Building the future we want

In future, the Town Centre of Bournemouth will:

- Be recognisable as a vital part of the social, cultural and commercial fabric of the conurbation
- Showcase the talents, character, diversity and achievements of all its residents
- Become a focal point for sustainable transport
Contents

06  Document Purpose
08  Introduction
18  Vision Foundations
26  The Visual Vision
28  The Written Vision
29  The Spatial Vision
34  The Emotional Vision
48  Delivering the Vision
Document Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide:

• Updated stakeholder opinion reflecting economic, social and environmental changes to the Town Centre ten years’ on

• A springboard and catalyst for further expressions, master plans & strategies, including investment and promotion

• Up-to-date evidence to inform emerging changes to planning policy.
Figure 1: The Vision is part of a suite of documents
Introduction

Bournemouth Town Centre stands at the heart of a conurbation which is home to around 400,000 people with a scale and layout inherited from the grand visions of its Victorian founders. Whilst Poole and Christchurch were established centuries before, central Bournemouth was planned and built in just a few decades at the end of the 19th century. An early motto for the town was *Pulchritudo et Salubritas - Beauty and Health* and that vision continues to have lasting value today.

Reinforcing its spa town origins, much of the Town Centre was built on the principles of the Victorian Picturesque movement, emphasising elegance, spaciousness, panoramas and vistas, and the natural landscape. Fortunately, the robustness of this approach ensured the Town Centre has the necessary flexibility to gently evolve over its first hundred years, and will stand it in good stead in the future. For whatever reason, there are relatively few large footprint developments or mega-blocks in the Town Centre. This fine grain is an important component of the flexible built environment that will serve Bournemouth well as ways in which we live, work or socialise ebb and flow in the coming years.

In 2008 Bournemouth Council produced a Town Centre vision following consultation with local people. The vision stated that: By 2026 Bournemouth Town Centre will be rejuvenated so it will be even better, more competitive and renowned as a place of high quality for residents, visitors, businesses and students. All changes in the Town Centre will be driven by the need to raise its image and profile as a high quality coastal garden town. Doing this will ensure the Town Centre is: A better place to live; A better place to visit; A better place to work; A better place to invest; A better place to learn; and A better place to socialise. These goals remain true into the future, and are reinforced throughout this document. The vision helped inform emerging planning policy and create the Bournemouth Development Company LLP (BDC), which is a 20 year partnership between the council and Morgan Sindall Investments. The vision included a number of development projects, some of which have already been implemented.

There are a number of reasons for producing a new vision now:

- The establishment of the BDC and the implementation of many of the ideas in the last vision
- The rapidly changing nature of work, shopping and leisure
- The growing demand for new homes & sustainable transport
- The increasing impact of new technology in our daily lives
- Challenges and opportunities relating to some developments and trends within the Town Centre
More recent developments have been bright and modern, and sit easily within the older parts of the urban area.

The flexibility found within the fine-grained urban area is one of the Town Centre’s strengths.

Its gardens and green spaces make Bournemouth a memorable place to visit, and should be conserved and added to where possible.
Figure 2: Bournemouth town centre is at the heart of a conurbation home to around 400,000 people
Early in 2018 key members and officers in the Council asked two local urban design and planning practices Boyle+Summers and Feria Urbanism to assist them in producing a new vision. A visioning exercise was devised to collect and combine the views of stakeholders in order to create a single description of the future Town Centre of Bournemouth. The aim was for the vision to be articulated in both words and images, be memorable and be easy to communicate with the widest audience. The vision relates exclusively to the Town Centre, as defined in various Planning Policy documents. This area covers the central beaches and East and West Cliff, the Lower Gardens, shopping, visitor, and cultural areas, as well as the Lansdowne and railway station.

Whilst commissioned by the Council the vision was nevertheless to be owned by the maximum number of stakeholders through a truly open and inclusive process. Workshops were therefore held in the summer attended by a wide variety of stakeholders including retailers, developers, voluntary groups, transport operators, hoteliers, the universities, BDC, ward members, council officers and others. This document summarises the outputs from those workshops.
A specific timescale has purposefully not been defined for the vision. The vision is designed to provide a set of values, principles and approaches rather than an end goal to be reached. Christer Larsson, Malmo City Planning Director describes visioning as “value planning where decisions are made based on a core set of values: expressed in a vision”. An agreed set of values is proposed rather than a specific set of projects. Values can last over time whilst projects may come and go, will be buffeted by economic or political cycles or simply fall out of fashion or lose commercial appeal.

Buildings and infrastructure will often last decades and the values & principles in this document aim to help in considering those investments.

The visioning exercise explored how a vision for the Town Centre could be expressed in a variety of ways, below, and this document sets each out in turn:

- Visual
- Written
- Spatial
- Emotional
- Delivery

So? Throughout this document there are pop-up boxes where the text starts, So? These are designed to illustrate an aspect of the vision, perhaps an initiative that could help with implementation, a potential project, or a novel approach to policy or strategy.

The workshop series held in summer 2018.
Figure 3: Some of the achievements since 2008

- **2008**
  - Town Centre Vision adopted
  - Pavilion Dance opened

- **2008**
  - Bournemouth Air Festival started

- **2010**
  - Triangle public realm scheme
  - New children’s playground in Central Gardens

- **2011**
  - Bournemouth Development Company est.
  - First Arts by the Sea Festival

- **2012**
  - Town Centre and Coastal BIDs created
  - First ice rink in the Lower Gardens

- **2013**
  - Planning policies updated (Area Action Plan)
  - IMAX/Waterfront development demolished

- **2013**
  - Bournemouth Uni investment in the Lansdowne began

- **2011**
  - BDC

- **2010**
  - Trees planted on Holdenhurst Road
Town Centre Vision adopted 2008

New Bournemouth Town Centre Vision 2019

2018
Berry Court development opened

2018
LEP funding awarded for Lansdowne public realm scheme

2018
Phase 2 Pier Approach public realm scheme

2018
BOMO arts, culture and ideas festival launched

2017
BH2 Leisure opened

2017
Phase 1 Pier Approach public realm scheme

2016
Richmond Hill public realm and movement scheme

2015
Hilton development opened

2015
Citrus buildings & Madeira Rd BDC developments completed

2015
Horseshoe Common public realm scheme

2015
Station public realm and movement scheme

2015
Lansdowne Delivery Plan adopted

2012
Town Centre and Coastal BIDs created

2011
Bournemouth Development Company est.

2011
First Arts by the Sea Festival

2012
First ice rink in the Lower Gardens

2008
Bournemouth Air Festival started

2018
BOMO arts, culture and ideas festival launched
The Pier. Sea views and wide panoramas around Poole Bay are a characteristic of this part of the coast.
When stakeholders were asked “If you were able to donate £500 million to the centre of Bournemouth what would you insist it was spent on?” their answers included:

“Upgrade the BIC. Invest in employment opportunities”

“Infrastructure. A holistic review of the seafront. A new pier”

“Heritage – the connections to the Victorian era. Transform Commercial Road with local independents, a route to The Gardens. Park-and-Ride”

“An iconic structure, like Spinnaker Tower. Public realm improvements. Refurb the BIC.”

“Transport and connectivity. A link from the station to the beaches. A cycle scheme. Develop a spectacular seafront. An arts market through the Gardens. A large hotel in front of the BIC.”

“Shared space streets for people, bikes and buses. Distinctive retail/leisure offer. A public transit authority”

“A clean green transport system. Incentives to reduce car use and improve the ped. An iconic cultural facility. An endowment fund for artists. An endowment fund for greenery & landscape improvements”
Vision Foundations

The vision foundations are a summary of broad characteristics of the Town Centre from which vision qualities can be drawn. These qualities should be carried forward through a variety of vision projects including buildings, public realm and events.

A  Elemental Bournemouth
B  Destinations
C  Bourne Identity
D  Views Out to Sea
E  Views into Town
F  Public Life & Focal Spaces
G  Town Connections
The three textures and materials that best capture the essence of the Town Centre and remain longest in the memory are the trees and lawns of the gardens, the soft sand of the beach and the cool water of the sea.

These elements should be celebrated and incorporated in all future visioning work, from urban branding and public realm schemes to festivals and celebrations.

Vision Qualities: Vibrant – Soft – Cool
A core group of civic buildings and destinations are close to one another, clustered around the navigational hub that is the Square. Whilst the railway station is somewhat removed from this main cluster, interventions to improve the experience of moving from the station to the Town Centre are underway and it is hoped that this will reduce the psychological distance significantly.

Vision Qualities: Connected – Walkable – Accessible
Much of the Town Centre occupies a distinctive valley formed by the River Bourne. The valley runs gently to the sea, with steep climbs either side as the land rises to plateaux east and west. The latter meet the sea via green cliffs either side of the central pier. Most of the key civic buildings and destinations, such as St Peters Church or The Pavilion, are prominent in the valley.

Vision Qualities: Drama – Openness – Shelter
Foundation D

Views Out to Sea

On the coastal fringe to the Town Centre, and from a few higher locations inland, long-distance views sweep out to sea and across Dorset’s coastline.

This experience of sweeping panoramas and sea views is an essential characteristic of the Town Centre and one that only a few large urban areas can make claim to.

Vision Qualities: Vastness – Theatrical – Sweeping
The promenade provides long views both north-east and south-west, whilst the seaward end of Bournemouth Pier provides longer distance views back to the skyline of the Town Centre.

From this vantage point we can look back at ourselves and the town we have created.

Vision Qualities: Inviting – Attractive – Leading
The Town Centre has a series of well-loved and identifiable civic spaces, sometimes used for public events. Most of these can be found along an east-west axis 500-600m inland from the coastline and include the Triangle, the Square, Beale Place, Horseshoe Common and the Lansdowne. Pier Approach sits at the landward end of the pier. Improvement works to most of these civic spaces have happened in recent years and more are proposed to ensure their continued success. Notable by their absence are any smaller civic spaces or squares on either East Cliff or West Cliff. It is in these areas where future interventions should seek to deliver neighbourhood-scale public spaces to complement the sequence that already exists.

Vision Qualities: Inviting – Interactive – Intense
The route from the station, along Old Christchurch Road and into the Town Centre is a critical route that threads together the sequence of spaces that includes the Triangle, the Square, Beale Place, Horseshoe Common and the Lansdowne. This route and these spaces sometimes lack greenery but benefit from enclosure, street life and diverse architecture.

A strong green spine does exist running along the valley floor including the hub-like Square. This iconic promenade forms perhaps the most memorable and long-lasting image of the urban area. This is also a popular route for parades, carnivals and public festivals. Future public realm interventions to this route should help reinforce its role in celebrations and events.

Vision Qualities: Pioneering – Striking – Beautiful
The Visual Vision
Blending the past with the present, all with an eye on the future.

The image opposite is designed to summarise some of the key visual dimensions of the vision. It does not seek to be comprehensive but merely to represent some of the themes and markers referenced in the course of the visioning exercise.

Figure 11
Embraced by the natural landscape of the Town Centre are a number of recognisable Bournemouth buildings, both old and new. Existing buildings are reflected in the sea and the better examples survive on land providing continuity into the future. In the spaces between them stand aspirational structures, sometimes outlandish, reflecting Bournemouth’s relative youth, growing confidence and familiarity with modernity.
Written Vision

The written vision seeks to describe the future Town Centre in terms that are evocative, clear and concise.

Bournemouth Town Centre will be:

• A place with broad appeal to all visitors and residents - where an ad-hoc picnic, cinema visit, shopping trip, business conference or live music event are equally valued and respected.

• A place with space for glamorous apartments and family accommodation, for student studios and downsizing homes. Somewhere with more places called home than flats used only occasionally.

• A Town Centre with the confidence and attitude to match, and where urban solutions are created or applied - to challenges like people movement, deliveries or refuse collection.

• A connected, networked and accessible place where affordable work, creative and leisure space is as important as new housing.

• A Town Centre with a sequence of civic square, streets and spaces. These are the places where we share ideas, friendships and experiences. Well-managed and well-designed spaces are a vital means of creating civic values.

• A place which supports and includes the independent small-scale start-up, the medium-scale niche business and the large national corporation equally.

• A place which conserves its rich stock of street buildings, as much for their future flexibility in the face of shifting living and working trends as for the architectural quality of many of them.

• A place on the balmy south coast which celebrates the beautiful and healthy outdoors. Which loves its beaches, cliffs and gardens and also its smaller or more off-beat public spaces. Which embraces life outside, amongst friends or strangers – at the heart of it or on the periphery, enjoying a moment of calm or revelling in letting off steam.

• A vision implemented every day through numerous decisions small and large, by businesses of one, to the Council itself. An act of faith by all who care about Bournemouth.
Spatial Vision

The overall spatial vision for the Town Centre is multi-layered and concerns the key elements of the 3D built and natural environment we share.

Topography

The shallow chine valley and steep seaside cliffs physically connect the Town Centre deep inland and miles along the shoreline. The overall vision for the Town Centre is to conserve and celebrate these natural assets.

So? Whilst the overall landform is fixed good development or public realm schemes could reinforce this characteristic. For example, could the Bourne stream be deculverted to connect the Lower Gardens with the beach and the sea?

Views and vistas

Partly as a result of its landform and partly due to planned interventions (the pier, streets such as Richmond Hill, etc) the Town Centre offers some spectacular panoramas and framed views. The overall vision for the Town Centre is to identify and conserve its best views and vistas.

So? Whilst identifying the most precious and meaningful views is an exercise in itself, some, such as across The Gardens from east-to-west and west-to-east, obviously stand out and can be acted upon immediately. Could new strategic tree planting prepare for future vistas across the town centre?
Connecting Land and Sea

Enjoying the sea, through all one’s senses, is the reason Bournemouth exists. Maintaining open public access to a well-managed and maintained asset is clearly the minimum that should be expected. Making more of the sea relies partly on improving access and partly on the creativity applied to small or large interventions or facilities alongside.

So? Could open or covered sea water pools at the beach or inland make experiencing the sea more accessible? Can more and better access over the cliffs to the beach be endorsed as an important and urgent priority for the Town Centre? Could a new or extended pier help make it easier to get on, over or below the waves?

A Green Network

The green spaces of the Town Centre, most notably the Gardens and the trees prominent in its streets, especially on East Cliff, are key and original components of its existing and future character. Most are statutorily protected but all need to be carefully conserved as part of the consideration of proposals affecting their setting or appreciation. Additional planting and attention to bio-diversity should also form an integral part of future plans.

So? Could Planning guidance be produced for developers/designers to identify specific design criteria to conserve existing green infrastructure when on or adjacent to a site?
Meaningful Landmarks

Navigating a Town Centre is partly related to a clear hierarchy of streets and spaces, and useful signage, and partly about encountering landmarks, of all shapes and sizes, that are memorable and act as markers for future trips. These will be private or public buildings, features or spaces, and might be memorable to some people but not all. In many cases their landmark status is by chance rather than design. Of those recognisable to the greatest number - and in need of protection - will be the obviously prominent buildings, such as the Town Hall, the Pier or Obscura Café in The Square. Tall buildings often act as landmarks, but rarely mark anything meaningful in terms of land use or location.

So? Because of their subjective nature, can a Town Centre vision do more than identify the most obvious landmarks?

The Grand Garden Walk

The term Grand Garden Walk was coined in 2008 for the circuit comprising Westover Road, Pier Approach, Exeter Road and The Square. It links the busiest pedestrian spaces and leisure destinations in the heart of the Town Centre and each of the four locations above has had significant public realm investment in recent years. Continued investment, already planned in Exeter Road and Pier Approach, is welcome and Westover Road should also be a focus, encouraging independent shops, cafés and restaurants along its elegant, Art Deco curve. Future enhancement of Westover Road will be closely linked with investment in Pavilion Gardens.

So? Can a holistic public realm scheme be implemented over time to create a seamless and legible connected Grand Garden Walk? Can planning or landowner policies be devised to promote a specific range of uses and occupiers in Westover Road?
High Rise to Low Rise

The current trend, which is unlikely to change over the lifetime of this vision document, is for increasing numbers of proposals for buildings much taller than their neighbours. Recent guidance has become quickly outdated and a new robust approach is required supported by the widest cross-section of stakeholders. This approach should seek to safeguard the most outstanding and iconic places, spaces and vistas and identify areas where tall buildings would make a positive contribution.

**So?**  *Should The Gardens be safeguarded from overbearing development by height restrictions on sites immediately adjacent? Could tall buildings on higher ground accentuate the valley profile within the Town Centre?*
Key:
- Listed Gardens
- Conservation Areas
- Area with Potential for Taller Buildings
- Grand Garden Walk
- Focal Spaces
- Key East-West Corridor

→ Improved links to the sea to relieve pressure on the central spine in the high summer months.
• New areas of coastal activity to relieve pressure on pier approach.
• Important views to be protected.
• Link to the sea, through gardens

Figure 12: This plan will be further developed in future planning documents.
The Emotional Vision

This vision seeks to reach deeper in to personal experiences of the place, understanding our positive emotional connections with it and the value of these combined as our collective civic memory.

We discover environments with our eyes, ears, fingers and feet. A warm day bare foot on the sand creates one memory, the sound of live music drifting across the Gardens or the sense of cosiness in gazing out of a café on a cold day creates others. Our senses and emotions help us to remember and want to repeat and recapture our experiences.

Capturing the range of sensory experiences offered by the Town Centre is beyond this or any paper document. Finding an appropriately expressive medium, perhaps a hand-held sculpture that can be mass-produced or a single substantial art installation, to represent the emotional vision is one of the challenges for the future.
Views around the bay
The salty breeze and warmth of the sun
Quiet spaces away from the crowd
Summertime
A symphony of excited children, crashing waves and lunch break promenaders
Glamorous nights
Bustling restaurants
Lights in the gardens
Shoes off on the sand
All dressed up and lots of places to go
A solitary stroll on a cool, dewy morning
A place for the arts and artists
For creativity, discovery & learning
Crafts by the sea
Street life / Square life
Youngsters, oldsters & inbetweensters
Sweet soul music, retro rockabilly or traditional brass
People-watching and attention-seeking
Sometimes choreographed, normally not
Green and blue vistas
A warm climate represented in lush landscape both natural & curated
Delivering the Vision

Infrastructure

The speed and volume of information accessible through new technologies and the digital environment will continue to increase. It will revolutionise how we do business and our everyday decisions and experiences. The increasing numbers of people that will live in and visit Bournemouth Town Centre will have an impact on the flow of people and goods, and the generation of ideas and innovation.

As has always been the case in urban centres, the emphasis in the future will be on walking, cycling and public transport. Parking and use of the private car will need to be reimagined for the 21st Century. Environmental sustainability will be achieved through a combination of reductions in energy use, production of green energy, use of digital technology and a shift away from car-dominated streets.

So? Could the town centre offer free parking and charging for electric vehicles? Could planning policies be devised to ensure new buildings & public realm include natural cooling features to counteract rising temperatures?

Visitor Experience

Visitors to Bournemouth Town Centre include local people and tourists. All will want to feel that the Town Centre is somewhere that has something for them. The Town Centre should feel welcoming at arrival points and easy to move around, especially on key routes, with a safe, clean and well-managed public realm.

Promoting the distinctive and unique qualities of the buildings and public realm will ensure visitors have a positive and memorable experience, whilst local stories will create a depth and resonance to the environment. The repetition of visual clues in the public realm can help with this – the pines of Bournemouth, symbolised through the pine cone perhaps.

A key change in visitor behaviour and experience is likely to be the reduction in shopping. This will potentially mark a distinct change in the appearance of parts of the Town Centre whilst also opening up opportunities to repurpose older buildings for other needs such as residential, medical or community facilities.

Bournemouth Town Centre will continue to be alive into the evening, with live music, shows, films, restaurants and bars. This important night time economy will need to be balanced along with the needs of people to feel safe going home and residents who need to sleep.

So? Could the Tourist Information Centre and Tourism Strategy be rebranded for Visitors and focus on local resident visitors as well as non-residents?

So? Could Horseshoe Common and the Upper Gardens include more play features for children?
Figure 13: The areas of change shown here indicate where development is anticipated in coming years. Significant development could also occur outside these areas.
Partnership approach

With the new BCP Council in place, there will be the opportunity to work in partnership with stakeholders across a wider area and enable a two-way flow of advice and monitoring of the vision. Stakeholders for the Town Centre can be grouped as follows:

People who:

- Work or learn here
- Create reasons to visit
- Make the place work
- Live here
- Live elsewhere

Bournemouth Town Centre is, as one would expect, the most diverse and mixed-use area within the urban area. Known as a place to shop, socialise or work in it is also home to an increasing number of residents. As more dwellings are built in the Town Centre, partly due to a shrinking commercial footprint and partly through new high-density development, the resident population will become an increasingly important and vocal stakeholder group in the future. Building and retaining their goodwill will be of critical importance to the success of the vision.

Developing the Vision

The Spatial Vision should be both 2D and 3D. Both could be further developed and/or illustrated. A master plan for the Town Centre would provide further explanation in detail about the future vision. It would examine the capacity for change and development within each of the character areas as set out below. A 2D plan would not fully illustrate the future vision so 3D visualisations would be required. These could either be physical models (which tend to be easiest for most people to understand) or computer-based virtual models (which are becoming increasingly useful, clear and affordable as technology advances).

The importance of further explanation of the vision as set out above relates mainly to ensuring the widest understanding of the proposed vision. A vision solely written or drawn in 2D will remain opaque to too many people, creating the potential for misunderstanding and challenge. The logic applied and care taken in developing the vision will continue to be critical to ongoing success.
Improvement to the public realm, such as this award-winning scheme at Horseshoe Common, have changed perceptions about the urban area.
This document summarises the values and principles behind the Vision for Bournemouth Town Centre. The aim is for all residents, businesses and organisations who live, visit or use the Town Centre to get involved with making it a reality.

How will you play your part?