



Brixham Town Centre Master Plan

Proposed

An integral part of the Brixham Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan

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Preface

This Brixham Town Centre Master Plan is one of the set of documents which together form the Brixham Peninsula Neighbourhood Plan.

Recognising the importance of the Town Centre to Brixham, it sets out how a mixed-use development can address the current issues of poor transport arrangements, aesthetics and connectivity problems of the two main shopping streets. It will include space for new employment, housing and a town square.

In addition it considers how Oxen Cove and Freshwater Quarry can come forward for employment to support the working harbour and town's regeneration. This area could provide space for new marine related employment and enable shellfish processing on the Harbour Estate. It could also provide improved car parking provision.

This document and conceptual drawings have been warmly received. In part this is due to the early and full public engagement and the recognition of the need to protect residential amenity, heritage and conservation assets, and the town's role as a major tourist destination. Accordingly, the Policy Document seeks to ensure such early and full public engagement continues through to the planning application stage.

1 Key areas of focus

- Bolton Cross – the gateway to Brixham
- Market Street – a cohesive transport system
- Middle Street – the primary access road and artery to the fishing industry
- Fore Street – the primary retail trading centre of Brixham
- The Town Centre Redevelopment Site – (the missing link) an opportunity for change
- The Inner Harbour – Brixham’s identity
- The Outer Harbour – the future and beyond.

2 Bolton Cross – the gateway to Brixham

2.1 Critique

2.1.1 The former Threshers site situated at the corner of Bolton Cross has been awaiting redevelopment for the past few years and attempts to find a suitable developer were stymied by the high costs associated with its location and limited area for construction.

2.1.2 However, the land has been successfully transferred to YES (Youth Enquiry Service), a charitable organisation who have invested in the youth of Brixham and secured a number of successful redevelopments specifically aimed at housing and assisting young people in their home town. YES have now secured funding and are currently taking this development forward, which has an expected completion date after September 2017.

2.2 Proposals

- To redevelop the former Threshers site into a mixed use residential premises with 2 small ground floor business start-up units.
- To enhance the directional signage and key location signage including a “Welcome to Brixham” arch above Fore Street.
- To enhance pedestrian links across Bolton Cross including a Shared Surfacing for traffic and pedestrians.

3 Market Street – a cohesive transport system

3.1 Critique

- 3.1.1 The existing transport routes into the town are confusing and dangerous to vehicles and pedestrians alike. All vehicles including public transport, HGVs, taxis, coaches, cars and bicycles entering the town centre are directed into Market Street. The current layout consists of two lanes entering and one large lane (recently widened by the removal of the Threshers building) leaving the centre, and it is bisected by the cluster of buildings consisting of the Brixham Baptist Church, Hall and café/restaurant.
- 3.1.2 This route then splits into two, one directing traffic towards the harbour and the other directing traffic to the town centre car park or back out of Brixham following the route in. For the unfamiliar traveller, the need to decide on the most appropriate lane can be confusing and often leads to errors and erratic driving. The impact on this of the immediacy of the bus terminal, the entrance to the town’s central car park and the taxi rank all converging behind the Baptist Church only exacerbates the problem.
- 3.1.3 In addition, it is often the case that several double-decker buses wait at the terminus where there is insufficient space to park two vehicles of this size; therefore the second vehicle has no option but to extend out into the highway and ultimately into the path of vehicles attempting to access the car park.

Throw into the mix the pedestrians attempting to navigate their way across these roadways and the full experience of arriving in Brixham can be perceived.

3.2 Proposals

- To provide a designated and safe bus terminus with sheltered waiting area and public information hub.
- To provide enhanced directional signage and extended junctions to allow clearer wayfinding.
- To create two distinct routes into the town: one a designated bus lane leading directly to a repositioned terminus, the other to the harbour and new multi-storey car park accessed off Middle Street or alternatively leading back out of town.

4 Middle Street – the primary access road and artery to the fishing industry

4.1 Critique

4.1.1 With the position of the new Fish Quay and processing facilities between the inner and outer harbour it is essential that the primary route along Middle Street is improved for commercial vehicle use. This is particularly important if the future commercial plans for Oxen Cove and Freshwater Quarry are to be realized.

4.1.2 A clear and unobstructed route through the town is also essential for tourism and both are seen as vital elements to the economy of Brixham. It is recognised that during the summer months when tourism is at its peak commercial transit suffers. It is therefore imperative that neither element is considered to be at odds with the other. This context should be read in conjunction with wider transport improvements beyond the boundaries of Brixham, which have impacted on the commercial viability of the bay. This should occur alongside improvements in the retail offer in Middle Street.

4.2 Proposals

- To provide improvements in highway routes and road network geometry.
- To provide improvements in controlled parking facilities and less reliance on on-street parking.
- To provide enhanced way finding and directional signage for both commercial and tourist facilities.
- To improve the existing public realm and create an enclosed "urban corridor" through the town lined with buildings on both sides.
- To provide increased connectivity to Fore Street and other areas of the town centre to increase retail viability.

5 Fore Street – the primary retail trading centre of Brixham

5.1 Critique

5.1.1 Currently suffering from a glut of charity shops, empty units and "if only's", Fore Street needs a shot in the arm. Like most towns struggling to get out of the recession there is a tired quality to what was once a busy commercial centre. Investment in the built environment has lapsed from both the property owners and the local authority leading to a general feel of a town that has lost its way. Brixham is often referred to as the poor relation to both Paignton and Torquay and as such has difficulties attracting new investment.

5.1.2 Brixham's prominence as the commercial fishing and heritage centre of all the three towns in Torbay needs to be fully recognised and enhanced through further investment incentives. Such investment can be encouraged by local authority initiatives such as rate relief on existing business and new start-up business support, and grant assistance on building maintenance and property enhancement.

5.2 Proposals

- To provide improvements in road surfaces and street lighting.
- To provide improvements to the built environment and encourage owner participation.
- To encourage new businesses and reinforce existing businesses through support funding and rate relief.
- To actively promote and encourage artisan markets and create a destination town.

6 The Town Centre Redevelopment Site – (the missing link) an opportunity for change

6.1 Critique

6.1.1 Through the years this historic and important site has been home to a multitude of activities and uses, starting at the town's inception as an open watercourse, then being reclaimed and occupied as agricultural land, to cottage industry, housing and a gas works. In the post-war years the site was cleared to house a rather brutal multi-storey car park and bus terminus until these too were cleared in 2004. Since the loss of these facilities Brixham has been left with a gaping hole at its heart.

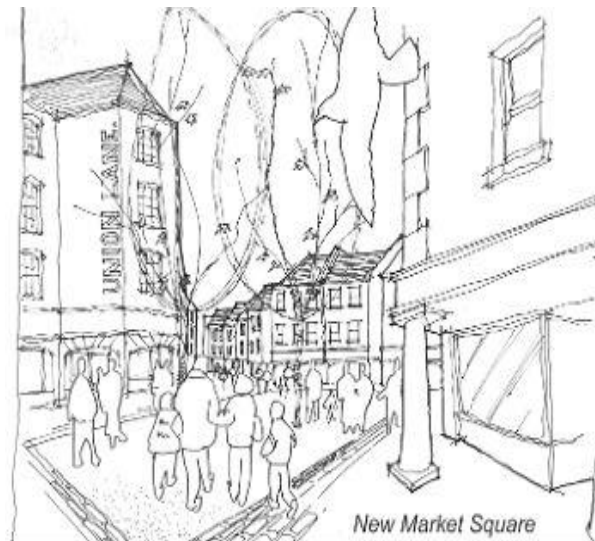
6.1.2 Over the years many schemes have been put forward in an attempt to rectify the situation and to provide a new town centre focus albeit based around a single large retail unit as was once the trend. Current thinking in the retail sector is that it is unlikely such a development would ever be possible again. Over the past few years consumer spending patterns have radically changed, largely as a result of online purchasing, but also as a result of the movement away from the department store scale of shopping. The industry has seen a return to smaller boutique retail outlets supported by an online supply network. The high street is becoming once again the shop window, but the need for stock handling is elsewhere.

- 6.1.3 Towns that are quick and flexible enough to respond to this are reaping the rewards. Those that aren't are slowly fading into decline. The latest venture to follow this strategy was the failed Tesco development proposal in 2012 which proposed a 2800 sqm of retail space in a single unit, with 218 sqm of secondary retail units, 14 residential units and a three-storey car park containing 338 spaces.
- 6.1.4 Despite receiving full planning permission from the local authority, the scheme was dropped due to the change in market conditions.
- 6.1.5 The objectives of Brixham's Peninsula Neighbourhood Forum are relatively simple: to create a new urban realm in harmony with the scale and context of the town that would complement the existing businesses rather than be in direct competition. Any scheme needs to offer a blend of uses akin to those successful model towns which promote their own unique selling point and at the same time must not remove the key ingredients such as safe and accessible parking and affordable housing.

6.2 Proposals

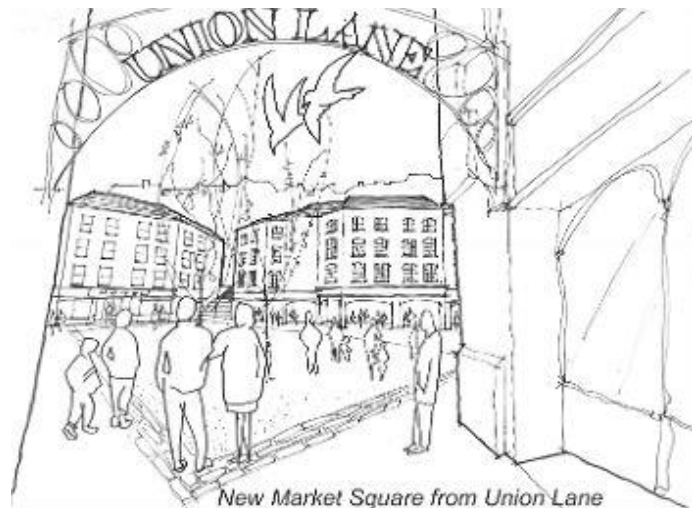
- To provide a new 200-space multi-storey car park.
- To provide small to medium (combined total 1450 sqm) ground floor level retail units to complement the size and scale of those on neighbouring Fore Street.
- To provide a medium to large (2250–3050 sqm) three- to four-storey mixed use commercial/hotel/retail unit.
- To provide 20 to 30 affordable housing units (first floor and second floor levels over ground floor retail units).
- To provide an attractive public realm and street scape interlaced with Fore Street to encourage a revitalized shopping experience to the existing town and increase inward investment and visitor spending.

- To provide a new sense of place and a Public Square for showcasing artisan markets, events and entertainment.



- To extend and enhance the lanes and passageways around the site to improve the tourist experience and encourage artisan workshops, galleries and small enterprise within these connective spaces (Paradise Place, Furze Lane, Pump Street, Beach Approach, Union Lane and several others as yet un-named).





7 The Inner Harbour – Brixham’s identity

7.1 Critique

7.1.1 Brixham’s inner harbour and as such its whole *raison d’être* is iconic. The natural amphitheatre as formed by the steep topography lined with terraced houses that all look into the harbour bowl is instantly recognizable and for that reason it is considered Brixham’s unique selling point.

7.1.2 Its fishing heritage underpins the very essence of Brixham and its community, and as a result the shape of the town has been honed out of this association

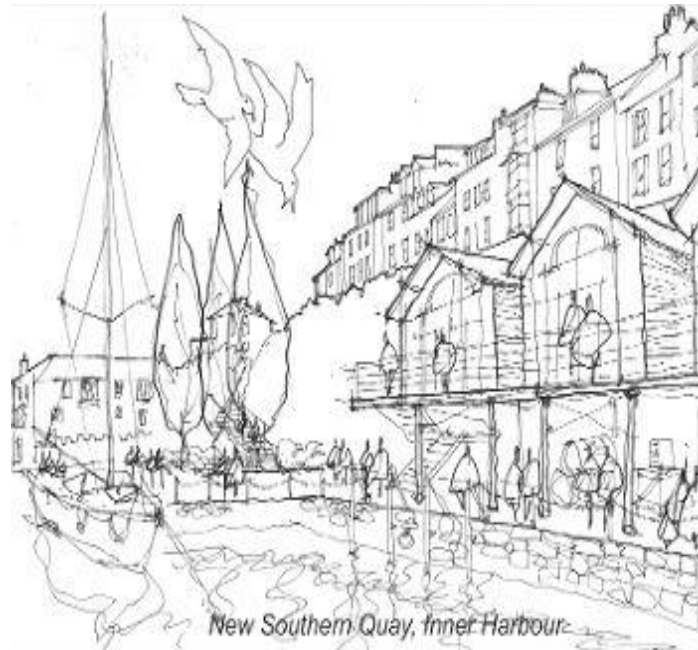
with the sea. It is vitally important then that this association is maintained for generations to come. This does not mean standing still, but ensuring the town is relevant and continues to respond to the community's needs and wants.

7.1.3 Brixham has always balanced the working needs of the harbour with those of its playtime needs, and this could be said to be the reason why Brixham is still relevant today. Whilst other fishing towns rest on their laurels and slowly slide into decline, Brixham's beating heart strives to place it at the top of the supply chain.

7.1.4 Gradually the perception of Brixham is changing and there is a wider appreciation of the town across the UK, which is reflected in the demand on properties in and around the harbour basin. To complement this interest the current areas of neglect need to be addressed, which include the inner harbour itself. Without losing any of its charm and character the harbour needs to build on its unique selling points.

7.2 Proposals

- To reorganise the harbour into discernible zones which would ensure that the quality of the spaces is maintained.
- To provide a permanent sill and create a floating harbour (existing dry mooring provision to be located beyond the outer harbour).
- To create a Heritage Fleet dock between the Middle Pier (Eastern Quay) and the End Pier.
- To provide a swing bridge link between the End Pier and King's Quay.
- To provide floating decked pontoons for tourist and leisure activities.
- To relocate the existing car parking spaces and provide maritime- and artisan-based SME business units along Southern Quay.



- To provide a new public event platform on Middle Pier (Eastern Quay) central to the natural amphitheatre.
- To provide a new Maritime Heritage Museum on the End Pier with direct visual links to the working harbour and heritage dock.
- To encourage further leisure activities and events along the harbour side.

8 The Outer Harbour – the future and beyond

8.1 Critique

8.1.1 The future prosperity of Brixham lies in its ability to accommodate new industry, both in the commercial and leisure sectors. The town currently enjoys an even blend of working and leisure harbours and moorings, both of which are close to their use capacity. The proposal to construct a new northern arm/breakwater has long been in discussion, but if realised could provide an increased area of safe sheltered water and moorings for the expansion of the outer harbour and contain both marina and commercial facilities.

8.2 Proposals

- To provide a new northern arm breakwater pier to provide protected moorings and sheltered landing platforms to the outer harbour.

- To extend the existing commercial harbour and processing facilities and provide new opportunities for marine-based business and tourism-based facilities – “The Brixham Shellfish Village Experience”.
- To provide a new leisure marina extending the existing moorings and Chandler support facilities.



Typeset by Sunrise Setting Ltd, Brixham

Submission Document August 2017