



Historic England

# Historic Places Panel Review Paper

Hartlepool, November 2023



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Cover Image: The Panel on Church Street, Hartlepool © Historic England

# 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Hartlepool is a town rich in history with a striking collection of characterful set-piece townscapes found across a wide, distinctive urban area with huge placemaking potential. Crucial to England's history more than once in its long life, Hartlepool has faced socio-economic decline in the later twentieth and twenty-first centuries like so many northern towns, illustrated by worrying education, health, worklessness and poverty statistics. Today, it is a town with many opportunities to see improvement in local people's lives, driven by inward investment from government funds and the private sector, focused on cultural enterprise, improving transport links and great waterfront development potential.
- 1.2. Overall, the Panel were supportive of Hartlepool Borough Council's plans and projects and were optimistic about the future of the town. Local people are set to benefit from many viable and exciting capital and revenue projects which, provided they are strongly linked to a wider industrial strategy for town and region, will help lift the community's economic and social fortunes. The Council are to be congratulated in choosing to use investment funds to capitalise on the town's heritage assets as part of their strategic plan.
- 1.3. The Panel heard much about "putting the heart back into Hartlepool". This emerged during the visit as a strong theme, both physically knitting the town's fragmented urban realm back together, and also by improving the way local communities are positively engaged with and actively able to contribute to the town's revival.
- 1.4. The Panel were asked to address six questions, and short, medium and long term recommendations are set out under each below. These follow several central themes:
  - 1.5. The need for all stakeholders to be working towards a shared vision of how the town's socio-economic performance can be enhanced, requiring improved collaboration between delivery and policy players to avoid risks of duplication, misaligned priorities and silo-working.
  - 1.6. Better public participation in devising and delivering projects and programmes, seeing beyond the rapid pace required to deliver short-term funding towards a strategic vision of sustainable placemaking with people.
  - 1.7. The importance of history in a much-altered town: the need to understand and use the town's big story, as a tool to inspire rootedness and pride in the future of the place, and as narrative 'glue' where historic buildings are gone.
  - 1.8. Plentiful historic buildings in need with great promise; strong joined-up visitor potential; streets and spaces with potential yet in need of a strategy to unlock and enliven them; and some of the best dockland potential on the east coast.
  - 1.9. Hartlepool Borough Council must remain focussed on strategic outcomes for local people when delivering at pace, working closely and constructively with partners. Heritage, culture, tourism and leisure can only be the medium for this as part of a complementary programme to integrate skills and learning with a clear industrial strategy.

## 2. The Visit

- 2.1 The Historic Places Panel arrived in Hartlepool by train, many using the direct rail link from London. Panellists immediately became aware of current investment in the town both at the railway station, where a new platform and footbridge were under construction, and in the Church Street Revival Townscape Heritage scheme, which has delivered new public realm in the quite intact Victorian high street, one of the focal points of the visit.
- 2.2. As context, Panellists were taken by minibus to the Headland, the town's earliest nucleus. As well as briefly admiring Grade I St Hilda's church, the Borough Hall and attractive historic housing, Panellists got their bearings from the scheduled Town Wall where views south highlighted heritage assets in a town of two centres, a port juxtaposed between them, and a location close to both Teesside heavy industry and the North York Moors. Panellists were immediately struck by the town's diverse offering including industry and business, high quality historic architecture and great waterfront potential.



Figure 1 View from the scheduled Town Wall from the Headland © Historic England List Entry Number: 1006761



- 2.3. The Panellists' base was the BIS, the recently created shared workspace for creative businesses in a former Victorian Post Office, managed by Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC), the Panel's hosts for the visit. Day 1 started with insight into the town and its future from officers at HBC and Hartlepool Development Corporation (HDC), including an overview of current strategies and masterplans. A walking tour of the town centre followed, and a visit to the town's Arts Gallery in the Grade II\* listed former Christ Church. The day finished with a working meal at Hartlepool College of Further Education's Flagship training restaurant. Day 2 took in the Northern School of Art (NSA), the Northern Studios, the waterfront and the National Museum of the Royal Navy. Panellists met many other local stakeholders including from the Hartlepool Town Deal Board, Big Town Tidy Up, Hartlepool Civic Society, Thirteen Group housing association, Jomast property developers and the Heugh Battery Museum. National stakeholders including Visit England, the Arts Council, the National Lottery Heritage Fund and The King's Foundation (previously the Prince's Foundation) were also present.
- 2.4. HBC is a small, geographically compact local authority which, since June 2023, works alongside HDC, a mayoral development corporation set up by Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA). HBC works hard to seek new development and growth opportunities, often working with TVCA, and now shares planning services with HDC (with Lichfields acting for HDC day to day). The town has high deprivation (25th most deprived local authority area in England out of 317), with insufficient jobs and career opportunities causing particular challenges. The number of out-of-work benefits claimants amongst 18-21 year olds is more than twice the national average. The Panel also heard about problematic health, wellbeing and crime factors.

## 3. The Projects

- 3.1 Overall, the Panel were supportive of HBC's plans and projects and were optimistic about the future of the town. Much good work has clearly taken place in recent years, developing viable and exciting projects which, when delivered, should be of enormous benefit to local residents and businesses. HBC is evidently keen to develop pride of place amongst Hartlepool's townspeople. The challenge now is for projects to be delivered through effective collaboration, to their full joined-up potential, and to deliver socio-economic outcomes so badly needed in Hartlepool.
- 3.2 In recent years, parts of the town have benefitted from very high levels of investment from central government through the Town Deal, Levelling Up Fund and, most recently, is now anticipating further investment from the Long-Term Plan for Towns, as well as from mayoral investment funding via Hartlepool Development Corporation. This is driving a distinctive and growing culture-based offer, primarily channelled through the NSA and Northern Studios with a proposed screen production village to help address socio-economic challenges and develop a viable plan for future growth. This culture-led plan, which includes enterprise support and training programmes, sits alongside other major strands of growth including engineering, health services and the Freeport.
- 3.3 It is of great credit to HBC's strategic foresight that they chose to use Levelling Up and Towns Deal investment to capitalise on and champion the town's heritage so directly. Resolving key heritage at risk sites and bringing to the fore some of the town's most cherished historic assets such as the Art Gallery is a commendable approach which the Panel welcomed.

## 4. The Partners

- 4.1 The Panel were hugely impressed by the HBC staff they met, a remarkably motivated team with optimism, energy and talent to help foster a good regeneration culture. In particular, the Panel were struck by the imaginative, collaborative attitude of Gemma Ptak and Georgina Ascroft, who spoke about the Highlight Centre and Art Gallery amongst other things, and by Sarah Scarr and Paul Taylor's enthusiasm for locally distinctive regeneration and placemaking. They go above and beyond for Hartlepool despite operating in a challenging environment, so the Panel flagged the need to ensure staff are retained to bolster successful delivery of HBC's plans. There seemed to be a real risk of job-related stress, low agency and poor job satisfaction creating a risk of staff leaving and thus project momentum being hindered.
- 4.2 Areas of overlap raised questions on how roles and responsibilities are managed between HBC, HDC and Lichfields, not least strategic direction and design quality. There is overlap in the two live masterplans, with the slightly different objectives of the parties (eg. for Middleton Grange Shopping Centre) harming clarity on vision. Other overlaps include growth strategies and destination management plans, which may confuse local stakeholders and incoming investors. The Panel were of the firm view that more collaboration and open, constructive communication is urgently needed between HBC, HDC and Lichfields, including agreeing on a clear, shared vision. Otherwise effective momentum will be harmed.
- 4.3 Panellists were very impressed by Hartlepool's success in securing large-scale funding and the number of complex projects that are being delivered. They shared HBC's concerns about tight delivery timescales from funders which impact on meaningful engagement with local people and partners. They were concerned that the pace of delivery may be impacting on quality, opportunities to better connect various investments, and the long-term sustainability of development.
- 4.4 Similarly, priorities need to be more selective amongst the wide range of projects planned. It appeared that, admirably, HBC are working hard to deliver many projects as a high priority. The Panel was concerned this could be harming delivery with fast-paced projects being less well designed and developing without sufficient community input. There is a real risk of key issues being overlooked and sound strategic visioning underplayed without a shared vision, including for the historic environment. The Panel was shown the detail of projects but little on overall objectives. Socio-economic outcomes, as informed by local people's input, must be positioned as the key outcome of all work in the area, whether from culture-led regeneration or the wider industrial strategy of which it must be part.
- 4.5 The Panel's views on priorities are that the production village focus on Church Street and the current town centre projects should lead in bringing jobs and changing perceptions, creating a better place for local people and momentum in the screen industries. Development at the waterfront and of the wider tourist offer should follow. These will complement and be supported by a more sustainable town centre and slowing them down will also give time for meaningful engagement.



- 4.6. The importance of stakeholder engagement should not be underestimated. Harnessing local place pride and creating a sense of ownership improves project sustainability. This approach appeared notably lacking in production of HDC's masterplan. More open community engagement and co-design are needed, enabling buy-in. This includes mainly local residents, businesses and groups, but also developers, housing associations and agencies including Homes England and Historic England. Improving this is likely to mean extending project timescales so projects can be sure to deliver long-term socio-economic outcomes over and above short-term impact. It was reassuring to hear how the timescale of the Highlight project was reassessed, taking longer than initially envisaged in order to better engage with its future users. This should be seen as an exemplar; it will be a better development for it.
- 4.7. Panellists heard many positive words from the local stakeholders they met, but there was concern that small and medium-sized businesses had limited agency, and that community groups seemed under-represented on the visit. More could be done to map and engage with this positive private and third sector resource. The Panel was pleased to hear of a new business forum but was concerned it seemed only to represent seven businesses. The group's purpose and ambition should be clarified, aiming for it to be proactive as well as a sounding board. Widening active agency in the town increases capacity beyond a tight public sector, so with a level of autonomy others could, for example, confidently run a 'shop local' campaign or devise better connected culture, leisure and tourism businesses on the Headland. Empowered community groups could do credible engagement. Art Gallery staff have shown they are already well equipped and experienced in working creatively with people.



## 5. The Potential

### The importance of the story in a much-altered town

- 5.1. Hartlepool has many fine historic buildings, from prominent listed buildings to everyday terraced housing, and many interesting historic spaces, including streets, parks, the docks and the sea front. Together these give the town a strong character, distinguishing it from neighbouring settlements and making it somewhere that people should want to live, work and visit. It has a long, important history and many stories to tell, although some can no longer be felt on the ground, due to the level of change in the town's historic environment over the centuries. There can be a narrative in the region that fixates on this high level of change and loss, but this narrative tends to downplay the level of interest in surviving assets, a risk exacerbated in Hartlepool by their separation and dislocation across the remodelled town.
- 5.2. It is therefore vitally important to recognise the surviving value of Hartlepool's historic environment, both for the contribution it already makes and the extra placemaking potential it offers through keeping and attracting people in the town, supporting distinctive local business, providing a foundation for growth and inward investment, and for offering solutions to social challenges. The value is both financial, supporting jobs and businesses, and social, engendering pride of place and contributing to wellbeing. To this point, the Panel agrees with the stance that culture, and heritage as part of it, should underpin wider investment as a "critical enabler" capable of telling a compelling and attractive story of the place to justify and support investment.
- 5.3. HBC should develop a role in curating the story of Hartlepool, using history to connect key fragments together where the much-altered place cannot. This helps make the scale and value of heritage clearer as a whole. Developing a narrative to tell Hartlepool's 'big story', and position today's period of change and investment within it, could reinforce roots, strengthen pride, and springboard off the past to inspire a sense of community regrowth. This can be used in place-branding to position Hartlepool's identity and to inspire investment, such as reopening the Art Gallery's viewing platform as a counterpoint to the views from the Town Wall.



Figure 2 Historic photograph of Victoria Terrace, Customs House and Dock Offices (c) Historic England Archive

## Historic buildings in need and with great promise

- 5.4 Church Street currently looks tired and quiet; in stasis at best and perhaps still declining. The Panellists heard that low property values mean maintenance and improvement can be seen as not worthwhile, leading to short term cosmetic fixes rather than long term asset management. This has led to escalating, deep-set historic fabric needs. The recent Church Street Revival Townscape Heritage scheme struggled to attract interest with a 75% grant rate; in some cases contract value was more than the property value. Nonetheless, Panellists saw firm evidence that confidence from public sector investment was encouraging the private sector, with recent and current refurbishment of several buildings around Church Street. New uses (ranging from production studios to escape rooms) demonstrate the flexibility of historic town centre buildings like these, a key attribute to be exploited.
- 5.5. HBC should initiate proactive conversations with building owners, users and the wider community about how the historic environment can serve the town in the 21st century. An understanding of historic buildings' embodied energy, their high-quality original materials, the financial reward from good maintenance, and opportunities for retrofit improvements can help position them as part of the solution for tackling climate change. Education on how to look after historic buildings in comparison to modern ones is likely to be key; partnerships with schools and colleges should raise awareness and equip future property owners with knowledge and skills to make the most of this valuable resource.
- 5.6. Creating momentum requires the buy in from businesses and residents, and the Panel were concerned the poor appearance in and around parts of Church Street, and the distinct lack of footfall, hinders perceptions and ambition. The area needs to look cared for and temporarily active to visibly demonstrate to the public that change is afoot. Short term activity such as festivals and takeovers can be powerful tools. As well as capital, HBC need to be sure they have sufficient revenue funding to support their aims and facilitate short-term activation and to support community action.
- 5.7. Church Street Conservation Area has seen recent investment through the Townscape Heritage scheme, HBC's recent purchase of properties in the area, the BIS, the Northern Studios and the Northern School of Art. Plans for the regionally significant screen production village – positively linked to similar investment in Sunderland – are very strong. This is a courageous move strongly welcomed by the Panel. The potential to attract high profile and valuable film and media work has knock-on benefits for the creative sector including students on the same street. This major move has the potential to revive Church Street as a direct outcome, ensuring the historic character of the buildings being used is enhanced, their reuse brings life to the street, and local people, businesses and students see direct impact. It has potential as a very distinctive filming location, so enhancing architectural character and appearance would support industry as well as benefit local people. There needs to be a prioritised list of future investment projects, which should include Church Street properties backing on to the station, the former Shades Hotel, the terrace north of it, the former Athenaeum, the former Royal Hotel and the level crossing. This will help generate private sector confidence in the area and stimulate further investment.



- 5.8. The Panel heard more is planned to maximise the potential of the Art Gallery, reopening the viewing platform in the tower, improving the café's offer and bringing the Gallery out in to Church Square and Church Street. This is welcome and will be especially important when the building shuts for refurbishment, maintaining the momentum and customer base that the Art Gallery has developed over the last decades. The Gallery's offer is not apparent from outside the building so its impact is limited only to those venturing in. Its impact could be spread further, in vacant shop windows or through largescale exhibitions of street art, both of which would encourage new visitors, boost town pride, and enliven forgotten spaces, as well as raise awareness that art is for everyone. Artists' creativity should be trusted and supported to change perceptions of Hartlepool as part of a place-branding exercise, with strong social media presence a target.
- 5.9. Alongside the Northern School of Art's formal learning channels, the Art Gallery can deliver more informal arts engagement, yet the Panel heard little about community-led arts projects and private sector creative business development. A very impressive exhibition of work by Hartlepool Art Club was on display during the Panel's visit, highlighting a significant local talent. Hartlepool's creative talent could be better used and promoted, helping it to become more embedded in the future of the town.

### Potentially exciting streets and spaces in need of a strategy

- 5.10. The value and strategic purpose of public open space, including streets, is as important to the town's future as the buildings. Local residents use them every day, and they're the first thing experienced by visitors. The design of spaces influences how they're used and by whom – so a priority must be to make them feel welcoming and safe. As the town's best places are quite spread out and disconnected, improving ease and pleasure of movement between them is very important. The Panel heard about plans to create new spaces outside the BIS and at the waterfront museums, but the purpose for these and their strategic fit in a public realm network – and indeed the need for yet more open space in the town – was not clear. An audit of existing spaces should be carried out, including engagement with local communities to understand current usage and need, leading to a coordinated approach to existing and new urban streets and spaces that meets the needs of local people, underpins inward investment and delivers good urban design. Without this there is a risk of an ad hoc approach and continued disconnection.
- 5.11. Such a new approach to understanding, knitting and adapting the historic road/block plan should improve connectivity and accessibility, and can also help decarbonise the town by incorporating active travel and grey-to-green moves. Being relatively flat with a centrally located rail station and some attractive streets, there should be many opportunities to increase walking and cycling. There is a clear conflict to this in the A179 and A689, cutting Church Street and the waterfront off from the rest of town and helping to disconnect these from the Headland. The physical barrier and the level of traffic are at odds with aspirations

for activity and re-use on Church Street, and the historic environment presents the chance to create new appealing walking and cycling routes.

- 5.12. The Panel found wayfinding to be poor with little to suggest attractions to visit only a short distance from the town centre. There was also little to indicate how to get from the town centre to Seaton Carew or the Headland. There is little in the town centre to suggest water is nearby, either the urban waterfront experience or the seaside resort of Seaton Carew. Exploring what a coastal market town with potentially iconic waterfront means in the 21st century would help build Hartlepool's brand and increase pride of place.

### The best dockland potential on the east coast?

- 5.13. Much of Hartlepool's historic waterfront presents unique and distinctive opportunities for new use and development on a scale rarely found on the east coast. Since regeneration began in the 1990s, most development has underplayed that potential leaving residential, leisure, hotel and retail of little character or quality, not context-led, and creating little sense of place. Many historic buildings have been lost, including a group of large-scale warehouses not unlike Liverpool's Albert Dock, and the small number of high-quality historic buildings left, important though they are, are sufficiently dispersed to add little weight as a townscape anchor.
- 5.14. Public realm work has somewhat improved the waterfront, and vital events such as the waterfront festivals and 2023 Tall Ships Races have raised its profile. Yet the urban realm is heavily car dominated, discouraging getting to or lingering in the area, worsened by the scale and exposure of tracts of fallow land. It is cut off from the rest of the town by the scale and placelessness of highway engineering, by the railway, and by the impenetrability of the Port of Hartlepool that hinders connectivity with the Headland.
- 5.15. The main draws are the busy, stimulating marina, and the National Museum of the Royal Navy and Museum of Hartlepool, impressive beacons offering immersive historical context to the town, historic vessels, and exciting maritime character. The Panel heard that both museums are looking to invest, refreshing their offer, adapting their buildings and increasing access to the waterfront. Nearby, HBC's forthcoming sport, leisure and healthcare facility, the Highlight, also has powerful potential.
- 5.16. The waterfront is a hugely significant asset for Hartlepool with acres of developable land an exciting USP. It is the largest dockside waterfront opportunity between Leith and Hull, and of huge



Figure 3 The Heritage of Coastal Towns. Hartlepool, Tees Valley. Entrance to Hartlepool Maritime Experience Museum © Historic England Archive



regenerative and placemaking opportunity for the region. Whilst the realities of development economics will be key, the scale of ambition should reflect the scale of the place. It is the strong view of the Panel that development must be much more ambitious than currently envisaged, be of much higher architectural quality, more cohesive in its urban design, and bring clear long-term public benefit to Hartlepool's deprivation factors. This contrasts with much of the existing development that has been opportunistic, with short term design characteristics and some with questionable regenerative impact. A more contextual approach is especially needed for housing (suburban culs-de-sac are not right for urban waterfront), and good comparators are needed to inspire the right homes and mixed-uses.

- 5.17. Much of the high-level masterplanning work has already been carried out, yet it is not clear that either current document is sufficiently ambitious or measured for the significant potential on offer. HBC and HDC should now develop together a more finely detailed plan for the area to help unlock the potential and quality. An holistic view of existing and proposed developments is essential for successful placemaking, rather than considering developments separately or reactively.
- 5.18. The Panel would also encourage innovation by seizing the opportunity to extract heat from the harbour's water to create a sustainable heat network, helping to deliver HBC's NetZero strategy. This could heat buildings around the docks including the Highlight and museums, housing (reducing fuel poverty) and businesses (increasing resilience). It might also be possible to include Church Street where the Panel heard a high street entrepreneur was closing their business due to unaffordable gas bills.

## Wider, joined-up visitor potential

- 5.19. The Panel was impressed by HBC's presentation on the visitor potential of the town's historic Headland and the seaside offer at Seaton Carew. The Panel felt a coherent approach across these Hartlepool honeypots could bring economies of scale and a weightier sense of purpose.
- 5.20. The Panel felt the recent direction of travel for the Headland is fundamentally sound with no need to reinvent the wheel. The successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (2001-2006) highlighted two issues yet to be resolved: connectivity with the rest of the town and the vacant Friarage Manor House. There is sound strategic direction and well-considered, deliverable actions in both the 2013 (then) Prince's Foundation community planning report, and HBC's Headland Heritage Strategy, both prepared with local people. Historic England's current support to prepare a Conservation Area Management Plan will bring this potential back to the fore, and focus it on place-based wins for local people such as opportunities for health and wellbeing, community cohesion and growing place pride. This may be particularly important for the Friarage Manor House, where re-use as something other than housing could help unlock the Headland's potential for economic regeneration.
- 5.21. A similar approach should be taken with Seaton Carew, where a management plan is also being prepared, following a 2015 masterplan. A strategy is needed that meets the needs of local residents, business and groups (such as Hartlepool Parkrun, Hornby Park and the Golf Club) and, as with the Headland, leads to an action plan of deliverable investment and partnership working opportunities. The King's Foundation may again be able to assist with this.
- 5.22. A critical mass of local visitors is needed to sustain businesses, so building this at the same time as promoting the place to visitors from further afield is important. Focussing on making wider Hartlepool somewhere that local people want to be will help resilience and out-of-season trading. It will also ensure local communities feel included and valued in the growth and development of their town, keeping the focus on their needs. In Bishop Auckland, an externally focused drive to increase visitor numbers has, at times, left local people feeling disconnected from the direction and impact of the town's growth. In time, the benefits to local people can be opened up to a wider tourism offer, for example by developing the Friarage as a culture and heritage node alongside St Hilda's Church and Heugh Battery Museum, an approach that the Headland Heritage Strategy shows local people would support.
- 5.23. This wider potential for characterful destinations across Hartlepool can also support the regional film production agenda discussed above. Other parts of town have a distinctive location offer that has already been used (eg. Vera, 2023; Victoria, 2018) and more can be utilised, for example with Seaton Carew's Art Deco bus station, an architectural style relatively rare in England and thus potentially prized as a film set.

## 6. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 6.1. Following on from this narrative is a series of recommendations using the structure of the six questions posed to the Panel for the visit.

### Q1. Value of the historic environment

**“How do we better communicate the economic value of Hartlepool’s historic environment including the contribution it makes to our decarbonisation pathway?”**

#### 6.2. Short Term

- 6.2.1. Tell the big story of Hartlepool. Hartlepool can genuinely claim to have been one of the most important towns in England at more than one point in its long and rich history. Conserving Hartlepool’s heritage is as much about telling this story as it is about conserving the fabric. The story can help connect the large fragments that survive (Headland, Church Street, town centre, waterfront, etc) to tell a bigger story than each can alone. Due to town remodelling and erosion of some surviving buildings, streets and other, each component is itself a rare fragment, so adding them together via an overall narrative reveals more and creates critical mass. Protecting and celebrating the big story can drive local people’s pride in place. This approach has been used in Navigator North’s project, which uncovered heritage stories from the buildings, people and places in Middlesbrough town centre to build a broader narrative about the creative story of the town.
- 6.2.2. Engage with local people and groups on the social value and potential of the historic environment, and to highlight placemaking and place-branding opportunities. The intense delivery pressures of recent projects have not allowed enough time for meaningful engagement or influence on some projects. This is not unique to Hartlepool, but its absence was felt given the ambition to “put the heart back” into the town. Perhaps due to different pressures, the Art Gallery team do appear well integrated with the community and have a highly commendable attitude to co-design, making them well placed to help more widely with this. The experience of slowing delivery of the Highlight centre to allow closer design development with future users is a great example.
- 6.2.3. Develop a shared vision between HBC and HDC with a mutual understanding of the value of the town’s historic assets, including stories of its past, and the town’s position in the strategic level thinking of TVCA. The Panel were concerned that communication seemed to be poor between the layers of local governance and delivery, with local distinctiveness not necessarily being prioritised and no agreed understanding of historic place significance to underpin investment. For example, there are differing views about the significance and future of the disused former Odeon cinema, a public clash of policy and approach that could be avoided through dialogue, including with Historic England.

6.2.4. Review Hartlepool's streets and spaces before investing in new urban spaces. A review of existing grey and green streets and spaces is needed, both historic and modern. The modern spaces between the various historic nodes are problematic, and the historic spaces at those nodes often feel forlorn. Admittedly on what was a cold winter's day, some spaces the Panel saw were unused and uninviting. A review would identify existing spaces' potential and the need for new ones. It should also be used to inform long-term planning to tackle how the A179 and A689 work within the town. The review should assess urban design principles such as connectivity, legibility, accessibility, safety, enclosure, greenness, sustainability, scale, exposure/microclimate, liveliness, etc. Sheffield has done much work to assess and plan for walking routes, with strong grey-to-green credentials. Bristol Temple Quay's spatial framework is evidenced on a sustainable urban mobility plan and public realm guide.

### 6.3. Medium term

- 6.3.1. A demonstrator project on Hartlepool's high quality 19th century buildings, which are a great asset for the town, including its terraced housing stock. To help highlight the embodied energy in existing buildings and create educational opportunities to upskill building owners, built environment professionals and tradespeople, it would be beneficial to run a demonstrator project, carrying out renovations and upgrades to improve thermal efficiency in a historic building, showing how inherently sustainable such buildings are. Historic England can assist with technical advice and, if this is done with housing, Homes England should be engaged as part of this project. This also would be a good opportunity for partnership working with local colleges and tradespeople.
- 6.3.2. Carry out maintenance both to publicly owned buildings and the public realm. It is hard for people to understand the value of built heritage when it is in poor condition or looks uncared for. Following this up with encouragement and, if possible, support for others to maintain their own properties (such as a 'cherry-picker day' offering shared action for rainwater goods in a terrace). In County Durham, the council has spent time understanding the scope of historic property in its own portfolio, helping to focus resources and skills where it was needed to avoid historic assets becoming at-risk from lack of, or ill-informed, maintenance and repair. Newcastle City Council recently updated its local heritage at risk strategy including a prioritised most-at-risk list; 6 of the top 10 assets were owned by the council, focusing attention on steps towards repair and reuse or disposal.
- 6.3.3. Invest in a clear wayfinding to raise awareness and help navigate the spread of Hartlepool's offer for locals and visitors alike, particularly walkers and wheelers. Community groups can highlight their preferred active travel routes and the desire lines for new ones. This can be linked both to the connectivity of streets and spaces in the town but also the recommendation to tell Hartlepool's big story, where all components work together to create a critical mass.
- 6.3.4. Plan for what happens after Historic England's Heritage Schools offer ends in 2026. The programme runs for two years from January 2024, training teachers in how to use local



heritage resources to teach Hartlepool's history. Use this momentum to devise educational opportunities to highlight the value of heritage. Plan for the end of the programme to explore how the big story of Hartlepool can continue to be told in class and in the townscape around, helping children value their local area and generate a sense of pride in Hartlepool from a young age. Devise ways to use heritage and history in training for the creative sector. This can help reinforce rootedness in the town and encourage students to stay once they enter the industry. Product design students at Northumbria University have successfully used Aydon Castle as a place for inspiration and exhibition.

#### 6.4. Long term

- 6.4.1. Resolve physical connectivity issues to reconnect Church Street, the waterfront and town centre, and to better connect those to the Headland. There is a need to stitch the historic settlement back together, both physically and notionally. This must prioritise addressing the barriers presented by the A179, the A689 and Middleton Grange Shopping Centre, and should follow on from the streets and spaces review recommended above. It will require significant long-term planning and investment rather than attempting change through short-term spot projects. While the ultimate aim should be to reduce the level of traffic, in the medium term it should be possible to improve connectivity using improved public realm, adding trees and by slowing the traffic down. Oxford Road, Manchester, has replaced vehicles with cycles as part of strategic movement planning. Poynton High Street created shared space to ease pedestrian movement with economic wins. New Islington, Manchester has seen radical highway remodelling to create a people-focused place. The Catharijnesingel project in Utrecht replaced a multi-lane urban motorway with green-blue space for movement, nature and leisure. Tackling this issue underpins so much of the future in Hartlepool. A stronger creative sector on Church Street relies on it not feeling cut off from the town centre; the town centre and waterfront offers must actively complement each other without 1990s dual-carriageways getting in the way; developing the waterfront's tourism potential should inspire an easy visit to the Headland. Radically and strategically addressing the challenging road network is key to Hartlepool's future.

## Q2. Shared delivery at pace

**“How do we ensure a shared vision and successful delivery of high quality placemaking and regeneration at the speed required when there are multiple public, private and third sector partners working in Hartlepool?”**

### 6.5. Short term

- 6.5.1. HBC and HDC should run a programme of internal collaborative workshops between them to discuss their ambitions for regeneration, planning and development in Hartlepool, aiming for a shared vision. Workshops should include the historic environment, urban design and placemaking themes. The process may require third party facilitators and should include mutual information sharing, mapping, role definition and visioning. In particular, it is important to address challenges in development management between Lichfields and HBC as local planning authority, and to discuss the scope and implications of a change in public asset ownership, particularly where assets are key to delivery of placemaking outcomes. Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Homes England are piloting a strategic place partnership, a new approach to relationships aimed at housing growth.
- 6.5.2. HBC and HDC should decide on their shared priorities, those projects – such as the screen production village and adapting the town centre – that can lead to further investment. Time should be allowed to deliver these properly, engaging with stakeholders so that the private and third sectors can bring forward their own complementary projects. Later priority projects – such as waterfront regeneration – can be brought forward more slowly to allow strong project development and investment planning to ensure better outcomes. The two current competing masterplans for the waterfront, neither of which seems to focus enough on realistic delivery, suggests this kind of more considered approach is needed.
- 6.5.3. Map out community groups and activity for public engagement, making sure reach is as wide as possible. Groups might also be able to support delivery where HBC capacity is a challenge, so placing more trust in the third sector can bring rewards, especially on small community projects. In Wavertree, a Liverpool suburb, local conversations created a genuinely grassroots group focusing on changing the place’s grim local image through community spirit and a sense of caring for people and the place they live in. Within two years they had won funds to give out community grants and open a community shop, as well as running everything from litter picks to car-free days. The Love Wavertree project is in a conservation area – it is not driven by heritage yet it has hugely benefited the place’s historic environment, and it is clear that pride of place and the strength of roots in a long-established neighbourhood have been key motivators.
- 6.5.4. Bring in external expertise and resource for community engagement as this was acknowledged to have been insufficient so far for some projects. This need not mean hiring expensive consultants; the Panel highlighted how good use of local knowledge and expertise can represent better value and sound longer term outcomes. Local history, rootedness and



memories can be powerful hooks for people to actively participate in the future of their town. This has been demonstrated well in recent years at the Headland, where an active, keen community is using heritage for community development goals at St Hilda's Church and the Heugh Battery Museum. Officers' skills to creatively reach wider audiences should be developed. Local people could also be rewarded for engaging with proposals, recognising the financial constraints that many face. Thinking Place have supported several places including Carlisle, Hull, Coventry, and Torquay to find a local 'coalition of the willing' by strengthening relationships, finding shared purpose, and empowering stakeholders to act together. Kirklees have worked with Beam Arts UK on cultural engagement as part of town centre revitalisation.

6.5.5. Develop a temporary Urban Room in a vacant building on Church Street, a place to engage and co-design the town with local communities. Creating a physical space would capitalise on the Art Gallery team's proactive approach to working with residents and would reinforce the value of collaboration on projects. Bringing this activity on to the high street is a positive step in its own right. While the Art Gallery is being refurbished, it could tie in with bringing art and culture on to the high street in a shop unit in public ownership. Something similar at the Highlight could exploit the presence of the NHS to bring gains. The Masham Hotel in Middlesbrough, run by Navigator North, re-uses a former Victorian pub as a project space to find out about Middlesbrough's past and future. Nottingham's Urban Room in a refurbished historic high street shop ran from 2014 to 2020, successfully moving online when funding for the shop ended. Birkenhead's Place is a community space to share views on long-term regeneration of a historic area undergoing significant change. York's Common Room run by Street Life York gave residents and visitors a chance to engage with placemaking and heritage-led sustainable development in the city. Reading's urban room, Your Place Our Place, has a wider focus on quality of life and community development as well as town centre regeneration. Newcastle's Farrell Centre is a leading model for urban rooms, inspired by the man who devised the idea.

## 6.6. Medium term

6.6.1. Develop the Business Forum to include membership of a wider range of businesses, including small businesses in and around Church Street. This can help with businesses support, making sure that it is focussed where it is needed the most, and with the delivery of projects, particularly in the town centre. Develop the forum to align with place-branding objectives to give the business sector strong agency in the message and identity that can be conveyed both to local people and the world through social media.

### Q3. The Waterfront: connecting existing and new

“How do we encourage a sustainable, high quality and distinctively Hartlepool townscape in the large areas of developable land at the Waterfront?”

#### 6.7. Short term

- 6.7.1. Develop a clearer, shared, ambitious vision for the waterfront with stakeholders including residents, community groups, HDC, TVCA, the museums, PD Ports, Hartlepool Marina, developers, Homes England, Historic England and others. This should clarify and improve the masterplans and design code for the area. It should promote commercial development complementary to the town centre (including redeveloping existing commercial development where it would achieve better placemaking); residential development appropriate in density, typology and quality for a central waterfront location; and public realm that is attractive and inviting for pedestrians not vehicles, encouraging greater footfall and longer dwell times. It is more important to get the right development on the waterfront than fast development.
- 6.7.2. Set up a Design Review Panel, and agree how responsibility for design quality is shared between HBC and HDC. The quality of historic waterside development and case studies of successful design from elsewhere should be used as the benchmark, rather than Hartlepool's waterside architecture from recent decades. Gosport's deprived and historically significant waterfront is seeing extensive masterplanning and design work. Smith's Dock in North Shields and The Decks in Runcorn have added striking modern homes to historic waterfronts. The Malings in Newcastle upon Tyne is award-winning waterfront family housing at a human scale. Hull's waterfront saw a major competition to explore its potential in 2019. The vision for Shoreline Crescent is transforming once deprived waterfront in Folkstone. Site visits to comparators can help visualise the potential.
- 6.7.3. Develop detailed plans for public access to the water's edge to as much of the entire harbour as possible, including areas currently behind pay barriers or otherwise inaccessible. This should follow on from the streets and spaces review and should be developed together with the NHS, Sport England, active travel interests, disability / equity interests and others.
- 6.7.4. Secure more joined up working between the Museum of Hartlepool and the National Museum of the Royal Navy, especially during refurbishment. This should include joint procurement of design and contractors to achieve a more holistic approach, selecting quality over price and setting high expectations for low carbon building design and people focussed public realm. Opportunities for more firmly combining both museums' offer should also be explored.

## 6.8. Medium term

- 6.8.1. Plan for comprehensive improve to the public realm based on the outcomes of the streets and spaces review recommended above. This should consider the seaward location but include greening and high quality materials, and consider the balance between longevity and sacrificial investment that might provide short-term impact before future redevelopment. Walkers and wheelers should take priority in the design with vehicle provision sensitively designed around them. It should follow a holistic approach to well-informed contextual design, providing for the whole waterfront rather than discrete, piecemeal projects, using a long term plan that can withstand changes in delivery.
- 6.8.2. Investigate the opportunity for a water-source heat pump in the dock as a renewable energy source. This could provide a heat network for waterside development and potentially the wider town centre to improve sustainability. Gateshead (operational) and Seaham (planned) have district heating systems using mine water as energy.
- 6.8.3. Provide free access to the National Museum of the Royal Navy for local people. The Panel heard that less than 10% of visitors come from Hartlepool, so this would not have a detrimental effect on revenue and would encourage local visitor growth. The Hepworth in Wakefield and the Minster in York offer free entry to local residents. The Royal Navy's own Fleet Air Arm Museum offers discounted tickets for local people. Leeds Industrial Museum offers £1 entry for locals.

## 6.9. Long term

- 6.9.1. Address the impact of the closed nature of the port's land, alongside addressing the linear connectivity issues from roads and railway. The waterfront is technically within easy walking and wheeling distance of the Headland as well as the town centre, so improved connectivity will be necessary to ensure maximum benefit to each of the three and the three together. Better active travel infrastructure should consider the opportunity for a pedestrian route carved through part of the Port.

## Q4. Tourism growth

“How do we draw on the success of the investment in Church Street and the waterfront to recognise the critical mass of wider assets including the Headland and Seaton Carew?”



Figure 4 The Panel on the waterfront © Historic England

### 6.10. Short term

- 6.10.1. Continue availability of the Art Gallery’s offer during refurbishment. The number of vacant properties on Church Street should make it possible for meanwhile activity of the Gallery’s retail, café and outreach offer. This will help support local artists and makers and continue community provision. Explore how this off-site retail offer can continue after the Gallery reopens, giving more exhibition space in the building, and an enhanced, curated exposure for local artists. This ties in with the urban room recommendation above.
- 6.10.2. Actively pursue recommendations in the Headland Heritage Strategy using an action plan with the community. This should be linked to the emerging conservation area management plan that sets the spatial and development objectives and context and formalises the vision.

### 6.11. Medium term

- 6.11.1. Work to address Heritage at Risk. This includes St Hilda's Church, a Grade I listed asset that should draw visitors but is currently in poor condition and has very limited opening times. The Church Street, Seaton Carew and Headland Conservation Areas are all on the national Heritage at Risk register and their various problems will hinder perceptions and discourage repeat visits. Historic England can advise on how to combine action to reduce risk to investment in these areas.
- 6.11.2. Develop a forum for visitor attractions, helping them to develop a joined-up approach. This should include culture and heritage attractions including the Art Gallery, National Museum of the Royal Navy, Museum of Hartlepool, St Hilda's Church, the Heugh Gun Battery, and non-heritage attractions such as Hartlepool and Seaton Carew golf clubs and the marina, and key regular events such as the waterfront festivals. Working together to build critical mass and momentum will be key, including on regional and national promotion of a joined-up heritage/culture offer aimed at Tees Valley, the North East and beyond. Raising awareness of clustered assets strengthens critical mass as a reason to visit. The Panel saw more tourism leaflets for attractions further afield than for those in the town, so marketing of the local visitor resource should be improved.
- 6.11.3. Invest in a programme of cultural and community events and activities that draws people to the waterfront, Headland and Seaton Carew as well as Church Street (see below). These may be small scale and low budget but offer a reason for repeat visit. The national cultural programme run by Historic England in its High Street Heritage Action Zones has achieved excellent impact through cultural programming in over 60 historic town centre settings since 2020, with many examples to explore.
- 6.11.4. Develop the café at the Art Gallery, bringing it out into the attractive public realm that surrounds the building with additional planting to give shelter. This will help animate the space, advertise the Gallery's presence and attract people to Church Street. York Art Gallery's café offer has enlivened Exhibition Square. Carlisle Cathedral's award-winning café extension has opened up access to the cathedral and attracted new visitors. Norwich Cathedral's refectory is a dramatic civic addition to precious ecclesiastical ground. The Lewis Carroll Centre is a cultural extension to Grade II\* All Saints Church in Daresbury, Cheshire.
- 6.11.5. Reopen the Art Gallery's tower viewing platform. This has the potential to be a key tourist attraction in the town centre and a great counterpoint to views of the town from the Headland's Town Wall. It would be a great tool for visually connecting the various places on offer to visitors, and should be part of the Gallery becoming a central visitor point for the town.
- 6.11.6. Agree reuse for the Friarage and fuller use of Borough Hall to benefit local people and add to the Headland's offer to local people and visitors. Historic England can offer advice and potentially grant support, as well as championing assets with other funders. The BIS is an excellent exemplar for creative reuse of a disused historic building, helping reduce risk to the



conservation area it sits in and demonstrating what can be achieved to an award-winning standard.

- 6.11.7. Develop a visitor and heritage investment plan for Seaton Carew, potentially working with the King's Foundation to engage local residents, businesses and community groups.

## 6.12. Long term

- 6.12.1. Develop health and wellbeing indicators that feed off heritage and placemaking. Examples include specific KPIs, a focus on social prescribing, exploiting opportunities for active living such as caring for historic open spaces, or increasing opportunities for active participation linked to the town's heritage such as volunteering at a site or completing a heritage walk around the town. For example, creating additional local interest and dwell points along the regional Way of St Hild can provide benefits for people in Hartlepool using only part of it for local active travel between the Headland and Seaton Carew.



## Q5. Creative industry potential

“How could the current investment in the Northern Studios be harnessed strategically to generate a stronger local creative, cultural and tourism industry?”

### 6.13. Short term

6.13.1. Work with local partners to develop a programme of events in Church Street to bring people to the area and animate the street. The street’s strong architecture and enclosed setting provides an ideal backdrop to festival-style programming, and the street is in need of life. The success of events such as the Tall Ships Races and Hartlepool Folk Festival shows that there is appetite for larger-scale events and regular smaller-scale events, such as markets (such as Sunderland’s pop-up makers market) or perhaps a dance festival that uses the rich setting and a popular local pastime to bring the streetscape to life. Such activities raise the profile of local creativity, encourage repeat visits and could support the business forum’s campaign.

6.13.2. Use the Art Gallery more to promote local creativity alongside the BIS and the other growing offer. The gallery is a great public face for the creative sector and has potential to be higher profile in the town, for example being used as a visitor hub to introduce the town centre and Church Street offer. Bringing the building’s life out in to street and nearby premises (as above) will be important to demonstrating the creative potential of the town.

6.13.3. As part of work to address heritage at risk, speak to Historic England about the potential for investment in the former Shades building and surrounding buildings on Church Street to enhance the planned investment of Levelling Up and other funds.



Figure 5 Panel in discussion outside of the Shades Hotel on Church Street List entry: 1250114 © Historic England Archive

6.13.4. Market Northern Studios heavily to develop an awareness of the facility. Work with BFI and North East Screen to host, for example, a location agency week or a film and media conference. This should be done in conjunction with the Fulwell 73 studios in Sunderland to demonstrate a wider North East offer. Also, occasional tours of the studios would encourage local people to feel engaged. Suggestions from panellists with experience in this sector include putting together a package of locations alongside the dry hire white box space, to simplify the offer and hiring process, plus having a designated Film Officer at HBC so production companies have a single point of contact to smooth delivery.

#### 6.14. Medium term

- 6.14.1. When considering new incubator or similar space needed for the growing creative industry, prioritise the re-use of historic spaces around Church Street, building on the successful re-use of the former post-office to create the BIS.
- 6.14.2. Empower local artists and creative talent by inviting ideas for the Church Street area. This could include murals on well-chosen side and rear elevations (Hastings' America Grounds mural, Nuart in Aberdeen and the Rochdale Uprising mural festival are good comparators) or interesting ways of temporarily enlivening front facades which also enhance historic character (such as Lumiere in Durham or Waltham Forest's 2019 projections). Shop windows of buildings in public ownership should display work by local artists and makers, helping to support them, create visual interest and advertise the nearby Art Gallery. Weston-Super-Mare's shop windows project saw artwork displayed in vacant windows to great effect.
- 6.14.3. Establish a process for temporary pop-up and meanwhile use in buildings owned by landlords keen to keep their assets in use whilst they plan long term. Collaborating with the local community can support small businesses and students as well as bringing street life. Offers aimed at children brings families to Church Street to expand on the Art Gallery's success in such an offer. The Fruit Market in Hull and the Make & Trade project in Derby are good comparators.

## Q6. Future momentum

**“How can the momentum of existing plans and visions be sustained to ensure continued high-quality development as they are rolled out?”**

### 6.15. Short term

- 6.15.1. Be confident that Hartlepudlians deserve the best, thinking long-term with community engagement. To achieve this, projects should be slowed down where possible, carrying out careful and early public engagement to ensure public value of investment will address socio-economic need. Practice at the Highlight should be emulated in other projects. It is recognised that recent government funds have emphasised delivery at pace, and that local residents and leaders are ambitious for change, but the borough has an important role in championing longer term thinking, inspiring high ambition for quality, and achieving genuine public engagement beyond consultation. Local support from the private and third sectors improves the sustainability of public projects and powers greater momentum through parallel delivery. The urban room and cultural programming recommendations above support this theme.
- 6.15.2. Support HBC staff to encourage staff retention, making them feel valued, able to deliver, and addressing work related stress. Without the excellent staff that are currently in place it will be very hard to follow through on existing plans and deliver projects.
- 6.15.3. Ensure a clear focus on longer term socio-economic outcomes when deliver existing strategies and plans. Socio-economic outcomes should remain even if delivery priorities and phases change. Investing in heritage and placemaking can help achieve these outcomes, just as investing business development or skills training can. The focus should be on forecasting the improvement to local people’s lives that will flow, whatever the investment agenda.

### 6.16. Medium term

- 6.16.1. Develop a clear creative place brand for Hartlepool as part of HBC’s emerging destination management plan. Go beyond marketing to focus on Hartlepool’s identity, reputation and perceptions for investment, business, talent, living and visiting. Use the town’s big story to shine local distinctiveness and substance without the need to resort to nostalgia or cliched heritage tropes. The Burnley Bondholders branding programme has helped turn round a declining population in a marginal northern town seen as boring, changing internal and external perceptions and inspiring homegrown and incoming talent, employers, investors and developers. Thinking Place helped post-industrial St Helen’s merge arts, culture and heritage investment to become the first Borough of Culture for Liverpool city region. Historic England can provide advice on using heritage in place branding.

## 6.17. Long term

- 6.17.1. Investigate the potential for a Business Improvement District to support and grow town centre businesses over and above the capacity of the Business Forum. While there may currently be inadequate critical mass, this should be a long-term target. BIDs can engage in capital work as well as programming and cultural activity, and so in time could support delivery of wider placemaking objectives beyond raising the profile of the town through programming.
- 6.17.2. Work with Arts Council England to establish a National Portfolio Organisation or Investment Principles Support Organisation in Hartlepool, as appropriate. Establishing a foundation for long term planning and leadership in a key arts organisation will help underpin growth in the wider cultural and creative sector, raising the place's profile and ability to attract further investment and partnerships.



# Historic England

The Historic Places Panel provides a broad spectrum of independent expertise to help local authorities and others engage in the regeneration and revitalisation of historic places.

A list of current panel members and previous review papers can be found on our website: [historicengland.org.uk/about/who-we-are/committees-and-panels/historic-places-panel](https://historicengland.org.uk/about/who-we-are/committees-and-panels/historic-places-panel).

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