former Gas Works, Ship Street - capacity of 100 dwellings
8. Highview School, Moat Farm Road - capacity of 27 dwellings
9. Folkestone Seafront - capacity of 1,000 dwellings and 10,000 sqm of commercial floorspace, and leisure facilities

KEY

(Source: FHDC Places and Policies Local Plan 2020, GIS 2021)

- Existing employment locations
- Employment allocations
- Potential Development
- Core Development SS6 (FTC policy map)
- Housing Sites
- Residential allocations
- Brownfield sites
- Strategic Allocations
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area

0 200m
N



3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Primary & secondary retail areas

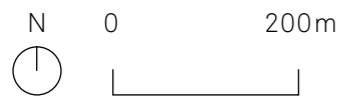
As defined in the Local Plan, retail areas are categorised into primary and secondary. Primary frontage in the town centre core aligns closely with some of the most struggling parts of the town centre.

Residential developments are permitted within the designated shopping areas on upper floors where it would enhance the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.



- KEY
- Primary Shopping Area (Source:Local Plan 2020)
 - Secondary Shopping Area
 - Town Centre boundary
 - Ship Street opportunity site
 - Extension of Town Centre study area

Primary retail area: 24000m²
Secondary retail area: 35000m²



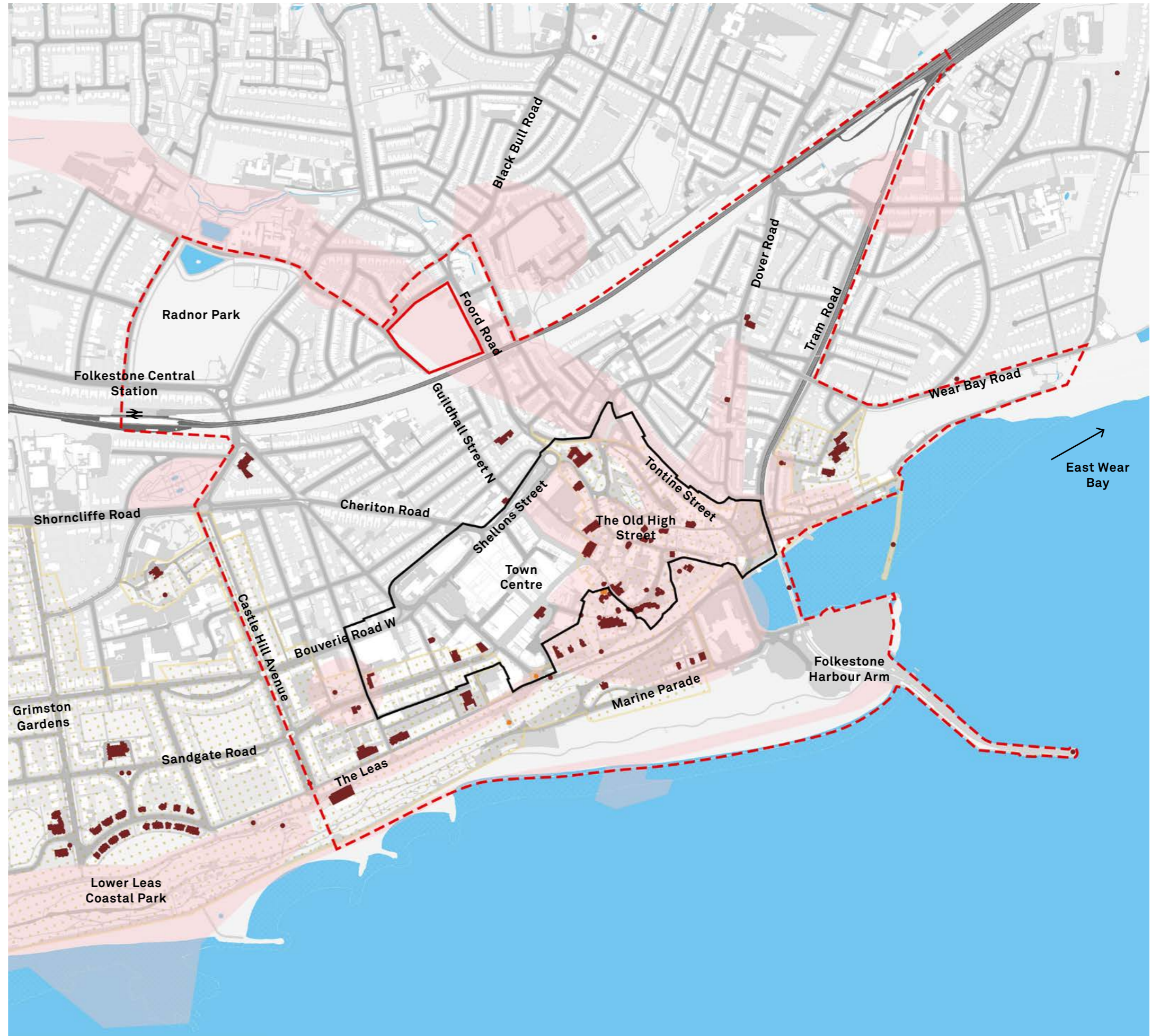
3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Conservation areas & listed buildings

The conservation area and area of archaeological potential covers almost half of the Town Centre area.

The boundary along the northwest of Tontine Street forms the core of the Old Town, leading out onto the harbour and along the Leas. There are a number of Grade II listed and characterful buildings in the old town centre, Victorian villas to the west and significant structures along the coastline. There is very little heritage protection in the Town Centre core.

There are no Ancient Monuments in Folkestone, but there is considerable archaeological potential judging by finds in the wider area as substantial evidence of Celtic activities around Folkestone has been found at East Wear Bay.



3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Historic Development

The name Folkestone was first recorded as far back as the late C17th in the guise of Folcansta. Archaeological studies indicate a 2 millennia long period of inhabitation. In the past 3 centuries the area developed from a small fishing town to a thriving seaside resort.

The Earls of Radnor, Lords of Manor of Folkestone among others are considered to be the most powerful influencers in the development of Folkestone. The West Cliff state expansion saw rapid growth along Leas, the Sandgate Road and Bouverie Road West.

Folkestone was also part of the Cinque Port network of harbours, giving it military significance.

Development timeline:

1843 - Purchase of Harbour by South Eastern Railway transforms it into a thriving cross channel port.

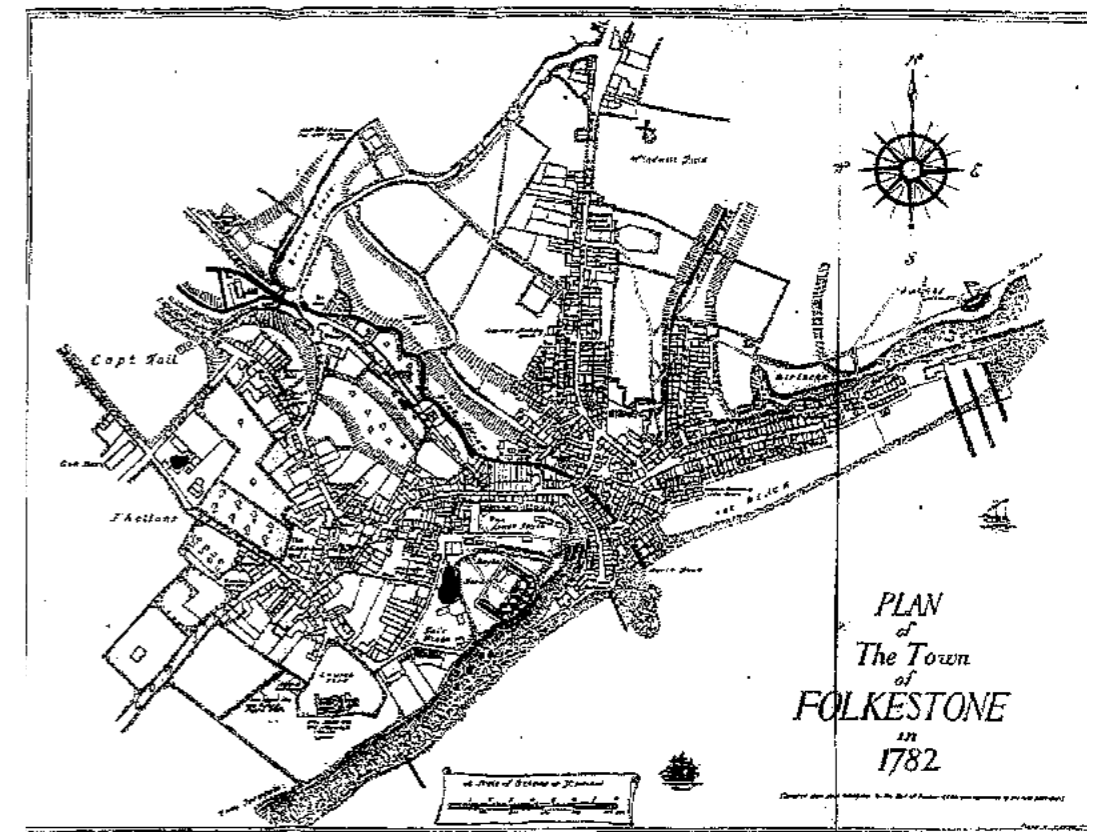
Railway Viaduct built as South Eastern Railway line reaches Folkestone

1850 - West Cliff estate expansion
Gothic Revival Church on Sandgate road designed by Sydney Smirke opens.

Villa style four storey stucco house developed on Sandgate Road.



↑ Map of 1698 prepared by Abraham Walter of Lakefield . Eanswythe Water Course to the Towne, the Pent River runs along the valley to the right of the Eanswythe Watercourse.



↑ Plan of Folkestone Town 1782 - Expansion showing build up of housing consisting of approximately 450 houses and 2,000 inhabitants.



↑ 1843 - Railway Viaduct along Foord Road



↑ 1870's - West Cliff estate expansion along the Leas, Sandgate Road and Bouverie Road west.

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Historic Development

The end of the 19th century is considered an era of growth, achievement and recreation, with the expansion of the railway, development of the harbour and major architectural achievements.

Folkestone came to be known as the 'gem of the south coast', hosting royalty and members of high society and was considered the most aristocratic seaside resort in the country.

One of Folkestone's largest public parks, Radnor Park was donated by the Earl of Radnor in 1900.

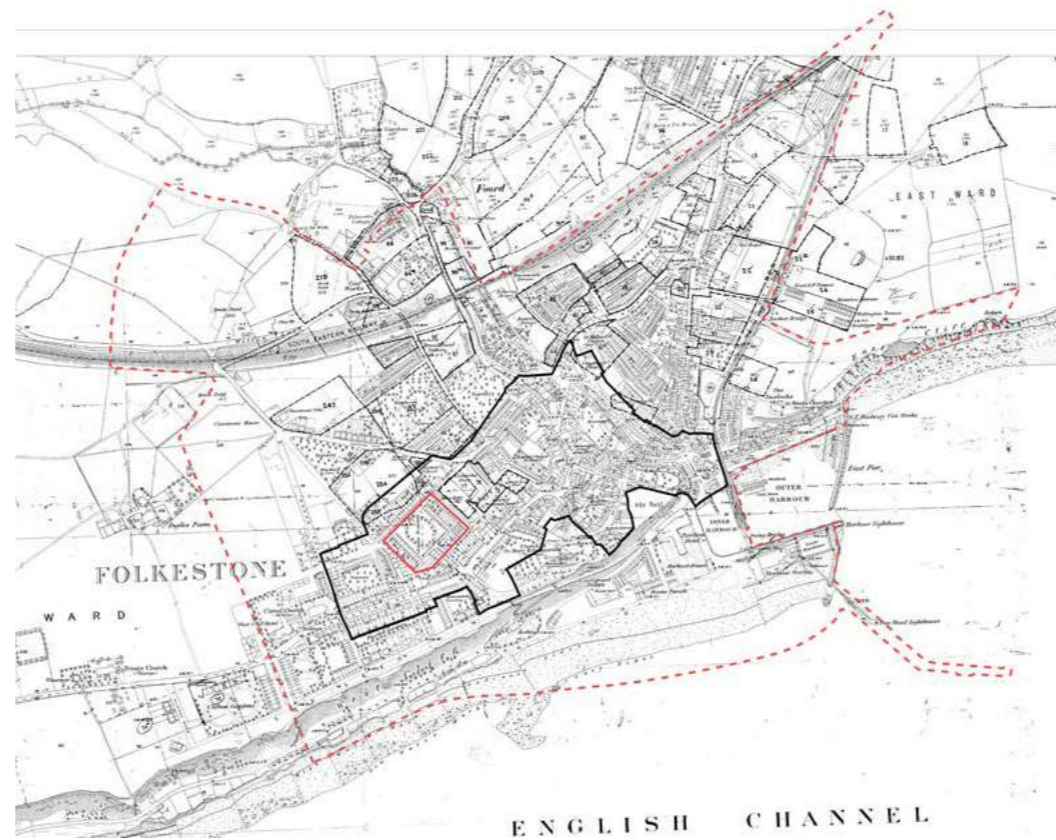
Development time line:

- 1870 - The South Eastern Railway's main line reached Folkestone in 1843, leading to the growth and development of the harbour which rivalled Dover.
- 1884 - Cheriton arch station opened
- 1885 - The Leas Lift
- 1886 - Radnor Park opens;
Pleasure garden theatre on Bouverie Road
- 1888 - Switch back railway (modern day rollercoaster)
- 1889 - Pier extended for use as landing stage for pleasure steamer
- 1889 - Patent Bathing Carriages launches
- 1900 - Radnor Park and Kingsnorth Gardens both donated by the Earl of Radnor to Folkestone for use as public gardens.
- 1902 - Edwardian Leas Pavilion opens
- 1903 - The Grand Hotel (London style hotels)
- 1910 - First cinema, The Electric Theatre opens

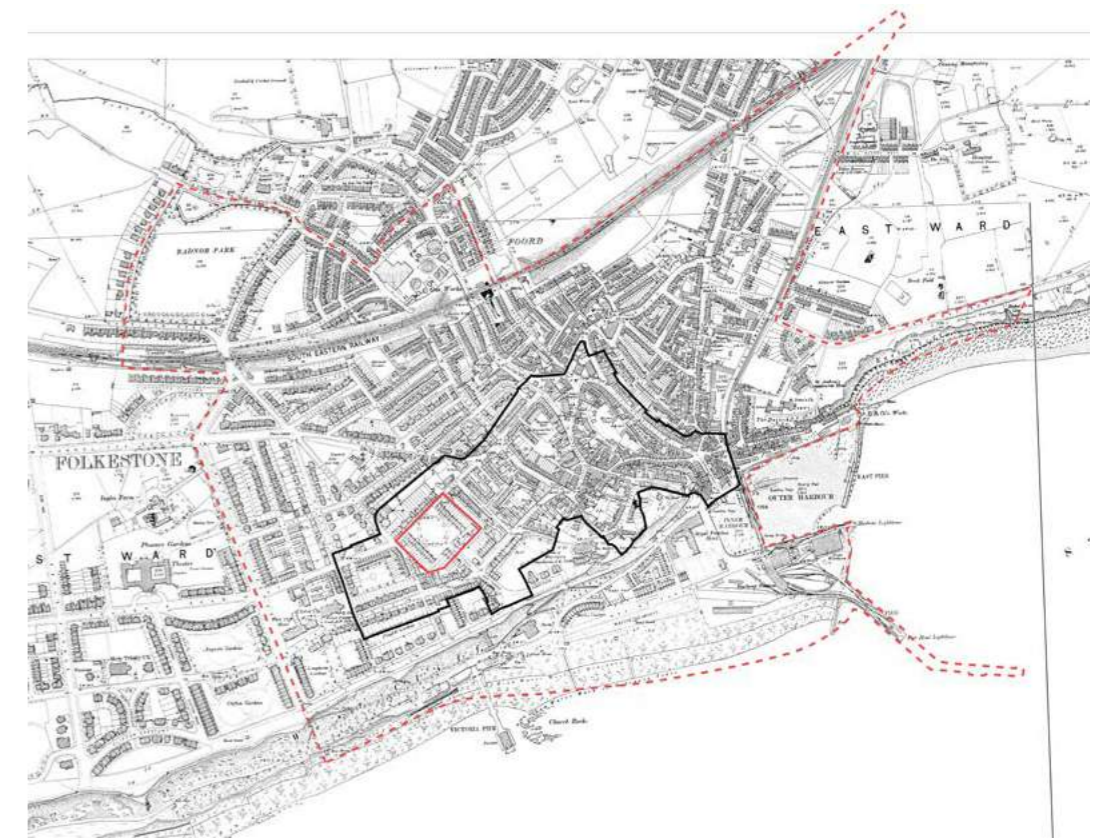
KEY

(Source: Historic Digimaps)

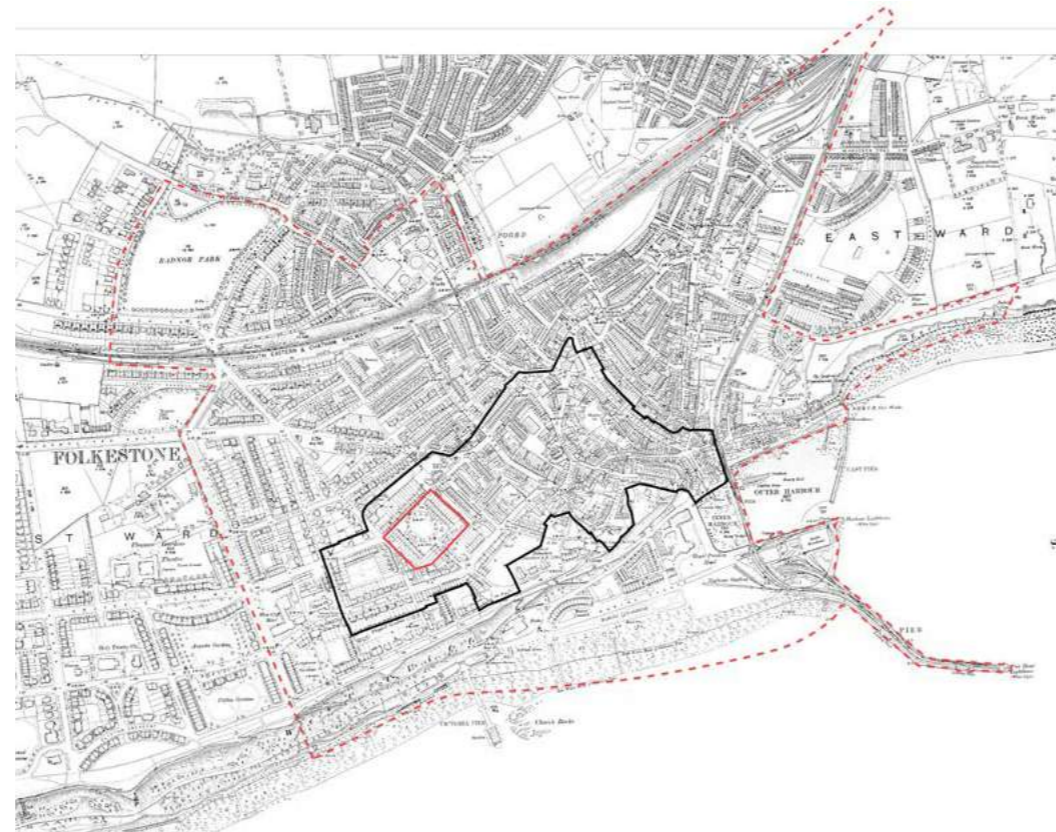
- Former public square / Current Bus Station
- Town centre boundary
- Study area boundary



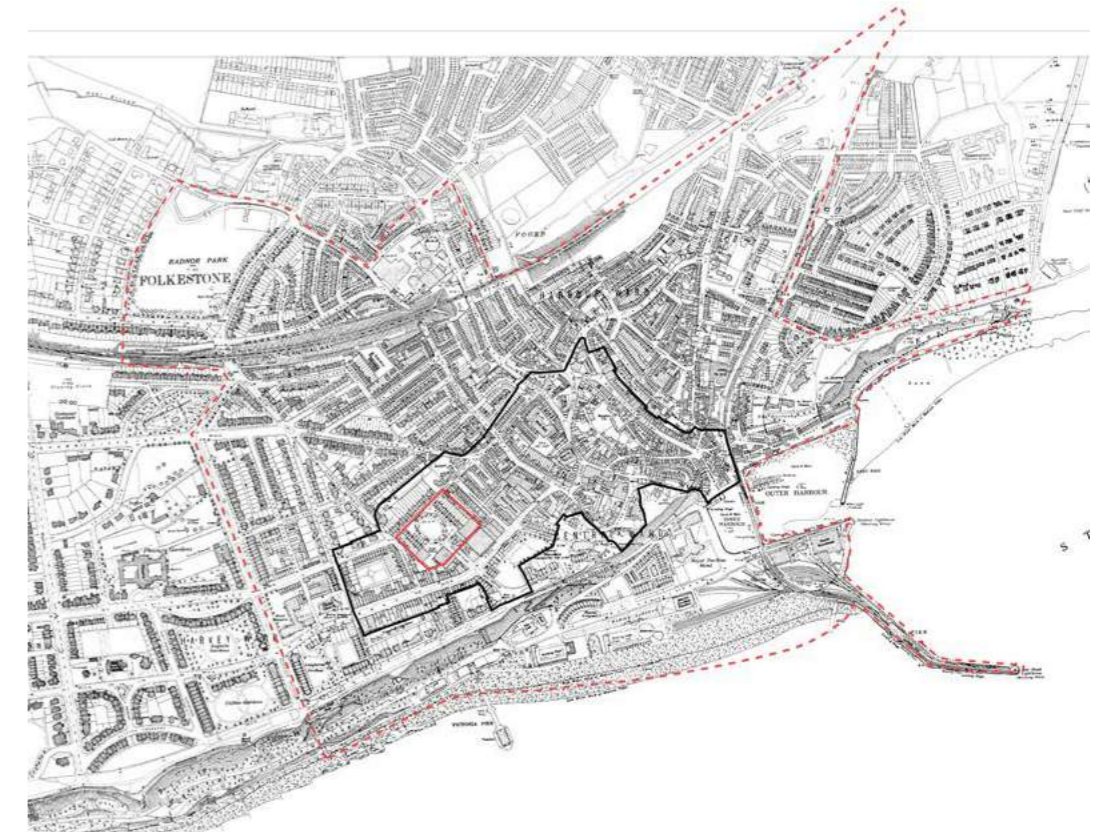
1870 - The South Eastern Railway's main line reached Folkestone in 1843, leading to the growth and development of the harbour which rivalled Dover.



1890 - Folkestone expands towards the west, significant harbour developments create offices, hotels and expand the railway.



1900 - Pier expansion and large scale cultural schemes like the Pleasure garden theatre and Edwardian Leas Pavilion cement Folkestone's reputation as a cultural hub. Bandstands for music erected in the Metropole Hotel.



1930 - Provisions along the harbour added for refugees from WW1 and wartime operations. Marine Gardens redeveloped to cater for family oriented visitor, though war soon brought this to a halt.

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Historic Development

The mid 20th century saw the decline of Folkestone as a hub. Once a hotspot for the affluent, attentions turned to more exotic foreign travel. The town suffered from economic stagnation, vacancies and general decay. The landscape of the harbour changed from 'handsome ships' to catamarans. The arrival of the Channel Tunnel took spending potential away from the town centre. Despite these changes, the town has managed to preserve its old buildings and streets as a result of the minimised traffic.

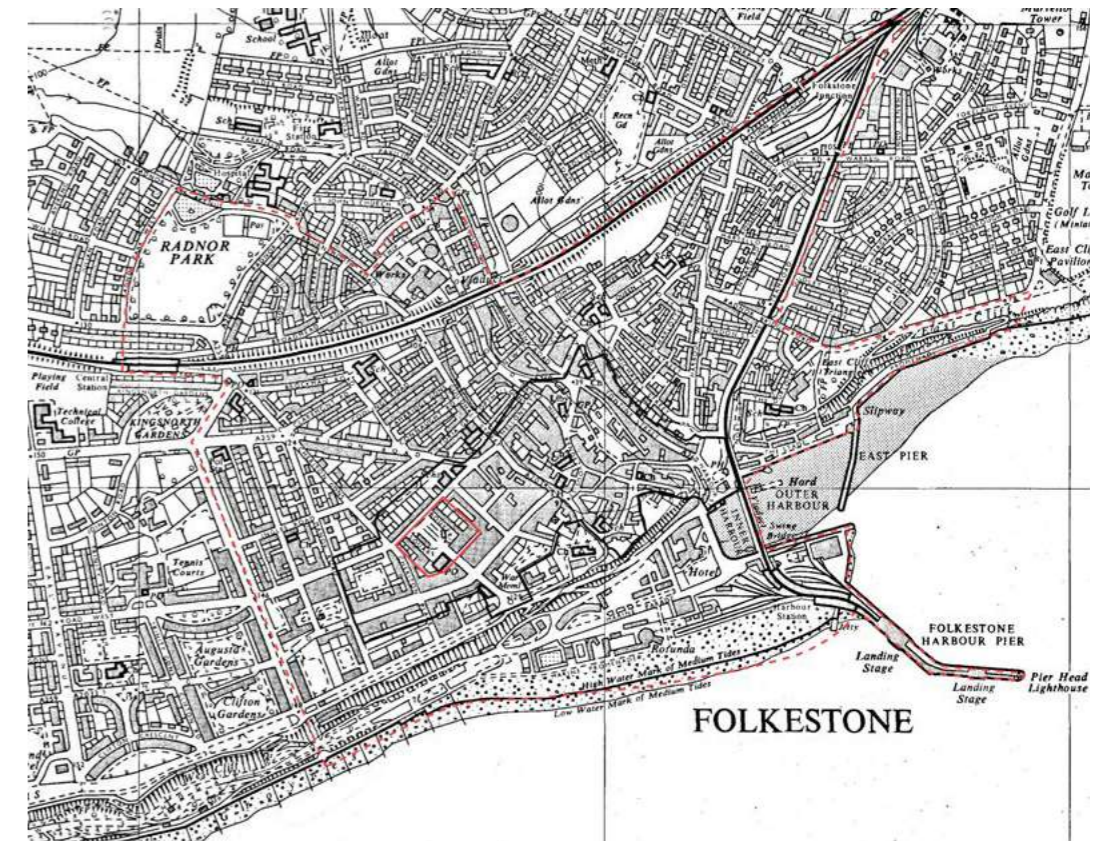
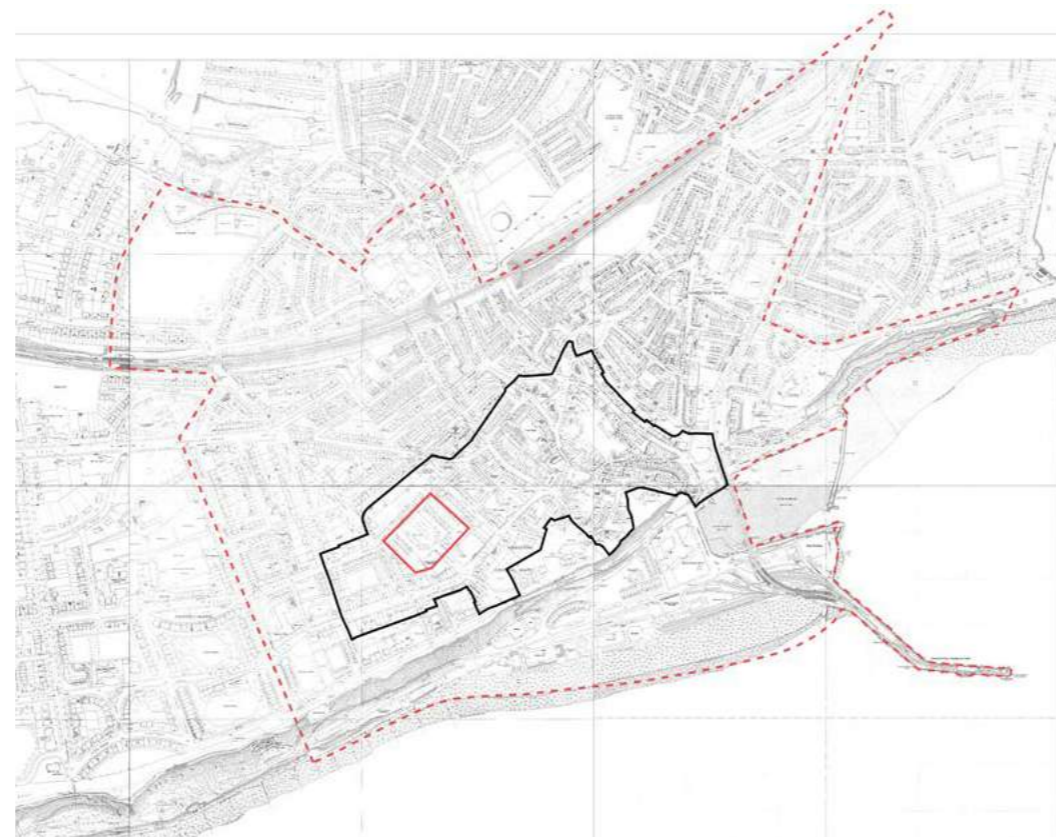
Development time line:

- 1930 - Corporate architecture of the Burton chain along Church Street
- 1941- WWII parachute mines and shelling fall on town
- 1945 - After the war rebuilding programmes expand residential and industrial sites across the town
- 1966 - One of the two Leas Lifts closes
- 1970 - M20 motorway development
- 1980 - Seaside resort falls out of favour leading to economic stagnation, building vacancies and decay.
- 1988 - Construction of Channel Tunnel begins
- 1994 - Channel Tunnel opens
- 2009 - Leas Lift closes

KEY

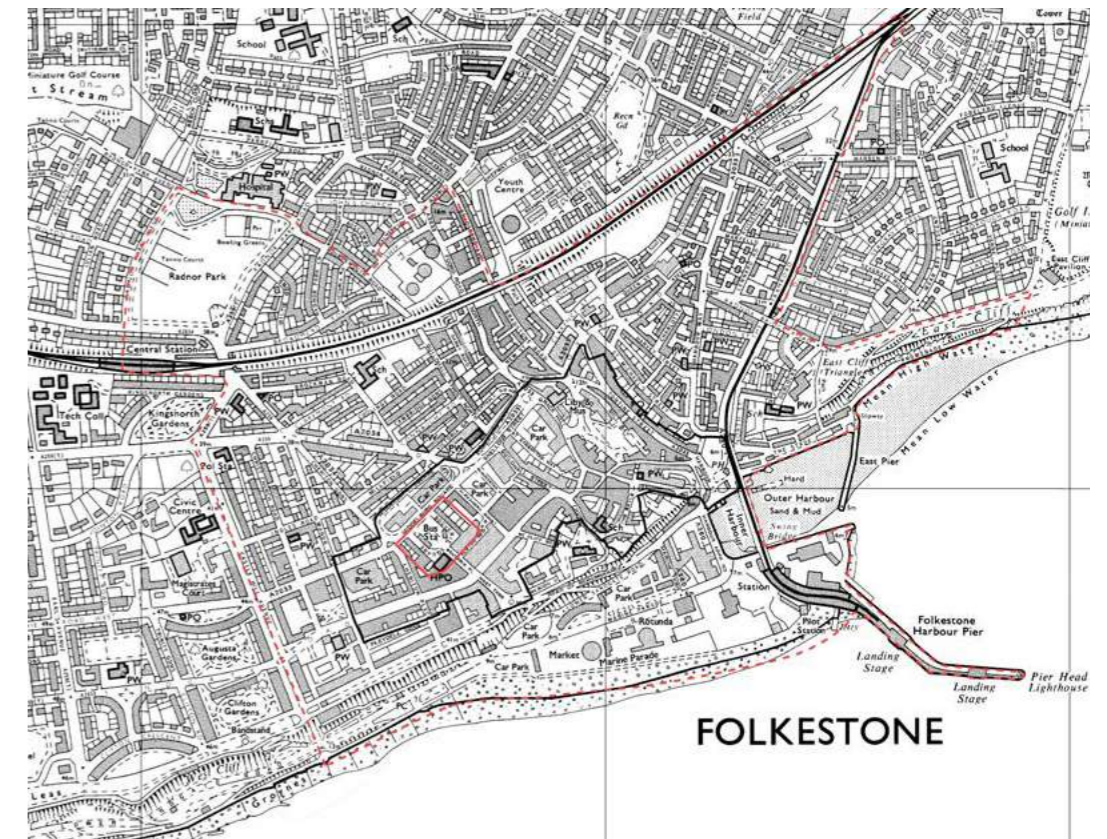
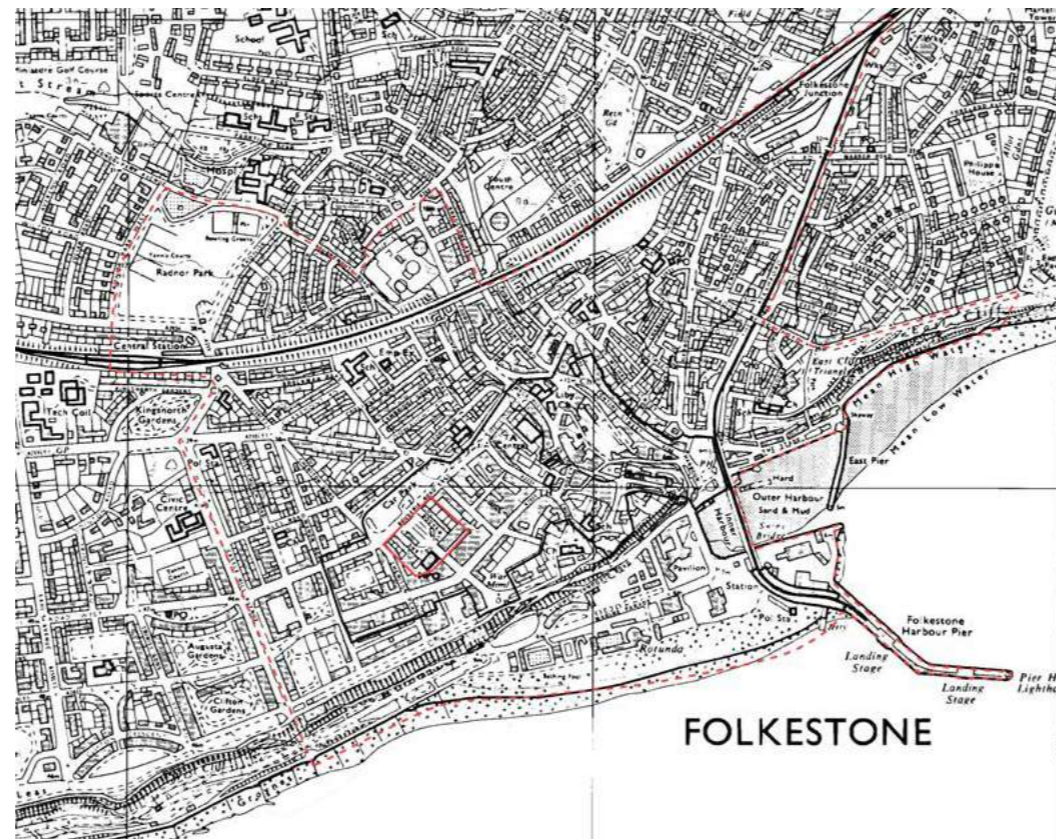
(Source: Historic Digimaps)

- Former public square / Current Bus Station
- Town Centre boundary
- Study area boundary



1950 - WWII causes damage to harbour and in the town centre. The old public square becomes bus station and efforts to rejuvenate the town begin.

1960 - Residential areas increase in density and town redevelops as a destination for holidaymakers and daytrippers.



1970 - M20 opens as the main motorway running through Kent.

1990 - Channel Tunnel opens changing the of traffic into Folkestone. The harbour becomes less beautified with catamarans and a loss of ferry services.

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Historic Development

During the late 90's to the early millennium the seafront was home to the Folkestone Rotunda, a thriving amusement park. Well used by the locals it was considered a staple of the archetypical English sea side resort, harking back to the heydays of the 1960's. The site was gradually cleared in 2003, falling into disrepair until 2007 when it was officially closed.

Similarly, the Sunday market along the seafront was a popular feature of the town, home to dozens of traders. It was considered 'the life blood of the town' by former Folkestone Town Centre Manager Rob Woods when it was demolished from 2002 to 2004.

In 2010 the seafront market was briefly revived by Folkestone Harbour Company who later submitted an application for markets on the refurbished former railway station platform in 2018.

After the seafront was purchased by Sir Roger De Haan in 2005 various developments were proposed, culminating in the Folkestone Seafront development, comprised of beach houses, apartments, town houses, and facilities for watersports.

Development time line:

- 2003 - Folkestone Rotunda closes, Sunday Market demolished
- 2005- Sir Roger De Haan purchases the harbour
- 2018 - Refurbished Former Railway Platform opens
- 2020 - Work begins on Folkestone Harbour development



↑ Folkestone Rounda and Market in the late 80's
Image Credit: www.ukvac.com



↑ Seafront harbour in 2011
Image Credit: coasterpedia.net



↑ Market briefly returns to the Rotunda in 2010
Image Credit: kentonline.co.uk



↑ Refurbished Former Railway station in 2018
Image Credit: folkestoneharbourarm.co.uk

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Land Ownership

FHDC do not have many buildings in their ownership, particularly in the Town Centre area. However recent acquisition FOLCA, key sites such as the bus station and areas of public ownership along the coastline offer great potential. Roger De Haan owns large amounts of land in Folkestone, including the seafront area around the harbour and shingle beach which is currently under development.

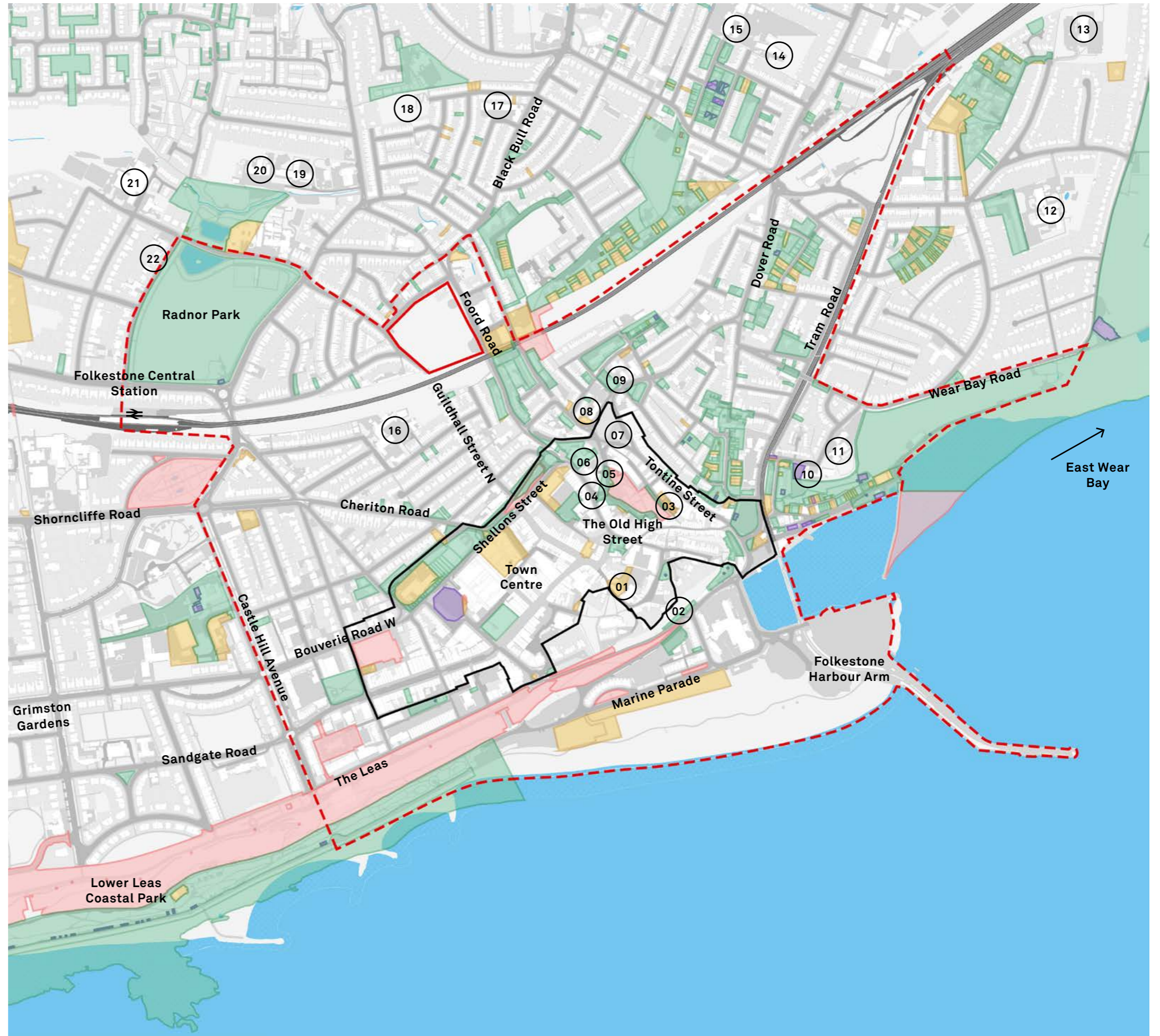
(KCC ownership):

1. St Eanswythe's CE Primary School
2. Land In Lower Sandgate Rd
3. The Pottery: Adult Education Centre
4. Five (Shepway Youth Hub)
5. Land At Payers Park Folkestone
6. Folkestone Library
7. The Cube: Adult Education Centre
8. Folkestone Health Centre
9. Early Years Centre: Children & Family Services
10. St Peters Church of England Primary School
11. Camelot Hall
12. St Marys Church of England Primary School
13. Martello Primary School
14. The Village Childrens Centre
15. Castle Hill Community Primary School
16. Folkestone Christ Church C of E Primary Academy
17. Mundella Primary School Black Bull Road
18. Mundella Primary School Playing Field
19. Brook Education Centre Parkfield Road
20. Stella Maris Catholic Primary School
21. Folkestone Sports Centre
22. Ash Eaton: Office

KEY

(Source: FHDC Land Terrier GIS Layer)

- FHDC Ownership
- Leased to FHDC
- Leased from FHDC
- Disposal
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Planning applications & recent development

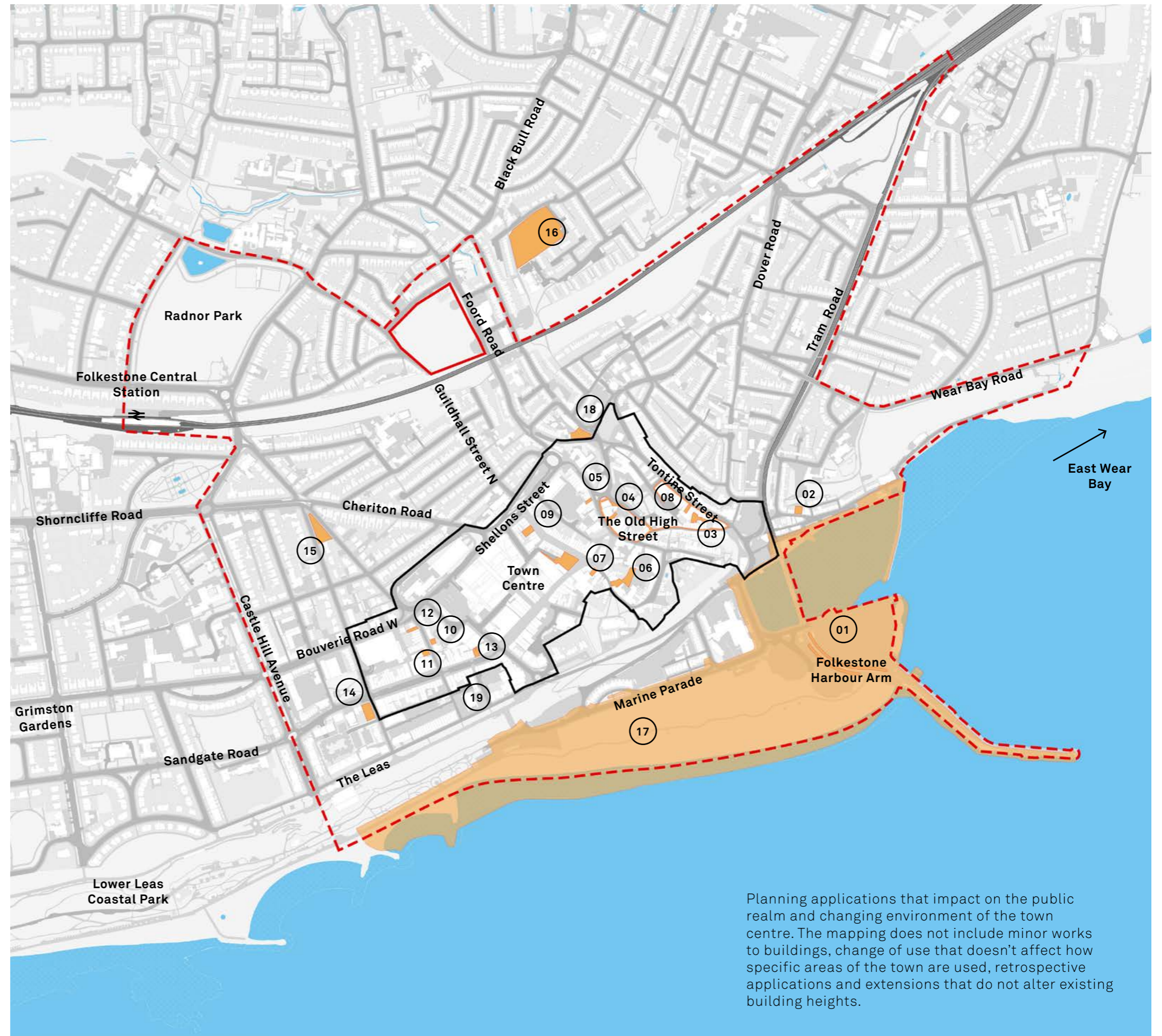
Approved planning applications

1. Station platforms changed to market space, Y18/0863/FH
2. New beach bar / restaurant, Y19/1474/FH
3. New shopfront, 27 Tontine Street, Y19/0668/FH
4. Change of use from shop to cafe & bar, 34 Rendezvous Street, Y18/1588/FH
5. Change of use from retail to cafe & restaurant, 19-21 Rendezvous Street, Y18/0603/FH
6. Conversion of office building to residential, ref: Y19/1055/FH
7. Conversion of retail to drinking establishment, ref: Y18/0474/SH
8. Conversion of existing offices into residential, ref: Y18/0018/PA
9. Conversion from retail to Orthodontist, ref: Y18/1582/FH
10. Office to live work, ref: Y18/0264/SH
11. Shop to bar/cafe, ref: Y18/0534/FH
12. Shop to drinking establishment, ref: Y19/0796/FH
13. Office units to residential, ref: Y19/0492/FH
14. Change of use from shop to a dance studio, ref: Y19/0378/FH
15. New mixed use development, ref: Y19/0490/FH
16. Erection of 17 two storey dwellings and 3 two storey apartment blocks, ref: Y18/1529/FH
17. Folkestone seafront development, outline application approved 2015, Y12/0897/SH, 2015 Phase 1 on site.
18. F51 Skate park, multi-storey sports park to include, three levels of skate park, Y15/1241/SH
19. Leas Pavilion Restoration and Residential Development, 20/0579/FH

KEY
(Status as of 15/01/2021, applications 2012-2021)

- Approved planning applications
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area

N 0 200m

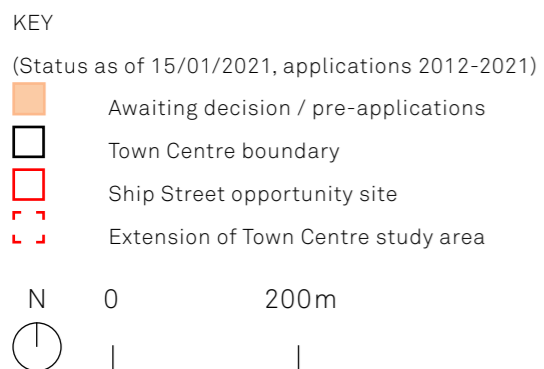
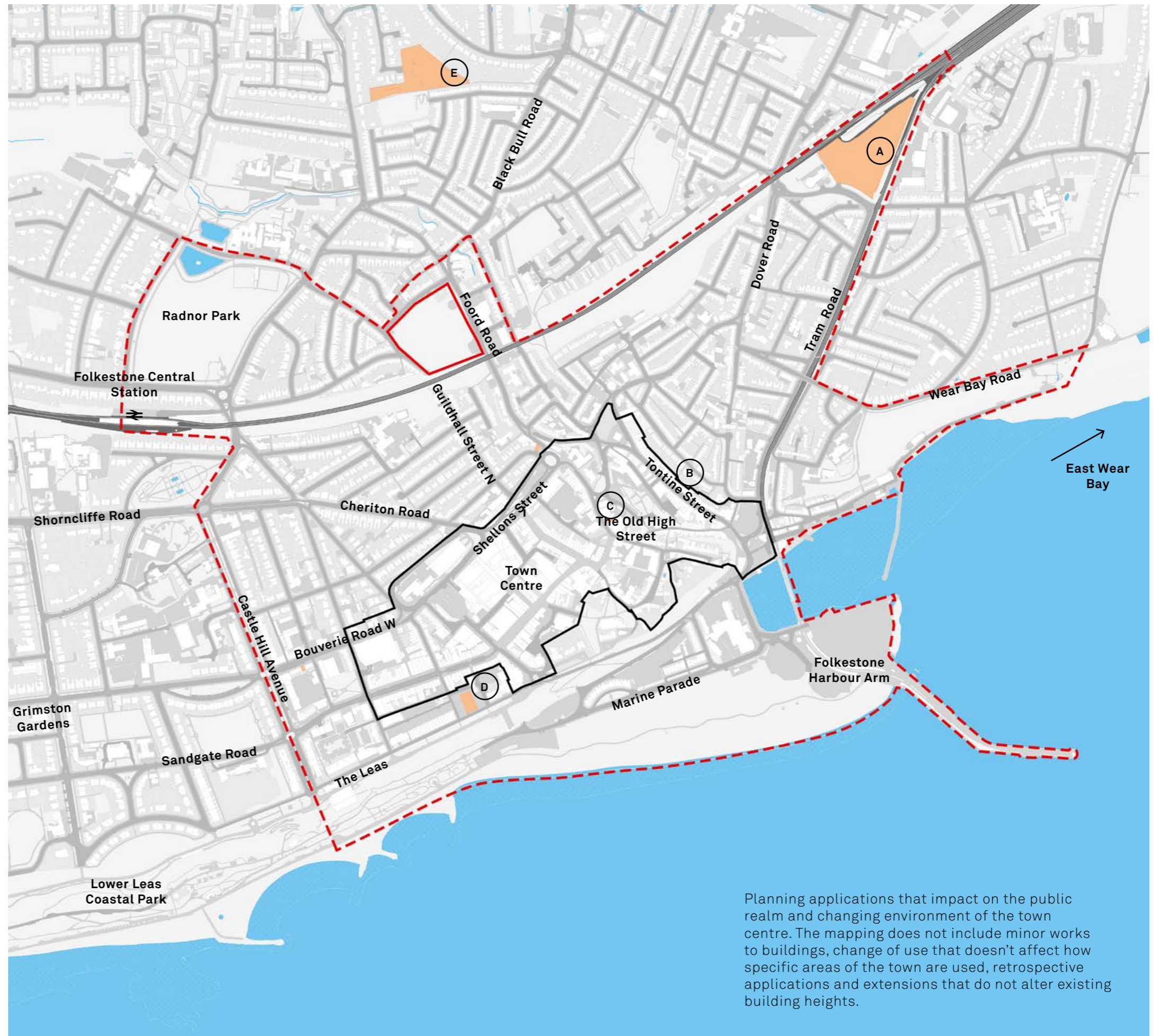
Planning applications that impact on the public realm and changing environment of the town centre. The mapping does not include minor works to buildings, change of use that doesn't affect how specific areas of the town are used, retrospective applications and extensions that do not alter existing building heights.

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Planning applications & recent development

Awaiting decision / pre-applications

- A. Mixed use development, ref: Y19/0866/FH
- B. 57 The Old High Street, ref: Y18/0448/SH
- C. Change of use from shop to drinking establishment, ref: Y19/1021/FH
- D. Listed building Shop front refurb, The Leas Club, ref: Y19/0870/FH
- E. New residential development, ref: Y19/0704/FH



Planning applications that impact on the public realm and changing environment of the town centre. The mapping does not include minor works to buildings, change of use that doesn't affect how specific areas of the town are used, retrospective applications and extensions that do not alter existing building heights.

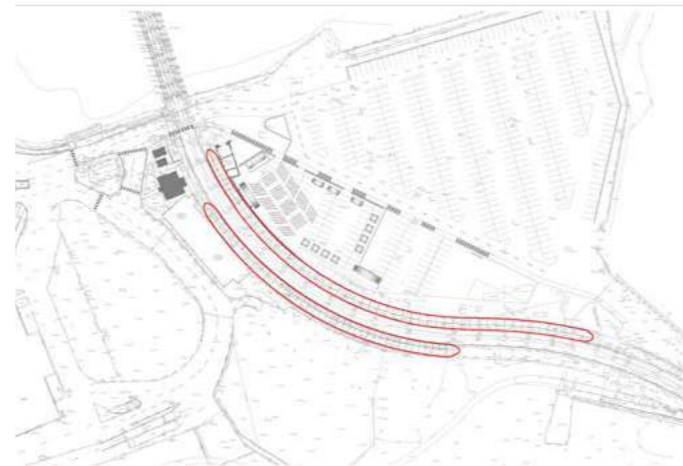
3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Significant approved / on site developments



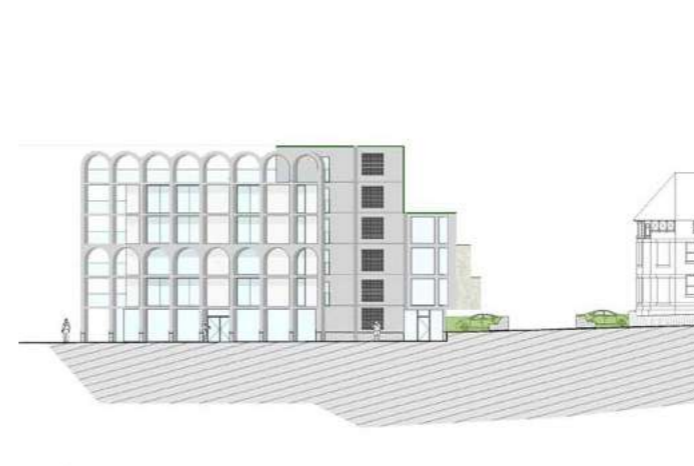
↑ 17. Folkeston Seafront Development, 2015, Y12/0897/SH

Redevelopment of the harbour and seafront to provide a comprehensive mixed use development comprising up to 1000 dwellings (C3), up to 10,000 square metres of commercial floorspace.



↑ 1. Market stalls, Folkestone Harbour, ref: Y18/0863/FH

Change of use of former station platforms to allow markets for a period of 8 years



15. New mixed use development, ref: Y19/0490/FH

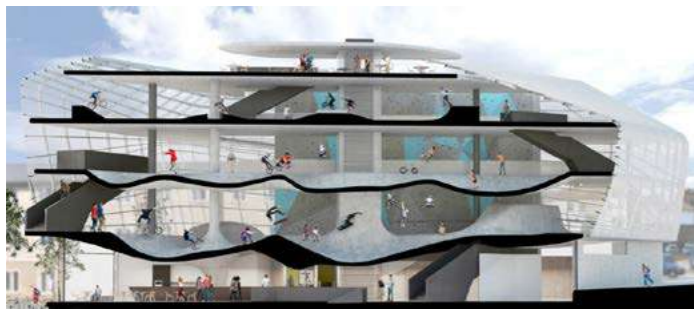
Erection of a five storey and roof terrace mixed use development comprising 7 self-contained apartments and flexible A1/A2/A3/A4/B1/D1 commercial space.

Awaiting decision / pre-applications



↑ A. East Station Goods Yard, ref: Y19/0866/FH

Mixed use development comprising 41 dwellings (30% of which will be affordable housing) and 1000sqm commercial space (Class B1/B8) with associated access, car parking and landscaping (resubmission of application Y14/0928/SH).



↑ 18. F51 Skate park, ref: Y15/1241/SH

Multi-storey sports park to include boxing club, skate shop, offices, cafe, three levels of skate park, climbing wall, bouldering room, flexible function space, refuse facilities, cycle parking, car parking and hard landscaping.



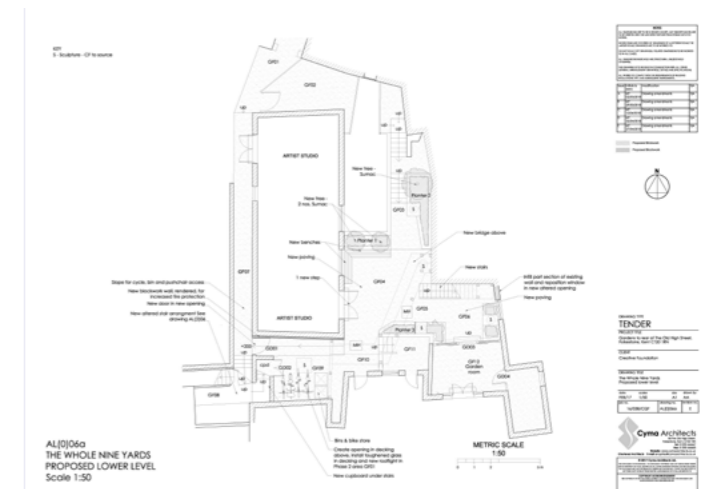
↑ 19. Leas Pavilion Restoration and Residential Development, ref: 20/0579/FH

Restoration of the Leas Pavilion together with the construction of a nine storey residential apartment block (5 full storeys, with setbacks to the upper four storeys)



↑ 16. New residential development, ref: Y18/1529/FH

Erection of 17 Two Storey Dwellings and 2 Three Storey Apartment Blocks Comprising 30 Apartments with Associated Access, Parking, Private Amenity Space and Public Open Space



↑ B. 57 The Old High Street, ref: Y18/0448/SH

Re-organisation and landscaping of exterior spaces to the rear of buildings on Tontine Street and The Old High Street with associated structures including connecting bridge, bike shed roof, garden room, lift, planters and extension of exterior decked space.

3.2 PLANNING & POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Flood risk & coastal erosion

There is a significant risk of flooding along the seafront and towards the eastern area of Folkestone. There have been 101 flooding events in the Folkestone and Hythe district in the last decade despite there being an extensive array of coastal flood defence mechanisms. The implications of climate change mean an increased risk of flooding in the area and reliance on coastal defence mechanisms will increase over the next century.

Flood Defences

1. Pent Stream - Chamber with orifice plates allowing the diversion of storm flows from tributaries to the sea.
2. Folkestone Warren - Concrete Sea wall with Timber Groynes
3. Folkestone Harbour - Harbour Arm and Pier
4. Rotunda/ Folkestone Sea Front - Natural Shingle beach
5. Folkestone to Sandgate- Concrete Sea wall and Shingle Beach

(Source: SDC 223 Defence Structure Table)

KEY

(Source: SCD Defence Infrastructure and Watercourse Map)

- Pent River
- Harbour/ Redoubt
- Concrete Sea wall
- No Protection
- Risk of fluvial tidal flooding (significant rainfall causing river to exceed capacity)
- Flood zone 2 (0.1% - 1% risk of rivers/sea flooding)
- Flood zone 3 (>1% risk of rivers/sea flooding)
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area

N 0 200m



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Land Use

Key issues:

- Dominance of retail
- Lack of leisure & community uses and cultural destinations
- Key anchor stores are closing or have closed (such as Debenhams)
- Lack of quality guest accommodation & hotels
- No healthcare facilities found in the Town Centre (but the Debenhams site will be used for vaccinations)

KEY

- Food and Drink
- Hotel
- Leisure
- Education
- Offices
- Residential
- Healthcare
- Storage
- Community service
- Commercial
- Civic
- Utility
- Religious
- Transport
- Retail
- Industrial
- Vacancy (Observational)
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Three town centres

Within the study are three distinct area of retail; Sandgate Road (west), the Town Centre core and The Old High Street including the Creative Quarter.



↑ Sandgate Road (west) has a local, low key charm serving the local population.

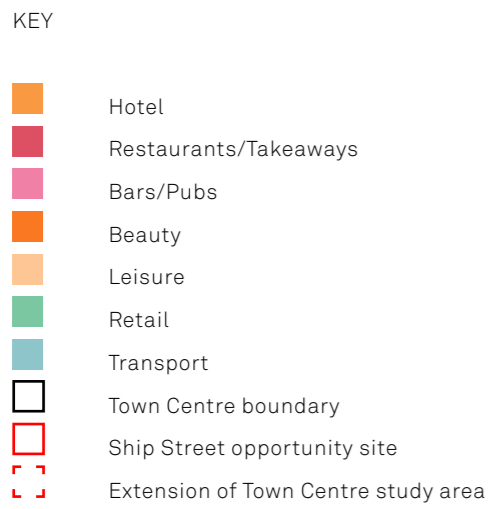
↑ The pedestrianised town centre, struggling particularly during Covid restrictions.

↑ Creative Quarter and Harbour area which attracts visitors and local residents alike

3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Evening activity

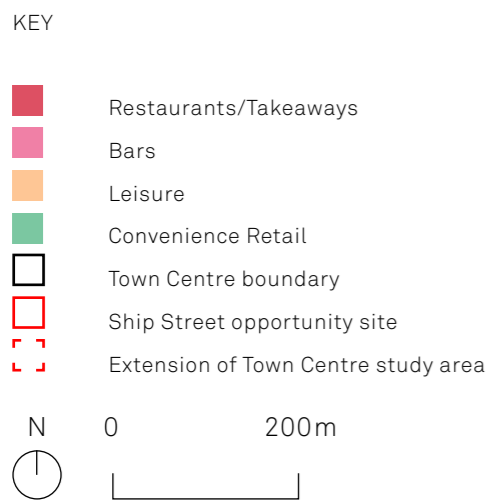
Few businesses are open into the evening and many close before 7pm. The evening economy is dominated by takeaway food units and has few leisure uses. There is a burgeoning scene for night-life with bars, integrated into pubs and music venues and a few along the harbour arm, but no distinctive evening venue. Occasional late opening hours for hairdressers and barbers add marginal variety to the evening landscape.



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

24 hour economy:
Open after 11pm

The scene after 11pm shows no substantial night time economy. There are a few bars open until 2am, but these have been severely affected by the COVID-19 restrictions.

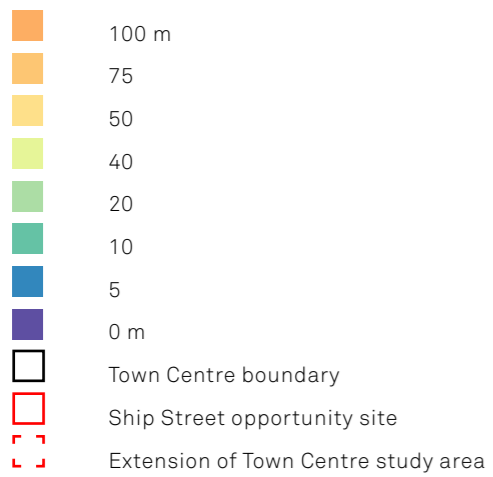


3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Building heights

Building heights are generally low within the study area, increasing slightly in the Town Centre and towards the waterfront.

KEY
(Source :2015 Building Heights in England - Emu Analytics)



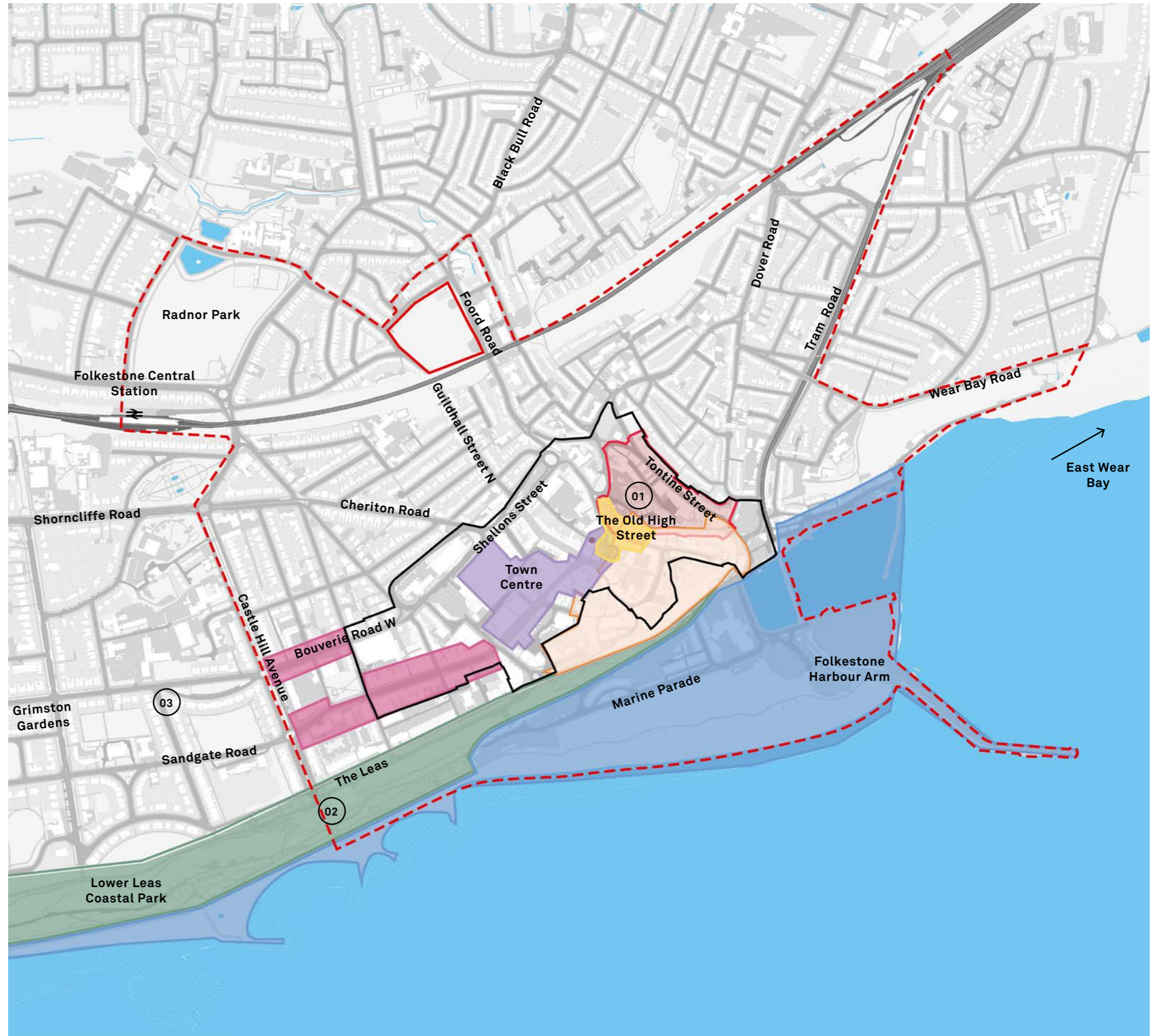
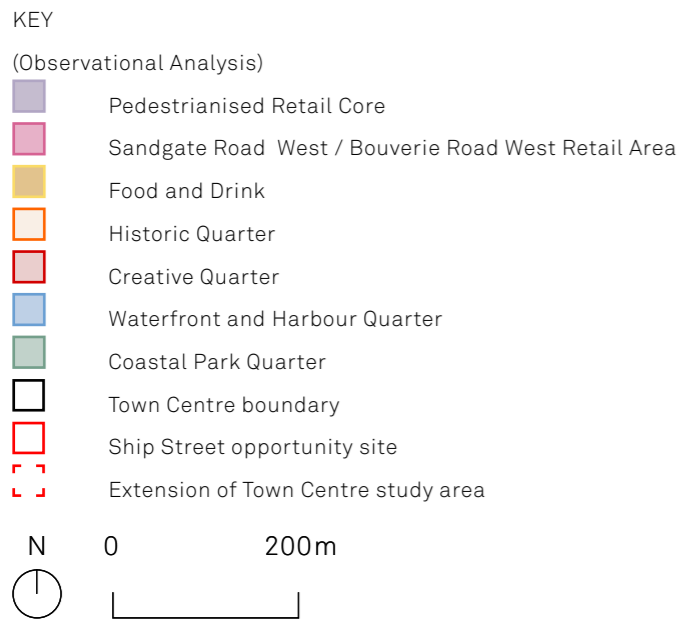
3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Perceived character

The town has a diverse range of spaces, graduating in scale from the openness of the sea and cliffs to the medium rise developments along the seafront and the organic, narrow streets of the old town. town centre- similar to many other larger towns the areas around it are much more characterful

1. The picturesque, village like quality of The Old High Street/ Bayle/Church Street area of the town centre, with its winding streets and emphasis on the individuality of buildings.
2. Urbane stucco architecture of The Leas, Clifton Crescent and Sandgate Road; similar to styles typical of C19th coastal towns.
3. Late C19th residential areas, such as Grimston Avenue/Gardens, Sandgate Road, Earl's Avenue, with its different palette of building materials (i.e. dressed stone, as opposed to stucco) and polychrome brick colours.

The town's historic relationship to the sea has impacted the way that distinctive areas and quarters have developed.
(Source: Folkestone Conservation Area Appraisal)



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Perceived character



↑ Moments of discovery and intrigue in the Historic Quarter



↑ Stucco buildings along the seafront on Clifton Crescent



↑ Grand Burstin Hotel fronting onto the Harbour



↑ Colourful frontages within the Creative Quarter



↑ Leas Lift on the Leas Coastal Park



↑ Bouverie Road West (known as The Village) is characterised by low key cafés, bars and restaurants

3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Destinations, landmarks & leisure uses

Most cultural leisure activities are concentrated in the eastern part of the Town Centre with some larger leisure centres and sports activities further out.

Destinations and landmarks are located around the waterfront and within the Town Centre with the exception of the Foord Road Viaduct, located North of the Town Centre.

Destinations

1. Folkestone Beach
2. Folkestone Creative Quarter/ Old High Street

Historical Landmarks

3. The Leas Club
4. Lower Leas Ampitheatre
5. William Harvey memorial statue
6. Leas Cliff bandstand
7. Foord Road Viaduct
8. Marine Crescent
9. The Folkestone Leas Lift
10. Stone Cross in churchyard of the Parish Church of St Mary and St Eanswythe

KEY

- Museums, galleries and art centres
- Cinemas, theatres and dance venues
- Music related venues
- Gyms, leisure centres and sports facilities
- Skate-parks
- Beach activities
- Beach
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Open space audit

Green and open space provision is severely lacking in the core Town Centre, with limited amenity green space along Shellons Street and Payers Park towards the east. The areas immediately surrounding the Town Centre to the North are similarly lacking green and open spaces.

Larger parks, gardens and outdoor sports facilities are segregated from the Town Centre area by the rail line and major roads, limiting access.

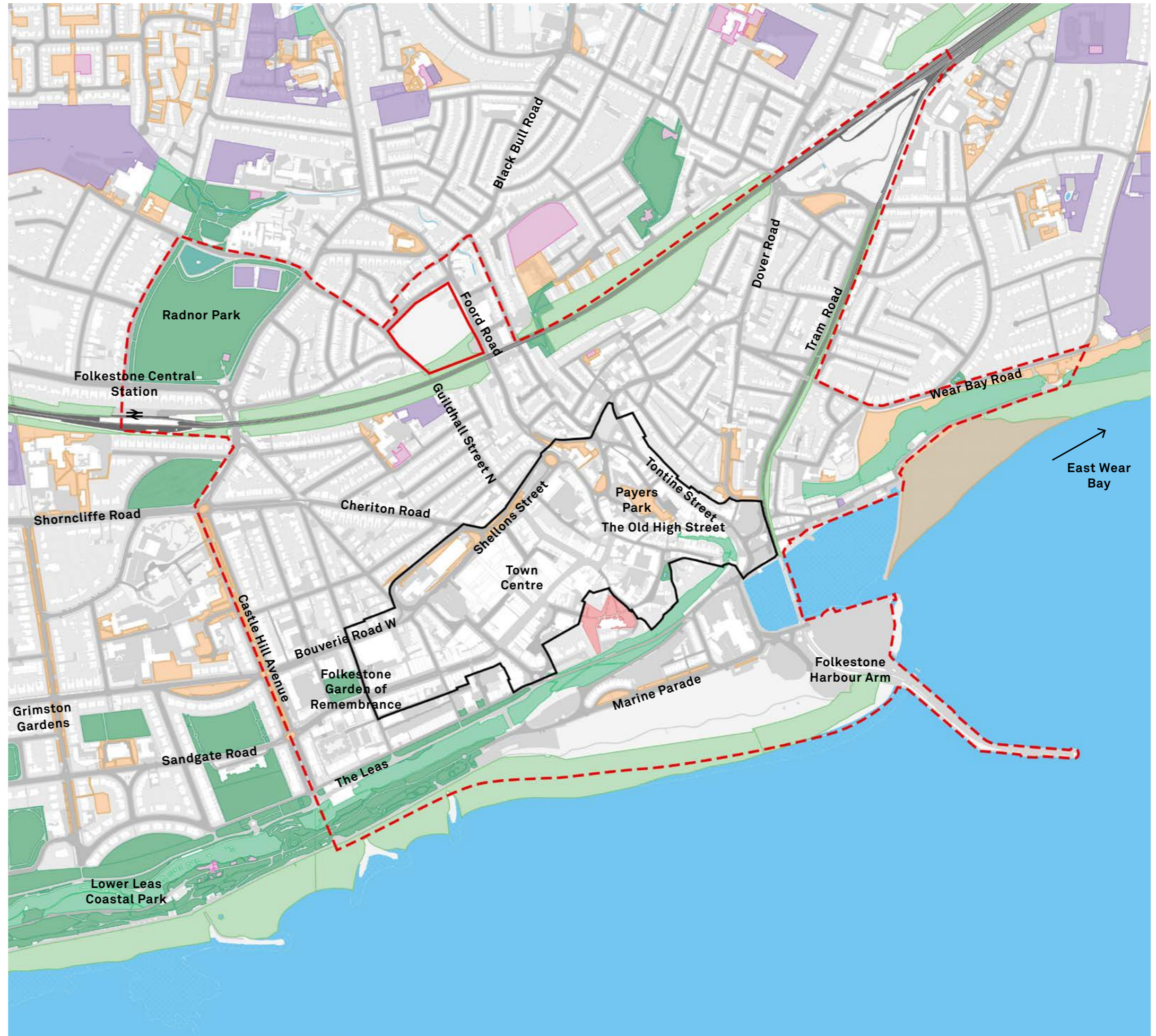
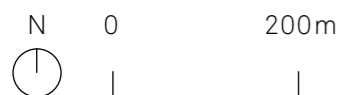
The coastline is dominated by parks, gardens and other green spaces - there is an opportunity for it to be better connected to the Town Centre area. Leas Coastal Park extends to the Harbour but is not treated as an asset east of the Leas Lift.

Overall there is limited provision of spaces for children and teenagers - there is an opportunity for these to be more present within the Town Centre.

KEY

Open space audit (GIS 2021):

- Amenity green space
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Green corridors
- Natural and semi-natural urban greens paces
- Outdoor sports facilities
- Parks and gardens
- Provision for children and teenagers
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Nature conservation policy designations

Access to the natural environment, green space and play spaces is poor in the town centre. There is an opportunity to enhance and manage access to the natural environment connecting urban areas to the countryside and key open spaces, particularly to the sea front from the town centre.

Environmental protection sites lie to the east of the harbour area but there are large areas of green space along the coastline.

Broad Habitat:

- Lowland Mixed deciduous Woodland - Folkestone Cliffs and Downs
- Calcareous Grass Land - Folkestone Cliffs and Downs
- Supralittoral Rock - Folkestone Warren

1. Folkestone East Cliff and West Country Park is of significant biological, geological and physiological interest, encompassing a range of marine and terrestrial habitats associated with the chalk cliffs.
2. Sunny Sands
3. The Leas
4. Folkestone Beach
5. Radnor Park
6. Kingsnorth Gardens



3.3 LOCAL ASSETS, LANDMARKS & USES

Open space issues and opportunities



↑ Former rail line along Tram Road currently disconnecting neighbourhoods, but with the potential to be a community asset.



↑ Payers Park provides green space and a place to play directly adjacent to the town centre streets, as well as a point of interest connecting to other locations, including the F51 Skate Park.



↑ Leas Coastal Park extends all the way to Harbour Street but the eastern end currently only really forms a divide between the sea and the town centre.



↑ Pedestrian routes through Leas cliff are characterful but in need of improvements and would not provide accessible links.



↑ This landscape approach could be extended up the Tram Road former railway.



↑ With grand Georgian and Victorian buildings fronting two sides, the bus station was formerly an important green space in the Radnor Estate layout and could be reclaimed to create an important point of arrival and green asset for the town centre.



↑ Road of Remembrance traverses down Leas Coastal Park directly connecting the town centre core to the harbour, but a single narrow foot-way make a poor pedestrian environment.



↑ Some pedestrian routes have been blocked off and allowed to deteriorate.

3.4 SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

Social & community infrastructure

Community uses are dispersed around the town, particularly in residential areas. However, there is a clear opportunity for the town centre to fulfil a stronger community, social and civic function.

- KEY
- Civic
 - Education facilities
 - Nurseries and crèches
 - GP Surgeries & Hospitals
 - Playgrounds
 - Public village halls & other community facilities
 - Private member's clubs
 - Places of worship & religious meeting halls
 - Town Centre boundary
 - Ship Street opportunity site
 - Extension of Town Centre study area



3.4 SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

Cultural & Community Context

Folkestone's recent development has been focused on the arts, particularly due to the private investment from Creative Folkestone and the Folkestone Harbour and Seafront Development Company.

The Sidney De Hann Research Centre for Arts & Health explores the benefits of active participation in creative arts for health and wellbeing.

The Folkestone Triennial raised Folkestone's profile and continues to attract visitors over the last few years. In 2017 150,000 visitors were attracted to the town over its 3 month duration. The Creative Foundation charity has made significant investments in Folkestone's Creative Quarter, for example the Creative Folkestone art trail.

Grant allocations to the Sacconi Quartet enabled them to become the Quartet in Residence for the town of Folkestone and its surrounding areas. The annual Sacconi Chamber Music Festival takes place in Folkestone, and features a generous outreach programme targeting local musicians and those in harder to reach areas.

There is a desire to develop new sectors, such as the music industry, to support an evening economy. It has recently been announced that Folkestone will be the World's First Music Town. Dr Julia Jones, who has worked with the UN, is currently developing a Music Charter as a template for how music can be used within the community.

Folkestone has a long heritage of entertainment venues established in the early 20th century. The Leas Cliff Hall hosts theatre performances and concerts. Located along Guildhall street in the Old Town hall is the Silver Screen Independent Cinema following on from the legacy of the Electric Cinema established in 1910.

The Quarterhouse is considered the cultural hub of Folkestone, with a recent revamp on the lower floor by Studio Ben Allen transforming the space into 'The Clearing', a thriving cafe/bar space.



↑ The Clearing, Studio Ben Allen



↑ Folkestone Fringe



↑ The Quarterhouse



↑ Harbour Arm



↑ Charivari Festival



↑ Folkestone Airshow



↑ Folkestone Book Festival



↑ Urban sports park and indoor skate park development currently on site, Guy Holloway Architects



↑ Folkestone



↑ Sidney De Hann Research Centre

3.4 SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

Arts, culture and creative sector

The cultural sector is supported by Creative Folkestone an arts charity launched in 2002, occupying physical space in the creative quarter as well as a strong online presence. A portfolio of acquired high street properties are offered to tenants at a low cost or sometimes free initially to stimulate cultural activity. 500 jobs have been delivered & 90% of rents are at market value rate.

Folkestone Creative Quarter is described as an urban village of designers, filmmakers, musicians, web developers and artists. Studio/retail, studio/office and apartments, are available for hire with a capacity of 80 flats, 115 studios and offices and over 50 shops spread across 90 buildings.

A major appeal is being able to see makers at work, transforming bars into micro performance spaces.

Events include the Folkestone Triennial, Folkestone Book Festival, Normal? Festival of the Brain and SALT Festival of the Sea and Environment.

Art walks:

- Walk A - The Pent Valley and the Railway
- Walk B - The Historic Centre
- Walk C - Waterfront and Harbour
- Walk D - West End

KEY

- Bars/ drinking establishments
- Museums, galleries and art centres
- Cinemas, theatres and dance venues
- Music related venues
- ▨ Creative Quarter
- Town Centre boundary
- ▭ Ship Street opportunity site
- ▭ Extension of Town Centre study area

N 0 200m



3.4 SOCIAL & COMMUNITY

Crime & ASB

Incidents are evenly distributed throughout the study area with violent offences most prevalent within the Town Centre boundary. There is a cluster of police stop & search, theft and drug related offences in the area around Tontine Street. Bicycle theft is most prevalent in the western part of the Town Centre and along main roads while vehicle crime occurs in the areas South and West of the Town Centre, with clusters around Marine Parade, The Leas and Bouverie Road.

- KEY
- Crime & ASB (August 2019):
- Antisocial behaviour
 - Bicycle theft
 - Burglary
 - Criminal damage and arson
 - Drug related
 - Other crime
 - Other theft
 - Possession of weapons
 - Public order
 - Robbery
 - Shoplifting
 - Theft from person
 - Vehicle crime
 - Violence and sexual offences
 - Stop & Search
- Town Centre boundary
 - Ship Street opportunity site
 - Extension of Town Centre study area



3.5 ENVIRONMENT

Air quality

Air pollution is a major cause of adverse health conditions and affects vulnerable members in society including old people, and children as well as those with respiratory conditions.

The motor networks around Folkestone including the M20, A20, A259, A260 and A2034 are the main source of emissions due to road traffic.


Pollutant	Air Quality Objective	
	Concentration	Period
Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂)	40 µg/m ³	Annual
Particulate Matter (PM ₁₀)	40 µg/m ³	Annual
Carbon Monoxide	10mg/m ³	Max 8h Period

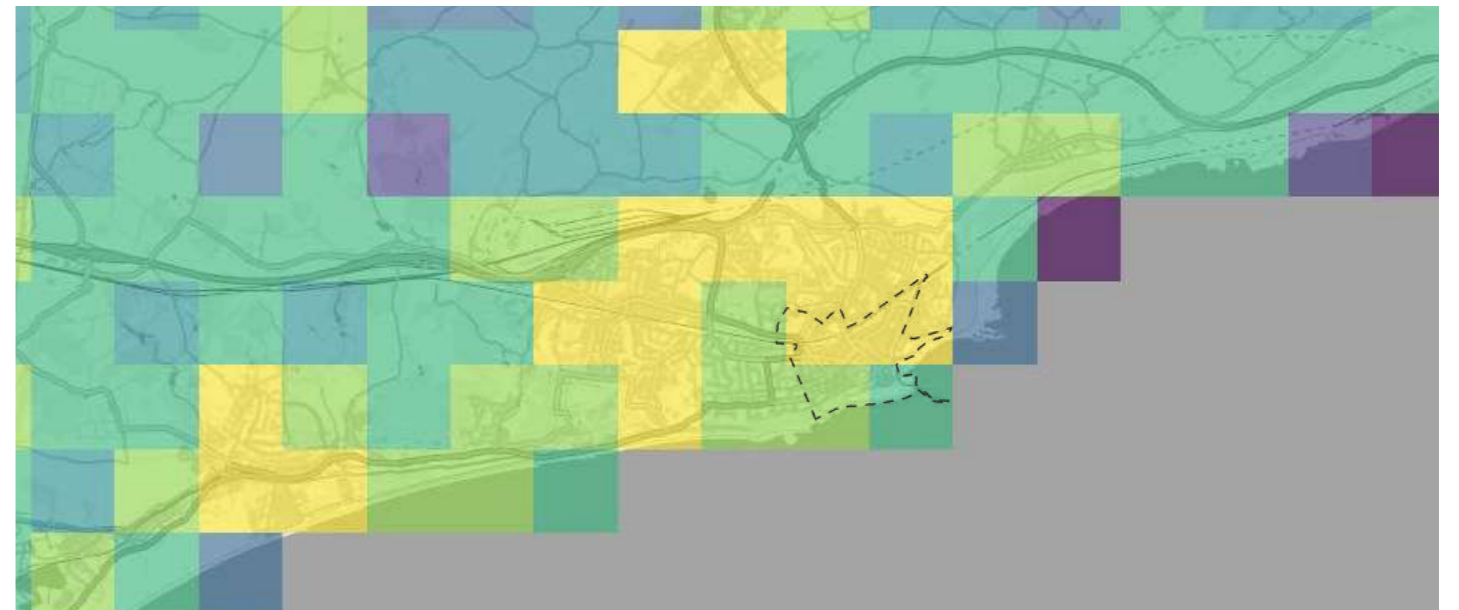
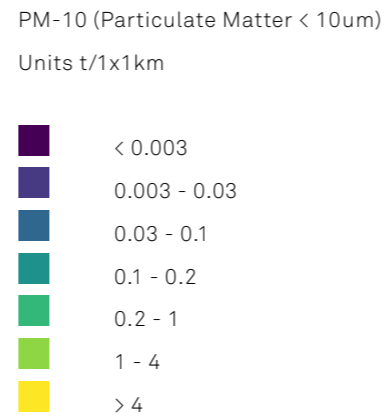
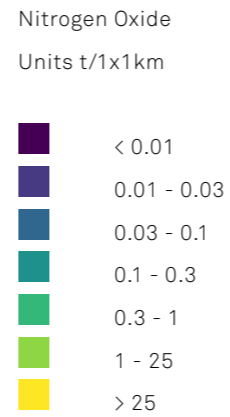
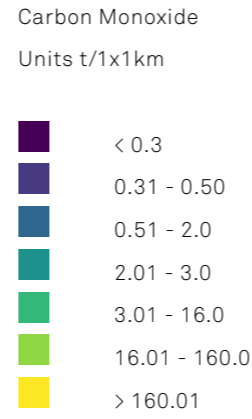
(Source: LAQM Annual Status Report 2018)

The results from 2017 show NO2 annual mean concentrations within Folkestone and Hythe to be well below the relative AQS objective but are the highest within five years, with the elevated concentrations reported within close proximity to major roads.

Currently there is no monitoring of PM2.5 or PM10 completed within Folkestone and Hythe, therefore no concentration values can be reported but the DEFRA 2017 Background maps show it to be below the national average.

(Source: LAQM Annual Status Report 2018)

 Study area boundary



3.5 ENVIRONMENT

Road & rail noise

The combination of road and rail data shows the annual average noise levels over a 16 hour period from 7:00- 23:00.

There is disruption along the top edge of the town centre boundary trailing in from Dover Road to Shellons Street, consistent with the A road network. Most of the disruption is outside or on the edge of the proposed study area, branching out from Sandgate Road West and Shorncliffe Road.

KEY
 (Source: Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs)
 Data indicating the level of noise according to the strategic noise mapping of rail & road sources within areas with a population of at least 100,000 people (agglomerations).

- 55.0 - 59.9 dB
- 60.0 - 64.9 dB
- 65.0 - 69.9 dB
- 70.0 - 74.9 dB
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area



4.0
TRANSPORT &
MOVEMENT



4.1 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Walking infrastructure & quality of pedestrian environment

Pedestrian network

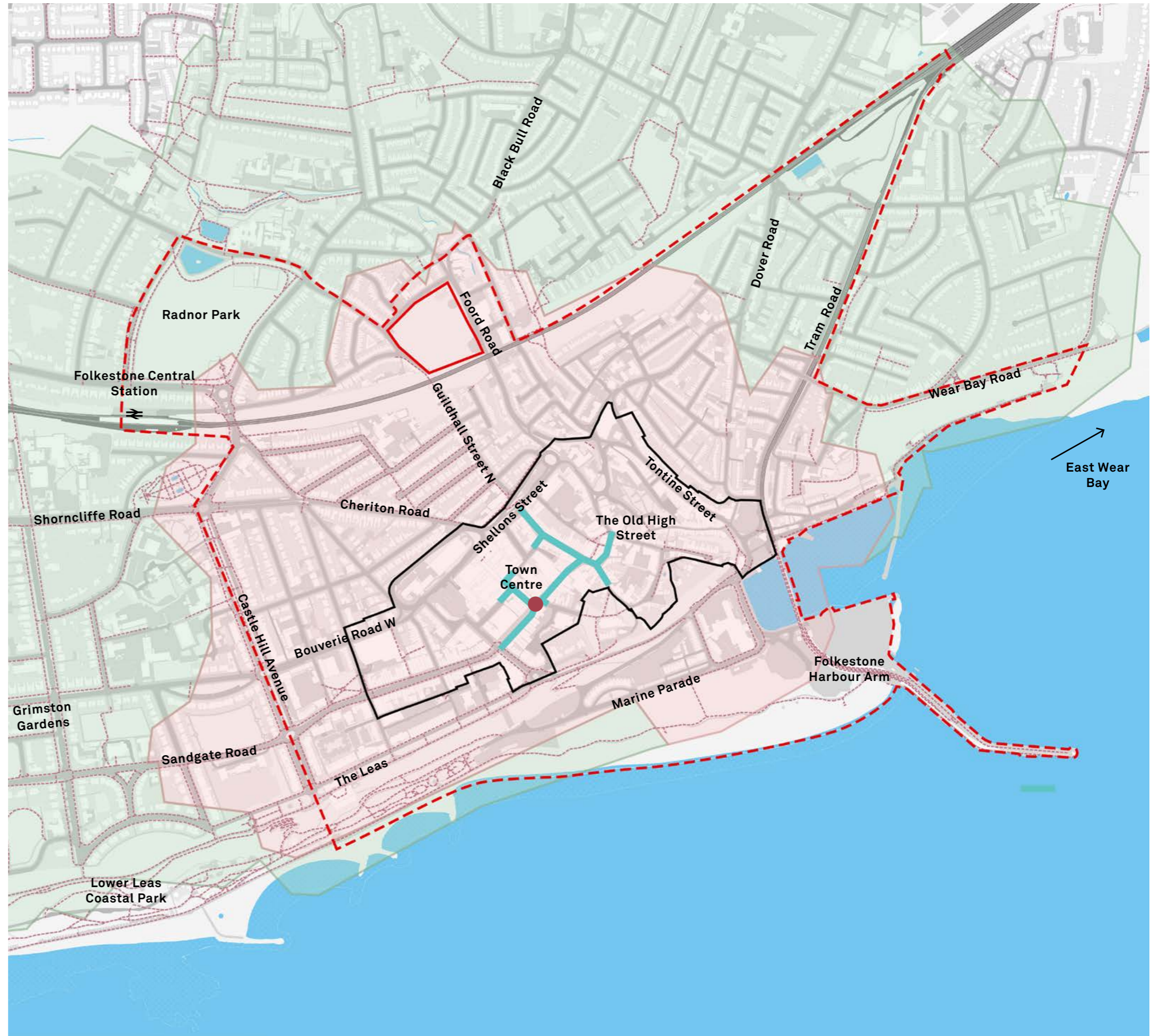
The footpath and footway network illustrated provides a comprehensive network for people walking (note that network quality is discussed separately). The network is predominantly on-street, generally with moderate-sized blocks resulting in a high density of junctions. This means the town centre feel compact and highly walkable. On-street connections are supplemented with important off-street links, such as the repurposed rail line which crosses the harbour, the Boardwalk, and The Leas promenade.

The study area, both immediate and wider, benefits from this connected pedestrian network; analysis undertaken by SWECO illustrates that the majority of the area falls within a 10-minute walking time. One of the main exceptions is the area south of The Leas due to a combination of terrain and limited connections. There are three access points to overcome the steep level change between The Leas and Lower Sandgate: the Zig Zag Path (just west of the study area); the Leas Lift funicular; and a footpath (with stairs) that leads from the First World War memorial on the Road of Remembrance to Lower Sandgate Road. More generally, although less steep, the terrain also affects access to the Harbour area from the town centre; access from the town centre is via steeply sloping Road of Remembrance, the less steep Harbour Street, or a footpath (with steps) from the Parade.

KEY

- 0 - 10 min walking distance (SWECO)
- 10 - 20 min walking distance (SWECO)
- Starting point: Sandgate Road / Alexandra Gardens
- Shared access
- Footpath
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre study area

N 0 200m

4.2 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Walking infrastructure & quality of pedestrian environment

Overall the combination of limited connections, steep gradients, and routes that require the use of steps affect pedestrian access to the harbour and seafront.

The railway line also creates a barrier for walking along the northern edge of the study area. There are six connections along the 1.7km length of railway line within the study area; five via the road network and one footpath connection between Brambledown and St John's Street. Most critically, is the gap in the street network caused by the ~420m stretch of railway line between the A259 Cheriton Road and Broadmead Road.

Finally, the road network itself creates a barrier to pedestrian movement in various locations. The size and highways-led design approach coupled with the speed of traffic create a series of roads which are not comfortable or attractive for pedestrians to walk along or across. This includes:

- The A259 Cheriton Road/ Radnor Park Road, an important through route, which creates a barrier immediately adjacent to Folkestone Central station.
- The gyratory system between the station and the town centre including Cheriton Road/ Foresters Way/ Middleburg Square and Cheriton Gardens, with oversized roads and few crossing points.
- The gyratory system of Grace Hill, New Street/ Bradstone Road/ Dover Road/ Tontine Street, also with over-engineered roads, a large roundabout, and few crossing points.
- The dual carriageway of Shorncliffe Road.
- The roads serving the Harbour such as Marine Parade, Marine Terrace, and Lower Sandgate Road.

Quality of pedestrian environment

The functional quality of the pedestrian environment varies considerably. A selected pedestrian route between Folkestone Central station, the town centre and onwards to the harbour has been reviewed to provide a sample of conditions. The images below highlight key issues.



↑ Cheriton Road at station: extensive guardrails, crossing not on desire line, lack of natural legibility (note wayfinding totem and map provided) though railway bridge acts as a gateway



↑ Shellons Street junction with Guildhall Street: dual carriageway with multiple lanes, three-stage staggered crossing away from desire line



↑ The Old High Street: design treatment with kerb upstands suggests vehicles may pass through even through full-time pedestrian space (may cause pedestrians to stick to footways), cobbles are uneven, extremely narrow footway on one side



↑ Cheriton Road junction with Shorncliffe Road: wide roads, two-stage pedestrian crossing, physical barriers, and poor sense of direction to town centre



↑ Guildhall Street: attractive and active pedestrian environment with ample space for both walking and sitting out activity



↑ Tontine Street junction with Harbour Street: pedestrian crossing points away from desire lines, planters create barriers to movement (though also provide informal seating), generally highways-led design approach



↑ Cheriton Road junction with Middleburg Square/ Foresters Way: wide road, narrow footways, no pedestrian crossings, inactive edge on one side, poor sense of direction to town centre



↑ Bayle Street: design treatment suggests pedestrian-priority space however cobbles are uneven, narrow footways on both sides, bollards and columns obstruct pedestrian movement, variable quality of materials



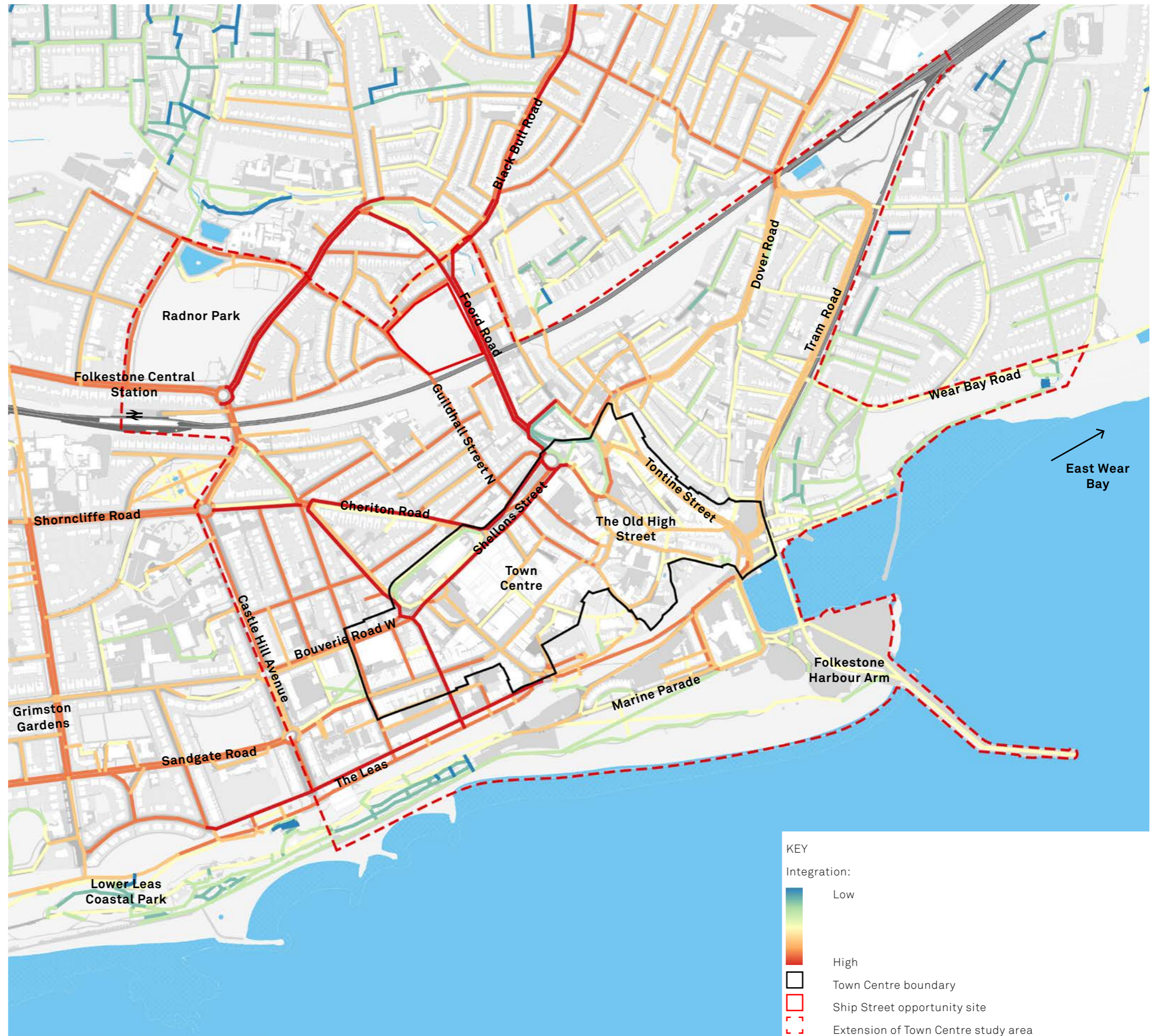
↑ Beach Street/ Harbour Fountains: high quality design treatment of public plaza, vehicular access in streets around the square albeit design suggests space to prioritise pedestrian usage

4.3 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Connectivity analysis

Connectivity analysis assesses degree of integration, or how well connected a street network is based on the number and degree of turns a pedestrian must make to reach other parts of the network. The fewer turns, and lesser degree of turning required, to walk from one point to another within the network means a street / street segment is better connected, and therefore scores more highly. Conversely the more turns and greater degree of turning required means it is worse connected, and therefore scores lower. Such analysis is usually indicative of how many people are likely to use a street network, and typically corresponds to rates of social encounter and activity.

Major roads such as the A259 are coded as two parallel pedestrian routes, with formal crossings between them, to more accurately reflect the fact that these present barriers to walking. The analysis shows that the town centre generally benefits from a high degree of integration by virtue of relatively small block sizes and permeable pedestrian network with a resulting high density of connections between links. There are some lower levels of integration in areas that are constrained due to topography, such as the routes south of The Leas which lie between steep terrain and the sea. Some of the links in the town centre area have middling levels of integration due to their curved alignment, which makes them less direct. Areas east of Tontine Street are also less-well integrated due to the disconnected structure of the street network.



4.4 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Legibility & wayfinding

The pedestrian network described above offers relatively good natural legibility where it is a regular grid of streets, and where there are structuring elements (views, topography, significant buildings or structures, local landmarks etc.) that aid navigation. However this is undermined by large scale roads in the gyratory system, large blocks in some locations (e.g. Middleburg Square), and to a lesser extent within the core of the town centre where the street grid is less regular. In 2015 Kent County Council implemented a pedestrian wayfinding signage system comprising a family of elements: monoliths; fingerposts; and town trail boards. The monoliths and fingerposts provide wayfinding information, and were installed at 34 locations. Town trail boards are an initiative promoted by Folkestone Town Council and show historical information relevant to the local area.

The signage offers good coverage of the town centre and placement is generally at key decision points. The route signposted from Folkestone Central Station to The Leas via Castle Hill Avenue is direct for accessing the seafront, and much of the route is attractive. However there is no direct route marked for people wishing to walk between the station, town centre or creative quarter, and the Harbour (e.g. the route reviewed in the previous section). Additional wayfinding – either visual clues or formal signage – would be beneficial to help address this gap. The wayfinding network is also primarily focused on the town centre area, and could benefit from expansion out to surrounding areas, to encourage local trips on foot rather than car.



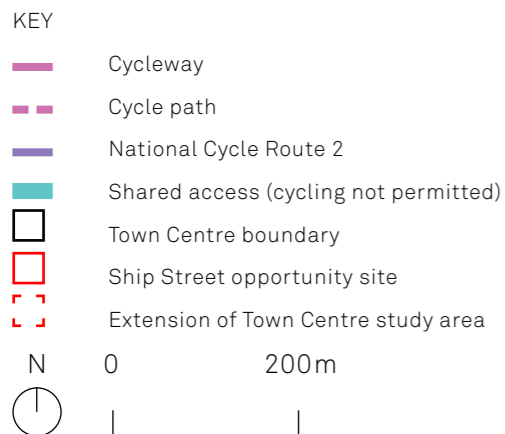
4.5 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Cycling infrastructure

The National Cycle Network Route 2 provides an attractive route along the coast, largely separated from vehicular traffic. There are no other signed cycle routes within the study area; routes on Earl's Avenue and Bouverie Road West are immediately adjacent to the west.

Within the town centre cyclists are banned from using Sandgate Road, meaning cyclists wishing to travel east-west through the town centre would need to take a more convoluted route. The major road infrastructure described in preceding sections such as the gyratory networks are uncomfortable for cyclists to use, and act as barriers to less confident cyclists. The combination of these two factors may well be off-putting for cyclists travelling from the railway station or further out towards the town centre or harbour.

There are currently few places to safely park bikes in the town centre, particularly in visible locations where people would be confident locking a bike where it would be overlooked.



4.6

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

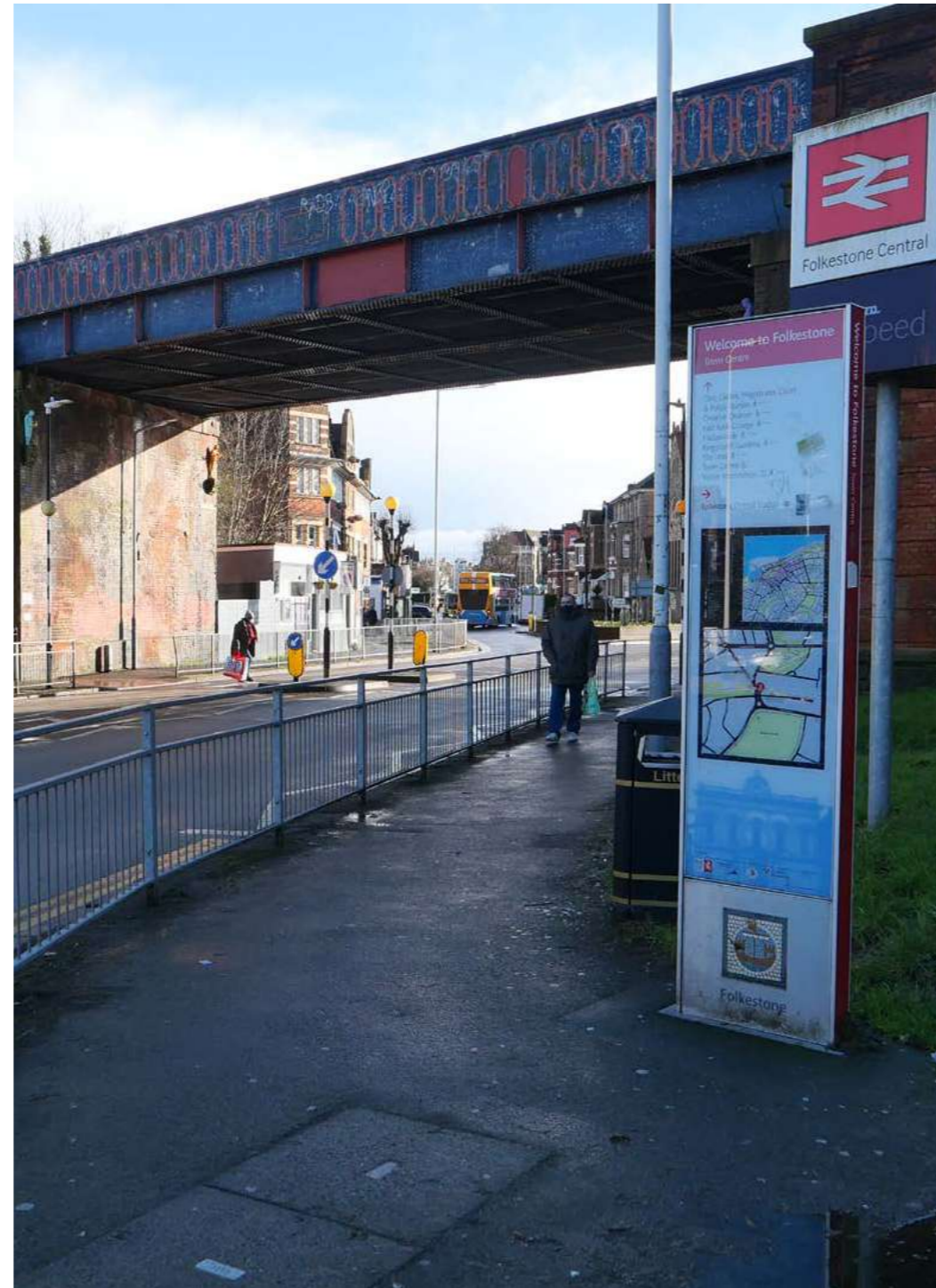
Public transport

Rail Access

The town centre is served by Folkestone Central station, providing access to the southeastern network for regional and high-speed rail services. The services provide frequent access to London St Pancras and Charing Cross stations as well as to Dover and Ramsgate. The station is located on Station Approach, accessed from the A259. The rail services provided from Folkestone Central station provide access to places to the north and west of the town, including Ashford. The walking route to and from the town centre to the station is a convoluted and somewhat illegible route. Moreover, the A259 acts as an immediate barrier for anyone approaching the station from the east - the direction of the town centre (southeast). The station also provides no parking facilities and has a small taxi pick-up / drop-off area located outside the station entrance.

Recent investment in Folkestone West station has seen surface car-parks and improved facilities for passengers. As Folkestone West is on the same line as Folkestone Central, and is less than a five minute drive away, it is likely that Folkestone West station will receive more outward commuting traffic from the surrounding towns and villages in comparison to Folkestone Central.

Given the quality of service and locations served by the rail services, there is perhaps an opportunity to encourage some behavioural change to using rail services instead of private vehicles to access the town centre. However, to do so, improved pedestrian links between the rail station and the town-centre must be improved.



↑ Signage on arrival from the station and view toward Cheriton Street



↑ The environment immediately outside the station is dominated by road



↑ Crossing to Cheriton Street from the station is not intuitive

4.6 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Public transport

Bus Network

Folkestone Town Centre is served by a central bus station. The bus station, located on Middleburg Square, is ideally located for bus travel to/from the town centre. The bus station provides access to 14 local bus services, as well as one intercity bus service, serving destinations such as: Dover, Ashford, Hythe and Canterbury.

Services are frequent, with an average of 7 buses every 10 minutes arriving and departing from the town centre bus station during the day, with services reducing in the evening from 9pm to approximately every hour until 12am, ceasing operation over-night. Bus routes serve to the north east and west of the town centre, providing an attractive alternative to the private car.

However, given the high quality of the bus network and the central location of the bus station, it is understood through discussions with stakeholders the service usage is low in comparison to that of the private car. This may be due to the perception of bus travel vs the convenience of the car or the pricing structure set on these services (an historic problem since bus deregulation meaning it is just as expensive to park the car for a few hours as it is to take the bus).

Moreover, the bus stations central location provides ideal access to the town centres retail offerings, however it is further from the Creative Quarter and the harbour area - a key area for redevelopment (though one bus route – the 102 – serves the harbour). Also, within the F&HDC local plan, the bus station is earmarked as a potential future development site. Therefore, the relocation of the bus station to an alternative location, or the development of smaller bus stops in collaboration with mobility hubs on the outer reaches of the town centre could be considered, for example. This presents an opportunity to enhance local accessibility, and integrate with other transport offerings.



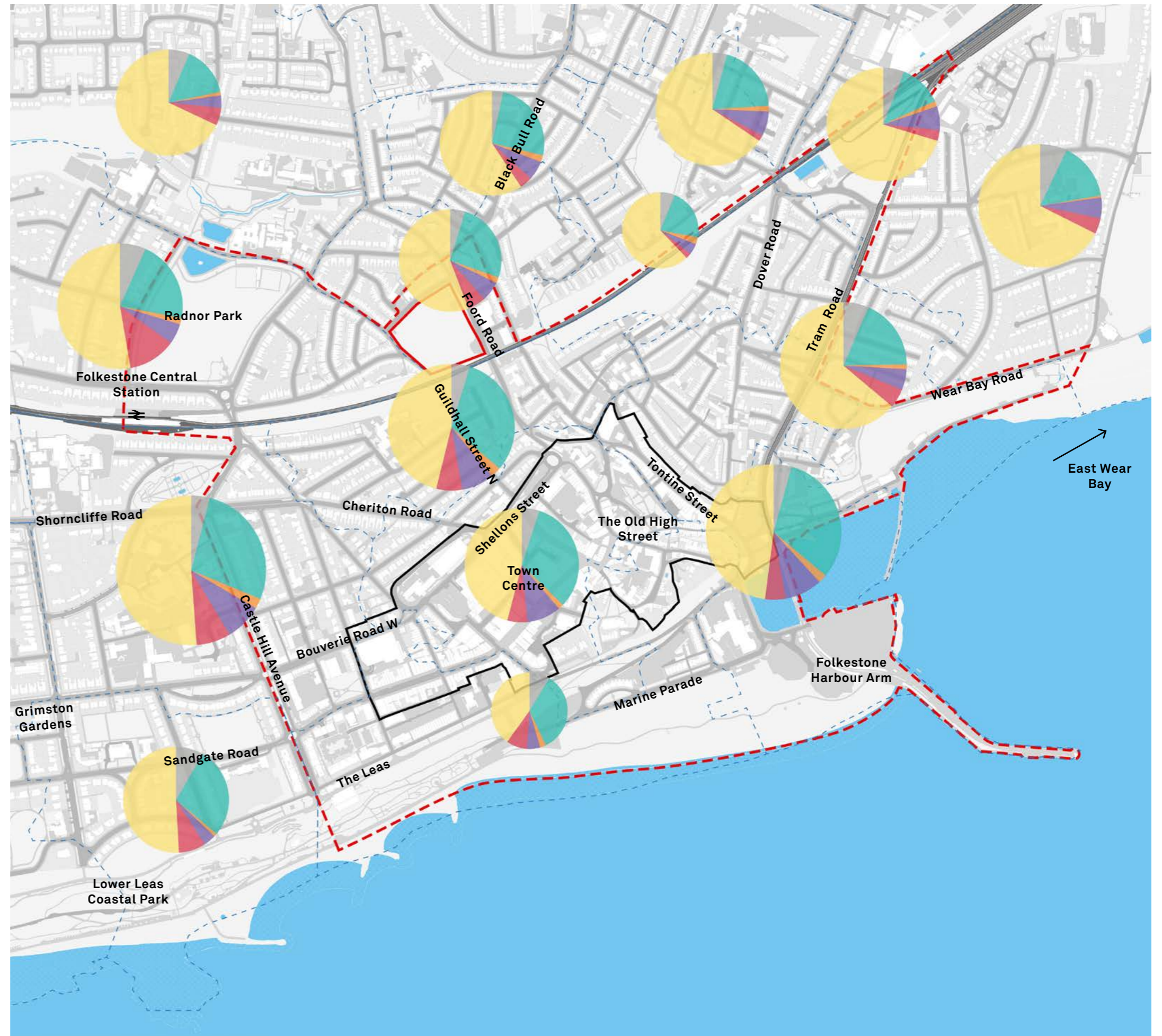
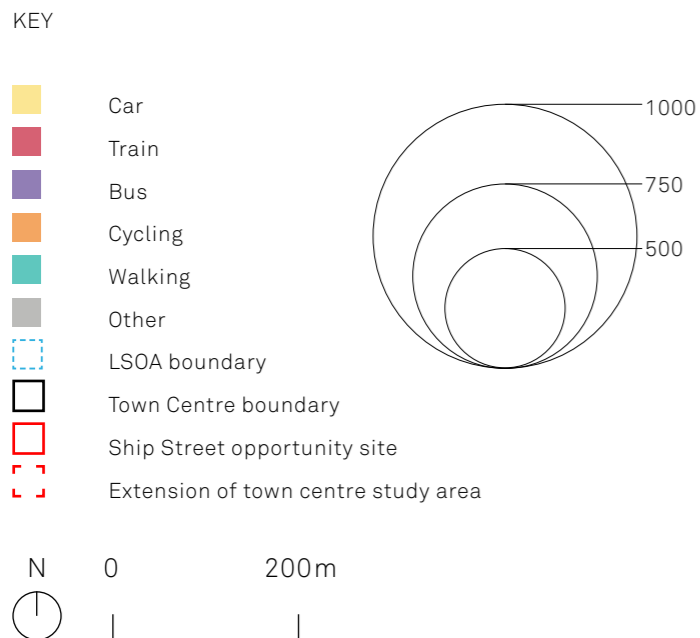
4.7 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Journeys to the town centre

Although data is over nine years old, the 2011 census data provides us the best indication of how people travel to/from the town centre for work and where they originate from. The accompanying plans indicate that the majority of commuters to the town centre complete their journeys in a private car, with the second most popular modal choice being walking.

However, when looking at the origin of the trips made to the town centre for commuting purposes, the majority of trips originate from nearby to the town centre, or from neighbouring towns and villages in southernmost Kent. This therefore highlights the over-reliance on driving from these outer locations and the ability to create a step change from here to greater public transport use.

Moreover, a large number of people who live closer to the town centre may choose to drive potentially due to the barriers that the highway network self imposes on pedestrians and cyclists, or the desire not to use public transport.

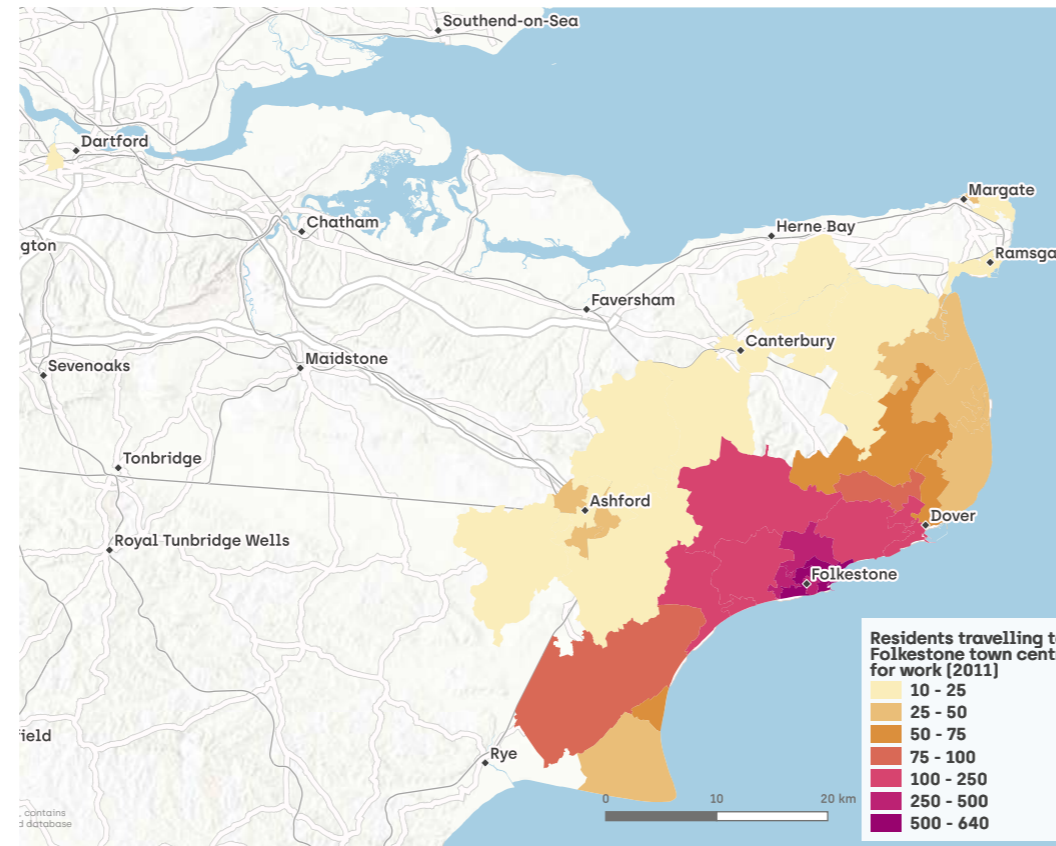


4.7 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

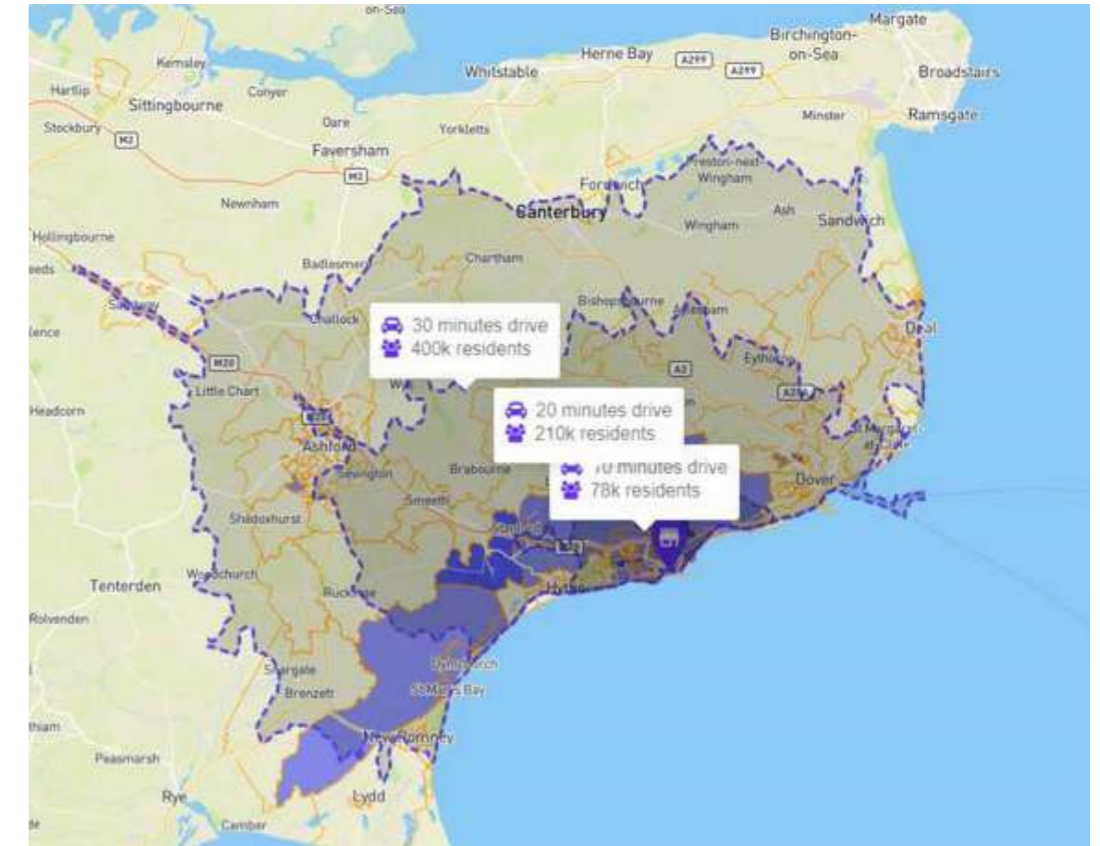
Journeys to the town centre

In 2020, Visitor Insights undertook a study of the town centre looking at the behaviours of visitors to the town centre between the months of June and December and comparing the data to the previous year (2019) to see what trends have occurred in visitor behaviour. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the data is somewhat unfitting to tell a story on the trends of visitor behaviour due to the very nature of lock-downs and enforced retail closures for “non-essential” shops.

However, what can be drawn from this information is that Folkestone Town Centre is generally visited by people from within a 30-minute driving distance - a trip that could be replaced by public transport. However, as discussed later in this chapter, the over-engineered nature of the local highways, do not lend themselves to a change in travel behaviour. In order to establish this change, it may be necessary to re-imagine the design of some of the key streets within the study area to enable safe and comfortable cycling and walking, and to dissuade people from driving.



↑ Residents travelling to Folkestone Town Centre for work (2011)



↑ Driving distances from Folkestone Town Centre
Source: Visitor Insights - All reports

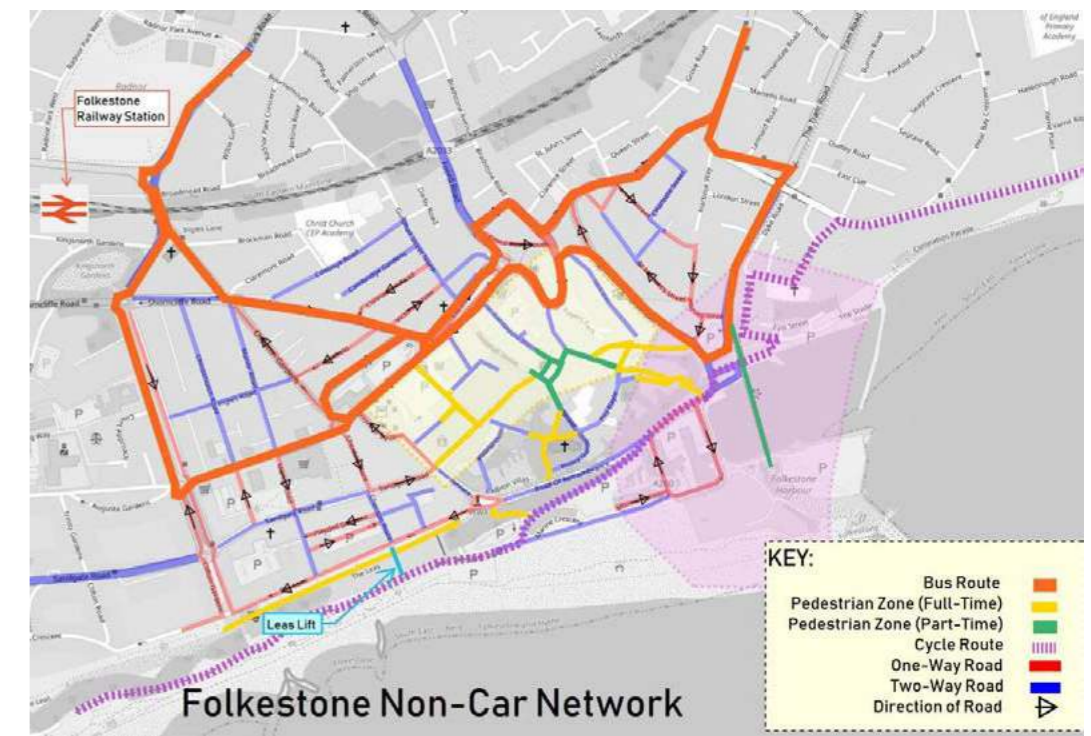
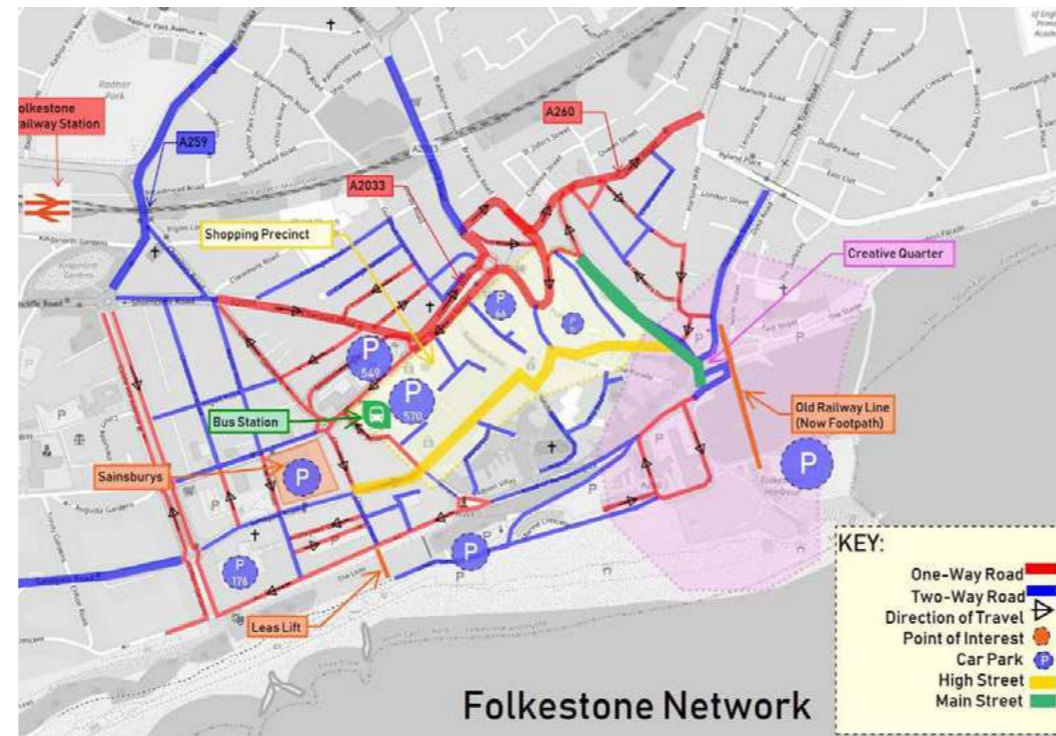
4.8 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Highways

Folkestone Town Centre is well served by its highway network, following its legacy as a ferry terminal for crossing the English Channel to continental Europe. The western end of the town centre is served directly by the A259, which cuts through the town centre, linking to the strategic road network (the M20) to the north of the town centre, from Hythe and Dymchurch to the west of the town centre.

The A260 serves the eastern end of the town centre, again providing links to the strategic road network when joining with the A259 north of the town centre. The A2033 links the A259 and A260 through the town centre, just north of the town centre's main shopping area.

A number of local roads, engineered to various degrees including the use of one-way systems, provide access through the town centre and to its car-parks. All key destinations are well signed from the highway network. The below figure (produced by SWECO) illustrates circulation within the town centre, and highlights the large number of one-way streets within the local highway network.



Source: SWECO report '2020.03.06_Street Improvements_Draft'

4.8

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Highways :
Speed & delay

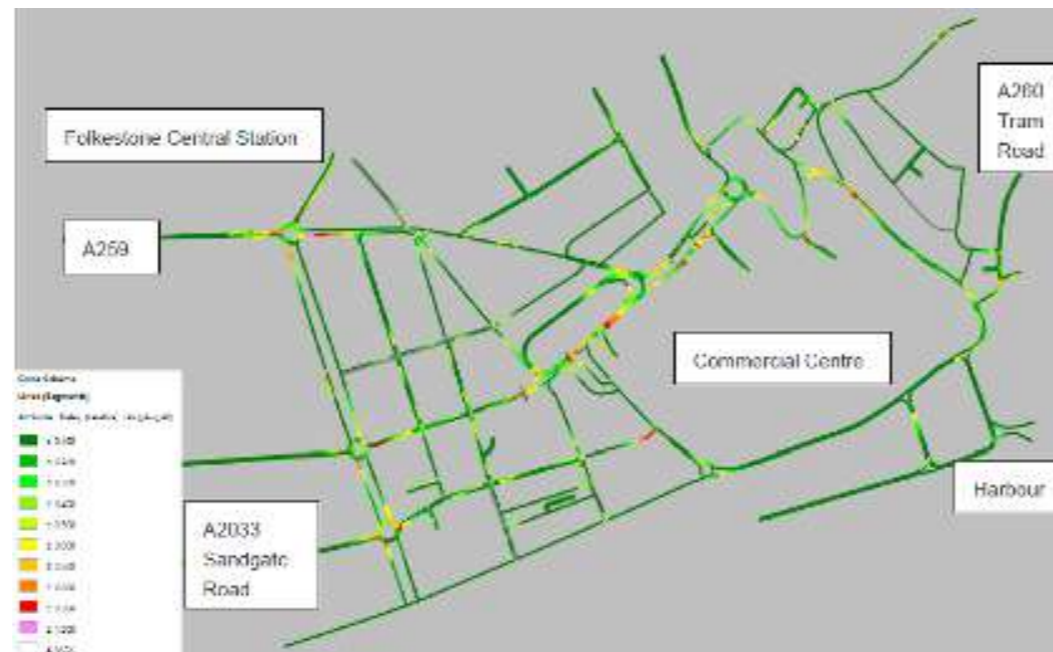
SWECO also produced a VISSIM model of the town centre area, testing the highways capacity in 2019. The study looked at the AM and PM peak periods testing both speed and delay, of which the results are presented in the figures on the right.

Both of the delay map outputs demonstrate that the A2033, A260 and Shorncliffe Road are by far the busiest roads.

The outputs of the speed mapping show that vehicles move the slowest through the town centre on Middelburg Square. However, vehicles can reach speed of 50mph on other town centre roads.

The results of the delay and speed mapping show that there are minimal congestion related delays and fast-moving traffic in and around the town centre during the AM and PM peak periods. This indicates that a rationalisation of the town centres highway could be considered in order to provide infrastructure and additional capacity to other modes such as walking and cycling. However, any rationalisation needs to remain cognisant of access and servicing requirements for the town centre retailers/businesses, as well as people of reduced mobility.

The data analysed also provides indication of a hostile environment for cyclists given the speeds exhibited on some roads providing town centre access. Given the over-engineered nature of the street environment in favour of motorised vehicles, it could be prudent to investigate the potential to provide semi- or fully-segregated cycle routes to serve the town-centre and beyond.



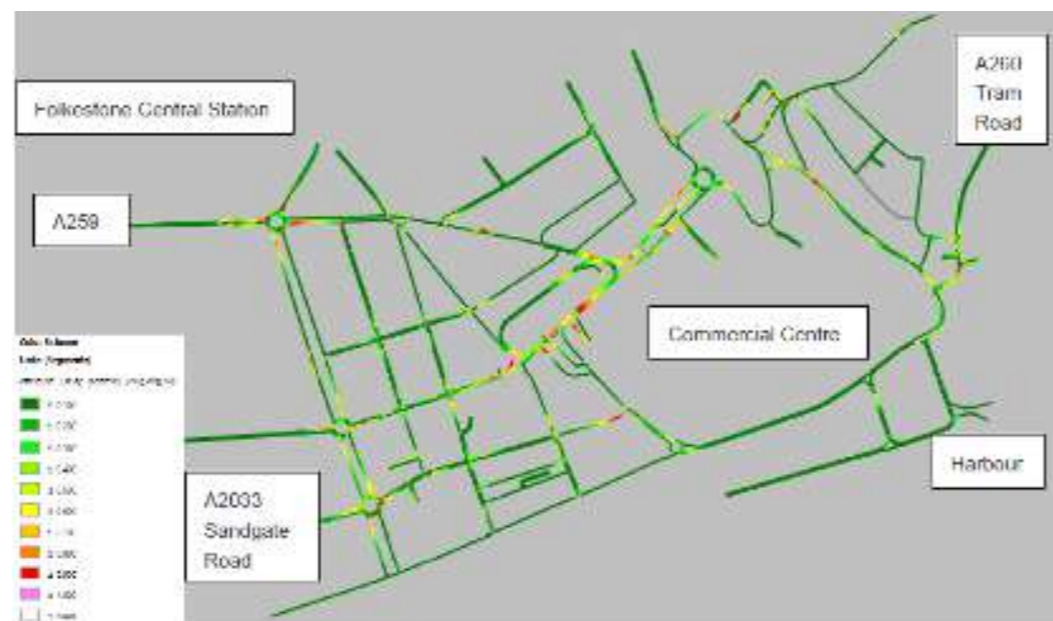
↑ AM Peak Delay Mapping:

Source: SWECO report '2020.03.06_Street Improvements_Draft'



↑ AM Peak Speed Mapping:

Source: SWECO report '2020.03.06_Street Improvements_Draft'



↑ PM Peak Delay Mapping:

Source: SWECO report '2020.03.06_Street Improvements_Draft'



↑ PM Peak Speed Mapping:

Source: SWECO report '2020.03.06_Street Improvements_Draft'

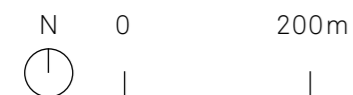
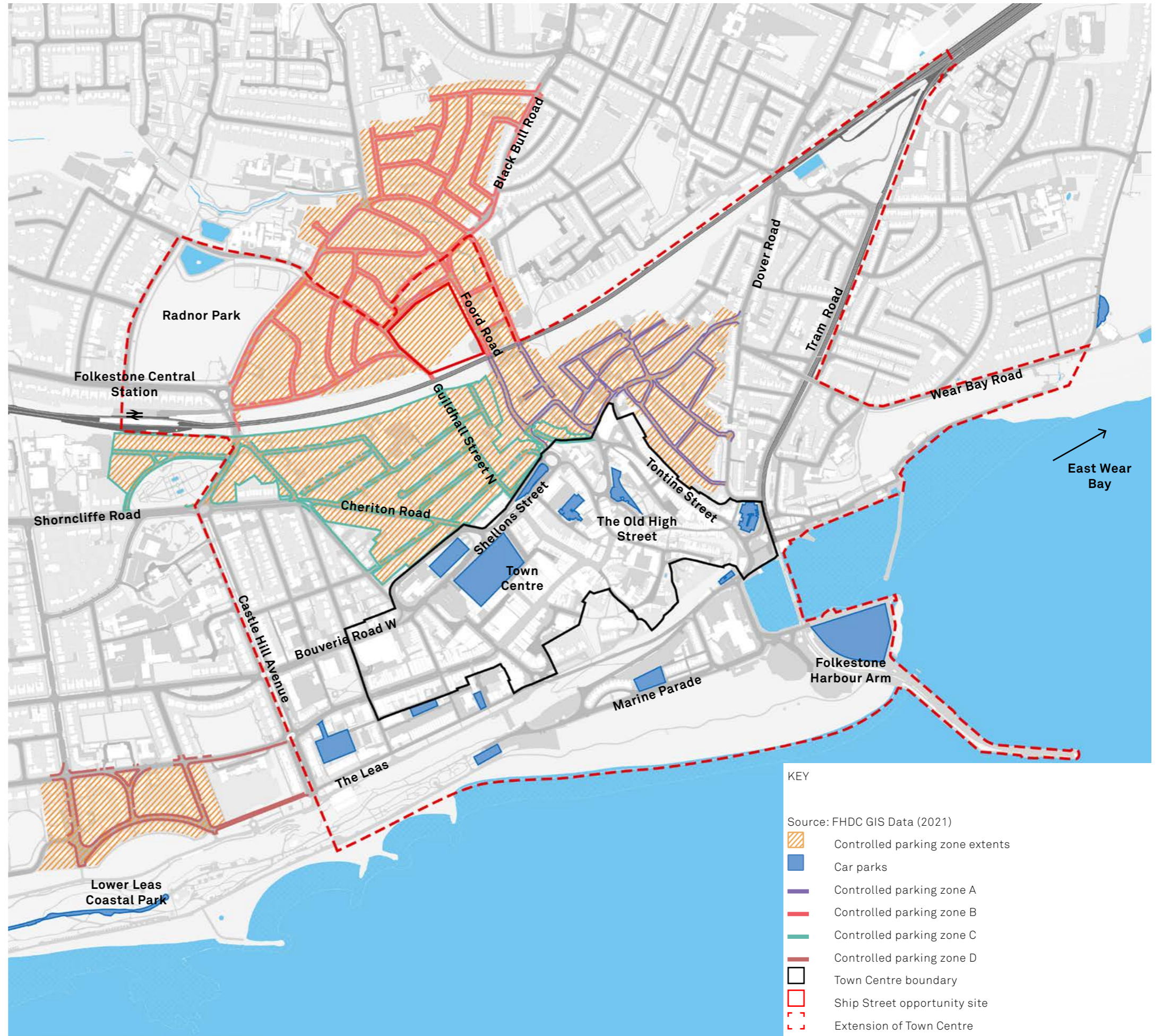
4.9 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Parking & servicing

There are a number of off-street parking areas in Folkestone town centre, with some eight car parks providing over 1,000 spaces for users. Some electric vehicle charging provisions are provided across these off-street car parks, however they are very limited in number.

There are also a number of on-street parking provisions across the town centre. All on-street parking provisions are demarcated, however there is a lack of controlled parking zones across the area, leading to high demand for parking spaces. Sandgate Street, Tontine Street and Cheriton Place are particularly congested streets, which all exhibit parking stress upon initial visual review of Google data. Where bays are not provided double-yellow lines are used to restrict waiting on the highway. However these restrictions are time limited in most places, therefore used for parking during hours when restricts do not apply.

The majority of town centre premises appear to be serviced from the rear of their buildings, with small access roads providing vehicles with the ability to deliver to a servicing yard. However, where servicing yards are not provided (e.g. on pedestrianised streets such as Guildhall Street) servicing vehicles are subject to restricted access between the hours of 10am and 6pm. Consideration could be given to introducing coordination schemes with local retailers a consolidated servicing approach could be established (e.g. for consolidated refuse collection, or consolidated deliveries of shared items), reducing the demand for servicing vehicles using the area, thus allowing timings to be extended to allow for greater pedestrian exclusivity.



4.10

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Personal injury collisions

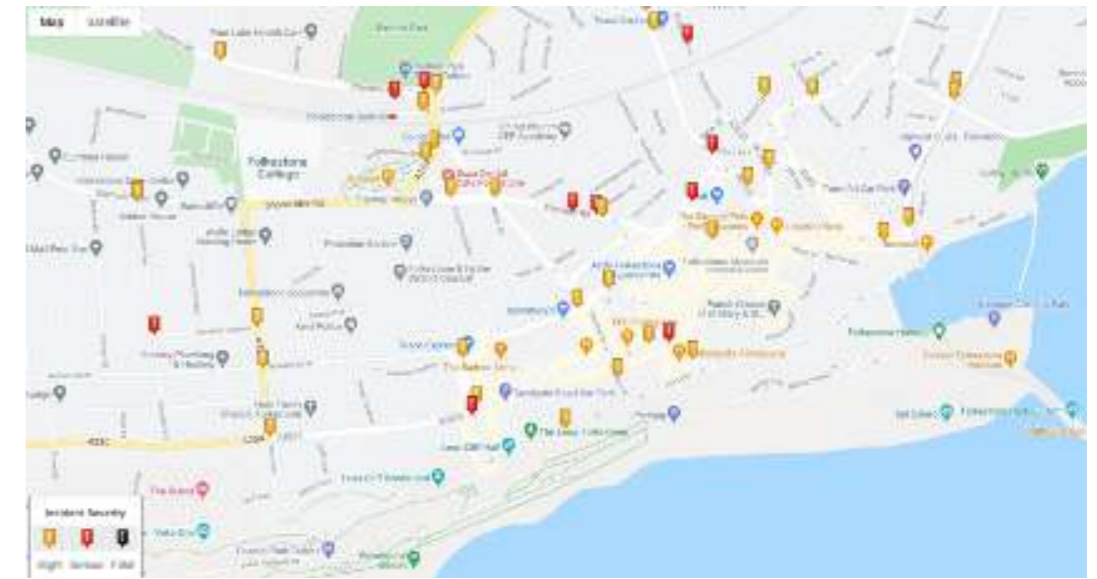
The study area has been analysed on Crash Map (crashmap.co.uk) to identify the collision hotspots over the past few years, by type of collision. The table on the right summarises the insights drawn across the latest available data across a three year period.

The data shows that the majority of collisions (over 50%) occur either as a vehicle-vehicle collision, or vehicle-pedestrian collision. Although details of the occurrences of these incidents are not currently accessible, the data shows that there could be an issue with pedestrian facilities, as well as overly complicated highway systems which cause driver confusion.

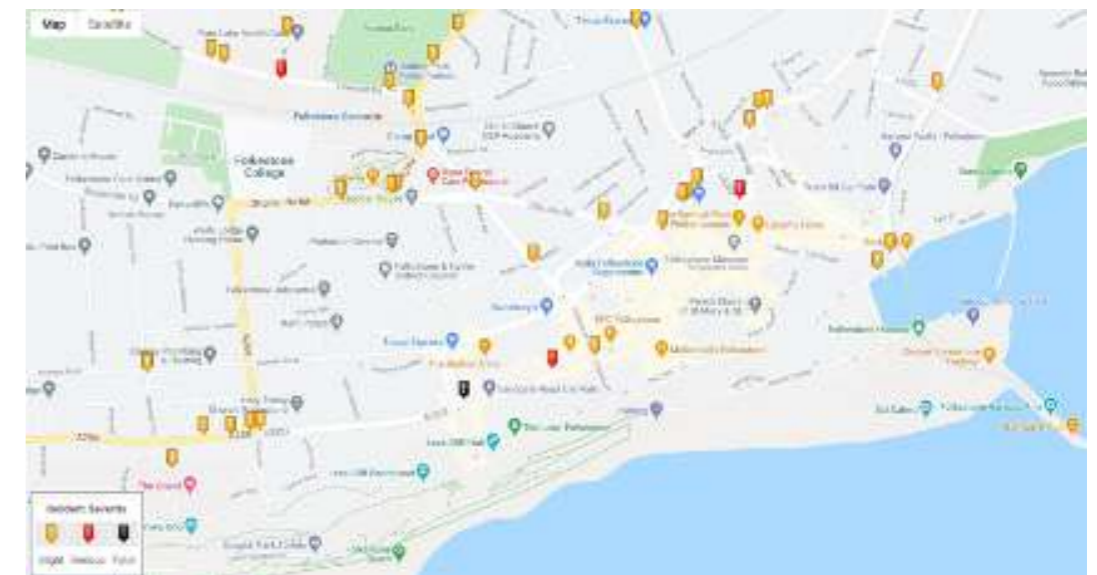
Moreover, it seems a large number of accidents occur at junctions, specifically where minor roads meet the main routes (A259, A260, A2033).

	2017	2018	2019	Total
Collisions (All)	44	38	31	115
Pedal cycle casualties	4	4	4	12
Child casualties	4	3	3	10
Motorcycle casualties	7	11	4	22
Pedestrian casualties	15	11	9	35
Vehicle collisions	14	11	11	36

Personal injury collisions, source: Crashmap.co.uk



↑ 2017 All collisions Source: Crashmap.co.uk



↑ 2018 All collisions Source: Crashmap.co.uk



↑ 2019 All collisions Source: Crashmap.co.uk

4.11

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Footfall analysis

Overall visitor numbers and dwell time were declining steadily pre-pandemic, but the trend has accelerated dramatically within the past year.

Footfall levels, dwelling time and the number of visits per annum have all been declining from December 2018 hitting a 4-year low in December 2020.

The total number of visits was down by 61% in April 2020, increasing to average levels in September and October 2020 but declining again in the following months. Even though the negative peaks align with the national lock-downs, both dwell time and number of visits per annum were in decline from Dec 2017 following the Triennial in Q4, while footfall had only marginally increased between 2018 and 2019.

Trends between December 2016 - December 2020

- Total number of trips to the High Street was 10,414,883 between December 2019 and December 2020, down 16% within the past 4 years
- The average number of visits per annum was 10 between December 2019 and December 2020, down 17% within the past 4 years
- Average dwell time was 95 minutes between December 2019 and December 2020, down by 18% within the past 4 years.
- Average indoor locations visited per trip was 2.5 between December 2019 and December 2020, down by 7% within the past 4 years.



Total visit change by month (%) Dec 2019 - Dec 2020



Footfall levels (Dec 2017 - Dec 2020)



Dwell time (Dec 2017 - Dec 2020)



Visits per annum (Dec 2017 - Dec 2020)



Number of indoor places visited per trip (Dec 2017 - Dec 2020)



↑ Town Centre Footfall Visitor Behaviours over a 12 month period (Dec 2019 - Dec 2020)
Source: Folkestone visitor insight Baseline Report December 2019 - 2020



Average visits by hour (Dec 2017 - Dec 2020), source: Folkestone visitor insight Baseline Report December 2019 - 2020

4.12

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Connections & severance

The Town Centre suffers from a number of obstacles to movement. The most obvious is the ring road, which is designed to carry large volumes of vehicle traffic that was needed when there was a Port. This has resulted in pedestrian movement being severed with very few or fragmented crossing points. During a site visit, it seems as though many pedestrians cross the road informally. There are also a couple of subways which are underused.

Bouverie Place turns its back on the ring road with its 'big box retail' units facing inward. The blank facade, car park access and inactive frontage dominates first impressions when walking down Cheriton Road from the Station.

The steep topography of part of Folkestone brings both character and problems of access. The steep cliffs in particular create a division between the town centre and the sea. The drop from the town centre to Tontine Street also creates difficulty of movement.

KEY

- Problematic inactive frontage
- ↔ Existing links across railways
- ⚡ Severance due to road
- ⚡ Severance due to rail
- ⚡ Severance due to natural barriers
- Town Centre boundary
- Ship Street opportunity site
- Extension of Town Centre

N 0 200m



4.12 TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Connections & severance



↑ Middleburg Square forming an impenetrable boundary to the town centre.



↑ Oxford Terrace looking towards Guildhall Street



↑ The junction where West Terrace meets The Leas and Road of Remembrance - should be an important pedestrian node



↑ Shellons Street Gyratory - a key arrival point from the station. Currently a green space trapped by roads.



↑ A number of service or vehicle access spaces dominated the north side of the town centre.



↑ The start of The Leas Coastal Park promenade







4.13

TRANSPORT & MOVEMENT

Views & vistas

1. Views from or along The Leas
2. The view from the beach looking back on the town above
3. The view towards Holy Trinity Church from Bouverie Road West
4. The view up Sandgate Road from Guildhall Street, and vice versa, looking towards the Old Town Hall (now Waterstone's).
5. Up and down The Old High Street
6. Looking up towards, from Harbour Street, The Eagle, No 1 The Parade, with its extraordinary tower, with lookout
7. The view into Clifton Gardens from The Leas
8. Castle Hill Avenue is a major artery through the historic residential part of Folkestone, as is Earl's Avenue, which runs parallel to it
9. The views looking out from The Leas towards the Harbour and the White Cliffs to the east, and the panoramic views over Sandgate and Hythe Bay to Dungeness to the west
10. From the Harbour Arm to the Warren and White Cliffs
11. Augusta Gardens front crescent and the gardens themselves
12. Picturesque view from the harbour across to Martello Tower No 3
13. View and setting from the Central Railway Station, greatly improved by Kingsnorth Gardens and trees around and in the Wyevale Garden Centre
14. Foord Valley Railway Viaduct visible from Junction 13 of the M20

KEY

-  Significant buildings as landmarks
-  Significant roads/streets/viaducts
-  Vistas
-  Town Centre boundary
-  Ship Street opportunity site
-  Extension of Town Centre

N 0 200m




4.13
TRANSPORT &
MOVEMENT

Views & vistas



↑ Grace Chapel and the hills beyond



↑ View through an alleyway next to The Guildhall



↑ View down Rendezvous Street



↑ View through an alley from Bayle Street.



↑ Folkestone Viaduct - Foord Road Section



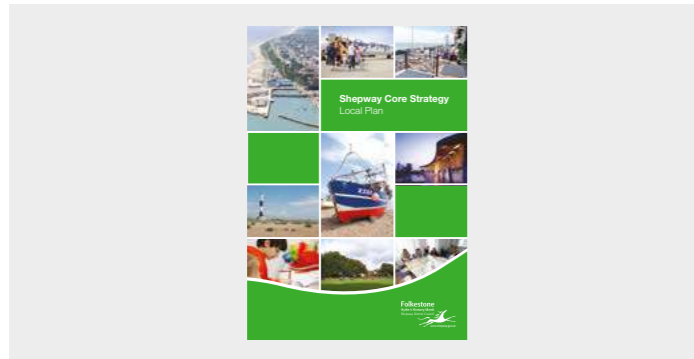
↑ The start of The Leas Coastal Park promenade

5.0
POLICY, STUDIES &
STRATEGIES



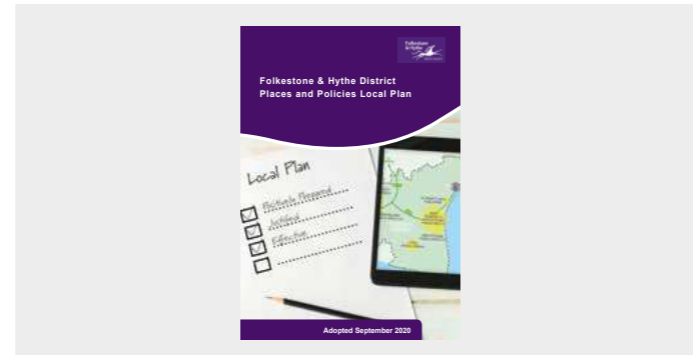
5.1 RELEVANT POLICY, STUDIES & STRATEGIES REVIEW

Overview



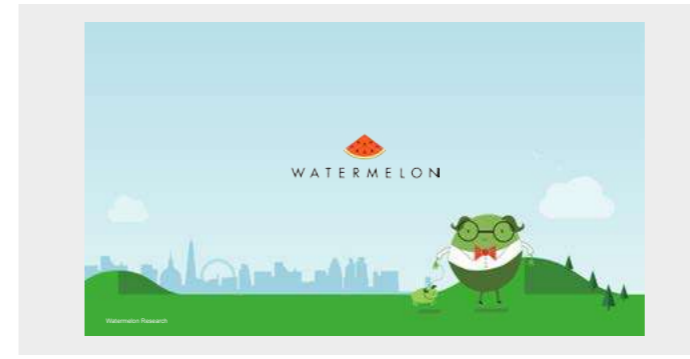
Folkestone & Hythe District Council Core Strategy, 2013

The Core Review sets out a vision for Folkestone and Hythe from 2019 - 2037. A separate Places and Policies Local Plan was developed alongside and recently adopted, which identifies sites for development in the period leading up to 2031.



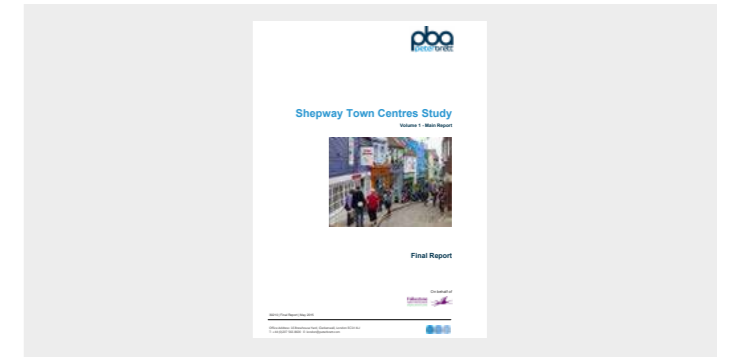
Places and Policies Local Plan, Adopted 2020

The Places and Policies Local Plan was developed alongside the Core Strategy Review to guide development in the area. It sets Policies to guide key housing development sites, most of which are outside of the Town Centre Area. Critical infrastructure projects described for Folkestone include improvements for vehicles and pedestrians and provision of new primary schools.



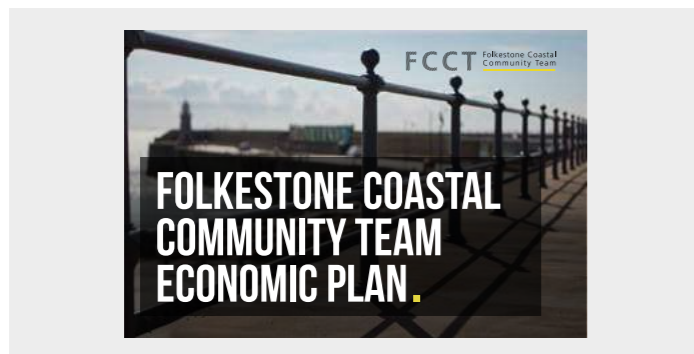
Market Research, Watermelon Consultants, 2019/2020

Online and face to face survey carried out at the end of 2019 to understand perceptions of Folkestone from residents, visitors, local businesses and businesses looking to locate.



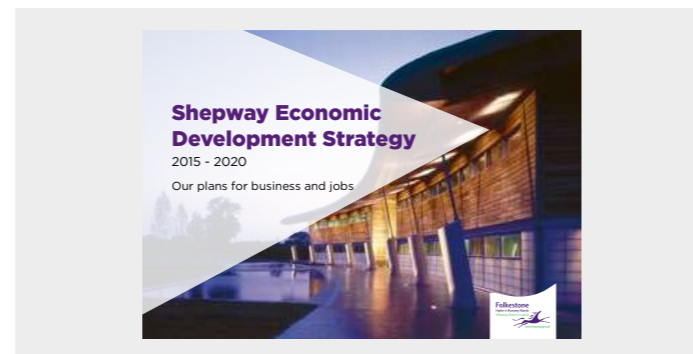
Shepway Town Centre Study, Brett Associates, 2015

Undertaken to support the People and Places Local Plan. The report highlighted factors such as the absence of an evening economy and highlighted a number of development opportunities. The study offers a series of conclusions, including based on the consultation as part of the People and Places Local Plan. A series of recommendations and strategies area made.



Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2016

Community Team and Economic Plan formed following funding from MHCLG. Projects aimed to address issues as identified in FHSF EOI, which fed in to application for Coastal Community Funding. These included branding to promote Folkestone, enhancing the street scene, providing a sustainably managed street market and enabling better connectivity. More jobs and apprenticeships for economic regeneration are highlighted.



Shepway/FHDC Economic Development Strategy, 2015 - 2020

Identifies development sites for commercial development to boost local economy and job opportunities, for example sites around the district's three junctions with the M20. Strategy focuses on prioritising building on existing economic strengths, boosting productivity and supporting business growth, promoting further investment and improving education and skills attainment.



Future High Streets Fund Application, March 2019

The strategic ambition sets out a plan for the Town Centre which includes considering new uses for under-utilised retail, bringing forward development opportunities to improve leisure offer, providing high quality business accommodation, improving vibrancy to attract investment, addressing transport and pedestrian connectivity.

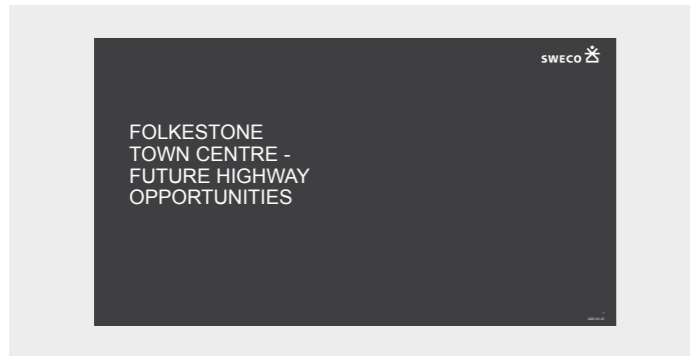


FHDC High Streets Fund, Ongoing

FHDC have set up a high street grant scheme to support improvements and innovation on the high street, valued between £5,000 to £50,000. Successful applications so far include refurbishment of existing units, a food hall in Market Square, public realm improvements by Folkestone Town Council, Leas Lift Escape room. Other applications have been recently submitted and await decision.

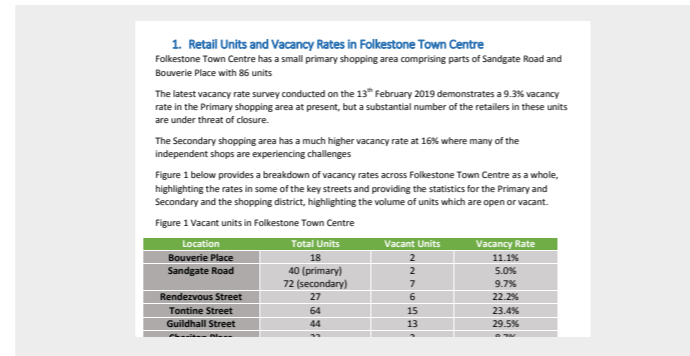
5.1 RELEVANT POLICY, STUDIES & STRATEGIES REVIEW

Overview



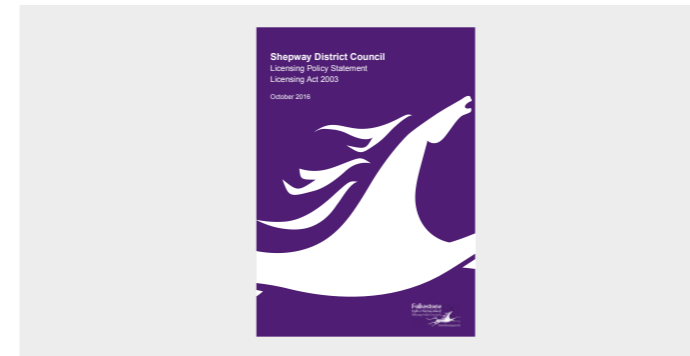
Highway Modelling, SWECO, 2020 Town Centre Future Highway Opportunities Report, SWECO, 2020

Developed with Kent County Council, this report gives a review of the current strengths, challenges and future opportunities for highways, public transport, pedestrian and cycle networks around Folkestone town centre. The effects of Folkestone Harbour Company (FHC)'s Masterplan to the movements and street function has been highlighted.



Vacancy Rate Survey, February 2019

Primary shopping area revealed 9.3% vacancy and secondary shopping area has 16%, with independent shops facing challenges. Guildhall Street has the highest vacancy with 29.5% with units that have also been vacant for the longest time. A few key retailers and anchor stores in the Town Centre are at risk and Debenhams has now closed.



Shepway District Council, Licensing Policy Statement, 2016

A review of the licensing policy will be carried out by NTIA as part of the engagement process. A plan for the future will inform a key part of the Place Plan.



Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031, Kent County Council

Identifies Folkestone as the largest town and main shopping destination within Shepway, sometimes suffering from congestion at peak times. The study also highlights the new transport routes and accessibility that will be introduced as part of the redevelopment of the harbour and seafront area.

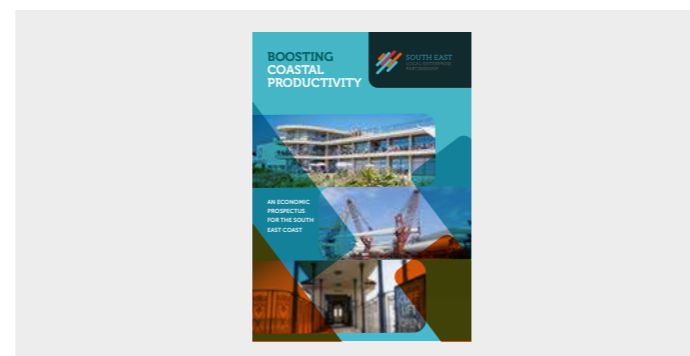


Shepway Employment Land Review, 2017

Identifies weaknesses such as lack of good quality commercial space, lack of road access to districts surrounding Folkestone and unsuitable available stock of offices.

East Kent Growth Framework, 2017

Identifies four key objectives for driving continued/sustained growth and focusing future investment; unlocking growth through infrastructure, delivery of business space, supporting innovation, productivity and skills, place making and shaping.



South East Local Enterprise Partnership Plan, 2020

Builds on closing the gap in economic performance and inclusion that exists in the South East Coastal region. Recognises the opportunities and the challenges faced by the region, and with support and investment seeks to deliver on the vision **SE LEP Local Growth Fund, 2016-2018** £5.6million funding provided for flood defence works for Folkestone Seafront development led by Sir Roger Da Haan's Folkestone Harbour & Seafront Development Company.



What Future for England's Struggling Seaside Towns, Shared Intelligence Briefing Paper

Highlights the importance of identifying and implementing interventions at a scale which will significantly alter the prevailing market dynamics **Future Seaside Towns Learning Note** Summarises the challenges facing seaside towns and captures the key discussion points from the policy roundtable on struggling seaside towns. Generates practical solutions for tackling severe levels of deprivation often found in seaside towns.



The Future of Towns & Cities post Covid-19, 2021

Highlights the challenges that town and city centres are facing due to the pandemic and recession. Highlights the need for local centres to redefine a new purpose in response to changing trends in footfall, working and consumer patterns. **Visit Kent, Covid-19 Business Impact Survey, 2020** Survey of Kent businesses to understand the impacts of the pandemic. Aspects that have been most affected included general footfall loss, impact on cash flow & impact on domestic group visits.

5.1 RELEVANT POLICY, STUDIES & STRATEGIES REVIEW

Other relevant strategies & initiatives

There are a wide range of positive initiatives taking place in Folkestone and a strengthening community offer which has potential to help support Town Centre development. A list below represents some of the groups that have been mentioned in strategies and policies as well as consulted as part of the People and Places Local Plan:

- Folkestone Town Team
- Up on the Downs
- White Cliff Countryside Partnership
- A Town Unearthed
- Creative Folkestone
- Shepway Business Advisory Board
- Folkestone Works
- Shepway Apprenticeship scheme
- Folkestone Coastal Community Team
- The Cube adult education

This list will be added to as the project develops.



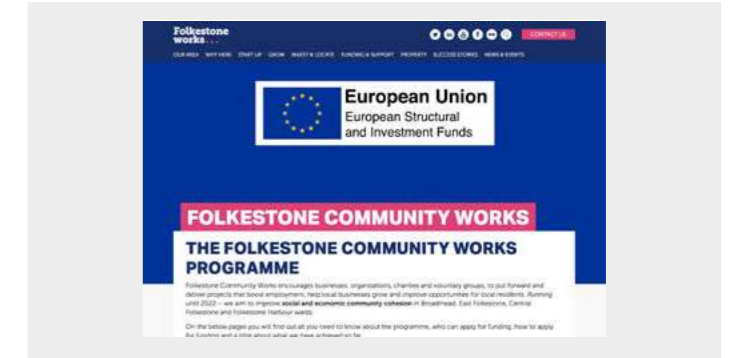
Lower Leas Coastal Park Improvements

HLF funding application submitted for 'Spirit of the Leas' capital works improvements to improve connectivity such as paths and a community engagement programme to improve understanding. The aim is to improve the Folkestone Coastal Park as a major tourist attraction. The Folkestone Leas Lift Company CIC set up in 2018 with the aim to get the lift back into action.



Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI)

The Folkestone Townscape Heritage Initiative (FTHI) is a partnership between Kent County Council, Folkestone & Hythe District Council and the private sector through the Creative Foundation. Heritage Lottery Fund provided funding for the partnership to help local communities improve the built environment in the Old Town. A number of projects were completed on the Old High Street, Rendezvous Street, Tontine Street and Church Street.



Folkestone Community Works Programme

EU funded Community Led Local Development (CLLD) to ensure that the town centre regeneration benefits residents and businesses in the most deprived parts of Folkestone; the eastern, harbour and central areas. Grants are included for SME businesses, a community hub and refurbished business accommodation for start-ups.



No Use Empty Campaign, 2005

County and District funded initiative to address vacant properties and encourage investment. Interest free loans are provided to developers. 127 Sandgate Road is now affordable apartments with an Architects office at ground floor.

Town Centre Animator

Retail consultant commissioned to start mid December to help curate Town Centre interventions.

Folkestone Independent Retail Regeneration Group
An emerging group of 80 businesses.



Folkestone Town Council Corporate Plan, 2017-2020

The plan states the aims, objectives and aspirations of the Town Council, which supercedes the Town Plan 2015-2020. Aims to deliver the vision by creating a better environment, representing local people, enhancing historic identity, improving community services and contributing to regeneration. Key missions include improving the appearance and quality of the environment as well as encouraging participation.



East Kent Growth Framework, 2018

Developed by five East Kent district authorities and Kent County Council. Sets out the case for investment including the need for Place Making and Shaping

Town Team Pop Up Shop

The Town Team 'pop up shop' on Guildhall Street in 2015 provided an important test bed for the charity United Response to set up, who have recently expanded to new premises Cheriton Road.

5.2 POLICY & STRATEGY REVIEW

FHDC Core Strategy Local Plan 2013

The Core Strategy Review sets out a vision for Folkestone and Hythe from 2019-2037 & identifies three strategic needs:

1. Improve employment, educational attainment and economic performance in the district
2. Enhance the management and maintenance of the rich natural and historic assets in the district
3. Improve quality of life and sense of place and the vibrancy and social mix of neighbourhoods, particularly where this minimises disparities

Number of sites and projects such as the Folkestone Seafront have now be taken forward.

Vision for Folkestone & Hythe District

- well connected to Europe
- recognised popular 'events town'
- West Folkestone and Sandgate will still be accessible & desirable seaside communities

Spatial Strategy for Folkestone & Hythe

- Develop Folkestone's centre, employment sites and deprived residential neighbourhoods, led by major opportunities on 'brownfield' land, and improved connectivity
- Accommodate new retail, leisure and an improved public environment at Folkestone
- Provide public access to major new green infrastructure
- majority of FHDC's commercial floorspace and the majority of the Urban Area's housing development will take place in Folkestone
- good transport connections open up central and northern Folkestone for investment
- the character and quality of the natural environment provides networking opportunities

Housing and Economic Growth

- The Employment Land Review summarises the impact of HS1 as: *"Overall, it is likely that faster rail links in combination with Folkestone's relatively low house prices will attract new population, including some higher skilled workers. Initially, many of these workers may out-commute to jobs elsewhere, but there is potential in the longer term for some to relocate or set up local businesses within Shepway. This should contribute to encouraging indigenous business*

growth within the District."

- FHDC has a wide range of existing business premises and locations, with recent progress having been made on bringing forward large sites (including Shearway Business Park in Folkestone)
- Attracting and maintaining office and modern business uses is important to stimulating growth
- Town Centre is the most sustainable and viable location for major retail, leisure and office development across FHDC

FHDC Transport Strategy

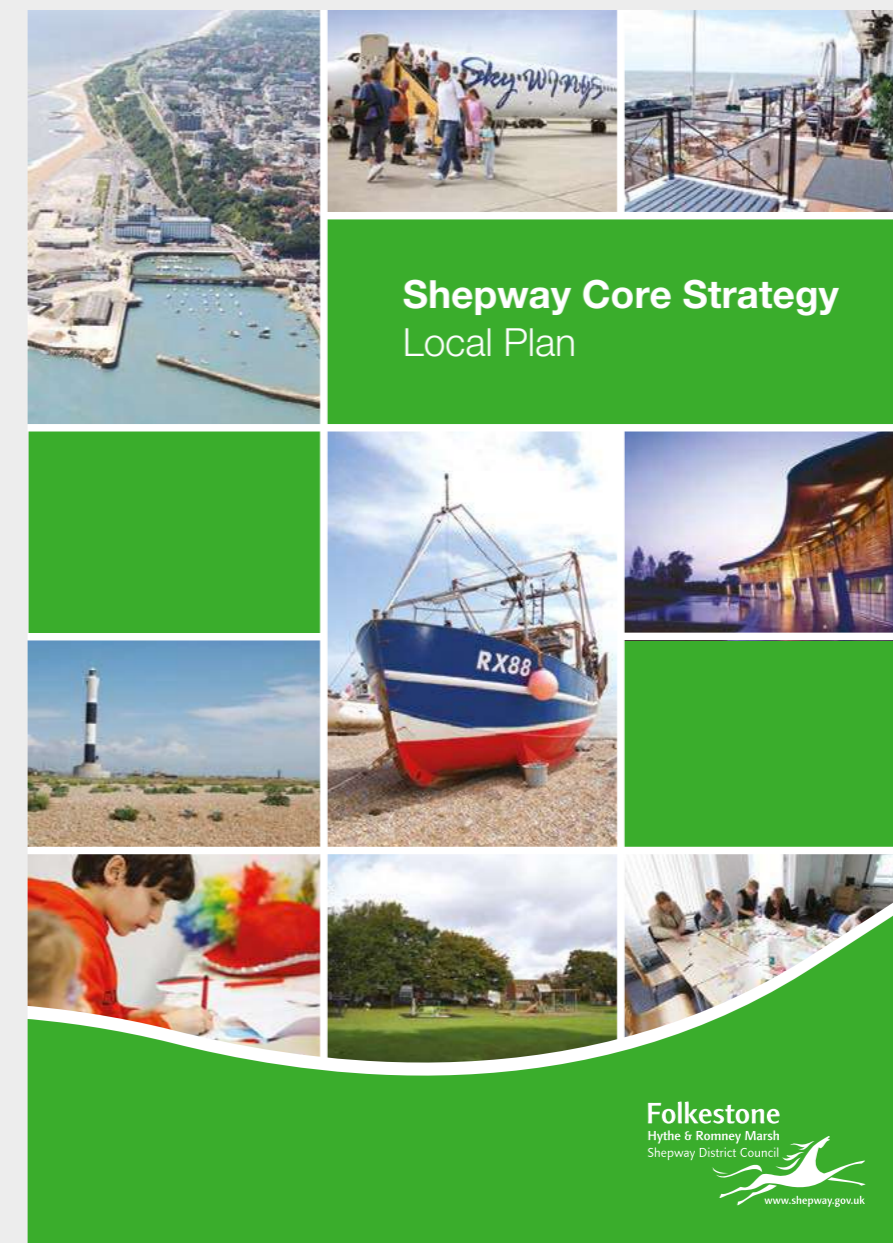
- highlights a highways review needed to assess feasibility of replacing and improving the one-way system in Folkestone with a two-way system that improves connectivity and access

The Urban Area sets out the rationale for Central Folkestone as: "Reasserting its role as an appealing, well-connected, sub-regional centre for commerce, culture, tourism and a high-quality coastal living environment. Framework set for charitable and private sectors Central Folkestone working in partnership, to secure spatial and sectoral spin offs to other parts of the town."

The importance of enhancing further and higher education provision and sport provision are listed. Opportunities to tackle deprivation include job creation, re-skilling & training programmes as part of developer contributions in partnership with KCC and voluntary sector organisations.

Central Folkestone Strategy

- Upgrading of buildings and public realm interventions to reflect the key attributes of the historic character from the Bayle to the Harbour
- Improvements around Bouverie Square/Shellon Street, and Cheriton Road railway bridge/Castle Hill Avenue junction area (entrance to station)
- Enhance pedestrian connectivity between Folkestone Central station and the town centre
- Improve connectivity between the town centre, creative quarter and the coast and harbour for pedestrians and buses, utilising routes through The Leas, Payers Park, Tontine Street and Green Walkway/national cycle route.



5.2

POLICY & STRATEGY REVIEW

Places and Policies Local Plan, 2020

The Places and Policies Local Plan sits below the Core Strategy and has two functions: to allocate enough land for future development to meet the requirements set out in the Core Strategy and to provide development management policies.

Folkestone as a sub-regional town

This is the highest-order centre in the district, meaning substantial residential, commercial and social development should be accommodated, and where the focus should be for retail, leisure, cultural and public services for the whole of the district.

Part One: Urban Character Area; Folkestone

Strategically critical infrastructure requirements are set out as follows (Core Strategy, Appendix 2):

- Upgrades to improve vehicular capacity, safety, ease of use, and cycle and pedestrian movement at Cheriton High Street A20/Spur junction;
- Folkestone Seafront priority connections including Tram Road;
- Upgrade of facilities, including pedestrian accessibility and public realm improvements for both stations;
- Improved bus network;
- Provision of new two form entry primary school at Shorncliffe; and
- Provision of public access open space and nature conservation area at Seabrook/Shorncliffe.

Specific sites identified in Folkestone:

- Policy UA1 East Station Goods Yard, Folkestone
- Policy UA2 Rotunda and Marine Parade Car Parks, Lower Sandgate Road, Folkestone
- Policy UA3 The Royal Victoria Hospital, Radnor Park Avenue, Folkestone
- Policy UA4 3-5 Shorncliffe Road, Folkestone
- Policy UA5 Ingles Manor, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone
- Policy UA6 Shepway Close, Folkestone
- Policy UA7 Former Gas Works, Ship Street, Folkestone
- Policy UA8 Highview School, Moat Farm Road, Folkestone
- Policy RL12 Harbour Line Railway

Part Two: Development Management Policies

Guidance on a range of topics; Housing and the Built Environment; Economy; Retail and Leisure; Community; Transport; Natural Environment; Climate Change; Health and Wellbeing; and Historic Environment.

New employment allocation sites

Folkestone Harbour is listed as a site. Other sites include Shearway Business Park, Cheriton Parc, Ingles Manor, Park Farm, AffinityWater site.

Tourism

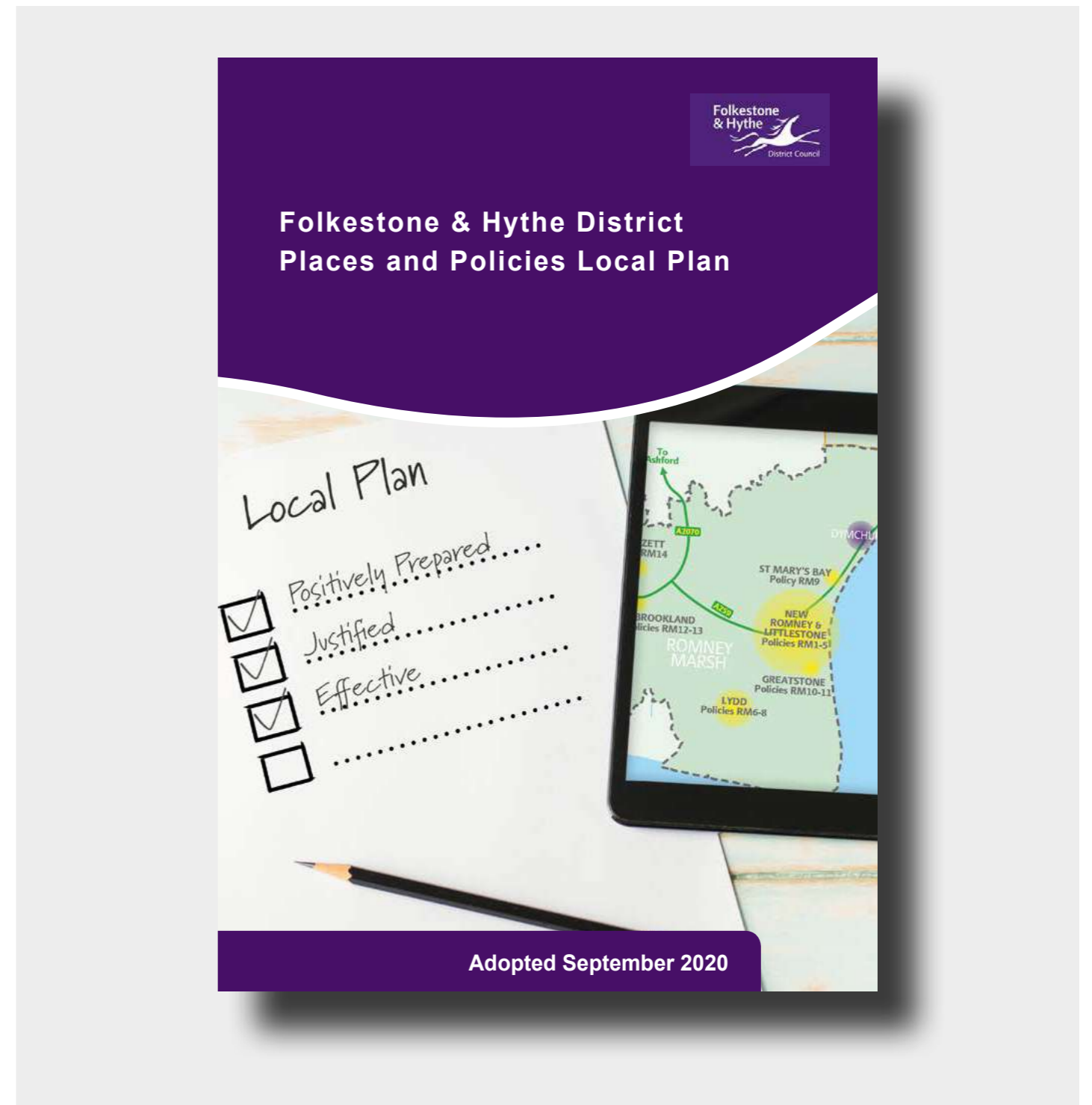
New initiatives, such as the Creative Quarter are cited as a reason to travel to F&H, along with water-related sports, heritage assets & wild landscapes.

Other points to note:

- Locally Kent County Council (KCC) is working with BDUK to improve access to superfast broadband services through 'Making Kent Quicker'
- Folkestone is a designated Town Centre; the Central/West Development Arc and the Seafront/Creative Regeneration Arc are set out
- Folkestone is defined as a 'Main Town Centre' in the retail hierarchy and is the focus for comparison goods shopping, civic facilities, tourism, arts and culture in the district
- The Creative Quarter is listed as an important asset but needs better integration into the centre
- KCC carried out a Heritage Strategy which cited heritage assets as a catalyst for economic & social regeneration, encouraging tourism and contributing to improved health & wellbeing
- Natural environment, Climate Change and Health & Wellbeing feature as separate policies
- Folkestone has significant historic gardens

Priorities to address:

- Lack of an evening economy reduces appeal
- High level of vacant units
- Lack of connections between town, seafront & railway station
- The need for improvement to the public realm;
- Maximising events in arts and culture
- Support for the hotel sector and green links
- Need to enhance the 'café culture'
- Bus station & Guildhall Street sites highlighted



5.2 POLICY & STRATEGY REVIEW

Town Centre study,
Peter Brett Associates
2015

The study was undertaken to support the People and Places Local Plan. The report highlighted factors such as the absence of an evening economy and highlighted a number of development opportunities.

Highlighted issues:

- reasonable diversity of use
- absence of evening economy
- high number of vacant units
- majority of stock is small
- tourism offer is important
- Creative Quarter complements 'mainstream' offer but the two need to be integrated
- potential for development of The Street market
- physical geography reinforces division to harbourside
- secondary retail areas in need of uplift
- focus of retail is day to day uses and not specialised
- investment in Guildhall Street is needed in the short term due to the high vacancy numbers

Development Opportunities:

- bus station
- Sainsbury's
- Railway gateway
- enhance links in key locations

Key conclusions from consultation:

- Folkestone lacks a competitive leisure offer. Opportunities suggested include cinema, bowling and ice rink
- develop a cafe and restaurant quarter at the top of the High Street as part of improving the night time economy
- encourage tourism through emphasising the town's history and heritage
- support for site and retail unit amalgamation along Guildhall Street

Proposed strategy:

- clear governance structure
- physical development to enhance retail and leisure offer
- interventions to improve the retail circuit

- environmental and public realm improvements
- supportive planning policy
- set up Town Centre Management
- support for key independent retailers

Proposed strategy for Guildhall Street:

- promote redevelopment of existing units to for larger and more modern ones to improve footfall
- link to Bouverie Place
- Council should support policy for redevelopment of units in this area
- investigate land assembly opportunities



5.2 POLICY & STRATEGY REVIEW

Folkestone Market Research, 2019

Watermelon carried out a market research survey at the end of 2019 to understand perceptions of Folkestone from residents, visitors, local businesses and businesses looking to locate. A high number of online and face to face surveys were completed. The following summary is based on the findings.

Resident Perceptions:

- satisfaction as a place to live is below the national average
- satisfaction of offer in retail, evening entertainment and community cohesion is weak
- positives include natural coastal environment, harbour arm and sense of community
- dislikes include social issues, aesthetic appearance, lack of amenities and shops
- better choice of shops would encourage a longer visit
- evening activities would encourage overnight stays

Perceptions as a Business Location:

- small sample size
- transport connectivity key for local businesses
- affordability key strength for London businesses
- geographical location key concern for London businesses, as well as suitable business space
- local businesses have relatively low satisfaction
- key concerns that need addressing are transport connectivity and a lack of appropriate skilled workforce

Visiting Folkestone:

- important reasons are retail and food offer, natural assets, visiting friends/family
- scope to increase Folkestone promotion
- visitors dislike are social, retail and amenities issues, parking as well as aesthetics (particularly the town centre and Grand Burstin hotel)
- better offer of retail, events, parking would encourage people to stay longer
- more evening activities and accommodation choice (3-4*) would encourage staying overnight

Use of Folkestone's Amenities:

- independent shops are an important offer for

visitors with a desire to support local (younger residents more likely to visit independents)

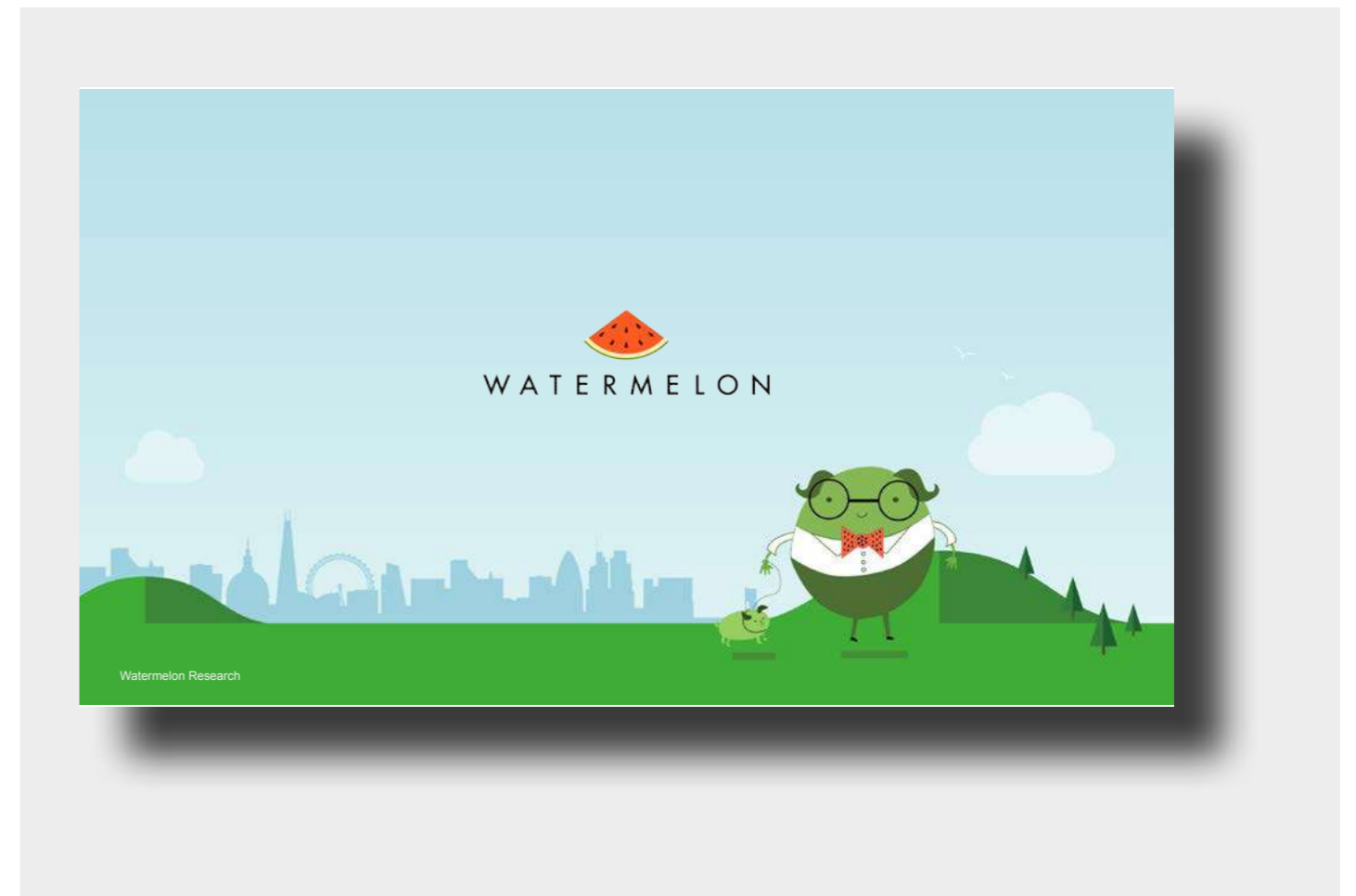
- scope to encourage frequency of visits by local residents as well as visitors. Better choice of shops likely to have the most impact
- Improvements in night time activities, such as nightlife and cinema, is a common desire

Improving Folkestone for Residents and Visitors:

- focus on shopping, evening entertainment, sense of community and promoting attractions and events
- emphasis on desire to see improvements to retail offer in next 5 years
- medium term improvements include better development (not losing current character), parking, amenities and activities, especially for families (eg swimming, icerink, bowling)
- Canterbury, Ashford and Brighton are important references due to mix of shops, parking, choice of amenities and activities
- Successful regeneration of sense of community also features for some
- support current cinema

Attracting London Businesses to Locate :

- focus on making 'pull factors' work harder, overcome perceived location and transport barriers, overcome perceived barrier to accessing a skilled workforce
- key driver is availability of appropriate premises, proximity, transport links and access to customer
- perceptions of lower cost and lifestyle potential are reasons to consider relocating
- encouragement or support such as grants, premises and business rates may encourage London-based businesses to consider relocation



5.2 POLICY & STRATEGY REVIEW

FHDC Economic Development Strategy, 2015-2020

Identifies an action plan for driving the economy forward based on the following key headlines.

Building on Economic Strengths

- promote key sectors (these include financial services, creative industries, business and professional services, transport and logistics, energy, tourism culture retail and recreation, advanced manufacturing)
- enhancing our towns and coasts (enhancing retail and entertainment offer is an important part of attracting business to the area)

Boosting productivity and supporting business growth

- encouraging more business start-ups and improving survival rates (SMEs dominate FHDC's economy with around 85% businesses having 0-9 employees)
- supporting businesses to grow
- attracting new businesses (and encourage highly skilled locals to stay)
- providing infrastructure to support business growth (importance of high speed broadband)

Promoting Further Investment

- identifying and bringing forward appropriate sites for commercial development (employment land allocations and building stock currently inappropriate to meet business growth potential)
- encourage development of commercial premises
- identify public sector financial resources
- maximising the impact of SDC's assets/resources

Improving Education and Skills Attainment

- building on FHDC Council's Apprenticeship Scheme
- work with education and training provider to meet employers needs
- support East Kent College
- establish closer links with Hadlow College

Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2016

Projects identified in Folkestone Coastal Community Team Economic Plan, 2016:

- Masterplan to focus on issues such as disconnect between Bouverie Place and rest of Centre; regeneration of Guildhall Street; specialist quarters; connecting Old High Street-Rendezvous Street – Guildhall Street; traffic, bus and pedestrian flows; better connection between Harbour / Seafront to Town Centre
- Marketing and branding
- Connectivity eg wi-fi, local shuttle buses
- Enhance connections between Seafront and Town Centre
- Heritage, built and coastal environment - complement existing initiatives and develop Heritage Strategy
- Short term goals that should have already been achieved include public realm environmental improvements, Radnor Park Lodge and gardens, Tontine Street public art, Christ Church Clock Tower, Noel's Yard events, Folkestone Business Hub



6.0
PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT
FINDINGS



6.0

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

What have people said so far?

An extensive engagement process will help to ensure that the Place Plan will be guided by the views of people living, working and visiting in Folkestone; both internal teams, strategic stakeholders, local stakeholders and the wider community. Up until 2019, Folkestone visitors, businesses and residents have expressed opinions about Folkestone related to the following reports, studies and engagement processes:

- Leas Pavilion engagement process report
- Watermelon Market Research (2019)
- Letters of support and employee's survey (2019) as part of Future High Streets Fund EOI
- Peter Brett Associates Town Centre Study (2015)
- Coastal Community Team workshops (2016)

The Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2015) sets out the strategy for how local people were involved as part of the Local Plan development.

The next section is a summary of common perceptions based on these previous studies and engagement processes. They provide a snapshot of findings that will set the scene and be reflected as an important part of our engagement process. We will update this document with our findings as our conversations progress.

Many residents are satisfied with Folkestone as a place to live but satisfaction appears to be below the national average and is particularly low among 16-24 year olds (Watermelon).

The retail offer, evening entertainment/ nightlife and community cohesion are areas where satisfaction is weaker – less than half of residents are happy with what the area's current offer (Watermelon).

Residents' dislikes about Folkestone most commonly include social issues and aesthetic problems such as being tired, run down or scruffy (Watermelon).

There is potential to increase the time visitors spend in the area. While half were only in Folkestone for a few hours, an improved offer could encourage a longer visit (Watermelon).

There may also be scope to increase overnight visits. Almost a quarter could be encouraged to stay overnight by either more evening activities or improvements in accommodation choices (Watermelon).

Folkestone Town Centre itself is generally seen as being synonymous with the Bouverie Place Shopping Centre by around two thirds of respondents (Council Employee's perception survey 2019)

6.0

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENT FINDINGS

What have people said so far?

Almost all respondents (96%) visit Folkestone town centre at weekends, mainly for shopping and eating and drinking. These visits are mostly limited to visits during the day and not at night, despite 47% walking into the town centre (Council employees).

Mapping perceptions of Folkestone's offer against importance to businesses suggests transport connectivity and access to an appropriately skilled workforce as key priorities.

Folkestone Town Centre currently does not offer an experience, range of products or services to encourage the local community to visit regularly (Council employees).

Choice and experience were mentioned and respondents cited the main attractions of the town being the Harbour Arm, Creative Quarter and Coastal Park (Council employees).

Residents and visitors say a better choice of shops would encourage them to use the town centre more often, followed by better parking, nightlife and recreation facilities.

"Encourage local residents (e.g. from West End) to shop and spend more in the town centre".

"Appearance of the town is essential – need to improve entrances so people have a good first impression of the town." (PBA engagement)

Folkestone shouldn't try and compete with the larger other centres. Canterbury has a unique offer; Maidstone has a larger town centre and offer. Folkestone needs to build its own identity based on coastal town and cultural offer. (PBA study)

There is some openness to considering Folkestone as a business location, but distance is seen as a barrier. There is an important "perception" gap around proximity to London.

7.0
URBAN APPRAISAL
KEY FINDINGS



Image credit: Fletcher Priest

7.0

URBAN APPRAISAL

KEY FINDINGS

Visiting Folkestone

<p>Folkestone is already an attractive place to visit.</p> <p>Beautiful beaches, strong heritage and excellent train & road links to London and Europe have supported a growing visitor economy in recent years. Station usage data, with over 1.8 million entries and exits made at the two stations in the town in 2019/2020, shows a 19% increase on 2015 levels and a 65% increase on 2010.</p>	<p>Folkestone has good transport links but lacks a sense of arrival.</p> <p>Arrival from the station is disconnected and lacks wayfinding to the town centre and local assets.</p> <p>Bouverie Place offers the only recognisable landmark of arrival into the town centre but has poor visual appeal. There is no central public square or welcoming entrance</p>	<p>Lack of quality hotels.</p> <p>Whilst the development of the Creative Quarter has boosted visitors, hotel investment has lagged behind. Provision of good quality 3-4* hotels would promote the evening economy and improve visitor satisfaction.</p>	<p>Access to the coast should be stitched through to the town centre.</p> <p>The seafront, Cultural Quarter and the harbour areas are landmark attractions but are not well connected.</p> <p>As a coastal gateway to Europe, a harbour location with historic significance and an existing seaside destination, this character is not necessarily apparent in all parts of the town centre.</p>	<p>Heritage assets could be further celebrated.</p> <p>Heritage assets are of significant importance to the southern areas of the town centre and coastline. Current policy lacks identification of these assets.</p> <p>The conservation area around Church Street and The Bale contain empty units and is threatened by planned residential development.</p>	<p>The Cultural Quarter and developing food culture is putting Folkestone on the map.</p> <p>Creative Folkestone, the Triennial & other festivals have put the Town on the map. The Quarter has created new jobs & the creative economy is becoming increasingly recognised locally and nationally. With the opening of high end restaurants such as Rocksalt, the cafe and restaurant offer is becoming a reason to travel to Folkestone.</p>
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Opportunities for the Place Plan

<p>Better pedestrian links and public realm around the town centre area will help to stitch under-used areas back together, placing an emphasis away from the Cultural Quarter.</p>	<p>Improving connectivity and wayfinding to the station area will improve footfall in the town centre area.</p>	<p>Encourage the development of hotel developments to promote overnight visitor economy.</p>	<p>Explore opportunities to connect other parts of the town centre to the coast and coastal heritage, whether physically or through activities and uses.</p>	<p>The Place Plan should seek to celebrate listed and/or characterful buildings in the town centre such as The Folkestone Museum through uses and public realm interventions.</p>	<p>The Place Plan should build on the success of Creative Folkestone's investment in programmes & events, helping to promote this strong offer. Diversity and accessibility of offer is important.</p>
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URBAN APPRAISAL

KEY FINDINGS

Living in Folkestone

Central & north-eastern Folkestone has pockets of severe deprivation.

In Folkestone Central and Harbour wards, 30% of children live in low income households compared to 20% across FHD and 18% nationally. This contrasts to communities in the south-west who are some of the least deprived nationally. The disparity in health, well-being & quality of life outcomes contributes to the sense of an increasingly divided town.

Skills levels are comparatively low compared to the rest of Kent, the South East and England averages.

Data is only available at FHD level, but shows a higher proportion of residents with no qualifications and a lower percentage with degree-level or above than those comparators. Youth unemployment is as high as 5% in some parts of the town centre, compared to 3% in FHD and 2% in Kent .

Folkestone needs to attract and retain young people to live and work in the town.

Folkestone has a higher proportion of working age people (aged 16-65) living in the town than the FHD and Kent averages. This relatively large potential workforce means that the town has strong productive capacity. However, forecasts show that the working age population is likely to stagnate and there could be as much as a +53% growth in residents aged over 65 .

Housing in the town centre is poor quality & unaffordable.

There is a high proportion of private rented housing in the town centre (52%) compared to district (20%) and county (15%) levels. However, comparatively cheaper house prices in the town (compared to outer coastal areas) are increasingly attracting young workers & families. Data shows that housing affordability levels in Folkestone (ratio of house prices to income) are the lowest in Kent.

There is a need to increase shared feelings of identity and community cohesion in Folkestone.

A study on social capital by Kent County Council found that Folkestone Central Ward had one of the lowest social capital (defined as formation of networks and trust between people) in the county. Folkestone has seen its social capital go from strength to strength in recent years, associated with the growing creative sector & range of community groups.

Opportunities for the Place Plan

Focussing short term physical improvements in the tightly deprived geography could act as positive precursor to longer term improvements.

Build on the success of the Folkestone Community Works programme and ensure continued support beyond the end of the project in 2022.

There is opportunity to improve attainment & provide pathways for young people into higher education, by capitalising on the recent investment in Folkestone College and improving links with universities in Canterbury.

Provide pathways into work, training and skills development for young people to address low skills levels and help to retain young people. In some cases, given the lower supply of available jobs, this will mean looking for new routes into education and other positive activities.

New developments must work for Folkestone & complement the town centre. Deprived and long-established communities need to benefit from and have a role in shaping these new developments. Housing must continue to be affordable for Folkestone's residents & attracting young people.

Boosting a sense of belonging and civic pride. Supporting increased community participation and volunteering is essential for creating local prosperity and enabling a greater sense of ownership and social integration.

7.0

URBAN APPRAISAL KEY FINDINGS

Town Centre uses

Footfall has fallen in the town centre.

Footfall has fallen 16% in the past 4 years according to the Folkestone visitor insight Baseline Report. The Turner Bates Study in 2019 highlighted leakage to neighbouring towns such as Ashford due to leisure offer. With 10,000sqm of commercial space coming as part of the seafront development, this problem could be exacerbated and also increase the perception of a 'town of two halves'.

The retail offer reflects wider trends.

Vacancy rates are high; a survey conducted in February 2019 for the FHSF EOI found that 14.9% of units are vacant across the town centre. The Secondary shopping area has a higher vacancy rate of 16%. This fits with UK-wide trends the decline of the traditional high street, the restructuring of the economy around new sectors & the changing tourism sector. Perceptions are that the independent retail offer is strong but tends to cater to a younger audience.

Visual perception of the town centre is poor.

There is a need for visual improvements to add vibrancy and improve quality of environment.

There are large areas around Bouverie Place & the bus station being used for service access, waste management and parking. Back of house and service areas create blank frontages and edges, contributing to a perceived lack of quality public realm in the central town centre area.

Natural assets are within close proximity.

Rural landscapes, AONB, coastline and parks are within close proximity. This offers an opportunity to further encourage active lifestyles, supporting health & well-being in post pandemic recovery.

The Sandgate Road part of the town centre is close to the sea front and yet very disconnected. There is an opportunity for vistas and connections to be a real asset to the town centre.

The evening economy is limited.

Few businesses are open into the evening and many close before 7pm. There is a lack of quality guest accommodation & hotels which limits options for overnight stays.

There is no particular focus for night time activity.

Otterpool Park should attract more footfall.

This opportunity should be maximised through strategic investment in the town centre to ensure its attractiveness for this new catchment. Folkestone town centre should be the major town centre of choice for the 20,000+ thousand new residents of Otterpool Park. This will support quality of life in the new town, and business opportunities in Folkestone.

Opportunities for the Place Plan

The Place Plan should create a clear strategy for uses in the town centre that complements activity in the Creative Quarter, harbour area and seafront.

Attracting creative re-use to respond to support civic & community functions will build on the social value of the high street. Supporting a mix of uses will ensure a vibrant town centre and support Covid-19 recovery. More radical solutions include social value leases.

There is opportunity to soften the pedestrian environment by increasing greening and seating.

Develop a long term vision for spaces to the north of Sandgate Street and connections to the north.

Seek opportunities to improve links from the town centre to natural assets - especially the coastline from Sandgate Street. Make better use of underutilised green assets such as Leas Cliff, to create improved connections.

Introducing complementary new uses, markets, leisure and events will help expand the 24 hour economy. Longer opening times and hotel provision will support evening activation but should remain family friendly. A review of the current licensing policy is underway.

Proposals and strategies should take into consideration the potentially increased footfall from this future populations and aim to provide services and opportunities accordingly.

7.0

URBAN APPRAISAL

KEY FINDINGS

Investment & development

Working in Folkestone

The town centre needs an integrated approach.

Currently perceived as a town centre with two halves, previous development and private investment has been focused on the Cultural Quarter and Seafront/Harbour development. The focus must now be shifted so that the town centre provides an offer that is accessible to everybody and does not discourage those communities that are most deprived.

There are many opportunities for development in the town centre.

There have not been any major developments in the town centre apart from the seafront area. The Core Strategy lacks an over arching vision for Folkestone's town centre and its high streets. There are relevant opportunities in the town centre for residential development which can also support activity, but must include provision for those who are most deprived.

The town centre isn't a very attractive and supportive environment for business growth.

Business accommodation in the town centre is poor, with a limited offer of high-quality space for businesses, particularly for businesses to start-up in and scale. According to the PBA study in 2015, 72% of retail units are under 200 sqm in size. Many premises are constrained with small floor plates, lending themselves to independent retailers.

Folkestone is reliant on sectors that have been hit hardest by the pandemic.

Folkestone is reliant on tourism, leisure, and sectors impacted by Brexit including fishing and logistics. The latest data shows that those claiming Universal Credit or Jobseekers' Allowance is up 100% from January 2020. The high claimant rates in the town are likely to be made worse when furlough ends, worsening deprivation.

The nature of employment in Folkestone should be challenged.

Jobs are predominantly concentrated in the public admin, education and health sector (driven by employment in schools & the Royal Victoria Hospital). The retail & hospitality sectors are also dominant compared to national averages. District data shows that people working in FHD have lower weekly earnings than Kent, South East and national averages. There is also a degree of in work poverty

Opportunities for the Place Plan

Seek opportunities to encourage investment in the town centre core. Create opportunities for experimentation with alternative uses including social and community services.

Explore opportunities within the town centre for strategic and housing development that will help mitigate against some of the issues facing the core town centre and capitalise on potential.

The Place Plan must support the provision of suitable and affordable business accommodation, for example through physical changes and business support programmes.

The Place Plan must respond to the major challenges caused by Covid-19 and Brexit. There may be new opportunities related to changing work patterns, remote working and renewed focus on healthy living.

Skills and training support for residents as well as improvements within 'foundational' sectors are needed. New approaches to participation and local ownership will also help ensure more value is retained within the town, supporting better local outcomes.

7.0 URBAN APPRAISAL KEY FINDINGS

Transport & movement

The over-engineered, largely obsolete road network should be seen as an opportunity for radical change.

There is a complex highway network system and ring road with one-way streets that has not been updated following the closure of Folkestone's harbour. The ring road segregates the Station and forms a triangular loop around the town centre and buildings have turned their back to it.

Pedestrian & cycle environment and connections are poor.

Climate and coastal change will be particularly visible in this seaside location. Reliance on private vehicles for travel contributes to air pollution and overall emissions. The priority is currently for cars and there is deficient pedestrian and cycle friendly routes with no cycle infrastructure through the town centre.

Changes in topography provides physical barriers but brings character and opportunity.

Steep vertical distances have contributed to the fact that the retail and historic heart has become separated from the coastline. Opportunities for large scale growth are hindered by the geographic situation.

Alleyways, stairs and cut-throughs are important assets that give Folkestone its character but provide problems with accessibility.

Public transport systems are good and well used.

The high speed rail connection has been an important factor in attracting visitors and opportunities for work.

The bus network is very well used throughout the day for both local trips and connections to nearby towns, and is an important function for the town centre.

Opportunities for the Place Plan

Explore opportunities to remodel parts of this network to create exemplar people friendly public spaces, streets and routes

Provision for sustainable modes of transport, such as the cycling infrastructure, must be improved and encouraged.

Accessibility must be considered to overcome barriers to movement and reconnecting assets.

Improve connections to the train station. Capitalise on the existing bus network and consider public realm interventions that support this. Consider relocating the bus station if it can improve the passenger experience and maintain good access to the town centre, without adversely impacting on bus operations.

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