Newhaven's Future High Streets Bid
Re—imagining Newhaven is Lewes District Council’s bid for £7.2million from the Government’s Future High Streets Fund (FHSF) to help transform Newhaven Town Centre and High Street, and create up to 200 jobs by 2024.

This very exciting programme is the culmination of 18 months’ work to give our residents and businesses the chance to shape the future of their town.

If our bid is successful, we will co-fund £2.26million to deliver a Community Healthy Living & Sustainability Hub and High Streets Events Programme.

The message is clear, our communities are ready for our High Street to become a destination again. This will involve experimenting and trying new things to create spaces and places people want to be in. Our High Street must again become a hub of the community that local people are proud of and want to protect.

Newhaven’s ambitious growth plans include 1,677 new homes and 70,000m² of new and refurbished employment floorspace anticipated over the next 25 years. The local education offer is set to evolve, and with a younger population profile than surrounding areas, there is a need for a wider range of opportunities to give incentive for young people to stay or return to their hometown.

These factors combined with the establishment of the Newhaven Enterprise Zone show that there is a clear economic case and need to transform the High Street.

Our business case submitted in June 2020 to Government was developed prior to, and during, the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is not yet clear what the long term economic and social impacts of this might be on Newhaven or the United Kingdom, as a whole, but we will be working closely to ensure impacts of working with the new Covid-19 ‘normal’ are minimised. We will work with national, regional and local partners to ensure that all our projects and programmes align with government guidance and that support is available for SMEs at all levels to aid recovery.

The FHSF funding is essential to help stimulate the local economy and community; encouraging investment from business, whilst tackling inequality and increasing diversity. We need to attract entrepreneurs from all communities and ensure our prosperity sits alongside greater social opportunities and benefits for all residents particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

— Councillor James MacCleary
Cabinet Member for Regeneration & Prosperity, Lewes District Council
RICH WITH HISTORY, NESTLED IN NATURE AND CULTURE, NEWHAVEN HAS AN ENVIRONMENTAL LOCATION. CHEEK BY JOWL WITH BRIGHTON AND ITS WIDER ECONOMY, THE TOWN HAS HUGE POTENTIAL AS A PLACE TO LIVE AND WORK.
Newhaven is a fascinating place, one of the most distinctive and unusual small towns in England. The town occupies a unique place on the south coast, but in many ways, Newhaven has greater affinity with its industrial counterparts in the north of England.

Nestled at the foot of the South Downs at the mouth of the River Ouse, its setting gives Newhaven its very special identity. A fascinating juxtaposition of marine, coastline, countryside and industry.

Newhaven is a place shaped by the elements; by the water and the energy of industry.

Artists have for centuries been inspired by Newhaven. Newhaven has an ethereal quality with magnificent vistas and huge skies.

From the centre you can see rolling Downs in the distance, and factories and dockside warehouses in the foreground that sit alongside hills of shifting aggregates. The sound of clanging metal reverberates around the town.

The people of Newhaven remain proud of the town’s heritage which manifests itself most strongly in its culture and setting as a port. Like many small industrial towns*, Newhaven has struggled to adapt to changing economic demands, but is still an important gateway to Europe and has a key strategic location, close to Brighton, the County town of Lewes, the resort of Eastbourne and 50 miles from Central London.

* Population of Newhaven is just over 12,000 (National Statistics 2019).
Weekly fruit & vegetable market, High Street.
Aggregates plant, North Quay
Newhaven Harbour Arm
Newhaven Chappa Ferry
Harbour Arm
Newhaven Town Centre covers an area of approximately six hectares, with the main High Street running uphill from east to west.

It has residential areas to its eastern and northern edges, with a leisure centre, a small 1980s precinct (Newhaven Square) and an unwelcoming multi-storey car park (Dacre Road) to its southern aspect.

The High Street traditionally provided the retail, community and social focus for the town and served the wider catchment, employment areas and visitors using the cross-channel ferry service. It is encircled by the A259 ring road (built in the 1970s), which limits access and creates traffic congestion culminating in poor air quality. The resulting environment is uninspiring, uninviting, difficult to navigate and disconnected from the rest of the town.
RE–IMAGINING NEWHAVEN

THE DECLINE

The decline of Newhaven

The closure of the Bevan Funnell factory and the Parker Pen factory combined with wider economic change, has led to hundreds of job losses and gradual economic decline. These wider economic challenges and changes in consumer shopping and leisure expectations have reduced the Town Centre to a shell of its former self.

There are now high levels of vacant units, with an increasingly limited retail offer. The town continues to suffer from poor commercial premises occupied by low value uses that have served to accelerate the decline in property assets, as well as a lack of diversity among activities taking place.

The concrete collar of the ring road has contributed to the poor perception of Newhaven. Ferry users in particular perceive Newhaven to be ‘unattractive’, consequently overall visits and spend by ferry travellers in the Town Centre is low.

19%
Empty property rate — the rate has doubled in a decade, almost doubles the national average of 10%.

8%
Less than 8% choose to do most of their shopping in the Town Centre.

7%
Just 7% choose the High Street for social and leisure activities.

84%
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There is little reason to visit the Town Centre when out of town options are more attractive.

We need to re–imagine, repurpose and improve the urban environment for residents as well as visitors. Walkways and routes need to reconnect the Town Centre and High Street, especially the retail areas on the east and west sides of the river.
Newhaven has a wide range of businesses from aggregates to high tech manufacturers with major players such as the makers of the world’s blackest black, Vantablack, and Boutique Modern pioneers in modular social housing.

The Newhaven Enterprise Zone was created to build on this energy and is generating growth by making use of the natural assets and providing the right space and support for businesses looking to expand or relocate. The Town Centre is part of the Enterprise Zone, but at the moment businesses don’t use the Town Centre and have little reason to visit the High Street.

Re—imagining Newhaven envisages an integrated and strengthened Town Centre that brings new and diversified uses to serve business communities. An expanded range of services will attract and maintain a sustainable footfall from local companies, who employ over 5,450 people. This will help breathe economic and community life back into our High Street and create a better and more pleasant place to shop and socialise.

The number of people that Newhaven businesses employ locally (Newhaven Economic Plan, June 2019).
Though at first glance Newhaven may look unloved and rough around the edges, it has become fertile ground for artists and innovators to work quietly below the radar.

It's a place where free-thinking, inventiveness and artistry is sprouting up through the cracks in the marginal, in this case the warehouses of Newhaven.

The annual Newhaven Festival and Artists' Open Call is a sign of a thriving artistic community. There's an energy, dynamism and passion within Newhaven that comes to the fore at Makers' Meetings that needs to be harnessed to bring new activity and life back to the High Street.

There is a demand for affordable studio space locally and we've got spaces that are interesting, textural, large, intimate and empty.

Newhaven has an opportunity to develop fantastic spaces for creatives.

Just nine miles along the coast, Brighton, with its vibrant creative scene, is bursting at the seams. For those looking for the new and exciting place to start an enterprise, Newhaven offers a real affordable alternative.

The interventions in our vision present a clear and compelling case to utilise empty spaces to meet the needs of the creative industries, while directly impacting the lives of our residents, which will ensure our town prospers for years to come.

Greater Brighton's creative industries are worth more than £1.5 billion.

The number of people working for creative businesses in Greater Brighton — up nearly 20% over five years.

62% of creative businesses are looking to expand.
From its 30-strong fishing fleet to cross channel ferry service, Newhaven has always been intrinsically linked to the water.

Maritime makes up Newhaven’s very special DNA and attracts clusters of companies involved in green energy and marine engineering.

Newhaven’s strong fishing tradition and bustling fish market have the potential to support local culinary tourism and cater for the ever-increasing popularity of fresh, locally sourced produce.

From sailing to diving, coastal walking and cycling all linked to the South Downs National Park, our location is perfect for building a strong marine influenced leisure offer to attract more visitors to Newhaven. The offer of food and drink facilities in the Town Centre needs to complement what Dieppe has to offer.

Newhaven is a town brimming with opportunities. It is perfectly poised to build on the existing marine-based industries, supported by a rejuvenated High Street and Town Centre fuelled by new leisure opportunities and entrepreneurship by the sea.

The Community Healthy Living and Sustainability Hub co-funded by LDC will focus on local suppliers and will work closely with Newhaven’s leisure and wellbeing sector to deliver a Community Supermarket and Community Kitchen.
20   THE VISION

Town Centre Interventions

What if...

Newhaven Town Centre is re-imagined and repurposed, step by step, to become a thriving and vital southern gateway for the UK?

Re-imagining Newhaven presents a compelling series of interventions for the transformation of underutilised and disused spaces in the heart of Newhaven Town Centre, as well as essential improvements to wayfinding and access.

The Creative Hub is one of the central pillars of Re—imagining Newhaven. It will create new opportunities for local entrepreneurs in the Greater Brighton City Region’s fast-growing creative sector.

A stepping stone economic model will help business start-ups to take hold, provide a place where enterprises can grow from just a desk to their own four walls. Where market traders can move into small food kiosks and food trucks move into restaurants on the High Street.

Realistic leisure activities will provide an alternative to neighbouring Brighton & Hove and Eastbourne, and cross Channel visitors from France will have choice to rival what Dieppe has to offer.

This focus on place-making is critical to ensuring the town’s wider regeneration, to attract additional commercial investment and help build community wealth.

1 The Creative Hub and Community Healthy Living & Sustainability Hub

Re-purposing a disused supermarket space, responding to a demand for creative industries by providing co-working spaces, small studios, meeting space, café and retail area.

Transforming the upper levels of the underutilised Dacre Road car park into a social and experiential meeting space. This will comprise a multi-functional covered space incorporating a range of daytime and evening uses to drive additional demand from a variety of audiences.

2 Urban Living Room

Connecting the Town Centre with key residential and business areas, increasing footfall and dwell time whilst reducing traffic and improving air quality by creating clear, legible and engaging wayfaring routes that bring a sense of care, pride and place ownership.

3 Wayfinding & Access

Employment floor space required in next 25 years.

1,677

New homes planned in Newhaven.

Low cost of rental space (per sq ft) compared to £30 in Brighton.

£10–15

70,000²

Employment floor space required in next 25 years.
Peckham Levels, designed by Turner Works for Make Shift

Turner Works was asked to design Peckham Levels for Make Shift, a social enterprise that focuses on giving people the space, the tools and the network needed to create thriving enterprises within local neighbourhoods. The project was designed to support and inspire a new community of artists, makers and entrepreneurs. This project illustrates how simple existing spaces can be transformed into rough and ready workspaces, suitable for a variety of uses.

Photography by Turner Works.

1 Existing pedestrian entrance retained.
2 New partition walls to create maker units.
3 New openings to create connections to street and surroundings.
4 Simple large-scale signage.

This indicative proposal for the former Co-op supermarket unit on Newhaven Square transforms the shopfloor to create loose-fit space for Newhaven’s enterprising local business community. By subdividing the ground floor open-plan shopfloor into large studio units and generous communal and breakout spaces, this vacant unit can become a lively, multi-use building for creative workspace and maker space. At lower ground floor the interior can be refurbished to house a health and wellbeing hub enabling community health services, events, focus groups and enterprise.
Our approach to the Dacre Road multi-storey re-imagines it as a multi-functional civic space which is part market hall, part event space and part greenhouse.

By covering the roof of the car park with a polytunnel structure, the deck is transformed into a series of rooms; some covered, some open. These spaces are loosely defined and flexible enough to accommodate a range of events.

A series of totems enclose the stair and lift cores, establishing and securing the entrances whilst doubling as signage to announce the project to the town.

The building presents multiple opportunities for public art and installations. This programme could be developed with local stakeholder groups to provide a rolling residency to showcase Newhaven’s artists.
Connecting the Town Centre and the High Street with key residential and business areas, increasing footfall and dwell time whilst reducing traffic and improving air quality by creating clear, legible and engaging routes that bring a sense of care, pride and place ownership.

These improvements will create a distinct and positive identity for the town. This sense of connectivity between places and communities and the uplifting cultural experience will be surprising, educational and inspirational.

New wayfinding systems will provide improvements to key access points to the High Street including from the rail station and river walks. The following sets out a series of potential improvements:

**Seating**
Install new seating on and around the High Street.

**Signage**
Paint large-scale ‘supergraphics’ signage onto walls and pavements to provide high impact wayfinding with limited means.

**Totems**
Install informative totems around the town which aid with directions and provide useful markers.

**Murals**
Liven up blank walls by commissioning local artists and designers to produce large works around the town.

**Art Crossings**
Apply painted graphics and artwork directly onto the tarmac to create impactful crossings and pedestrian zones.

**Tidy**
Remove extraneous street furniture and repaint the existing streetlights. Paint them in a range of colours.

**Traffic Measures**
Enforce the parking restrictions on the High Street to create a calmer, more pedestrian-friendly experience.

**Concrete Planters**
Install concrete rings (usually used for drains and manholes) as planters to soften the High Street with greenery.

Integrative designs to propose wayfinding and narrative wayfaring in the public realm that speaks of place-specific stories through art, words and information — both of heritage and the contemporary — engaging with local designers, makers, fabricators, artists and communities to bring a sense of place ownership.

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Thorough engagement has taken place throughout the development of the business case for Newhaven’s bid for the Future High Street Fund. The outcomes of these consultations are embedded within this document. Workshops and meetings were held with a wide range of stakeholders to:

- Inform the Newhaven Micro Plan and vision — engagement led by Turner Works
- Creation of the Newhaven Story — engagement led by Thinking Place
- Town Centre user survey — carried out by Lewes District Council
- Presentations to Newhaven Town Council, Newhaven Enterprise Zone Strategic Board, Newhaven Town Deal Board, Team East Sussex and Greater Brighton Economic Board
- Meetings with Lewes District Council members.

Residents, businesses, key local public sector partners, regional strategic partnerships and political representatives, have, and will be fully engaged and informed throughout the Re—imagining Newhaven programme.

The Future High Streets Fund submission for the Re—imagining Newhaven programme included a range of letters of support from key stakeholders:

- Arts Council England
- Baroness Whitaker
- Biosphere Delivery Board (Brighton & Lewes Downs)
- Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership
- East Sussex College Group
- East Sussex County Council
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Fine Marketing Digital Agency
- Greater Brighton Economic Board
- Locate East Sussex
- Maria Caulfield MP
- Newhaven Chamber of Commerce
- Newhaven Enterprise Centre
- Newhaven Port & Properties
- Newhaven Town Council
- Portside Vets
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership
- Team East Sussex
- The Alliance of Chambers in East Sussex.

Lewes District Council is expecting a funding announcement from Government before the end of 2020.

If Newhaven’s bid is successful, the Re—imagining Newhaven programme target dates are:

- Community Healthy Living & Sustainability Hub — opens June 2022
- Creative Hub — opens July 2022
- Urban Living Room — opens September 2022
Credits

Re—imagining Newhaven document designed by Steven Larkin (house-of-sl.co.uk), written and produced by Beth King of Locate East Sussex in collaboration with the Regeneration Team at Lewes District Council and Newhaven Enterprise Zone.

All photography featured, unless otherwise stated, by Benedict Stenning (benedictstenning.com).


Cover Image by Bernard Hermant, with wayfinding graphics by Richard Wolfströme.

Aerial image of Newhaven by John Fielding. Wild, Rugged, Raw & Real image from Adobe Stock.