

HASTINGS STATION GATEWAY

**Key Findings
& Next Steps**

DRAFT SUMMARY REPORT

for:

**Homes England &
Hastings Borough
Council**

June 2023

lsh.co.uk



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Signed:

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For and on behalf of Lambert Smith Hampton

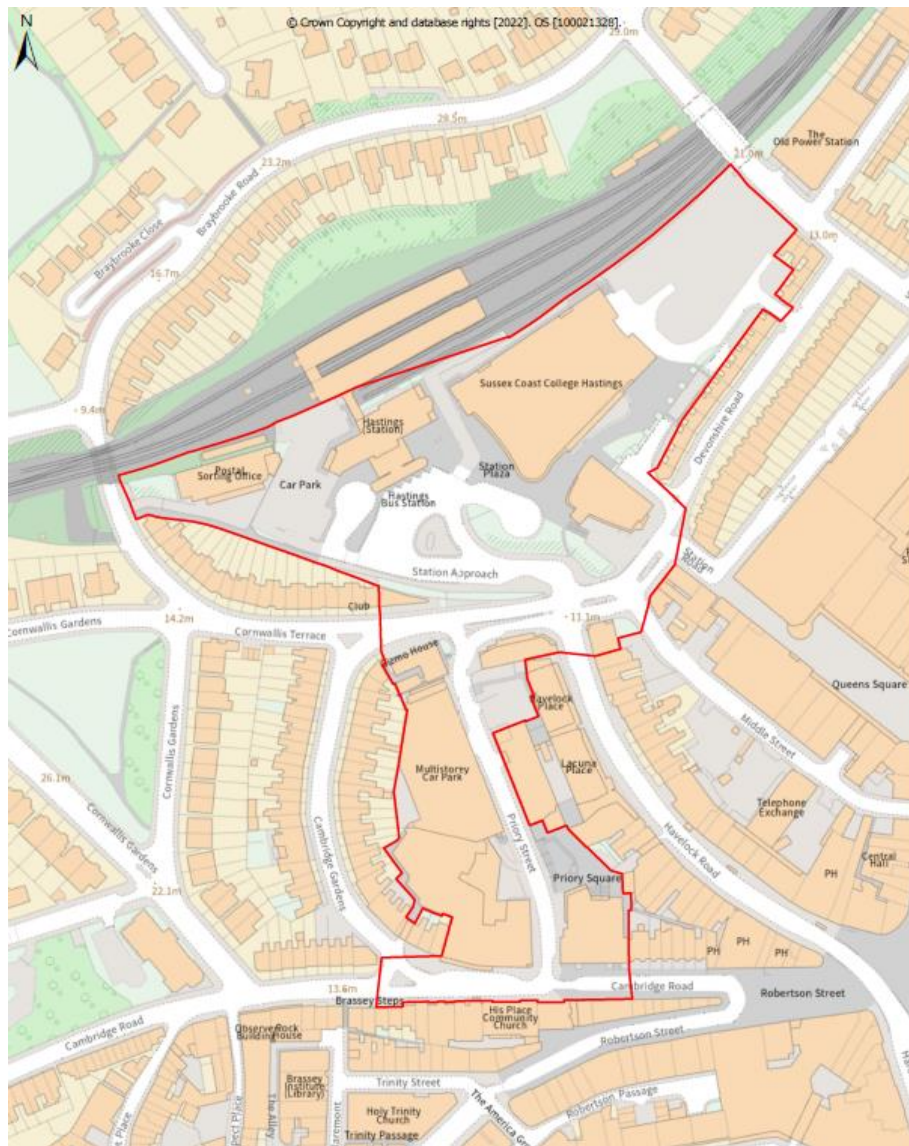
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) was commissioned by Homes England (HE) and Hastings Borough Council (HBC) in December 2022 to review and advise on the market potential for regeneration of the Hastings Station Gateway site. The scope of work included exploring the potential land assembly opportunities to unlock and help accelerate delivery of this area, and to inform the potential future preparation of a Station Gateway masterplan.
- 1.2 LSH assembled a multi-disciplinary team supported by: Tibbalds providing specialist masterplanning and urban design input; and transport planners Andrew Cameron Associates (ACA) providing transport, movement and car parking advice

Figure 1.1: Hastings Station Gateway: Red Line Boundary



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- 1.3 As part of the assessment a number of interrelated elements of work have been undertaken for the overall site area (and beyond). These should be read alongside this report and include:
- Report 1: *Constraints and Opportunities Analysis* prepared in collaboration with Tibbalds and ACA;
 - Report 2: *Visioning Workshop Outputs and a Vision Statement* also prepared in collaboration with Tibbalds;
 - Report 3: *Market Review Report of Hastings* with a socio-demographic, planning, regeneration and importantly commercial property and residential market context to any future town centre masterplan; and
 - Report 4: *Viability Assessment Report* which details a high level viability assessment of three sites (Priory Street, Station Yard, and Queensbury House) within the Station Gateway area.
- 1.4 This final summary report provides a broad overview of the key findings of the above reports, and potential recommendations for next steps.

2. KEY MESSAGES

2.1 This section provides a synopsis of the outputs and key findings of Reports 1-4.

Report 1: Constraints and Opportunities Analysis

2.2 Key **constraints** detailed in the assessment include (*inter alia*):

- Poor Station forecourt environment and the Station Gateway creates a poor first impression of the town. This is exacerbated by the number of vacant buildings in direct view upon exiting the station.
- Buses, cars and roads dominate the front of the station limiting safe and attractive pedestrian spaces and create a poor first impression of the town resulting in real and perceived barriers to pedestrian movement.
- Challenging topography around the station area (with the station sitting at +12.2 m 'Above Ordnance Datum' (AOD)¹ and Devonshire Road at +6.4m AOD) creating an awkward connection for vehicles and a poor level of accessibility for pedestrians.
- Retaining wall of approx. 4m height forms a blank edge between Cornwallis Terrace and Station Approach.
- Poor environment along Devonshire Road with vacant buildings, busy traffic, traffic islands and railings and awkward crossing points.
- Lack of clear wayfinding to the town centre and sea front due to the existing site levels and accessibility issues, lack of hierarchy of the existing street pattern, busy traffic on Devonshire Road and street clutter.
- Poor environment along Priory Street due to Multi Store Car Park (MSCP) dominating the site and vacant land/building and the one way system arrangement resulting in speeding vehicles.
- Vacant land behind the College and next to the railway line adds to the poor environment around the station especially at night.
- Any development along the site edge next to the railway will need to take account of noise/acoustic impacts.
- Any development/regeneration plans will need to retain existing access from the gardens of the terrace facing Cambridge Gardens direct into the Priory Street MSCP.

2.3 Key opportunities include the need to:

- Apply a well thought out and holistic (masterplan) approach to create attractive developments fully integrated within their locality and contribute positively to the whole of the station gateway area.

¹ Refers to a height above the Ordnance Datum; with the datum being the mean sea level.

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- Provide a new transport interchange - accommodating space for all bus requirements, taxi stands and commuter parking.
 - Explore possible car access to the station from Cornwallis Terrace using the existing Royal Mail Sorting Office access.
 - Create an attractive station square where pedestrians feel safe to move around and spend time in.
 - Create a smooth, safe, accessible and seamless connection across Devonshire Road and along Havelock Road as a main approach to the town centre and seafront and along Station Road direct to the Priory Meadow Shopping Centre.
 - Explore the rear of the distinct crescent form of Cornwallis Terrace to create a strong front edge onto the station forecourt area.
 - Explore the development opportunity of the slither of land forming the end of Cornwallis Terrace and to help enable the smooth transition from the station through to Priory Street.
 - Create a landmark building on the site of Queensbury House either through a well-considered and quality refurbishment or a high quality new build development. Consideration should be made of the scale of the building and treatment of the facade to create a strong active edge onto the station at all times of day and night.
 - Reconsider the public transport movement on the one way system along Priory Street - removal of this and the creation of a two way local road will offer a safer pedestrian environment and a more attractive street environment.
 - Create a strong active edge on Priory Street.
 - Respond positively to Priory Square; to deliver creating a strong active frontage of appropriate scale to the west edge of the space and create a well-proportioned enclosure to mark an arrival space (destination) with routes through to the town centre.
 - A well-considered response is required of the rear of the existing terrace facing Cambridge Gardens and the interface with any new development.
 - Create a strong frontage onto Cambridge Road responding positively to the scale and heritage of the Priory Square Building and together forming a gateway entrance to Priory Street from the Cambridge Road pedestrian zone
 - Complete the built edge along the railway with a well-considered development to complement the College building and respond to the scale of the existing terrace on Devonshire Road and the level changes along South Terrace. Create attractive active edges on all four sides of the site especially along the south eastern edge to provide natural surveillance at all times.
 - Integrate nature and SUDS within the public realm to green the environment and manage flooding.

Report 2: Visioning Workshop Outputs and Vision Statement

- 2.4 The Visioning Workshop identified some 'big' ideas for Hastings Town Centre, including to:
- Open up the view from the station to the sea – including demolition where feasible.
 - Connect up the station, High Street and Seafront.
 - Improve and expand 'Cultural Quarter' / Housing/Education and Public Realm.
 - Use water and the beach more – Join it up – 'Work and Life.'
 - Redesign Town Centre on child-friendly principles to become everyone's front garden.
 - Provide multi-use space for Community and Entertainment use amongst housing and other offers.
 - Increase connectivity and greening of town centre.
 - Fully pedestrianise the town centre.
 - Minimise traffic (excluding buses) and encourage more active travel in town centre.
 - Enhance public realm and greening of the town centre.
 - Link to public realm and 'Town Centre Public Realm & Green Connections' initiative (as set out in the Hastings Town Investment Plan).
- 2.5 Some of the top priorities identified for the Station Gateway include:
- Delivering good quality affordable homes for all.
 - Providing a place people really want to live in.
 - Provide for a "15-minute walkable neighbourhood".
 - Create better 'welcoming facilities' around the station area and for the town as a whole.
 - Providing a "stunning" station area environment to create an impact on arrival and improve the 'first impression' of Hastings.
 - Create a "people space first" plaza outside the station, which is green well connected to the rest of the town.
 - Turning Queensbury House into a positive landmark on arrival.
 - Create better and coherent connectivity between the Station area with its surroundings, the Town Centre, the seafront and the Old Town.
 - Deliver multiple uses at the Station Gateway to ensure it functions well, and to help build-in resilience
 - Incorporating the space/route behind the station to Trinity Hall (Braybrooke Road).
- 2.6 The visioning workshop highlighted the need to bring about comprehensive and transformative change. This will depend on effective partnership-working between Council departments, landowners, investors and the community.

2.7 A co-ordination of mixed-use development, transport projects, and public realm improvements will help the area become an area of transition with a unique sense of place.

2.8 On this basis the high-level' vision and a set of objectives was based on the following key themes detailed as follows:

- **Arriving in Hastings and accessing the town centre and seafront:**
 - Transform the train station forecourt into a 'Gateway' to be proud of;
 - Clarify the routes to the town centre and the sea; and
 - Enable a much-improved route along Priory Street.
- **Achieving and sustaining a thriving and diverse economy:**
 - Create flexible, mixed-use environment for urban working with space;
 - Seek to deliver flexible leisure and culture space to complement the existing offer and meet unmet demand and community aspirations;
 - Support the business and visitor economy;
 - Support the business and visitor economy; and
 - Create attractive town centre living, accessible for all.
- **Addressing climate change:**
 - Encourage active travel by prioritising pedestrian movement;
 - Integrate nature and SUDS within the public realm to green the environment and manage flooding; and
 - Seek high environmental standards for buildings and spaces.
- **Bring the community back to the centre by delivering new homes that people can afford and want:**
 - Utilise upper floors of mixed-use buildings and available sites to deliver a mix of urban housing for everyone and of all incomes;
 - Design homes to be tenure blind; and
 - Contribute to meeting Hastings housing challenges.
- **Celebrate Hastings unique natural landscapes, the historic built environment and community that makes Hastings special:**
 - Be bold, have confidence and be creative in the design, delivery and procurement processes;
 - Include tall buildings enabling views to the sea; and
 - Explore targeted demolition of poor quality and underutilised buildings.

Report 3: Market Review Report of Hastings

- 2.9 This report highlighted that the Hastings Station Gateway site represents a key spatial component of the town centre but one which at present has poor public realm and connectivity. There was an identified need for change for this important gateway in to the town centre.
- 2.10 The report identified repositioning of the site in the current context of the town centre was necessary. The recommended aim was to build on the strengths of the town centre; to make it an even more attractive place to live, work and visit; to offer a town centre experience that cannot be found online; and, to encourage a thriving day and night time economy.
- 2.11 The analysis showed the area has the potential to:
- Create spaces, connectivity and permeability;
 - Focus on green space, health and wellness, biodiversity and community;
 - Create opportunities for a wider range of additional town centre uses; and
 - Assist in addressing the climate change emergency.
- 2.12 On this basis, and at the heart of the future repositioning of the site, was the need for placemaking and the creation of an enhanced town centre gateway experience to ensure its vitality and viability for the future.
- 2.13 The market review also focussed on the residential and commercial office, retail and leisure position and prospects for deliverability. The direction for travel for these sectors in Hastings and the Station Gateway site in particular was as follows:
- **Residential Market:** Potential demand and interest from housebuilders for a variety of tenures in Hastings, but subject to the right placemaking environment of the centre. Placemaking and good design will create a more attractive environment and help generate further market interest and demand. There is the potential need for a future Masterplan with the ability to go to market to get developers on-board.
 - **Office Market:** New Grade 'A' space in Hastings was attractive to those occupiers seeking modern and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) compliant space. The market research showed that the Station Gateway site lends itself as a location of interest, but as part of a wider mix of uses.
 - **Retail & Leisure Market:** The seismic shift to online shopping and the (post-pandemic) reprioritised economic, social and environmental needs of the Borough means that (like many town centres) Hastings is potentially over shopped, with surplus retail floorspace. There is a need for a place-led design for the town centre to show creativity and, innovation, as well as demonstrating positive statements of intent to align with the Council's wider regeneration and housing agenda.

Report 4: Viability Assessment on Priory Street, Station Yard, and Queensbury House.

2.14 The fourth report in this series provides a high level viability assessment of Priory Street, Station Yard, and Queensbury House. For all three sites the report identified: .

- a viability gap;
- two of the sites are in third party ownership - apart from the multi storey car park which is owned by the Council; and
- the current landowners' expectations of land value appear to be unrealistic, having regard to development viability issues.

2.15 In terms of the individual sites:

- **Priory Street: Site** is in three ownerships². The appraisal was based on development across the three sites. Consideration must therefore be given to whether the site needs to be acquired/developed as a whole, or whether a more pragmatic approach is needed, that looks at each site individually. Inevitably this may not necessarily have a big impact in regeneration terms but purely on financial grounds it may be more prudent.
- **Station Yard:** of all three sites, this appears to have (relatively) least complexity in terms of development potential. The current owner (at the time of drafting this report) is seeking offers via its agents Savills with a guide price of £1.5m. However, the high-level appraisals indicate a negative value. There is a need to consider in more detail alternative / mix of uses on the site to make it viable. Further due diligence should be undertaken on the previous use of the site, access and scope for phased development. We advise that HE may need to assist with initial site assembly and have a patient approach to investment returns to unlock development constraints.
- **Queensbury House:** has been previously considered for hotel development and is believed to be structurally unsound (before the landowner's land purchase expectations are taken into account). Further work needs to be undertaken to investigate the structural component of Queensbury House. In terms of uses, further detailed analysis is required to understand space requirements and market demand .

2.16 In summary, all of the sites comprise assets in third party ownership that would need to be acquired, which would increase the viability gap identified by the high-level appraisals. Furthermore, the options appraisals highlight that building a high-rise residential scheme on the site does not necessarily improve the viability gap.

2.17 However, further work is needed to devise a viable (masterplan) scheme for each of these three sites. Furthermore, a broader town-wide masterplan and investment strategy (including areas of public realm) should also be considered to create an inviting arrival

² Ownership comprises: (1) 23 Priory Street, Hastings TN34 1EA; (2) Priory Street Multi-storey Car Park, Priory Street, Hastings TN34 1ES (3) ESK Wholesale, 18 – 24 Cambridge Road, Hastings TN34 1DJ.

experience; encourage connectivity between the station, town centre and seafront; and help promote new and repeat visits to the town centre.

3. NEXT STEPS

- 3.1 The redevelopment and regeneration of the Station Gateway area is complex.
- 3.2 There are potential site-specific development opportunities, but it is clear that both HE and HBC need to consider the Station Gateway regeneration potential in the wider context of Hastings town centre. This will necessarily involve complementing the existing, planned and proposed regeneration projects in the town centre and related initiatives, to ensure there is a “golden thread” connecting any proactive intervention and site acquisition and development within the Station Gateway with the rest of the town centre.
- 3.3 HE has recently published its **Strategic Plan 2023 – 2028**³. This focuses on the broad range of interventions that HE is committed to deliver on behalf of the Government working in partnership with a broad range of partners as shown below:

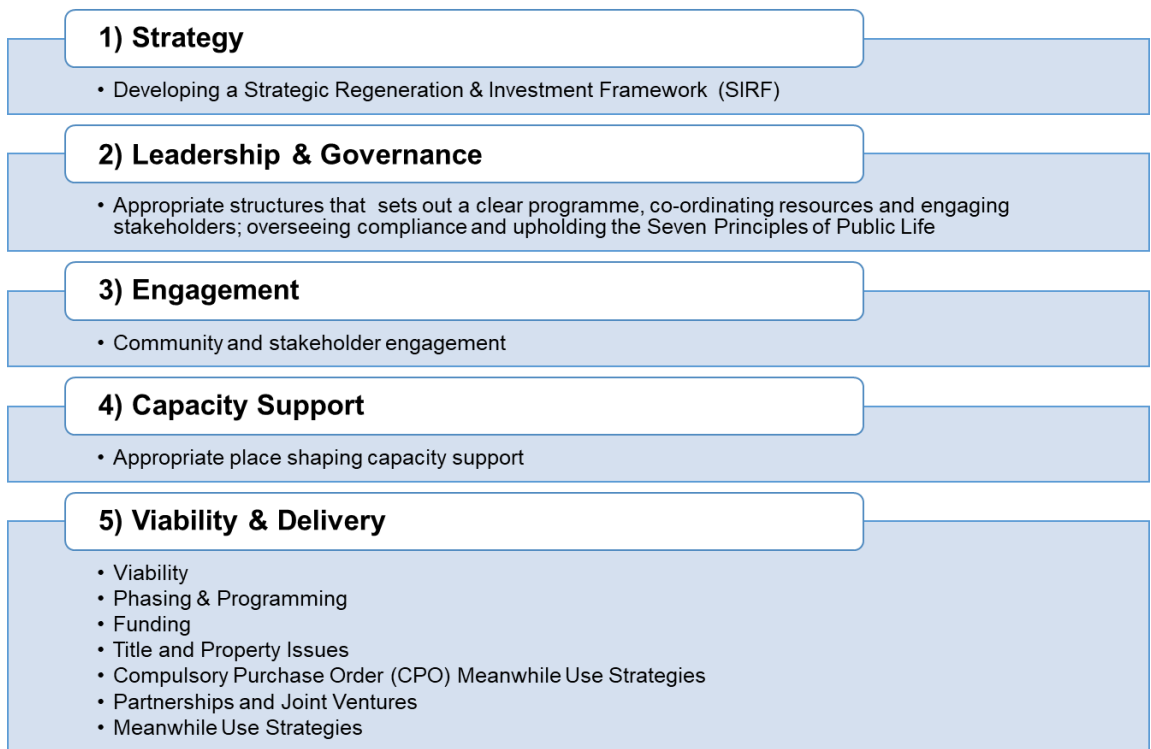
Figure 3.1: Homes England Strategic Plan (2023 – 2028): Objectives



Source: Homes England Strategic Plan (2023 – 2028); Page 10.

³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1155338/Homes_England_Strategic_Plan_2023_to_2028.pdf

- 3.4 A key stated objective relevant to Hastings is to “*support the creation of vibrant and successful places that people can be proud of, working with local leaders and other partners to deliver housing-led, mixed-use regeneration with a brownfield first approach.*”
- 3.5 This section therefore provides a number of key themes that we consider both HE and HBC need to review, reflect and prioritise to enable the regeneration of sites within the Station Gateway area. This will also necessarily have a bearing on the wider vision, strategy and regeneration priorities for Hastings town centre as a whole.
- 3.6 We have grouped the next steps and actions into the five following broad themes:



1) Strategy

- 3.7 Hastings town centre is “*ripe for a step change.*” We believe this needs to be underpinned by a **Strategic Regeneration & Investment Framework (SRIF)** to ensure that all proposed interventions and initiatives over the short, medium and longer term are agreed, co-ordinated and managed effectively.
- 3.8 In our experience a robust SRIF will help HBC to achieve a number of critical objectives, including:
- defining a vision and spatial framework - from which more detailed place-making plans can be developed to guide new regeneration and investment;

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- identifying key stakeholders, landowners and “*local champions*” who can help support and deliver critical projects/initiatives;
 - providing the framework for new regeneration, employment, housing and planning interventions;
 - identifying, reviewing, testing the viability and phasing of different development sites and options across the town centre, including the Station Gateway area;
 - reviewing and addressing critical movement, transport infrastructure and parking needs;
 - reviewing and enhancing the town centre (green/blue) environment. There is significant potential to create beautiful, active and connected spaces/attractions (e.g. aligned with the ‘*Town Centre Public Realm & Green Connections*’ initiative in the Hastings Town Investment Plan);
 - promoting Hastings as a ‘*10-15 minute neighbourhood*’ concept – to create a “*liveable, walkable, sustainable, and connected*” town centre;
 - building business, investor and community confidence through a prospectus of regeneration and place-making opportunities, and programme of activities;
 - providing the necessary support for the Council to use its Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) powers – demonstrating it is “necessary,” etc. This will be important to ensure that there is a compelling case in the public interest for a CPO for any related intervention;
 - creating a place-making brand and marketing proposition, to help promote and market the wide range of cultural events in Hastings etc, to a wider “audience;” and
 - identifying, measuring and monitoring the overall ESG (covering social value) benefits generated from any interventions.
- 3.9 We believe a SRIF will help create a compelling set of complementary interventions that will enable a fundamental step change in the economic, social and environmental potential of Hastings.
- 3.10 A phased approach will be required to address the challenges facing the town centre, and Station Gateway; underpinned by critical project initiatives and interventions to help kick-start the wider regeneration process over the short, medium and long term.
- 3.11 The preparation of a SRIF will also build on the current proactive Council-led interventions, and other wider town centre initiatives underway or completed in Hastings, as part its Town Investment Plan (TIP) including:
- **Town Centre Public Realm & Green Connections** – To transform Hastings town centre with green infrastructure, improved walking and cycling cycle parklets, enhanced public realm, infrastructure for markets, events and festivals, lighting and public art project.
 - **Town Living:** To develop and provide high quality, affordable and energy efficient homes in Hastings town centre by repurposing poor quality existing Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) units and redundant commercial spaces.

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- **Hastings Commons** – “*Town to Sea*” - bringing difficult and derelict buildings back to life in the White Rock neighbourhood area, which connects the main town centre to the seafront.
 - **Priory Meadow Phase 1:** the previous New Look premises has been transformed into two separate businesses. On the lower floor, there is a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Job Centre office and the upper floor is occupied by a leisure operator - The Gym Group.

2) Leadership & Governance

- 3.12 At the outset we strongly advise that effective leadership and governance structures need to be identified and agreed. This will be fundamental for the SRIF to be properly conceptualised, implemented, delivered and sustained. This is fundamental as regeneration is a long-term, transformative process of change, and it will inevitably occur against a background of dynamic shifts in the political and economic cycles. It necessarily entails change, disruption and risk. Therefore consistent and joined-up political and project leadership and support is essential to managing and delivering the regeneration process.
- 3.13 Part of this is to ensure that multiple stakeholders - ranging from businesses, community groups to local residents - are engaged in the process, understand the importance to the future of Hastings, and are aware of the different methods in which they can actively/proactively participate.
- 3.14 The benefits of regeneration projects are often not realised and experienced until much later, whereas the risks (e.g. investment of public funds), and any material hardships (e.g. residential and business displacement) are experienced up front in the early years of the project. Therefore, the political leadership must provide the confidence that the costs and benefits of regeneration are in the best interests of Hastings. Communicating this effectively and openly is essential.
- 3.15 In addition to the political dimension, any regeneration-led intervention will necessarily need to engage with and involve a variety of stakeholders, including the local community, from inception to delivery. A structured governance process is therefore vital to ensure clear terms of reference, project roles and outcomes, to ensure certainty of delivery, and help mitigate risks from the outset.
- 3.16 In relation to a SRIF we suggest the creation of an appropriate Board or Taskforce (comprising Council, HE, businesses, landowners, community groups, etc that bring together the best and most relevant stakeholders from the private and public sector to deliver transformational change) with agreed governance structures to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with good governance principles (building on the *Seven Principles of Public Life* - Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership). This will also provide robust challenge, hold delivery partners to

account and ensure the benefits of any intervention are achieved. Furthermore it will aid to strengthen the deliverability of a long term and sustainable SRIF.

- 3.17 Having an integrated and combined vision between the private sector and public agencies will heighten the scale of the Board or Taskforce with HM Government and the key drivers of economic change in Hastings.
- 3.18 The regeneration opportunity for the Station Gateway area and Hastings as a whole will be contingent on multiple projects and potentially multiple funding streams. On this basis it will be essential for the Council to set up an internal Programme Management Office. The personnel within it would identify key interdependencies, risks, and opportunities and governance across the projects. HBC in particular will need to have this capability in place in advance of its regeneration journey and again as part of a SRIF.
- 3.19 LSH has considerable experience of helping to set up effective leadership/governance structures through our previous involvement in major regeneration projects; including the preparation of successful Town Investment Plans and the formation of Town Boards.

3) Engagement

- 3.20 Any intervention should have the support of all stakeholders, including the local community, who have a vested interest in the future of the Station Gateway and wider town centre. HBC will need to engage and work with a wide range of stakeholders from the outset. Early and ongoing engagement and genuine partnership arrangements will provide the foundations for a shared and joined-up vision, with agreed goals, priorities and objectives, underpinned by innovation and creativity.
- 3.21 The Hasting local community should be part of originating ideas, setting objectives and project visions rather than just giving feedback on proposals. It is vital that the local community is heard and invested in the success of the SRIF. This should ultimately help develop a further sense of pride and connectivity to Hastings and help mitigate risks. This will also help identify 'champions' who will help support and deliver the regeneration of Station Gateway, as well as wider town centre regeneration objectives and priorities.
- 3.22 The visioning exercise (Report 2) will ensure all stakeholders with a vested interest in the regeneration of the Station Gateway and town centre are involved from the outset, providing the necessary local knowledge, vital insight and capacity. This will also engender a community-led support for any critical interventions.

4) Capacity Support

- 3.23 To deliver any intervention HBC will need to have the need capacity to manage, create and plan spatial development.

3.24 It is recognised that Local Authorities in general are concerned about economic impacts on their teams, projects and budgets. These issues include the impact of inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and the impacts from the wider economy.

3.25 Nevertheless, HBC will need to acquire suitably skilled personnel and ensure that funding is in place to support this. Additionally, it may also wish to consider networks and resources that value sharing best practice such as working across neighbouring authorities. This may address capacity needs in the short term but in the light of the complexities associated with regeneration a longer term well-funded personnel solution is advocated.

5) Viability and Delivery

3.26 For the SRIF to successfully be implemented and delivered will require addressing a number of factors including:

a) Viability

3.27 As the high-level Market and Viability assessments (Reports 3 and 4) found, all the sites/properties identified are subject, to varying degrees, to challenges in terms of ownership, viability, land assembly, funding and delivery. For example:

- all of the sites/properties have assets in third party ownership that would need to be acquired, which would further increase the costs and viability “gap;” and
- all are subject to “market challenges.” For example, the Market Assessment (Report 3) identified that building high-rise residential schemes will not necessarily improve the viability gap due to the potential significant increase in construction costs; and

3.28 Addressing viability will therefore be key to deliver of any scheme and attending to the identified viability gap will be a key part of HBC’s undertaking. This calls for additional work to devise viable schemes, and a mix of appropriate uses for each of the identified sites.

3.29 Funding of major regeneration proposals will require a more creative, multi-sourced and phased approach. HBC will need to assess the viability of key interventions on their merits and against their importance to the overall regeneration of the town centre.

3.30 In terms of bridging the viability gap, HBC will need consider a range of options including HE, One Public Estate (OPE), exploring other potential Government-backed town centre and infrastructure programmes/funds, as well as proactively working in partnership with the private sector on potential regeneration sites.

3.31 Further, it will be important for HBC as part of its regeneration framework journey to understand for each site the types of uses, scale, partnership and phasing to ensure successful delivery.

3.32 Where HBC has a land ownership interest, it will need to consider a range of delivery options including:

- a development partner that might bring elements of private sector investment;
- assessing mechanisms to de-risk/make projects more attractive to private sector investment;
- where appropriate, disposing of smaller single use sites to release value;
- collaboration with other public sector bodies;
- direct development - using design and build contracts; and
- collaborating with local Community Trust organisations.

b) Phasing & Programming

3.33 There needs to be a balance between long term regeneration projects with longer lead in times and delivery milestones, and short-term measures to help revive the town centre.

3.34 The suggested SRIF will help to identify the interventions, associated timelines and phasing, as well as developing viable and complementary uses for the identified sites. It will be important for HBC to focus first on specific catalyst sites (“early wins”), and direct appropriate capital and resources to bring regeneration forward.

3.35 Due to the complex nature of the projects within the Station Gateway area, along with other ongoing wider interventions in the town centre, each will progress at a varying rate. Identifying and delivering early projects will help provide market confidence to future partners and other potential investors. The Council’s role, potentially in partnership with HE, could include initial land assembly and acquisition, through to specific masterplanning of individual sites.

c) Funding

3.36 Realistically HBC will need access to sufficient capital resources to facilitate any substantial and impactful regeneration over the short to medium term.

3.37 It has been recognised that HBC is risk averse. It is also not in a financial position to seek debt funding for capital expenditure projects. It is therefore reliant on some form of public financial assistance, potentially at this stage through HE.

3.38 As HE has been involved in the Station Gateway project from an early stage this should be seen as an asset, so that any contribution in the future can be targeted and used advantageously based on early involvement and assessment.

3.39 As the HE Strategic Plan (2023-2028) states: “...improvements to the built environment can catalyse wider improvements in people’s quality of life and improve a place’s social and

*economic outcomes. We can play an important role in the government's efforts to tackle these complex economic and social challenges"*⁴.

- 3.40 As stated earlier, it will be important for HBC to recognise upfront that there will be a requirement for a careful and well-documented analysis of leadership and governance structures, risk and financial control requirements before and during any intervention as part of any funding process.

d) Title and Property Issues

- 3.41 It will be essential that any intervention which involves an acquisition is underpinned by appropriate due diligence to understand the ownerships of sites.
- 3.42 Every aspect of the title will need to be checked together with attending to any defects prior to taking a site to the market.
- 3.43 Furthermore if HBC were to use its CPO powers it will be essential to ensure a clean title is delivered to any future development partner to avoid future downward price negotiations or in blighting any future development.

e) Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO)

- 3.44 The assembly of sites to help with the regeneration of the Station Gateway is a critical starting point. This may ultimately require HBC to use its Compulsory Purchase powers. Therefore, at the outset, HBC will need to be committed and demonstrate that:
- there is a compelling case in the public interest for a scheme to go ahead;
 - there are no material impediments to the scheme including planning and finance; and
 - the promoter must use reasonable attempts to acquire the property interests only using compulsory powers as a last resort.
- 3.45 As HBC/HE will be aware, a "*statement of reasons*" will need to be produced to demonstrate the compelling case in the public interest. This involves a detailed analysis of the social, economic and environmental benefits of the scheme, and the steps taken to mitigate the inherent harm that arises from the interference from private property rights.
- 3.46 It will be necessary to demonstrate that the use of compulsory purchase is a last resort, and a CPO is necessary to deliver the scheme, and that there would be no impediments to the scheme going ahead if a CPO is made (for example there are no planning policy impediments, and that there are resources in place to fund and deliver the scheme).

⁴ Source: Homes England Strategic Plan (2023 – 2028); Page 17.

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- 3.47 In broad terms a CPO against third party land will be difficult to justify where the Council does not have a planning case or viable form of development and the SRIF may be of particular importance in advance preparation of this aspect.
- 3.48 The CPO process is complex and HBC will require resources (human and capital) and support to facilitate the process.

f) Partnerships and Joint Ventures

- 3.49 HBC will need to identify appropriate partners for delivery of its regeneration objectives. This will be contingent on:
- the complications associated with a particular intervention;
 - timescales;
 - level of control;
 - internal capacity and capability; and
 - appetite to risk.
- 3.50 Long term complex regeneration is capital intensive. It requires a mix of skills and resources to unlock a project's potential for the local community and economy, whilst also maximising the use of public and assets.
- 3.51 HE can play a significant role in this process. Their Strategic Plan states: "*...we will work with our partners in local government in a bespoke way, tailoring our offer to reflect a place's capacity and ambitions*"⁵.
- 3.52 Joint Venture (JV) options should be considered as a means of sharing the risks of a project, particularly where commercially focussed development is intrinsic to project financing and delivery.
- 3.53 In all cases HBC will need to have the human and capital resource to be able to facilitate this.

g) Meanwhile Use Strategies

- 3.54 The Constraints and Opportunities Analysis (Report 1) highlighted the poor environment in a number of locations including:
- the vacant land behind the College;
 - vacant buildings when exiting the station; and
 - a number of vacant buildings and along Priory Street.

⁵ Source: Homes England Strategic Plan (2023 – 2028); Page 25.

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- 3.55 These are obvious signs of urban “decay,” which create additional associated issues, including vandalism, antisocial behaviour and general negative perceptions and concerns for safety.
- 3.56 We consider this can be addressed in the short term by fostering meanwhile activities for buildings and spaces. This can bring a positive temporary, interchangeable and flexible use to a space. This can also be a quick win with the community; bringing life and energy to a location while the longer-term regeneration plans are being worked up.
- 3.57 Queensbury House is a good example. If it were in the control of HBC, for example, it could be repurposed as an area for (meanwhile and/or permanent) public realm and greening.
- 3.58 This could further support, or be an adjunct to, the wider ‘*Hastings Garden Town Vision*’ being promulgated under the Hastings Town Investment Plan interventions.

Summary

- 3.59 The potential route-map for the successful regeneration of sites within the Station Gateway will encompass:
- partnership working between HE and HBC;
 - address capacity resourcing at HBC to make regeneration and delivery happen;
 - engagement with HE on related expertise;
 - develop a *Strategic Regeneration & Investment Framework* (SRIF) of Interventions across the town centre; and
 - prioritise, phase and programme interventions.
- 3.60 All of the above is contingent on resources and expertise being in place.
- 3.61 At the outset we would recommend that a SRIF is developed so that short-to-long term planning, phasing and funding takes place.
- 3.62 It will be important that further work is undertaken to devise viable schemes across the three sites so that when opportunities present themselves (such as the Station Yard that is currently on the market) these can be capitalised upon.
- 3.63 It is vital that all regeneration, development and investment proposals for Station Gateway are placed in the context of the wider plans for the town centre and seafront and complement the wider vision and aspirations for Hastings over the short, medium and long term.

