

Mentor Report: Havant



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About this report

The High Streets Task Force visited Havant on 16th March 2023 to undertake an Unlocking Your Place Potential diagnostic visit, with the subsequent report recommending how your town could benefit from additional support. As such, Toyubur Rahman was prescribed as one of our Experts to provide help and guidance in the area of town centre partnership building as the main barrier to transformation in Havant.

As part of this process, we have undertaken a deeper exploration of the issue(s) resulting in this report that details practical guidance and support that, if applied, will help to unlock some of the barriers to transformation in your town.

On behalf of the High Streets Task Force, may I take this opportunity to thank all those who gave up their time to help inform this report and for the frank and positive manner throughout our engagement with your town.

It is clear that there are great opportunities in Havant , with many strengths both in the town and in your people. As such I hope that this report will help you to build on those strengths as you seek to transform your town.



Matt Colledge

High Streets Task Force Project Director

Introduction

Havant has a remarkable heritage, beautiful countryside and compelling coastline right on its doorstep. It also enjoys other strengths in having a relatively large catchment within walking distance of the town centre, high occupancy rates, and good transport links in having a main line railway and bus station.

Much of the centre retains the original crossroad configuration (North, South, East and West Streets) and its architectural assets span many centuries - with significant buildings from more recent decades. In summary, the town has many strengths and although it is facing challenges, these strengths give Havant strong foundations to build upon.

Following the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit in June 2023, the expert identified the lack of an organisation or group to take responsibility for the town centre as the main barrier to transformation in Havant. As such, Toyubur Rahman was appointed as the dedicated High Streets Task Force Mentor to support you in this area.

Toyubur is a passionate place management professional with a wide range of experience in urban regeneration, economic development and town planning. He has a proven track record of successfully implementing projects to improve town and city centres, with a particular specialism in town centre management, partnership development, Business Improvement Districts and developing evening economies.

Following a review of the material that has been provided and at a virtual meeting between Toyubur and senior officers from Havant Council. It was decided that a facilitated workshop would be useful to:

“to examine issues of place leadership, governance, place management partnership structures and help to put in place a “Town Board” to implement town centre projects.”

To achieve this, it was recommended that a “Place Partnership Workshop” be undertaken to bring stakeholders together to discuss and decide the key issues, terms of reference and a structure of a newly formed “Town Board”. This workshop was delivered on 2nd November 2023. The key issues that emerged through those that attended the workshop centred on identity, events, evening night time economy and activities for young people.

Tackling these identified areas of need, the following next steps are recommended:

- Put in place the Town Board. Implement a recruitment process to find committed place leaders from the business and wider stakeholder community that can be part of its membership.
- Agree terms of reference, governance arrangements and decision making processes.
- Investigate how the actions of the Town Board will be delivered – e.g. through stakeholder partners, economic development service
- Further investigate the solutions that delegates outlined in this report and prepare proposal documents to implement them. A Place Making Programme workshop will help with this.

Information Gathering & Engagement

A large number of documents were reviewed as part of the process which provided great insight to the issues and challenges that Havant faces. We also engaged with a number of people ahead of the workshop as well as the people at the workshop. These included:

Grant Thornton	Regeneration and Economy Manager
Wayne Layton	Regeneration and Economy Director
Siobhan Flynn	Regeneration and Skill Manager
James Maw	Economic Development Manager

Documents Reviewed Included:

- A Regeneration Strategy for Havant Borough 2018 – 2036
- Heritage Action Zone Bid
- The Building a Better Future Plan – the new Local Plan for Havant Borough
- Havant Town Centres Study July 2020 Library Ref: EB51
- Havant and Waterlooville Retail and Town Centres Study Prosperity Havant Background Paper June 2016
- Havant Town Centre LUF Lookbook, Fabrik
- Building a Better Future Document, 2022

Place Partnership Workshop delivered on Thursday 2nd November 2023

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- Principles of Place Management
- Place leadership exercises
 - To answer the question, “Why are you here?”
 - What is the purpose of a “Town Board”?
 - Post card from the future exercise
 - Town Centre Visions exercise
- Terms of reference
- Governance Arrangements

Findings & Analysis

- The UYPP report was well received by stakeholders and the new Councillors.
- There has been a period of adjustment after Havant Borough Council formally agreed to withdraw from its joint management agreement with East Hampshire District Council in March 2022.
- Since then, Havant BC has been realigning its resources so it can pursue its newly refreshed priorities. This is especially important in order to pick up the work that was done pre-covid to bring to fruition some of the regeneration ideas and plans that were discussed.
- A new Local Plan is being developed, “Building for a Better Future” which has had its first round of consultation. This is scheduled to be adopted in 2025.
- There are some visionary strategic regeneration proposals for the town, which if implemented will help the town transition into a multifunction centre.
- Havant BC own the Meridian Shopping Centre. This provides significant opportunity due to being a major site under the Council’s control.
- Spring Arts Centre is a well-respected cultural facility that punches above its weight and should play a more prominent role in the town. It is an ideal platform to develop the wider cultural offer in the town and attract a wider demographic.
- There is a limited evening and night time economy, which largely consists of a few pubs and takeaways.
- The vacancy rate of the town is low, although footfall is also low. This is due to the retail park which is very close to the high street, which draws focus away.
- There has been very little business engagement and there is no up-to-date database

There are a number of towns of a similar size and function to Havant in the South East, such as Eastleigh, Tonbridge and Malling, Test Valley (Andover and Romsey), which appear to be performing relatively well, with good town partnership arrangements in place, delivering high street regeneration projects.

As such, we see real opportunity for Havant to make similar progress.

Workshop findings

The challenges identified by the group who attended the workshop echo those described in previous reports and meetings.

It was clear from the workshop that stronger partnerships between the councils, businesses and the wider community is needed to build more capacity for making change happen in the town. There was clearly lots of commitment from the stakeholders present. The setting up of a “Town Board” and ensuring clear terms of reference, shared values and responsibilities will really help building a strong partnership.

From the business delegates that were in attendance, it appeared that there was real willing to be part of a rejuvenated “Town Board” that can show commitment to improving the town and many welcomed the opportunity to be part of it. It was evident that businesses in Market Parade want to do more to improve the appearance of the area and improve the gateway for those coming over the footbridge and on the train.

With regards to the Spring Arts Centre, which represents the cultural sector, it was clear that patrons hold the venue in very high regard as it provides a much needed outlet for the arts. Although, it was noted that more could be done to increase communication of what is available to a wider group of people who have not been or don’t know it is there.

In addition, the provision at the Spring Arts Centre could be better supported by wider arts engagement, cultural music, food activities and events; that will encourage more people to visit and increase dwell time in the town.

Place Management is all about delivering coordinated action that ensures more impact from the investment and interventions made. It was very clear from the workshop that there is a huge amount of enthusiasm and support for the town from both the councils and business leaders. More frequent and open communication is needed, to build trust, focus on shared values and importantly deliver tangible actions. This will encourage wider participation especially amongst businesses who will see improvements in the town taking place.

Exercise 1: Why are we here?

The purpose of this exercise was to prompt a discussion of the need for a common purpose for the town/partnership, anchored to just a few important issues or challenges. There were a number of common themes that kept on cropping up, such as the need to engage with young people, improve parking, enhance the night time economy, improve local identity, enhance cleanliness, and tackle shoplifting.

The main points raised during the meeting are listed below:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night time Economy x 2 • Age inclusion • Location of the town centre • A sense of place • Belief in the value of Havant Town • Station footbridge • Residents engagement • Lack of family entertainment, multiplex • Identity of town • Young people offer • Planning • Park Road south • What is your USP • Keeping independents • Appearance away from West Street • Market Parade train station • Parking x 2 • Change entrenched negative beliefs • Drawing footfall in – providing convenience from services/retail • Co-ordination of town centre as community hub 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Footfall • Parking Vouchers • Lack of events x 2 • More independents • Identity – what would I attend? • Anti-social behaviour can be to some extent be tackled by providing activities for young people • Attracting young people use the town and facilities • Negative attitude /lack of vision • Pigeons • Crime shoplifting • Dirty pavement, unclean, uncared for • Less desirable people housed in Havant (crime) • Developing stronger sense of place (Branding) marketing the town • Advertising • No council website about what is on in Havant! • Future sustainability
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Vision Statements

“A place to visit, live, work, grow up and grow old”

“A welcoming, thriving, attractive place to be proud of and regularly visit”

“Events, activities, street markets, food festivals, sport – especially engaging young people, pedestrian areas” choose from various role models such as Winchester, Chichester

“Thriving and sustainable – offer, welcoming, attractive, practical, accessible, safe, inclusive – all age groups

Exercise 2 Postcard from the Future

To help identify some of the solutions to the issues we undertook a Postcard from the Future exercise. This session encourages individuals to think positively about the future. It can help to provide the ingredients to create a shared vision or implementation plan, but importantly to recognise what you did as a place leader to help solve the issues.

“Imagine yourself five years in the future. Your partnership has achieved something great. You are so excited about it you want to tell your friend/family/mentor about this achievement. What has the partnership achieved and what was your contribution? Invent the future and write it down on your post card”

A selection of some of postcards are provided below. They demonstrate the hope that people have for the future of Havant and their ambitions for it. The postcards were dated for 2028.

“we organised 12 months of events organised by businesses, community and L.A, co-ordinated, empowering and bringing stakeholders together. The street is teeming, it’s vibrant full of music and food. There’s another planned for next month” James Maw

“Havant town centre now has an annual calendar of events such as music festival, food festival, working with other retailers and local councillors “ Cristian Preda

To my area manager “After the road closure outside of the church was implemented, the nearest businesses worked together to keep the area cleaner and arranged some late night and seasonal events” Jacquie Neale

“Enjoying my retirement listening to a lunch time concert and just off for an Italian meal at the new restaurant in North Street. Shelley Saunders (Pallant)

“Good news! After having an active role in the HTBP, we have increased residential and evening economy, with greater community use and regular positive feedback.” Rob Fryer

“Had a lovely meal in a restaurant overlooking Havant Park, lovely planting in the town, interesting shops, easy parking and brilliant art centre nearby” Jackie Branson

“The Spring is known throughout the borough and the region. It is a cultural hub and destination for its community” Sue Dickenson

“Youth clubs, leisure facilities, drop-in centres, night time economy, engaging young people through school/college” Gillian Harris

“Havant Town Centre (station) is now a welcoming place and has a vibrant community with better parking and toilet facilities; you would feel safe and secure coming here in the evening and enjoy food in one of the many nice restaurants” To my family in Sheffield, Marie Ottley

“We are now a Town Centre Partnership, organising events, festivals, promotion, branding of the town. It’s welcoming, invigorated public realm, clean and tidy. Pedestrianised West Street outside St. Faiths Church, all resulting in increased footfall

and businesses. Strategically, our data insights lead us to economic decision making with HBC, offering a sustainable future for the town centre. “ Peter Hammond.

“I enhanced the park “offer”; influenced the development of the Meridian and clear pedestrian route through the centre; helped facilitate an improved leisure offer; quality public realm/ flexible event space on Meridian site”

Dear Kieron, you’ll pleased to know our original “safer town centre” programme is ALMOST BACK to how good it was in the 2020s” Gary Morton

“We formed an events group made up creatives, charities, community leaders. We worked with local council to draw up a calendar of events, encouraged all to take part. We worked with local agencies, groups to promote through networks/social media” Liz Weighell

“We tackled shoplifting, liaising with the Police, reporting incidents, CCTV, following up with people who report incidents” Phil Munday

Potential Solutions

Issue	Potential Solutions
1. Strong Town Centre Partnership “Town Board”	<p>Recruit place leaders from the businesses. Agree the terms of reference, governance and structure.</p> <p>This will be key to ensure they will be able to provide a voice of the businesses that can be represent at the regeneration board</p>
2. Action plan for town by “Town Board”	<p>Undertake the Place Making Programme workshop delivered by the High Street Task Force. This will help to prioritise initiatives and produce action plan for the town that the Town Board can deliver on.</p>
3. Identity	<p>The Place Making Programme will help with this issue as well. In addition, some further consultation or research with businesses and residents would be useful here. This could be undertaken by branding agencies but also take a look at this paper on the Sense of place, it discusses the concepts of place attachment, place identity and place dependence</p> <p>https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/details/?id=3e48d420-7598-40ab-822a-f7035a4dcb5b</p> <p>This will help to crystalise a collective identity for the town that the Town Board can build on.</p>
4. Evening and Night Time Economy	<p>Begin to develop an Evening and Night Time Economy programme. Consider using the Purple Flag framework to devise a strategy and action plan to improve this area of the economy. Consideration should also be made as to how the arts, music, cultural and sporting offer can be developed in a co-ordinated manner.</p>

Additional Support

As discussed during the workshop, this is part of the process that towns have to go through in order to implement the right projects and solutions to their issues. It is vital that some of these projects get implemented in order to maintain the momentum, build trust and demonstrate that it is worthwhile for stakeholders to engage in these types of discussions.

There are a number of organisations that can assist you to take you to the next phase and work up these solutions into fully costed and resourced plans. These include the HSTF, Institute of Place Management, Association of Town and City Management and Historic Towns Trust.

Conclusion

Havant is a town that has a huge amount of potential. It should, over the coming years, be able to build on its heritage and solidify its identity. Maintaining the commitment to the town and focussing on these solutions the right levels of investment will eventually come.

However, in the meantime, the town and its stakeholders can do much to change the narrative of the place and communicate widely what is good about the town, what people are proud of and the reasons to visit.

We hope the following recommendations can be implemented and hope that the support to date has been beneficial.

- Implement the “Town Board” and create a proactive town centre partnership with strong leaders.
- Undertake the Place Making Programme workshop to help place leaders from the business community to emerge and prioritise the issues that need tackling.
- Further investigate the solutions that delegates outlined in this report and prepare proposal documents to implement them.

I hope that the town will achieve its aspirations to optimise its potential. Thank you for your help and support throughout this part of the process.

Delegates Present

Cllr Gillian	Harris	HBC	Ward Councilor St Faiths
Cllr Philip	Munday	HBC	Ward Councilor St Faiths, Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Cllr Lulu	Bowerman	HBC & HCC	HCC Councilor Emsworth & St Faiths, Cabinet lead for Commercial, Ward Councillor Emsworth. Trustee Spring Arts Centre
Cllr Jackie	Branson	HCC	Trustee Spring Arts Centre, HCC Councilor North East Havant
Cllr Alex	Rennie	HBC	Leader & Cabinet Lead for Policy, Corporate Strategy and Regeneration
Chris	Caesar	Crime Reduction Partnership	
Gary	Morton	HBC	Neighbourhood Quality & Community Safety
Chris	Riggot	HBC	Head of Property & Asset Management
Elizabeth	Weighell	Havant Library – HCC	
Kate	Pontin	HBC Community Officer	
Sue	Dickinson	The Spring	Interim Director & CEO
Peter	Hammond	The Spring & Havant Civic Society	Trustee Spring Arts Centre & vice-chair HCS
Bob	Comlay	Havant Civic Society	Chair
Shelley	Saunders	The Pallant Centre	Manager
Rob	Fryer	Meridian Centre	Manager
Martina	Spencer	Endless Gifts	Owner
Sandra	Smith	Endless Gifts	Owner
Sarah	Thompson	Athena Blooms Floristry	Owner

Amanda	Howard	D B Whites Newsagent	Owner
Marie	Ottley	Moore Traditional Funeral Directors	Branch Manager
Jacqueline	Neal	Chestnut Tree House	Store Manager
Cristian	Preda	The Coffee Lounge	Owner
Terry	Thompson	COOP Funeral Care	Branch Manager
Wayne	Layton	Havant BC	Executive Head of Corporate Finance and Head of Regeneration
Siobhan	Flynn	Havant BC	Regeneration and Skills Manager
James	Maw	Havant BC	Economic Development Manager
Toyubur	Rahman	High Street Task Force	