

Historic Places Panel Review Paper: Grimsby 2019



Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
	Key Questions for the Panel	4
2	Initial Thoughts	5
3	Grimsby	6
	Victoria Street and Riverhead Square	8
	West Haven Maltings and Garth Lane Development Site.....	10
	Alexandra Docks.....	11
	Victoria Mills Silo.....	11
	The Docks and the Kasbah	12
	The Ice Factory and Marina.....	14
	King Edward Street and Freeman Street.....	15
4	Wider Issues.....	16
	Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan	16
	Considerations of Connectivity	16
	Height – Tall Buildings	17
	Community Engagement	17
5	Conclusions and Recommendations	18

1 Introduction

- 1.1 From many perspectives, Grimsby could be described a place on the edge. This is, in fact, a core part of its identity and its character, defined over the centuries by its location on the edge of the Humber estuary and its relationship with it and the North Sea. Grimsby has a history of being on the leading edge of technological progress, innovation and change, as evidenced by its status as the first industrialised fishing port. Its early adoption of mechanised processing and strongly integrated maritime logistics forms a core part of its heritage, but also a vital part of its future as Grimsby embraces the opportunities brought by the new and growing sources of economic activity in the vast wind energy plants emerging from the North Sea. Because of this, it is evidently also a place on the edge of real, positive change and regenerative growth, reflected in Greater Grimsby's successful bid to be the UK's first Town Deal, worth £67 million.
- 1.2 Grimsby's townscape reflects a glorious past, with some fine civic and commercial buildings in the town centre reflecting the considerable wealth generated by the town's history as one of the largest general ports in England, and its position as the world's largest fishing port during the later 19th and 20th centuries. The town's Italianate Dock Tower, a landmark for miles around, can probably claim to be the finest 'campanile' in Northern Europe, albeit without bells, and the massive Victoria Mill silo, adjacent to the Alexandra Dock, is an impressive monument to the town's exuberant economic vitality and industrial capacity in the late nineteenth century.
- 1.3 More recently, however, Grimsby has suffered from the catastrophic collapse of the fishing industry that had historically sustained the town's economic fortunes. Changes to the way freight is shipped, and the loss of access to key fishing grounds, meant a fundamental restructuring of Grimsby's port infrastructure to reflect new ways of working, and the loss of traditional industries, manifesting in extensive changes to the dockland townscape and loss or abandonment of historic infrastructure and buildings. Moreover, the town contains areas that are high on the indices of deprivation in both income and employment, educational attainment levels are low, and productivity is below the national average. Young people who leave to pursue higher education often do not return, and those that don't are more likely to be unemployed than the national average. Population has also remained stagnant. Alongside these factors, the housing market remains challenging, despite an outstanding quality of conveniently located suburban housing stock.
- 1.4 However, the underlying picture is not by any means a bleak one. Although there are challenges, the local economy has much to be positive about. Grimsby remains Europe's largest fish processing centre, and is at the hub of Britain's frozen and chilled food industries – a status cemented by the presence of the Humber Seafood Institute, which opened in 2008. The port – which now functions as one part of owner ABP's wider Humber Ports cluster is also developing into one of the country's centres for renewables and offshore wind, hosting Danish company Ørsted's UK operating base. The area remains an important cluster for chemicals and manufacturing, and unemployment has fallen by over 30% in the last five years. There is therefore a real sense of opportunity in Grimsby, and a willingness amongst key stakeholders to be at the forefront of positive change.

- 1.5 The visit by the Historic Places Panel therefore comes at a point where Grimsby is on the cusp of a significant change in its fortunes, and is very timely in light of the opportunities for place-based regeneration presented by the Town Deal, Future High Street Fund, and projects funded by the Cultural Development Fund, Humber LEP, and Historic England – all of which will take as their foundation the Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan (2009).
- 1.6 The Historic Places Panel was invited to Grimsby to consider how, in light of the success in gaining substantial capital funding via the Greater Grimsby Town Deal, the Heritage Action Zone, and potentially the Future High Street Fund (altogether worth almost £100million), it should harness those opportunities to improve the town's fortunes; how best to take advantage of Grimsby's extraordinary heritage capital; how it should best develop and utilise key sites and buildings in a way that creates maximum benefit for the town; and think about how key areas of fractured townscape could be re-connected, closing the gap between the core of the town centre and the historic docks.

Key Questions for the Panel

- 1.7 In particular the members of the Panel were asked to consider the following questions:
 - I. How can Grimsby re-connect the town centre to its historic docks through place-making?
 - II. What development options might be viable along the Alexandra Dock waterfront in the context of Grimsby's economy?
 - III. How might major road infrastructure be reconsidered to address town centre severance?
 - IV. How could the sustainable reuse of key heritage assets, such as the Ice Factory and Victoria Mill, best contribute to regeneration in Grimsby?
 - V. What approaches to masterplanning/strategic development should the Council consider to bring together the current regeneration initiatives, including community engagement?

2 Initial Thoughts

- 2.1 Perhaps surprisingly, given the town's incredibly rich historic environment, the visit to Grimsby by the Historic Places Panel was the first for the vast majority of its members. Despite characteristic autumnal weather doing its best to obstruct the timely arrival of many of its members on the first evening, the Panel arrived enthusiastic and keen to get to grips with a place that, in the popular imagination of those unfamiliar with it, still evokes images of post-industrial decline. Finding on arrival that much of the town centre showing little sign of activity and that most leisure facilities and restaurants were firmly closed by 8.30pm did little to enhance first impressions. However, the morning brought sunshine and fresh eyes, and as the two days of the Historic Places Panel visit progressed, initial doubts were swiftly replaced during the series of tours, presentations and discussions over dinner by a sense of Grimsby's vitality, its enormous untapped potential, and an enthusiasm to get to grips with the challenges posed.
- 2.2 The Historic Places Panel considered North East Lincolnshire Council should be highly commended for its dynamism and achievements in leveraging in such significant amounts of funding, and they were particularly encouraged to be visiting a town and local planning authority where such obvious passion and enthusiasm for improving their town had created such huge potential for transformation. The introduction from NELC made it clear that Grimsby was ambitious, energetic, and focused on achieving a step change in regeneration, moving away from a more traditional approach and creating strong links with strategic partners such as the LEP. The Panel were impressed also by the drive and enthusiasm generally on display, from the Chief Executive downwards, by NELC's staff, and encouraged to see that the partnership between ENGIE and NELC was yielding positive outcomes. In particular, the Panel considered that, alongside Heritage at Risk grant funding from Historic England's Midlands region, North East Lincolnshire Council's swift and substantial response to the potential collapse of Victoria Mills silo was something they should be congratulated on, as a clear, positive investment into a key landmark.
- 2.3 The Panel were unanimous in their praise of Grimsby Minster for its role as the very conveniently located and architecturally magnificent venue for the visit's evening meal, which included the unexpected but charming addition of a celebratory peal of bells as the meal began. It was also discovered with relish that the smoked fish served as canapés had been provided by Grimsby's own Alfred Enderby Ltd.

3 Grimsby

- 3.1 The Panel were unanimous in their enthusiasm for Grimsby's potential as somewhere that could grasp the opportunities of heritage-led regeneration, establishing it as a truly unique and remarkable place in the process. The high number of historic buildings, the depth and complexity of its history, and the clear narratives for the future around industry, sustainability, innovation, health, and high quality food all offer interlinked potential. Grimsby's relatively compact, walkable and cyclable scale also makes this in theory, easier to achieve, provided the right conditions are created in key locations.
- 3.2 After having undertaken the walking tour between St James Square and the dockland areas, it was felt that Grimsby comprises a series of nodes – or a “string of pearls” - the individual strengths of which should be the focus of investment in the first instance. There is, the Panel contended, a danger that despite the considerable sums available, investment could be spread too thinly, and that there remain significant obstacles in the short term for realising the vision of a fully connected single ‘place’. This was one of the Panel visits strongest themes, and this Historic Places Panel Report is therefore laid out approximately along these lines, taking each ‘pearl’ individually, whilst considering broader questions of connectivity and longer-term strategic measures.
- 3.3 Perhaps chief among these is defining a vision and “brand”. This is of course a matter primarily for the people of North East Lincolnshire. However, the Panel were struck by the unifying influence of the sea on its three main but quite distinct settlements – Grimsby, Cleethorpes and Immingham. The Port Manager's evocative description of the docks at Grimsby and Immingham as well as the Humber itself, will live long in the memory. The strategic importance of these ports as the largest nationally came as a revelation.
- 3.4 The panel also heard about the burgeoning renewals industry and the broader industrial sector, which many overtly more “prosperous” places would envy.
- 3.5 As if this was not enough, few towns or cities have a foundation myth. The huge potential for the town's Danish origins to be explored as part of place-making was evident, and the Panel welcomed the enthusiasm for Grimsby's archaeological significance to play a role in this.

St James' Square and Surrounds

- 3.6 The fact that the Panel members were accommodated overnight in the St James Hotel, on the northern side of the Square, enabled members to gain an immediate appreciation of St James' Square and its possibilities. The Panel were generally impressed with the existing spatial qualities of St James' Square, noting that it is a relatively tranquil and pleasant space, with mature landscaping contributing to an intimacy that is contained by the well-proportioned and carefully orientated buildings set around its perimeter – with the exception of the blank Wilko's facade on its eastern flank. Also noted was its important role in providing access to the town centre for people living in areas to the west and south-west.
- 3.7 The Square is clearly one of Grimsby's ‘pearls’, owing to its relationship to the splendid Minster church itself, but also because it is a key public space and gateway

to the town centre. It was clear from the tour of the Square and from the presentations from NELC afterwards that St James' Square was perhaps the obvious place for the future regeneration of Grimsby to get the 'kickstart' that it needs.

- 3.8 The Panel appreciated that the proposed public realm scheme for St James Square was in its final stages of development, and at the time of writing, it has indeed been consented by NELC. The general principle of celebrating and enhancing this space to create a unique destination was wholeheartedly welcomed by the Panel, and all were agreed that finding a new use for the presently vacant St James House was of paramount importance.
- 3.9 Despite Grimsby's archaeological potential being a matter of real enthusiasm for NELC more broadly, the Panel questioned whether sufficient thought had yet been given to the archaeological potential of the Square, given its proximity to the Minster. The Panel noted that successful archaeological excavations had been undertaken at Carter Gate, just beyond the Frederick Ward Way underpass, and St James Square could complement this work. If excavation is required for mitigation purposes and the limitations of its context do not preclude community engagement, St James House would seem to offer the perfect space to be used as a pop-up exhibition area in lieu of a permanent use. The value of such activity is well understood, and organisations such as "Veterans Still Serving", and others, could be key partners.
- 3.10 Setting aside the questions of public realm and archaeology, the question of how best to secure the regeneration of St James Square was one the Panel felt was crucial to the success of this gateway to the town centre. The Panel universally considered St James House to be a successful building and indeed a representative example of a number of high quality twentieth century buildings to be found around Grimsby – including its striking public library. Ensuring this building has a use in the short and long terms was considered to be vital.
- 3.11 On the face of it, the proposals for a 'Heritage Centre', including a broad range of uses from a local studies library and a museum, with associated café, to an events space to support the Minster, seems like a highly desirable outcome for what is presently a key underused building and an asset. However, the high price tag for this ambitious scheme, and broader questions of location and associated uses, caused the Panel pause. The Minster needs investment, and finding funding for the upkeep of all buildings of its type is a challenge. The Panel therefore considered that the creation of a subsidiary events space in St James House could draw vital activity and funding away from the Minster itself which, as the Panel were delighted to witness, is a wonderful events space in its own right. Further thought was also recommended regarding the location of the Heritage Centre and Museum – the Panel considered that a different location, and perhaps other buildings, might benefit more from the investment – for example would this use not be more suitable for one of the town's derelict historic buildings, bringing life and activity to another key area on the proposed heritage trail in need of regeneration?
- 3.12 Given the importance of St James Square as a point of pedestrian access to the Town Centre, it would seem to the Panel that an alternative opportunity for St James House would, rather than a museum, be for an energetic 'Regeneration Hub', certainly in the short term while questions of substantial funding from the NLHF or others are considered over the longer, 3-5 year, timescale. The existing energisers of the space are the Minster and St James Hotel, but Wilko's turns a blank façade to the square, and thought should be given to ways in which this could be activated. This

could be undertaken alongside the consented public realm refurbishment. St James House should be re-occupied with meanwhile uses as soon as possible, and it is suggested that key facilitators for this could be Creative Start, the Minster's own community, and possibly the Freeman. An obvious and exciting starting point on the proposed heritage trail would be allowing people to access the top of the Minster tower to orientate themselves, locate other key landmarks, and gain a sense of the town and docks. A 3D Grimsby town model housed in St James House could also be an excellent way of engaging visitors and the local community with the town and Docks, creating a centre piece that enables them to understand and discuss the regeneration of their community in a similar way to the 'City Model' open to the public at the Building Centre in London or the one that has been made for Newcastle. A roof garden might also be possible.

- 3.13 From the perspective of urban form, and the 3D relationship of buildings to space within St James Square, the Panel recommended changes to St James House should not intrude beyond the existing frontage, although the potential for extension to the rear and side of the building to enhance the sense of enclosure was considered by Panel members to be worthwhile.

Victoria Street and Riverhead Square

- 3.14 The walking tour afforded the Panel the opportunity to explore the town's principal commercial 'High Street', along Victoria Street which, despite the widely reported poor performance of the retail sector nationally, appeared to be doing rather well, albeit with pockets of under-utilisation and poor-quality frontage. The street, the only pedestrianised area of the town centre outside the privatised space of the Freshney Place, had a sense of life and activity to it, and Grimsby's status as a retail destination was demonstrated to the Panel by the presence of well-known names. Victoria Street was the main route for people through the town from the direction of St James Square to the docks, and is a key 'spine' to the town centre. It emerges at its eastern end onto Riverhead Square. This is where the town centre's coherence begins to break down. As presently constituted, Riverhead Square is essentially a failure in terms of public realm, accessibility and connectivity. The shops on its western side are closed and shuttered, and the area of the disused bus station is an incoherent area of disused and disjointed public space, with access to most of the waterfront blocked to the north by the substantial barrier of Frederick Ward Way
- 3.15 Riverhead Square was therefore felt by the Panel to be the most obviously significant lynchpin in the mission to stitch the town and the dock area together into a coherent series of places. Despite its current condition, it has all the ingredients of a great public space: it's useful size; sunshine; proximity to key civic space and main retail areas; a high level of pedestrian movement; a close relationship to water, and the presence of mature landscaping. It is where the town meets the river, and where people can first – in theory – access the water, and the Panel noted that this is also the first space – if travelling from the direction of the railway station – in which a visitor to Grimsby first gets a sense of being close to the sea. This space is a pivotal linkage for the legibility of the whole of the town centre, and is fundamental to any future link between the High Street/Town Centre and the areas to the north around Alexandra Dock and beyond.
- 3.16 Despite its underlying attributes, it is a space that provides no impetus for people to meet, spend time in, eat, celebrate or undertake any sort of civic activity. Above all, the Panel were strongly against the suggested possibility of the reinstatement of a bus station on Riverhead Square. The need to provide public transport connectivity is

of course an important consideration, but the Panel recommended that an alternative approach was adopted in order to make sure that the regeneration opportunity for this site – which has the potential to be the ‘heart’ of Grimsby – was not undermined by the unwelcoming presence of idling bus engines and the barrier they would be to congregation and pedestrian movement.

- 3.17 The Panel therefore suggest that, instead of concentrating the bus station into the square, a “dispersed interchange” approach could be adopted, that – carefully planned – could provide as much public transport integration as a single hub would do, without the damaging impacts on public realm, health and well-being. This approach has been adopted elsewhere, notably at King’s Cross, but also York, Salisbury, Exeter and Bournemouth to name a few. As the implementation is necessarily different in each place, exemplars are of limited value however. The panel therefore recommend that a workshop to determine how this might be achieved is a sensible next step.
- 3.18 The Panel therefore encouraged NELC to think big for this space, taking the opportunity to open it up as a space for people and, fundamentally, to reconnect it to the riverside. The Panel welcomed the ambitions for the Youth Zone and the Garth Lane development site, discussed below, particularly as NELC wishes the future of Grimsby to include a higher level of student population. In the short term, the Panel considered that a public realm analysis, followed by some ‘quick wins’ to enhance the space and encourage people to spend time there would be beneficial. Particular examples would be a series of pop-up and meanwhile uses, and the two closed retail premises should be re-opened as soon as possible, by NELC as ‘Urban Rooms’ if necessary, or perhaps as small local art galleries. This approach, on different scales, has been very successful in Nottingham and Lowestoft, where vacant units were successful repurposed and attracted considerable footfall. In the square itself, moveable furniture could be introduced, or a council sponsored ‘Box Park’. One only need look at the resounding success of ‘Spark’ in York (located on the site of a derelict tram station in a run-down area of the City previously avoided by any tourists and hurriedly traversed by locals) to see what can be achieved.
- 3.19 Longer term, the Panel recommended opening up the potential uses of this space to an international ‘ideas competition’, and also facilitate a series of events and opportunities to interact with the space and explore what was possible. The Panel also identified a clear need for a local ‘curatorial’ or connective role, such as a Town Centre Manager, and Business Improvement District, to contribute to the overall management of the town centre.
- 3.20 Fully reconnecting Riverhead to the waterfront areas would involve taking a key decision to substantially downgrade or even completely remove Frederick Ward Way as a highway. A compromise option would involve the reduction of Frederick Ward Way to a single carriageway, squeezing it at the intersection with Riverhead Square to facilitate pedestrians and cyclists, with multiple crossing points – perhaps single phase Tiger Crossings where cyclists and pedestrians require a crossing at the same place. The benefits this would unlock would be manifold, and be the most effective individual change that could be implemented to reduce the severance between the town centre, waterways and Alexandra Dock. Removing this barrier between Grimsby’s people and their river would permit the entire riverside to be opened up, creating a totally new area of public space and facilitating the badly needed rejuvenation of this area. It would allow not only Riverhead Square to flourish as a destination and act as a key node between town and docks, but provide crucial open

and ideally green space alongside the river, which, considered along with the proposed new uses on the north bank, would transform this superb natural asset from what at the moment is little more than a neglected canalside area into a pleasant, accessible and attractive riverside location.

- 3.21 A key question remains regarding the ability of people to cross the river, and NELC are again to be commended for sourcing the financial resources to augment this.

West Haven Maltings and Garth Lane Development Site

- 3.22 This part of Grimsby was identified as long ago as 2009 as a crucial opportunity site for the regeneration of Grimsby, and the fact that it remains one today is testament to the complexities and timescales that such projects inevitably involve. The requirement for principal stakeholders to have a long term view is something the Panel regarded as no bad thing, given the obviously 'slow burn' timescales that many of the proposals discussed in this report will also run to. However, the Panel were again keen to commend NELC on their willingness to invest corporately to unlock the benefits of the site once it had been identified and an opportunity arose, and considered that this approach is one that will yield success in other key areas. There was a clear sense of tangible progress being made on both sites. The regeneration of both will bring much needed life and energy back to the northern side of the river. Key questions remain about how to ensure appropriate levels of connectivity, both between the two sites, but also to the south. This is fundamentally linked to the wider questions about Frederick Ward Way, considered above.
- 3.23 While the proposals for the development site were ambitious and impressive in scope, including potential higher education uses and public space, NELC are encouraged to consider the importance of ensuring that the riverside remains a relatively green and pleasant space on its northern side, and the implementation of a 'Green Infrastructure Strategy' was recommended as a crucial piece of the jigsaw in this regard.
- 3.24 The Panel considered that the most important thing would be to ensure key views from Riverhead towards Corporation Bridge were not impeded, and that buildings of 5-6 storeys would provide considerable density without overdeveloping the site. There is clearly a potential for high quality public space and this had been a key question in public consultation. The Panel supported this, but sounded a note of caution with regard to the need to ensure Riverhead Square's regeneration would not be undermined by a competing space in terms of character and surrounding uses.
- 3.25 Garth Lane and the Riverhead Area is, as NELC highlighted in their presentation, the most likely location for the earliest origins of Grimsby as a settlement, with links to the Havelock and Grim mythology. The location of the site creates huge potential for waterlogged deposits of extremely high interest archaeologically. The potential is therefore for Garth Lane to offer a once-in-a-generation opportunity for archaeological engagement, and to use the history and archaeology of the area to encourage community participation. The Panel is therefore very pleased to see that public engagement for the archaeological investigation of the site is being considered, and consider that the potential for more than the normal 'site tours and finds tables' type of engagement is too good to be missed. A "City of Culture" style series of events could be arranged on Riverhead Square and elsewhere, with exhibitions and interactive activities housed in the vacant units to either side. A 'Festival of Archaeology' could be held, and NELC are recommended to seek

capacity building funding to support this, as well as opening discussions with organisations such as the Council for British Archaeology.

Alexandra Docks

- 3.26 It is rare for a town to be blessed with such a large body of protected open water, in easy walking distance from the centre, and as well-connected to principal transport routes. The discovery that it had a decidedly inactive, poorly defined ‘back of house’ feeling, with neither the large supermarket or indeed the Fishing Heritage Centre deciding to create any active frontage to the dockside on the western side (despite the location of a museum ship moored here), was disappointing. This was offset only slightly by the presence of two intrepid souls kayaking, showing a glimmer of what could be possible.
- 3.27 Riverhead Square, via a rejuvenated Garth Lane and the west side of Alexandra Dock up to Corporation Bridge form an obvious “place”, but the fact that the eastern side of the dock is presently occupied by light industrial uses and an enormous Stagecoach bus storage facility, makes the goal of reconnecting the town centre with the Docklands and Kasbah a considerable challenge. NELCs long term aim of unlocking the redevelopment of both sides of the Dock is something that the Panel wholeheartedly endorsed, and considered that Alexandra Dock’s obvious future potential lies at least in part in the leisure and tourism industries. It is possible to envisage Alexandra Dock hosting a wide ranging set of facilities for active uses, from water-sports requiring minimal infrastructure such as kayaking, sailing etc, or potentially more intensive interventions such as surfing or water-skiing, similar to the facility at Surf Snowdonia, for example. This should be linked to the forthcoming Youth Zone development at West Haven Maltings.
- 3.28 To achieve this long term vision for this particular ‘pearl’, the Panel considered that NELC might usefully set this vision out in a strategy document focused on Alexandra Dock as part of the wider series of nodes, adopting a clear policy requiring any future development on either side of the Docks to have a mix of uses that relate strongly to the water, and to maintain a footpath along the waterfront. In the meantime, the supermarket and the Fishing Heritage Centre on the west, and pool and snooker club on the eastern side, should be encouraged to open up their dockside-frontages, and NELC should be prepared to step in financially to secure the use of the supermarket site should it become vacant. Smaller useful interventions in the short term would be better way-marking and interpretation, perhaps incorporating public art, to enhance the experience for people using the footpath.

Victoria Mills Silo

- 3.29 Victoria Mills Silo, along with the Dock Tower, is one of Grimsby’s icons of architecture and history, invaluable in its contribution to the wider townscape. Its slab-sided southern elevation dominates views from Alexandria Dock, and its rescue, after worries that it would collapse, is something of which NELC should be proud. Now that the residential towers near Freeman Street have been demolished, another decision for which NELC should be congratulated, it has reclaimed its place as one of the town’s pre-eminent landmarks. Its stature and internal volume offers the potential of a fundamentally unique asset to Grimsby, and one that has the potential to signal regeneration and confidence in a bold way similar to, for example, Tate Modern on the Southbank, the Baltic Centre in Newcastle, or George’s Dock in Liverpool.
- 3.30 The Panel were asked particularly to consider options for its future use, and they recognise that there are some challenges with regard to this question. Access to its

location on foot is presently not easily achieved, public funding will undoubtedly be required to underwrite the conservation deficit, and parking requires some creative thinking. However, the Panel considered that the water-side of the Victoria Silo could be linked to a dock-side walk, contributing to part of the 'heritage trail', or enhancing the accessibility of Victoria Mills as a destination in its own right.

- 3.31 As for the building, the Panel considered there are a number of potential uses that don't necessarily require lots of natural light penetration. This might include arts uses such as a theatre – the height of the building lending itself to use for flying gantries of the type used to raise and lower sets and scenery. This might be combined with a cinema, rehearsal spaces and even a gig venue, all of which offers great opportunities for community outreach across a number of demographics. Sports uses, such as an internal sky-diving venue similar to the example in Milton Keynes; a climbing wall (its height here would make it one of the most challenging in the country, possibly the world); or bungee jumping. In addition to interior uses, the height of the building enables superb views across both the town and the docks, and an obvious thing to do would be to open the upper level up to the public as a viewing tower, and it could make an effective 'vertical pier'. Access could even be a meanwhile use, allowing the people of Grimsby and further afield to enjoy it even in its current condition, while ideas are gathered for a permanent use. In the event that Alexandra Dock is regenerated on both sides, could the Fishing Heritage Centre be encouraged to expand into this space? An ideas competition could be held within the building, offering tours to the roof as well as an exhibition of proposed ideas.
- 3.32 You may take inspiration from Chester Storyhouse, which is an excellent example of mixed uses and collaboration across sectors both to develop the project and to run and enliven the building with fantastic mix of uses by over a hundred community groups/organisations.

The Docks and the Kasbah

- 3.33 Grimsby's working port was a fascinating part of the Panel visit, not least because of the superb opportunity to visit the historic Port Offices (grade II) and take advantage of the excellent views across the docks afforded to visitors to ABP's main boardroom. The very fact that the Historic Places Panel were welcome guests in this building, with detailed and illuminating presentations from ABP alongside NELC and GGIFT, is a sign of a new, very welcome and positive relationship that has developed in the last few years between ABP and all partners, following the regrettable loss of the Cosalt buildings some years earlier. ABP's new emphasis on community engagement and a cautiously positive response to the proposals for regeneration in the Kasbah were given context by their highlighting of the practical considerations of ABP's statutory responsibilities as Port Authority. However, as they made clear, regeneration is not natural and familiar territory to ABP, and the Panel were invited to offer any helpful advice they could to assist them.
- 3.34 The Kasbah area elicited perhaps the most effusive of reactions from many Panel members. Phrases such as "*It feels so exotic*", and "*I'm stunned at how gorgeous the Kasbah is*" capture something of the enthusiasm Panel members had for the Kasbah and its potential to be a first in class example of an area re-energised by heritage-led regeneration, but this enthusiasm did not blind Panel members from the real and considerable challenges there are to overcome: an unenviable vacancy rate of 70%; a considerable number of buildings in very poor condition (exceptions included the wonderful green glazed tiled shop frontage of Tom Taylor & Son, suppliers to Grimsby's marine industries); real and perceived barriers to accessing the site, and

limitations on the opportunities for public realm enhancements by NELC owing to unadopted highways. As the HAZ Project Officer for Grimsby pointed out, there are also challenges about perception and to some extent a need for myth busting – for instance that the Kasbah is not ‘closed’, and that it remains accessible. Set against this however, is a varied townscape of superb quality, including tightly packed streets with superbly detailed traditional buildings, offering excellent permeability and tantalising vistas of Grimsby’s deservedly iconic Dock Tower.

- 3.35 The Panel noted that there was a dramatic disconnect between the substantial investment into new infrastructure at the port to support the renewable energy growth, and the level of investment into the existing historic building stock. Given the wider narrative of renewable energy and sustainability, the failure to take the environmentally responsible route of repurposing some of the many historic buildings at the port was something the Panel was keen to see ABP help to address. They were at pains to point out that there is an enormous amount of goodwill and political capital to be gained in doing so with the renewable sector and other industries looking to offset their environmental impact. From the perspective of ABP’s balance sheets, it may also make financial sense to repurpose these buildings and use them to generate an income. Taking a different approach offers the potential of raising Grimsby’s national, and even international, profile as somewhere that is a place of responsible and creative regeneration, linking together the narratives of health, sustainability, innovation in food and wider industries, together with a stellar historic environment. There is a considerable commercial potential in the Kasbah, which if unlocked would come with manifold social and community benefits.
- 3.36 There are, already, a number of shining examples of what might be possible on a wider scale, if some of the challenges are addressed. The Panel’s visit to ‘Creative Start’, a community interest company set up in a vacant building in the Kasbah, was one of these. The building they occupy, which had been in need of investment prior to the CIC taking it on, has been renovated by the people that Creative Start had been set up to help – as Sam Delaney described them, “the hard to reach”, and the Panel wholeheartedly congratulated him and their partner organisation ‘Veterans Still Serving’ for their success. Another example is the wonderful Enderby’s fish smoking business, operating out of its historical base, and producing a world class and superb quality product, sold at high end establishments across the world. However, as the Director of Enderby’s told the Panel, the lack of awareness of the Protected Geographical Indicator awarded to Grimsby’s smoked fish in the local area is an issue – and in the view of the panel something which should feed into the new, compelling ‘brand’ narrative that is needed for Grimsby.
- 3.37 Despite the obvious potential in the Kasbah, the Panel expressed reservations regarding whether or not small scale refurbishments carried out on a wider basis would be possible to achieve without a more hands on approach. It is proving challenging to attract users even with the offer of considerable grant funding (via the Heritage Action Zone), due to the requirement to invest a substantial capital sum up front just to bring the buildings up to a useable standard. The Panel therefore considered that in that context a joint working and leadership will potentially be necessary if discounted leaseholds on their own do not prove successful. A way forward could be a form of Development Trust, a “community builder’s trust”, supported by ABP (who should be a Trustee) who could engage their Corporate Social Responsibility budgets in this venture. This model would allow ABP to provide a measure of leadership while sharing the burden of bringing selected buildings back into use. For example, could the Kasbah have potential as somewhere for visiting

sailors to use and visit? Are there also the opportunities to work with universities by linking this work with their architecture, conservation and environmental technology curriculums?

- 3.38 Longer term, enabling the Kasbah (and indeed the adjacent Ice Factory) to thrive will require greater accessibility, real and perceived. Part of this is related to physical infrastructure, and this is evidently a complex issue. The Panel recommend that NELC hold high level discussions with ABP to establish what ABP require in terms of road infrastructure to carry out their Statutory Port Authority functions, and explore where their current control could be consolidated to enable greater freedom of access to key assets such as the Kasbah. Additionally, the Panel recommended a movement analysis is undertaken to establish the merits of potentially relocating the existing level crossing to provide a more direct route into the Kasbah and docks area from the south, as the present location requires an awkward and relatively unattractive dog-leg to be navigated. Moving the level crossing to connect Riby Street directly with Gorton Street would directly correspond with desire lines for people coming from Freeman Street, and may also unlock development opportunities. It would be an expensive project, but be of enormous strategic benefit if successful implemented. Until this research is undertaken, improvements to the public realm and a change of perception will prove difficult to achieve. A good start would be to vastly improve way-marking and signage, which could be undertaken as a unified 'heritage trail' branded investment into the public realm.
- 3.39 Perhaps Grimsby's greatest single heritage asset is the Dock Tower, a stunning Italianate landmark in views of the docks from miles around, and an icon of Grimsby's ambition and sense of pride in itself, but encircled by high security infrastructure. The Panel were sympathetic to ABP's point that public access to the Dock Tower was challenging owing to the legal requirements placed upon them as Port Authority, but nonetheless strongly recommended that solutions to provide public access were explored.

The Ice Factory and Marina

- 3.40 The Ice Factory is perhaps the most topical of Grimsby's outstanding collection of nineteenth century industrial heritage. It is a prominent landmark, and lies at the gateway to the docks and the Kasbah. Its repair and reuse is therefore imperative for the wider regeneration of the area. Its plight is well documented, and the Panel was brought helpfully up-to-date by the Great Grimsby Ice Factory Trust, who illuminated the funding and resource challenges of trying to redevelop such a large, complex building as a small community led trust, coupled with the problems of access, parking and ABP's operational restrictions regarding potential uses, as discussed in relation to the Kasbah.
- 3.41 The Panel understands, however, that there is hope in the form of potential proposals for the building. The Panel were encouraged, also, that the result of a 2019 condition survey indicated that the building remains in stable structural condition, but the lack of a functioning roof means that it will swiftly deteriorate and urgent work is now required to stabilise and secure the building. Generally, it was considered that the Ice Factory was adaptable to a number of uses and is eminently flexible as a structure. Although perhaps desirable as an arts or cultural venue, commercial uses associated with the Port could also be appropriate, as might be an educational use. The Panel considered that pragmatic decisions needed to be taken with regard to the ice-making machinery within the building and its retention, set against the need to create flexible internal spaces.

King Edward Street and Freeman Street.

- 3.42 Freeman Street and King Edward Street were, predominantly owing to the constraints of time, slightly secondary elements to the Panel's visit, only being experienced by minibus. This was thought to be a shame by Panel members, who considered that both of these streets have a key role to play in terms of connectivity, and regeneration, particularly in light of the forthcoming developments including the YMCA's housing.
- 3.43 Recent 'green shoots' of diverse economic activity along King Edward Street, particularly the Docks Beers Micro-Brewery, indicate the possibilities for market led regeneration of this area and the organic creation of a destination. The Panel recommended that NELC should support this activity through an approach of 'do no harm', but suggest also proactively identifying potential ways in which the street's accessibility could be enhanced to encourage ease of movement to and from it. Consultation with the owners and operators of these businesses to see what they consider to be the challenges would also be useful in identifying ways in which the Council could helpfully assist.
- 3.44 The railway presently creates a significant barrier to east-west movement, with only a single footbridge. The creation of some additional permeability would be hugely beneficial, stitching the Freeman Street and King Edward Street/Victoria Street areas together.

4 Wider Issues

Grimsby Town Centre Masterplan

- 4.1 The Panel was specifically asked by NELC about their collective views on what the best approach was to making use of, or updating the now ten year old Town Centre Masterplan Document (2009). This document was felt by the Panel to contain much useful and relevant information, and that fundamentally the approach set out ten years ago was largely valid. This is borne out by the success Grimsby has subsequently had in attracting substantial investment as a result of its overarching vision alongside the Local Plan.
- 4.2 The Panel's suggested approach was therefore that, rather than investing considerable time and resources in updating what is, essentially, a sound document, NELC should instead build on this document to create a series of "bite sized" and targeted Area Action Plans (or similar). This would create a more flexible set of smaller documents that would also open up the possibility of targeted community engagement, allowing NELC and its partners to bring the local people into the discussion on specific questions, in an iterative process. It would also allow the existing Masterplan and its assumptions to be re-visited where necessary, particularly regarding the zones it identifies.
- 4.3 However, alongside this approach, the Panel felt that there is also a need for a 'Big Vision' for Grimsby, as well as a consistent and coherent 'place brand', based upon the many successful things that Grimsby already does. Linking this overarching vision and brand for the town as a whole to a series of complementary but distinctive area action plans for the individual nodes was considered by the Panel to be the way in which Grimsby's regeneration will be achieved through place-making policy.

Considerations of Connectivity

- 4.4 To create a unified place, Grimsby needs to be rebalanced away from the private motorcar, the infrastructure for which was acknowledged by all to have created a series of barriers to movement and areas of fractured townscape. The pedestrian experience of movement from Victoria Street, via Riverhead, towards the docks, is not a pleasant or easy one. Neither is the transition between King Edward Street/Freeman Street between either the Kasbah or towards Alexandra Docks.
- 4.5 NELC are therefore encouraged by the Panel to grasp the opportunities available now, to make long lasting and strategic changes that will unlock future benefits, downgrading highways that act as substantial barriers to movement and concentrating on key nodal junctions. The Panel considered that focusing on key junctions and destinations will allow connectivity to develop organically, rather than focusing on the connectivity first, then destinations later. The Panel felt this approach would also yield location specific benefits more quickly, owing to the vastly differing timescales that, for example, St James Square and the Kasbah, will follow in terms of their regeneration.
- 4.6 The Panel were struck by how little Grimsby takes advantage of its rail connectivity. Few places outside the capital have such closely spaced mainline railway stations, and the geographical location of Grimsby Docks railway station has the potential to play a key role in establishing links between the Town Centre and the Kasbah, while potentially permitting easy access to intermediate destinations. The Panel felt that

the rail link between the Kasbah and Cleethorpes added a further strategic dimension to this.

Height – Tall Buildings

- 4.7 The Panel congratulated NELC for taking the decision to demolish the tower blocks, which has reasserted the primacy of Grimsby's key iconic structures in its townscape, as well as longer views of the town. These assets are deserving of the stature they now have, and have a presence in the same way medieval cathedrals anchor the heart and identity of cities such as Canterbury or York.
- 4.8 There is now the opportunity to develop an urban design framework for Grimsby, which should include policy to ensure the primacy of the Dock Tower, Victoria Mills silo and the Minster. The Panel encouraged NELC to undertake this as soon as possible.

Community Engagement

- 4.9 The Panel was at pains to stress the importance of community engagement, and felt that this was perhaps the one area that the Council has yet to fully incorporate into their approach. Full and inclusive community engagement offers not only a method for canvassing opinion and establishing local needs and aspirations, but it is also a vital tool in unlocking truly collaborative action and partnership working that has collateral benefits on wellbeing and community cohesion. This will be vital in securing a shift of vision from Grimsby's community regarding the potential for their town to be truly world leading and a place to be proud of.
- 4.10 The Panel therefore recommended that NELC invest time in developing a community engagement strategy to work across sectors. This should move beyond traditional consultation and communication techniques, and lay the foundation for a holistic conversation about the future on Grimsby, opening the door to the community playing an active role in ideas generation, decision-making and partnership working.

Education

- 4.10 Educational attainment is a real issue for Grimsby, and the Panel were encouraged by the ambitious proposals to build a University Hub in the heart of the town at the Garth Lane site. The Panel advise that it should be encouraged to engage its students with this and the broader regeneration initiatives in Grimsby through its Architecture, History and Heritage schools for example. More broadly, its National Centre for Food Manufacturing may also have potential in this respect, and there are no doubt other departments in this rapidly expanding institution that may provide opportunities for collaboration in the wider economy.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Grimsby is that rare place, somewhere that has much of what it needs to achieve greatness, and people with the energy and leadership to harness it. During the course of the visit, many of these assets were revealed to the Panel, as was the potential for them to work together in innovative ways to their mutual advantage. Food and social interaction; green energy and building re-use; archaeology and community engagement – and so on and so forth. The overarching recommendation therefore, the “lens” through which the following should be seen, is that place-making is a collaborative effort, and there is therefore value to be derived not only from the “outcomes”, but as much from the process as part of a virtuous circle of engagement, decision making and implementation.

1. Grimsby should define an inspiring and inclusive vision and brand based upon its assets and aspirations. The connection with the sea, from earliest times to the present day is a natural starting point.
2. To implement this, the Council should prepare a number of complementary and integrated strategy documents, coordinated under the Vision Statement. This should include:
 - A ‘string of pearls’, series of targeted interventions using design competitions and community-led design exercises (such as interactive design workshops and “charettes”) to engage the public and bring fresh ideas. These would form a series of place specific Area Action Plans that would attract investment.
 - A Community Engagement Strategy that sets out a holistic approach to mobilising the local community (in its broadest of definitions) as active contributors to the process of change, rather than just commentators.
 - A Green Infrastructure Strategy, to include guiding principles on the implementation of the enhancement of Grimsby’s key public spaces and routes through tree planting and soft landscaping.
 - An Urban Design Framework, to guide future development in Grimsby to ensure that key landmarks are given the primacy they need to advertise and promote Grimsby as a destination.
 - A Movement and Transport Analysis, to:
 - i. Examine the existing patterns of movement; identify key bottlenecks and areas for enhancement.
 - ii. Analyse the benefits and costs of moving the level crossing to the north of Freeman Street

- iii. Understand the potential for the railway to play a key role in connecting the Kasbah, Town, and Freeman Street together, as well as its potential for opening up all these areas for visitors from Cleethorpes.
- iv. Establish the feasibility of implementing a “dispersed bus interchange”.

3. In order to successfully achieve the regeneration of the Kasbah Conservation Area, the Panel strongly recommended North East Lincolnshire Council and ABP hold high level strategic discussions to establish the following:

- The minimum defensible area and access required by ABP in order to undertake their duties as Statutory Port Authority
- Opportunities to consolidate and re-order the highway and public realm to unlock the potential of the Kasbah as an accessible destination.
- Any potential for the Council to adopt, manage, and enhance highway and public realm infrastructure within the Kasbah.
- The potential to work with higher education and cultural sector partners in order to further explore and unlock opportunities for regeneration in this area through wider collaboration.

4. Kasbah Regeneration Trust:

Should the current model of leasehold inducements fail to deliver the required interest, ABP and its partners should set up a ‘Regeneration Trust’ or something similar to manage and oversee the regeneration of the Kasbah Area, using the company’s corporate social responsibility budget and with ABP as a guiding Trustee.

This would provide a vehicle of accountability, and would enable a greater degree of coherence than a myriad of smaller bodies focused on their own smaller projects.

A similar, albeit larger, model may be the Coalfield’s Regeneration Trust, a charitable body that undertakes activities to revitalise and support communities in former coal mining areas across the UK.

5. Brand Ambassador:

The Panel noted the strong links between Grimsby and several well-known individuals in the public eye. A key part of Grimsby’s rejuvenation will be linked to its brand management and telling the story of 21st Century Grimsby.

North East Lincolnshire Council should consider approaching such individuals to act as ‘brand ambassadors’, to highlight Grimsby to a wider and more diverse audience.

6. “Meet and Eat” style events would be an ideal way of anchoring engagement activity in one of Grimsby’s core assets – food. Altrincham Town Market is an excellent example of this elsewhere. The Kasbah is a food destination waiting to happen...
7. The Council should hold ‘City of Culture’ style events that promote and encourage participation in Grimsby’s heritage to inform its future. The example of Hull is perhaps an obvious reference, but its outstanding success in what is a similar context must be acknowledged. The wider community should be encouraged to be positive about Grimsby’s huge potential, rather than focussing on the loss of past glories. Grimsby is a fantastic place, with a great future, if it chooses to reach for it.

The Historic Places Panel – previously known as Urban Panel provides expertise to help local authorities, development agencies and others to engage in major regeneration of historic towns and cities. The Members who attended the visit to Grimsby on the 29th and 30th October, 2019, were:

Julian Hill
Rosemarie Macqueen
Chris Smith
Sophia de Sousa
Geoff Rich
David Ubaka
Katie Wray