

## **Brixham Town.**

Key areas of focus:

- ✓ **Bolton Cross – the gateway to Brixham**
- ✓ **Market Street – a cohesive transport system**
- ✓ **Middle Street – the primary access road and artery to the fishing industry**
- ✓ **Fore Street – the primary retail trading centre of Brixham**
- ✓ **The Town Centre Redevelopment Site – (the missing link) an opportunity for change**
- ✓ **The Inner Harbour – Brixham’s identity**
- ✓ **The Outer Harbour – the future and beyond**

### **Bolton Cross – The Gateway to Brixham**

Critique:

The former Threshers site situated at the corner of Bolton Cross has been left awaiting redevelopment for the last several years and attempts to find a suitable developer have been stymied by the high costs associated with its location and limited area for construction. In the last several months discussions have taken place for the land to be transferred to YES (Youth Enquiry Service), a charitable organisation who have invested in the youth of Brixham and secured a number of successful redevelopments specifically aimed at housing and assisting young people in their home town. YES are currently seeking the additional funding necessary to take this development forward but until then the site remains derelict and therefore an unattractive first impression of the town. The site has both planning and building regulations approval.

Proposals:

- ✓ To redevelop the former Threshers site into a mixed use residential and small ground floor business start-up unit and public information centre.
- ✓ Enhanced directional signage and key location signage including ‘Welcome to Brixham’ arch above Fore Street.
- ✓ Enhanced pedestrian links across Bolton Cross including a Shared Surfacing for traffic and pedestrians.

### **Market Street – a cohesive transport system**

Critique:

The existing transport routes into the town are confusing and dangerous to vehicles and pedestrians alike. All vehicles including public transport, HGVs, taxis, coaches, cars, bicycles entering the town centre are all directed into Market Street. The current layout consists of two lanes entering and one large (recently widened by the removal of the Threshers building) lane leaving the centre and is bisected by the cluster of buildings consisting of the Brixham Baptist Church, Hall and café/restaurant. This route then splits into two; one directing traffic towards the harbour and one to the town centre car park or back out of Brixham following the route in. For the unfamiliar traveller the need to decide on the most appropriate lane can be confusing and certainly lead to errors and erratic driving. To therefore impact on this with the immediacy of the bus terminal, entrance to the town’s central car park and taxi rank all converging behind the Baptist Church only exacerbates the

problem. In addition it is often the case that several double-decker buses wait at the terminus with insufficient space to park two vehicles of this size, and therefore the second vehicle has no option but to extend out into the highway and ultimately the path of on-coming vehicles attempting to access the car park. Throw into the mix pedestrians attempting to navigate their way across these roadways and the full experience of arriving in Brixham can be perceived.

Proposals:

- ✓ To create two distinct routes into the town; one a designated bus lane leading directly to a repositioned terminus, the other to the harbour and new multi-storey car park accessed off Middle Street or alternatively leading back out of town.
- ✓ To provide a designated and safe bus terminus with sheltered waiting area and public information hub.
- ✓ To provide enhanced directional signage and extended junctions to allow clearer wayfinding.

### **Middle Street – the primary access road and artery to the fishing industry**

Critique:

With the position of the new Fish Quay and processing facilities between the inner and outer harbour it is essential the primary route along Middle Street is improved for commercial vehicle use. This is particularly important if the future commercial plans for Oxon Cove and Freshwater Quarry are to be realized. A clear and unobstructed route through the town is also essential for tourism and both are seen as vital elements to the economy of Brixham. It is recognised that during the summer months when tourism is at its peak commercial transit suffers. It is therefore imperative that neither element is considered to be at odds with the other which can only lead to their detriment. This context should be read in conjunction with wider transport improvements beyond the boundaries of Brixham which have impacted on the commercial viability of the bay.

Proposals:

- ✓ Provide improvements in highway routes and road network geometry
- ✓ Provide improvements in controlled parking facilities and less reliance on street parking
- ✓ Provide enhanced way finding and directional signage for both commercial and tourist facilities
- ✓ Improve the existing public realm and create an enclosed 'urban corridor' through the town lined with buildings on both sides

### **Fore Street – the primary retail trading centre of Brixham**

Critique:

Currently suffering from a glut of charity shops, empty shops and 'if only's', Fore Street needs a shot in the arm. Like most towns struggling to get out of the recession there is a tired quality to what was once a busy commercial centre. Investment in the built environment has lapsed from both the property owners and the local authority leading to a general feel of a town that has lost its way. Brixham is often referred to as the poor relation to both Paignton and Torquay and as such suffers from attracting new investment. Brixham's prominence as the commercial fishing and heritage centre of all the three towns in Torbay needs to be fully recognised and enhanced through further investment incentives. Such investment can be encouraged by local authority initiatives such as rate relief on existing business and new start up business support, and grant assistance on building maintenance and property enhancement.

Proposals:

- ✓ Provide improvements in road surfaces and street lighting.
- ✓ Provide improvements to the built environment and encourage owner participation.
- ✓ Encourage new businesses and reinforce existing businesses through support funding and rate relief.
- ✓ Actively promote and encourage artisan markets and create a destination town.

### **The Town Centre Redevelopment Site – (the missing link) an opportunity for change**

#### **Critique:**

Through the years this historic and important site has been home to a multitude of activities and uses. From the town's inception as an open watercourse, then reclaimed and occupied agricultural land to cottage industry, housing and a gas works. In the post-war years the site was cleared to house a rather brutal multi storey car park and bus terminus until these too were cleared in the early 1990s. Since the loss of these facilities Brixham has been left with a gaping hole at its heart. Over the years many schemes have come forward in an attempt to rectify the situation and provide a new town centre focus albeit based around a single large retail unit as was once the trend. Current thinking in the retail sector is that it is unlikely such a development would ever be possible again and over the last several years consumer spending patterns have radically changed largely as a result of online purchasing, but also a move away from the department store scale of shopping. The industry has seen a return to smaller boutique retail outlets supported by an online supply network. The high street is becoming once again the shop window, but the need for stock handling is elsewhere. Towns that are quick and flexible enough to respond to this are reaping the rewards. Those that aren't are slowly fading into decline. The latest venture to follow this strategy was the failed Tesco development proposal in 2012 which proposed 2800sqm of retail space in a single unit, with 218sqm of secondary retail units, 14 residential units and a 3-storey car park containing 338 spaces. This proposal sought to fill the site entirely in one built mass with pedestrian access and circulation consigned to the peripheral spaces left over. Such a solution was considered by many who were opposed to the scheme as incongruous to the existing urban pattern and how the town's built form is interlaced with lanes and passageways that provide connections through the town. The proposed development failed to address the concerns of the wider public and instead chose to drive forward an unpopular and unwelcome scheme. Despite receiving full planning permission from the local authority the scheme was dropped.

The objectives of Brixham's Neighbourhood Forum by comparison are relatively simple: to create a new urban realm in harmony with the scale and context of the town that would complement the existing businesses rather than be in direct competition. A scheme that could offer a blend of uses akin to those successful model towns which promote their own unique selling point and at the same time does not remove the key ingredients such as safe and accessible parking and affordable housing.

#### **Proposals:**

- ✓ Provide a new 200-space multi-storey car park.
- ✓ Provide small to medium (combined total 1450sqm) ground floor level retail units to complement the size and scale of those on neighbouring Fore Street.
- ✓ Provide a medium to large (2250sqm – 3050sqm) 3-4 storey mixed use commercial/ hotel/ retail unit
- ✓ Provide 20 – 30 affordable housing units (first floor and second floor levels over ground floor retail units)
- ✓ Provide an attractive public realm and street scape interlaced with Fore Street to encourage a revitalized shopping experience to the existing town and increase inward investment and visitor spending.

- ✓ Provide a new sense of place and Public Square for showcasing artisan markets, events and entertainment.
- ✓ Extend and enhance the lanes and passageways around the site to improve the tourist experience and encourage artisan workshops, galleries and small enterprise within these connective spaces (Paradise Place, Furze Lane, Pump Street, Beach Approach, Union Lane and several others as yet un-named).

### **The Inner Harbour – Brixham’s identity**

#### Critique:

Brixham’s inner harbour and as such its whole *raison d’etre* is iconic. The natural amphitheatre as formed by the steep topography lined with terraced houses that all look into the harbour bowl is instantly recognizable and for that reason is considered Brixham’s unique selling point. Its fishing heritage underpins the very essence of Brixham and its community and as a result the shape of the town has been honed out of this association with the sea. It is vitally important then that this association is maintained for generations to come. This does not mean standing still, but ensuring the town is relevant and continues to respond to the community’s needs and wants.

Brixham has always balanced the working needs of the harbour with those of its playtime needs and this could be said to be the reason why Brixham is still relevant today. Whilst other fishing towns rest on their laurels and slowly slide into decline Brixham’s beating heart strives to place it at the top of the supply chain. Gradually the perception of Brixham is changing and there is a wider appreciation of the town across the UK which is reflected in the demand on properties in and around the harbour basin. To complement this interest the current areas of neglect need to be addressed which includes the inner harbour itself. Without losing any of its charm and character the harbour needs to build on its unique selling points.

#### Proposals:

- ✓ Reorganise the harbour into discernible zones which would ensure the quality of the spaces are maintained.
- ✓ Provide a permanent sill and create a floating harbour (existing dry mooring provision to be located beyond the outer harbour).
- ✓ Create a Heritage Fleet dock between the Middle Pier (Eastern Quay) and the End Pier.
- ✓ Provide a swing bridge link between the End Pier and King’s Quay.
- ✓ Provide floating decked pontoons for tourist and leisure activities.
- ✓ Relocate the existing car parking spaces and provide maritime and artisan based SME business units along Southern Quay.
- ✓ Provide a new public event platform to Middle Pier (Eastern Quay) central to the natural amphitheatre.
- ✓ Provide a new Maritime Heritage Museum on the End Pier with direct visual links to the working harbour and heritage dock.
- ✓ Encourage further leisure activities and events along the harbour side.

### **The Outer Harbour – the future and beyond**

#### Critique:

The future prosperity of Brixham lay in its ability to accommodate new industry, both in the commercial and leisure sectors. The town currently enjoys an even blend of working and leisure harbours and moorings both of which are close to their use capacity. The proposal to construct a new northern arm/breakwater has long been in discussion, but if realized could provide an increased

area of safe sheltered water and moorings for the expansion of the outer harbour and contain both marina and commercial facilities.

Proposals:

- ✓ Provide a new commercial harbour extending the existing fish landings and processing facilities.
- ✓ Provide a new leisure marina extending the existing moorings and Chandler support facilities.