

We
Made
That

prd



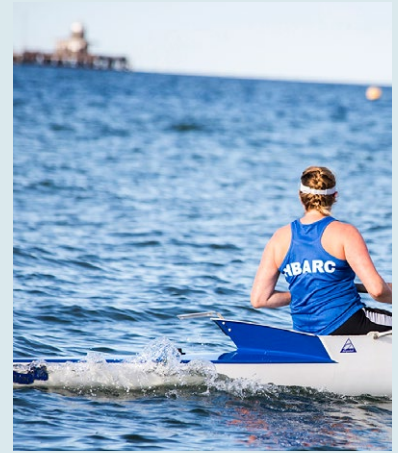
Herne Bay Town Centre Strategy

2026-2043



Executive Summary

This strategy outlines a transformational vision for Herne Bay's town centre. It proposes a clear and deliverable place-specific plan focusing on regeneration, investment and growth. The strategy will also align with the new Canterbury District Local Plan, ahead of forthcoming local government reorganisation (LGR). It has been developed in collaboration with community groups, businesses and other stakeholders to ensure it delivers on local priorities.



This strategy will help support better and inclusive access to the water. Image by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey



This strategy seeks to re-energise the town centre and bring back spaces into active use. Image by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey



This strategy will seek to deepen cultural, community and leisure programmes. Image by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey

What is the vision?

Herne Bay will be a more prosperous town where young people want to stay, people's health is improved and everyone is proud to call it home.

Its vibrant seafront and high street will be home to an ambitious calendar of events which bring people together to celebrate their past and embrace a more inclusive, creative future.

What's in this strategy document?

This strategy sets out a long-term vision and a series of strategic principles to guide the future of Herne Bay's town centre.

It provides a clear framework for how the town should evolve, responding to the opportunities and challenges identified through talking to people and gathering evidence from adopted and draft strategies, policies and plans which have also been shaped by public consultation.

Crucially, this document has been created with the community, local organisations, businesses, cultural partners and other key stakeholders. Their insights, experience and ambitions have directly shaped the priorities, themes and strategic direction set out here.

Because the strategy is rooted in talking to people with a stake in the town, we have confidence that what it articulates truly reflects the issues that matter most to the people who know and use it every day.

This shared authorship provides a strong and credible foundation for future decision making and delivery.

To achieve the vision, Herne Bay should:

1. Breathe new life into the heart of the town
2. Weave a green thread through the town
3. Link the high street to high tide
4. Restore and reconnect its coastal gems
5. Nurture a healthier Herne Bay
6. Give the next generation the space to grow
7. Back the Bay
8. Picture the postcard



Image provided by Explore Kent ©

We Made That

Herne Bay Town Centre Place Strategy

Contents

1.0 Introduction	6
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Introduction and purpose– Herne Bay town centre context– Policy context– Key challenges to address	
2.0 Engagement Summary	20
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– What have people said?– Public survey summary– Key things to get right	
3.0 Guiding Principles	30
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Herne Bay vision for 2043– Herne Bay strategy principles– Links to UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and Marmot principles	
4.0 Governance, Evaluation and Delivery	38
<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Measuring success– Monitoring and review– Projects and action plans– Local governance planning	

Front cover image
Visit Canterbury ©

Image credits
Visit Canterbury © & Explore Kent ©

We Made That

Herne Bay Town Centre Strategy

Document Version
January 2026

01

Introduction

- Introduction and purpose
- Town centre context
- Policy context
- Key challenges to address



Image provided by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey

Foreword

The nature of our high streets and how we shop has changed. The historic growth of out-of-town shopping and, more recently, of online retail means high streets are increasingly places where people seek memorable experiences more than products. They are places for people to meet, work and interact with others.

The loss of familiar brands and services is unnerving for some, but the evolution of our high street also provides an opportunity for local needs to be met in different ways and for new uses to appear in under-used spaces.

Councils can support their communities by using public buildings and public services like libraries, health centres and community spaces in new ways to increase footfall and civic participation.

Changes to the high street can provide opportunities for the community to redefine what types of enterprise they want in its town.

Together, we can consider creative and innovative ways in which we can support local and community-owned businesses which ensure profits stay in the area and provide skills, training and jobs which resolve social as well as economic challenges.

The high street has the power to support happier, healthier and more prosperous communities. At a time of profound change, we bring our public spaces like our streets, gardens and parks, to life and help them play a powerful role in making people feel welcome and at home. They can ensure there are spaces and opportunities for communities to connect without money changing hands.

Private enterprise will always be at the heart of creativity and innovation in the high street but its vitality and viability lay in it engaging, understanding and responding to the needs of its communities and visitors.

We've worked with a lot of different people to create our town centre strategies to make sure they are a blueprint for coherent and place-specific visions for each of our three urban centres - Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable - and their unique challenges.

It is our ambition that the clarity of this framework will unlock private investment, provide direction during local government reorganisation and continue to return civic pride to our district

Process

This document has been pulled together with the help of community groups, businesses, stakeholders, councillors and council officers.

Place-based assessments for each of the urban centres have been produced to gather evidence and understanding to support the strategies.

The strategy work has been undertaken to align with our new draft Local Plan, transport policies and other corporate strategies.

Local Government Reorganisation context

In March 2025, Canterbury City Council, along with other district and county councils in Kent signalled their intention to accept the government's instruction to explore local government reorganisation and devolution.

While no decisions have been made, it is expected the council will dissolve in 2028 and join a larger unitary authority comprised of neighbouring districts in east Kent and parts of Kent County Council. It is also expected that, eventually, the district will form part of a wider Kent Mayoral Strategic Authority.

Purpose

Our council's corporate plan and key corporate strategies recognise the need to tackle national and international problems at a local level through its adoption of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

Our central ambition is to continue to return pride to our district, ensuring a greener, fairer, stronger and better future for all. We believe this wider lens is a good way of coming up with an ambition and achievable vision that can bridge an exciting period of change, kickstarted through LGR.

Support for the UN SDG framework exists at a national, countywide and local government level.

We believe the synergy which comes with aligning our ambitions with the SDGs and a future new unitary council's responsibility for adult social care, public health and youth services, can ensure our town centres are both great places to live, as well being great places to visit.

Whatever changes lie ahead, we believe our success will be judged by residents who will see our proposals as authentic answers to the problems they see in their everyday lives.

These town centre strategies are designed to:

- Recognise the key assets and positive attributes that make our high streets vibrant and the qualities that will help drive their future growth.
- Summarise key market trends and how they will change our high streets in the future.
- In the place-based assessments, map out the here and now outlining current and planned investment.
- Identifying good things that are already happening in our urban areas.
- Summarise the key challenges to our towns and city.
- Outline a vision and strategic ambition for each area, summarising the things we need to get right.

An overarching framework for our centres

While our district has three distinctive centres each with their different needs, opportunities and identities, we have developed singular overarching framework for our high streets.

We want to see our high streets succeed in a way which retains and builds the wealth, skills and opportunities for the benefit of people living, working and studying here.

Private investment will always be at the heart of our high streets but we believe targeted public sector investment can complement and strengthen it – creating an effective ecosystem which encourages entrepreneurial behaviour.

We will target our investment on projects of real public impact. Projects that provide social, environmental, commercial and economic value.

Our aim is to build city and town centres which:

1. Are accessible, attractive and enjoyable places to spend time.
2. Are safe spaces with easy, well-signposted walking routes between the places people need to reach.
3. Encourage people to use sustainable transport, to get to, and travel around them.
4. Increase the biodiversity of our town and city centre spaces, with more planting, green landscaping and scoping of opportunities for future 'pocket parks' for public realm enhancement.
5. Allow spaces to be used in different ways and set up flexible arrangements for how they're occupied or managed, so the city and town centres can adapt when the economy changes.
6. Foster variety where household names and cherished independents sit side by side ensuring our high streets are intriguing, vibrant and resilient.

Town centre context

Introduction

Herne Bay is a seaside town on the north Kent coast, located a few miles east of Whitstable and about eight miles north of Canterbury.

Known for its long shingle beach, colourful beach huts, and Victorian charm, it developed during the 19th century as a fashionable resort for those seeking fresh air and sea bathing.

The town's seafront is a good example of a Victorian promenade with heritage assets and ornamental gardens spread across a wide, half mile long, coastal path. It includes a pier — once one of the longest in the country which was destroyed in 1978 leaving the pier head isolated far out to sea. The Clock Tower was built in 1837, thought to be one of the world's first free-standing seaside clock towers.

Although Herne Bay's days as a grand resort have faded, it retains much of its historic character and continues to attract families and day-trippers seeking a traditional coastal experience. It is also well-located to explore neighbouring towns, country parks, forts, nature reserves and the northeast Kent coastline by foot or by bike.

There is a history of regular events such as the Herne Bay Festival, vintage car rallies, concerts and summer air shows adding vibrancy to the calendar, although the frequency of these events and activities has seen noticeable decline due to financial pressures of running these types of events.

The town centre hosts two regular markets. One is a weekly, more traditional retail market held on Mortimer Street. The other is a produce and craft market held in Wimereux Square twice a month.

Herne Bay's town centre is distinctive for its two parallel shopping streets — High Street and Mortimer Street — which together form the heart of the town's social and commercial life.

The main High Street runs east to west and carries most of the through traffic, while Mortimer Street, which runs just behind it, is pedestrianised for much of its length and offers a more relaxed atmosphere for shopping and strolling.

The High Street is home to a mix of well known chain stores, banks and essential services, catering to people's day-to-day needs. It also retains an array of independent shops and hospitality businesses.


Mortimer Street also has an independent flavour featuring small boutiques, cafés, galleries and other local businesses as well as some household names.

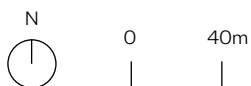
Some businesses have reported very little crossover between weekday local trade and weekend visitor trade.



Key takeaways

- The primary shopping area has the unusual distinction of two parallel high streets. In this area the number of vacant commercial properties has increased. Mortimer Street is understood by many to be the primary shopping area.
- Herne Bay has a series of valuable heritage assets with programmed investment but the town centre heritage, that beyond the seafront, is underutilised.
- Given the comparatively high levels of deprivation experienced in Herne Bay, the town's social infrastructure may require improvement

 Town centre boundary (Local Plan)



Where is the town centre?

The draft Local Plan 2042/43 sets out a revised town centre boundary which is far tighter than the previous version. This boundary is more focused but also better aligned with how people use the town centre and seafront, supporting a stronger, more integrated commercial area. However, this strategy document considers projects and their impact holistically across the town, not just the town centre boundary identified above. Our assets in the town include key buildings such as The King's Hall, Central Bandstand, the pier and Heron's leisure centre as well as key open spaces such as the Memorial Park.

Town centre context

Snapshot

Heritage

Herne Bay developed from a small fishing settlement to a major Victorian seaside town following significant investment in 1830.

The town contains several notable listed buildings, including its Clock Tower. Herne Bay's Central Bandstand and King's Hall are also prominent and very popular landmarks attracting both residents and visitors.

The entire town centre boundary sits within the Herne Bay Conservation Area.

Shopping

The primary shopping area includes the High Street and a portion of Mortimer Street. Other connecting streets also host independent shops, cafes and other outlets. A nearby Morrisons store on William Street and Aldi on King's Road serve as important anchor stores drawing large numbers of shoppers into the town. Some of these shoppers are likely to make linked trips in order to use the town centre's wider retail offer and amenities.

William Street also connects the primary shopping area to the seafront. There are other opportunities to enhance this connection, particularly at Cooper's Hill.

Green and open spaces

There is little green and open space within the town centre boundary but a large amount exists in the Herne Bay Memorial Park. The park offers a wide range of outdoor amenities to enjoy including planted gardens, mature trees, places to sit, a lake, a play area and newly improved sporting facilities.

The park is a significant local asset which although highly valued by residents is much less utilised by visitors.

Development context

There is one allocation (Policy HB2: an area of Beach Street) in the draft new Local Plan within the town centre boundary.

There is a cluster of potential new development next to Herne Bay railway station which may require additional infrastructure.

Deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2025) ranks the entire town centre area within the second decile (20%) of deprived local areas, placing it among the most deprived town centres in the region.

Cultural and social infrastructure

There is relatively little social infrastructure within the town centre boundary. However, several GP surgeries and two schools are within close proximity of the centre and key transport routes. Cultural infrastructure is relatively evenly spread throughout the town centre, with a strong presence of art spaces, community buildings and places of worship. The town also has a centrally located and popular cinema and leisure facilities (Herons Leisure Centre).

Economic impact of tourism

We regularly commission reports estimating the volume and value of tourism to the district. Annual data is sourced from Destination Research (2025). Tourism remains a key sector in Herne Bay's economy and the town also helps the district showcase

an attractive and diverse offer to visitors. Data for 2024 highlights that tourism supported 840 jobs in Herne Bay, up by 3% from 2023. This equates to 2% of all jobs in the district's economy. In 2024 Herne Bay attracted 626,000 trips in total comprising 555,000 day trips and 71,000 overnight stay trips. Compared to 2023 the volume and value of day trips had fallen.

Although the number of overnight stays remained unchanged in 2024 the length of stays and associated spend actually increased. For comparison Herne Bay attracted a lower number of trips than Whitstable, including 44,100 fewer overnight stays. This resulted in significantly less overall spend in the town. Also spend per visitor in Herne Bay equated to £52.16 in 2024 which was 27% lower than in Whitstable.

This demonstrates how the accommodation part of Herne Bay's tourism sector underperforms. This is all despite staying visitors to both towns staying for a similar amount of time - on average for four nights per trip.

This Strategy and the Draft Local Plan

Herne Bay's town centre strategy is shaped by, and designed to advance, the direction set out in the emerging Local Plan. Draft Policy HB1 establishes the principle that Herne Bay's town centre must evolve into a more focused, resilient and adaptable core, capable of supporting local needs while strengthening its role as a district centre.

This strategy interprets that policy ambition through a place-specific lens, ensuring the spatial and social realities of Herne Bay inform the way the town centre is supported through change.

HB1 tightens the town centre boundary and concentrates activity within a smaller primary shopping area. The town centre strategy aligns with this by promoting a coherent approach to the wider town centre environment that reinforces the strength of this consolidated core while recognising the importance of surrounding streets and civic spaces in sustaining vitality.

By considering how the high street network, seafront and civic spaces function together, rather than as isolated destinations, the strategy supports the draft Local Plan's ambition for a town centre that draws people in, encourages longer dwell time and maintains an appealing and legible structure for residents, businesses and visitors.

Where the draft Local Plan seeks to support a broader mix of uses within the town centre, the strategy complements this by providing a framework for nurturing activity that reflects Herne Bay's identity and the aspirations of its communities.

Instead of repeating policy language, the strategy provides a link between HB1's policy requirements and the realities of how people experience and move through the town.

It acknowledges that a successful town centre depends not only on land use designations, but on the quality of place, the coherence of the urban environment and the town's cultural and social life - all elements identified in HB1 as central to long-term vitality. The strategy also advances the draft Local Plan's intention to improve movement, accessibility and environmental quality. HB1 emphasises the need for better connections between the shopping area, the seafront, the station and neighbourhoods.

This strategy takes this forward by articulating how a more walkable, inclusive and attractive town centre can support this ambition.

It recognises connectivity is as much about experience as function: clear wayfinding, an inviting public realm and well-linked destinations work together to support the draft Local Plan's aim of people getting around in a more sustainable way.

Heritage is another area where this town centre strategy provides a practical interpretation of the draft Local Plan's policy direction. HB1 highlights the significance of Herne Bay's assets including the seafront, historic buildings and civic spaces, as anchor points for social, cultural and economic life.

The strategy reinforces this by setting out an approach that positions heritage as an active part of the town's future, contributing to identity, pride and placemaking, rather than as a static resource. This supports HB1's requirement that heritage be protected, enhanced and sensitively integrated into wider regeneration activity.

Where the draft Local Plan identifies ongoing challenges regarding perceptions of the town centre, market confidence and the need to attract investment, this strategy responds by outlining a long-term narrative for Herne Bay that emphasises identity, quality and community value. By setting out a clear strategic direction, it provides the policy-aligned context necessary to give confidence to partners, stakeholders and potential investors, thereby supporting HB1's aim of enabling sustainable economic growth.

Taken as a whole, the Herne Bay town centre strategy translates the aims of HB1 into a locally-grounded, evidence-based framework.

It demonstrates how Herne Bay can fulfil the wider ambitions of the draft Local Plan through a town-specific approach prioritising coherence, connectivity, identity and quality of place. In doing so, the strategy provides the narrative and spatial logic that give effect to HB1, ensuring the evolution of the town centre is both policy compliant and authentically rooted in what makes Herne Bay distinctive.



Image provided by Explore Kent ©

We Made That

Herne Bay Town Centre Street Art

Key challenges



Economic deprivation

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2025) scores and ranks all areas of England and Wales according to the level of social and economic deprivation they experience.

The IMD reveals the areas which make up Herne Bay centre (these sub-ward levels of geography are called Lower Super Output Areas or LSOAs) are ranked within the 20% most deprived LSOAs in England in 2025. The IMD data also indicates that at a sub domain level crime and jobs were the most significant deprivation-related challenges in Herne Bay town centre. Under these sub domains of deprivation, the LSOAs that make up the town centre were ranked within the first decile (or 10%) most job and crime-deprived areas in the country. Continuing the theme of jobs, claimant unemployment in Heron Ward was 4% (315 people) in November 2025. This exceeded the district (3.2%) and Kent (3.4%) but is comparable with national levels (3.9%). Only Northgate ward (5.5%) in Canterbury had higher unemployment in the district. Encouragingly Heron's unemployment rate has fallen by 11% compared to the same time in 2024.

Poor health outcomes

Data prepared for Kent County Council suggests residents in Heron ward have a life expectancy 10 years shorter than some other parts of the district (79.9 years). Around 5% of those living in the centre of Herne Bay are over the age of 85, which is twice the average for local areas (2.5%). The mortality rate of people under 75 who die from preventable diseases is the 12th highest in Kent and well above the national average.

Levels of obesity and COPD also exceed comparable coastal towns in Kent.



Condition and suitability of coastal landmarks

The council's largest asset in Herne Bay, The King's Hall, is very popular, attracting customers from across Kent but is too geographically detached from the town centre for many businesses (e.g. cafes, restaurants) there to also benefit from these visits. There is also limited evidence of overnight stays in the town linked to or generated by trips to the King's Hall.

Two key landmarks – The King's Hall and Central Bandstand will need new investment to ensure these remain important and active parts of the town's leisure offer and appeal.



Constraints to investment

Several commercial and mixed-use redevelopment schemes have not been delivered despite being awarded planning consents.

Some new build retail units in the town centre have not been taken up by the market. Also new investment in other much-needed residential and commercial space, including hotels has not come forward.

This may suggest a lack of confidence from inward investors in the vitality of the seafront and town centre to support new commercial uses.

In recent years, some visitor experiences or perceptions of the town have been poor which may adversely impact investment.

The 2022 Which? annual survey of the appeal of seaside towns for example rated Herne Bay as the sixth worst of 100 towns in the UK, with the lowest rating in Kent, although this has improved in more recent surveys (89th out of 117 in 2025).

Key challenges



Antisocial behaviour

Echoing IMD crime data Herne Bay is ranked among a group of medium-sized towns in Kent with crime rates higher than the Kent level (71 per 1,000 daytime population) (Source: CrimeRate 2025).

Its crime rate of 85 per 1,000 people is 23% higher than the UK average (69).

Seasonal anti-social behaviour involving young people has recently posed challenges for the town.

Crime rates in August for example will commonly be four times that of January.



Lower-value visitor economy

Herne Bay remains reliant on lower spend-based day visits.

The volume of annual overnight stays has not grown in over six years. Though when visitors stay in the town, they stay for 4 nights on average which is positive. Only 11% of all staying trips to the district are to Herne Bay compared to 18% in Whitstable and 68% in the city of Canterbury (Source: Destination Research, 2025).

Herne Bay remains the only seaside town in Kent without a hotel in its centre or on the seafront.



Image provided by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey

We Made That

Herne Bay Town Centre Place Strategy

02

Engagement Summary

- What have people said?
- Summary of public survey results
- Key things to get right



Image provided by Visit Canterbury © Leanne Bracey

What have people said?

In 2025 a series of engagement activities and events were undertaken to inform the strategy, including:

- An in-person drop-in event
- An online survey
- Targeted meetings with key stakeholders, for example businesses and partner organisations
- In-person meeting with councillors



A drop-in session was held at Baytastic on Sunday 31st August 2025.

Drop-in session summary

- More activities for young people - youth clubs, seafront activities
- Many people have positive perceptions, helped by great events like Baytastic and the Jazz Festival
- Lack of infrastructure for recent growth
- Support for high street businesses is needed, particularly small and independent businesses.
- More investment needed for public and cultural facilities - parks, libraries theatres and public toilets
- Increased community safety, especially for young people
- Seafront improvements to enhance character such as renovation of the Central Bandstand and green space
- Existing cycle routes are working well
- Markets need refreshing/improving, both regular and for specialist/events

Stakeholder meeting summary

- All events are delivered by volunteers and a lot of work is done behind the scenes. Stakeholders don't have a team with full-time staff to organise activities
- Local voluntary groups have to compete for the same pots of funding. This process needs to be coordinated better and short-termism addressed
- A market has been tested successfully on Mortimer Street but lacks formal access to utilities infrastructure
- More empty shops in Herne Bay could be put to better use for pop-ups or other entrepreneurial uses
- Herne Bay lacks a community hub
- The town has an impressive seafront and sites of ecological interest. However its access to water is underutilised (i.e. lacks paddle boarding or wind surfing facilities etc)

Local business meeting summary

- High rental values is perceived to be an issue
- Impact of vacant or inactive spaces on visitor perceptions and experiences
- Problems with flytipping and people lingering and drinking in groups outside shops
- Increase frequency of markets all year round and enhance marketing to attract new or repeat visits
- Good bus routes but poor frequency of services impacts businesses
- Competition with Canterbury for shoppers/visitors, particularly in the pre-Christmas period shopping
- Long-term initiatives to foster collaboration eg a business co-operative or trade association
- Reviving a distinct Herne Bay identity through cultural events and attractions like air/car shows

What have people said?

Public survey results

A total of 378 people responded to the public survey. Responses were received from across all age groups though over half were received from people aged between 55 and 75.

Key findings:

1. Parts of the town centre are run down and not very inviting. Addressing perceived decline of the town centre was the top priority
2. There is a lack of regeneration activity where it is most needed
3. Parts of the town centre feel outdated, and many existing venues and events such as the bingo hall and some pier activities cater mainly to older audiences
4. There are too many empty shop fronts, charity shops, vape shops and greasy spoon cafes. A greater diversity of appeal is needed such as focal stores or interesting shops such as bookstores.
5. There is a lack of diversity of restaurant offer
6. The seafront is much loved but there is a desire for improved amenities, and more related activities for others be able to fully enjoy it
7. Parking charges and out of town developments are taking people away from the town centre.
8. Public transport provision is viewed as infrequent discouraging usage
9. Anti-social behaviour remains a problem and is impacting perceptions of the town centre

Parts of the town centre are run down and not very inviting. The variety of shops is very limited.

Parking and out of town developments taking people away from the town. Anti social behaviour.

Lack of regeneration and diversity. Many empty shop fronts, mostly charity shops, vape shops and greasy spoon cafes, no focal stores or interesting shops such as a book store, and a lack of diversity in restaurants. The town is very outdated and has become a forgotten retirement town i.e. bingo hall, the pier events are aimed at older audiences.

Key priorities

A total 72% of respondents wanted to see a greater variety of shops and businesses

Priority spaces

The High Street (61%) and Mortimer Street (50%) were the areas most in need of improvement

Outdoor locations

People also wanted improvements at the seafront, on the promenade (51%) and the beach (44%)

Seafront

People wanted to see more water based or related activities (54%)

Outdoor spaces

A total of 62% said more public toilets and places for changing would make outdoor spaces more appealing

Transport

66% of respondents said they drive into the town and while 14% use the bus. The frequency of bus services is a key challenge

Herne Bay's strengths

The survey highlights several positives including the town's impressive and attractive seafront, community spirit and activities and independent retailers.

- The seafront remains a strong draw to visitors
- The retail area of the town is accessible, pedestrianised and an all-round pleasant and traffic-free environment for pedestrians and cyclists
- Strong community spirit

Key things to get right



What's the context?

Some strategic sites and projects were delivered through previous development and action plans such as the award-winning Herne Bay Area Action Plan (AAP). Adopted in 2010 most AAP projects were successfully achieved.



What's the context?

One key regeneration site (HB2: an area of Beach Street) has been carried forward into the draft new Local Plan. This project is set to be delivered by the city council over two phases (starting with redevelopment of the former Tivoli arcade site on Central Parade) to regenerate and reactivate an important part of the seafront.

What needs to be done?

Economic regeneration must be led by the public and private sector working closely together or by reimagining existing property assets and sites. This may also need to be achieved without the level of external funding available in previous Local Plan periods. There is greater pressure and competition for development contributions (e.g. section 106, Community Infrastructure Levy, and fewer government-led capital grant funding schemes available). Previous investment plans should be completed and infrastructure, such as those providing new or improved cycle paths, reimagined to promote use and strongly connected to coastal paths and other high profile routes.

Supporting quotes from public survey

Despite Herne Bay's coastal charm, the town centre lacks meaningful green infrastructure. Promised greenery in new developments has often failed to materialise which has left our public spaces barren and uninspiring.

There are quite a few vacant shops on Mortimer street and the High street and there are a lot of cafes, charity shops and estate agents - more variety of shops and restaurants needed.



What's the context?

Herne Bay has highly-valued heritage assets. However, many of these need new capital investment for upgrades or repairs while town centre heritage beyond the seafront can often be underutilised.

What needs to be done?

Improving connectivity between Herne Bay's landmarks and heritage assets is key.

Supporting quotes from public survey

The seafront buildings look terrible. Lots need renovations and redecoration to make the front look attractive. Lack of public toilets makes it difficult for visitors.



What's the context?

The town centre is within the 20% most deprived places in the country, and there is a perception that antisocial behaviour has been increasing, particularly by young people

What needs to be done?

Key interventions should engage young people. Deprivation can be tackled by projects which leverage education, employment skills and health initiatives.

One big issue is that, no one is catering for the young of our town. We are way behind in our facilities for both young and old in Herne Bay.

Key things to get right



What's the context?

The town centre is comparatively stretched and the primary shopping area has the unusual distinction of two parallel high streets. This wider area makes it difficult to sustain pedestrian footfall levels. Commercial vacancy rates have increased, partly due to some banks and other high street brands withdrawing.



What's the context?

The seafront functions well and has a wide range of appeal and attractions, but there are greater distances (for pedestrians) between the pier and The King's Hall for example.

What needs to be done?

Connectivity between Mortimer Street, High Street and the seafront must be improved. This could be done at several points notably via William Street. As a pedestrianised space with longer dwell times, Mortimer Street continues to function as a more attractive location for café culture and independent retail and should be prioritised to help support management of commercial vacancies. The High Street plays a complementary role, with a stronger presence of financial and essential/specialist services. Signage and wayfinding across the town centre needs improving both in terms of replacing/upgrading existing infrastructure and reviewing any potential street level clutter.

Supporting quotes from public survey

Our independent shops and local market are vital to our town's economy and character, but they face pressure from rising rent and falling footfall.

The old dirty buildings that are not maintained well make it feel run down. There should be some level of responsibility for the maintenance of sea front property. The bandstand stage should have live music every weekend.



What's the context?

Cultural infrastructure is strong and events in the town centre are very popular and well attended. People are proud of their town despite some challenges. Better utility infrastructure in public spaces is required to facilitate an increased events programme.

What needs to be done?

While pathways to new investment have been limited in recent years, well directed investment can help to build both economic and social opportunities in the town centre. Markets should complement and not duplicate the existing retail offering.

Supporting quotes from public survey

Venues like King's Hall are underfunded. These spaces are vital for social cohesion, creativity, and local pride. We need community input to breathe life into our town centre.



What's the context?

Hotel and hospitality development schemes have not advanced

What needs to be done?

A strong strategy along with well coordinated and joined up action planning is needed to help build a strong case for new private sector investment.

We must get the basics right as a foundation to build a more unified appearance of the town and improve attractiveness which begins with cleanliness and presentation. Wimereux Square is an under-utilised space which could be better used for events.

- Herne Bay vision for 2043
- Herne Bay strategy principles
- Links to UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and Marmot principles



Image provided by Explore Kent ©

Vision

By 2043, Herne Bay will be:

A more prosperous town where young people want to stay, people's health is improved and everyone is proud to call home.

Its vibrant seafront and high street will be home to an ambitious calendar of events which bring people together to celebrate their past and embrace a more inclusive, creative future.

NEW

STREET

A R T
MODERN &
ANTIQU

1

W. L. E.
C. 725
274295
C. 51675422



Strategy Principles

To achieve the vision, Herne Bay should:

1. **Breathe new life into the heart of the town**

Reinvigorating the town centre by bringing underused spaces and buildings back into active use. Supporting signature events, pop-ups and creative activities that draw people in all year-round. Improving and programming Wimereux Square into a space that works harder for the town

2. **Weave a green thread through the town**

Enhancing walking and cycling infrastructure by introducing green corridors and reimagined public spaces that encourage active travel. Improving connections along the historic Saxon Shore Way to neighbouring towns, forts, nature reserves and coastline

3. **Link the high street to high tide**

Creating a more walkable and connected town centre by improving routes between the seafront, high streets and key destinations. Movement through Herne Bay should be enjoyable, accessible and inclusive

4. **Restore and reconnect the coastal gems**

Celebrating Herne Bay's heritage by restoring key assets such as the Central Bandstand and The King's Hall. The seafront will become a continuous, high-quality public realm – a single destination that brings people together and showcases the town's identity

5. **Nurture a healthier Herne Bay**

Enhancing the coherence of the town's leisure offer and developing complementary water-based and wellness activities. Investing in infrastructure that supports inclusive and sustainable access to the water and creates opportunities for recreation, health and wellbeing

6. **Give the next generation the space to grow**

Work with the community to design and deepen cultural, community and leisure programmes with young people, ensuring they can shape the town's future and gain the skills, confidence and opportunities to thrive. Investment in youth spaces, creative hubs and skills pathways will help retain talent

7. **Back the Bay**

Empowering businesses, residents and communities come together to build a stronger and fairer Herne Bay – ensuring regeneration benefits everyone. Enabling people to maximise their capabilities and take ownership of the town's future

8. **Picture the postcard**

Developing a coherent town narrative and destination brand that reflects Herne Bay's authenticity and difference from other coastal towns. Using joined-up marketing and partnership working to promote responsible, sustainable tourism that attracts visitors, investors and events that align with the town's values

Links to the United Nations sustainable development goals (UN SDGs) and Marmot principles

The council's corporate plan aims to build a fairer economy and not just a bigger one – we support the ambition in the UN SDGs to build sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth – balancing the social and economic needs of our communities.

Herne Bay health data gives evidence of greater health inequalities as identified by Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer in his 2021 report of coastal areas. We are committed to providing meaningful opportunities for people to be healthy and to plan coastal communities in ways that resolve health inequalities where they are most prevalent.

The Kent & Medway NHS Trust and Kent County Council have launched the 'Kent Marmot Coastal Region Programme' with the aim of coastal Kent being the first region in the UK to establish a standardised approach to proactively tackling health inequalities in coastal towns.

We are committed to providing meaningful opportunities for people to be healthy and to plan coastal communities in ways that resolve health inequalities where they are most prevalent.

Our strategic aims reflect this commitment in the way in which they align with:

- The 17 sustainable development goals of the United Nations
- The eight objectives advocated by Professor Sir Michael Marmot in the development of towns that seek to tackle the social and economic costs of health inequality

1. Breathe new life into the heart of the town

Marmot principle 3 – Create fair employment and good work for all

UN SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities

UN SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth

Reactivating underused buildings and creating a vibrant programme of year-round activity helps stimulate enterprise, increase access to good work, and strengthen the local economy. These improvements support fair job opportunities and enhance the vitality and resilience of the town centre.

2. Weave a green thread through the town

Marmot principle 8 - Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

SDG 13 – Climate action

Introducing green corridors, enhancing walking and cycling routes, and improving environmental quality directly support sustainability and equitable health outcomes. These actions promote active travel, reduce emissions and create healthier urban environments for all.

3. Link the high street to high tide

Marmot principle 5 – Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities

SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities

Improving walkability and inclusive movement networks strengthens the quality and accessibility of public spaces. Enhancing routes between key destinations supports healthier, people-centred urban design and enables all residents to move safely and confidently through the town.

4. Restore and reconnect its coastal gems

Marmot principle 5 – Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities

SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities

SDG 14 – Life below water

Restoring heritage assets and enhancing the seafront creates high-quality shared spaces that strengthen community identity and wellbeing. This work reinforces the value of place, improves access to natural environments, and supports healthier, more sustainable coastal living.

5. Nurture a healthier Herne Bay

Marmot principle 6 - Strengthen the role and impact of ill-health prevention

SDG 3 - Good health and wellbeing

Investing in recreation, water-based activity and wellness programmes supports preventative approaches to health. Enhancing access to leisure and nature improves physical and mental wellbeing and helps reduce long-term health inequalities.

6. Give the next generation the space to grow

Marmot principle 2 - Enable all children, young people and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives

SDG 4 - Quality education

SDG 10 - Reduce inequalities

Skills pathways, creative hubs, and co-designed youth programmes expand opportunities for young people to learn, develop, and shape their future. These initiatives build confidence and capability, helping to reduce inequalities in life chances.

7. Back the Bay

Marmot principle 4- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all

SDG 10 - Reduced inequalities

SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth

Empowering residents and businesses to participate in regeneration supports equitable economic opportunity. Strengthening community-led action and enabling people to thrive contributes directly to improving living standards and reducing social and economic inequalities.

8. Picture the postcard

Marmot principle 8 - Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity together

SDG 12 - Responsible consumption and production

SDG 8 - Decent work and economic growth

Promoting responsible, values-led tourism and a coherent destination identity helps protect natural assets, support sustainable consumption and ensure economic benefits are shared fairly. This strengthens the town's long-term environmental and social wellbeing.

04

Governance, Evaluation and Delivery

- Measuring success
- Monitoring and review
- Projects and action plans
- Local governance planning

the **GREENDOOR** deli

23

the **GREENDOOR**
deli
Homemade
DESSERTS
FRESHLY PREPARED
Sandwiches
USING KENTISH INGREDIENTS
OF COURSE
Freshly Grounded
COFFEE

Measuring success

Introduction

This strategy will be delivered alongside the Canterbury District Local Plan until 2043.

Throughout the life of this plan, it is vital to track progress against the strategy principles and vision.

Monitoring progress will enable understanding whether interventions have been successful and will ensure future activity and investment is targeted in the right areas.

Measuring success

Desired outcomes

1. The King's Hall is a hub with skills and cultural facilities for young people

2. High quality heritage assets along the seafront are well preserved. There are creative opportunities along the length of the promenade

3. Active travel corridors through the town and along the seafront are improved, extended and well-used

4. Footfall and commercial occupancy in both Mortimer Street and the High Street has increased

5. Public squares have greater utility and identity. The market offer is programmed to animate key spaces in the town and attract new visitors

6. Opportunities for play and physical activity are improved – Herne Bay is a healthier place to live.

7. There is improved and more accessible access to the sea

8. There are more spaces for young people to go and for everyone to access support

9. Herne Bay has a critical mass of events and activation, giving people a reason to visit and extend their stay overnight along with accommodation that meets these needs

10. Partner organisations and activators have greater ownership of projects within the town

Monitoring and Review

Introduction

Monitoring and review are essential to ensuring this high-level strategy remains relevant, effective and responsive to change.

Because this document sets out strategic principles rather than detailed projects, ongoing review will help maintain a clear line of sight between the long-term vision for Herne Bay and the evolving local, regional and national context in which it will be delivered.

A dynamic, adaptive strategy

The monitoring and review process is designed to keep this strategy dynamic, enabling Herne Bay to respond confidently to opportunities and challenges over the coming decades. By regularly assessing progress, refreshing priorities and maintaining strong engagement, the strategy will remain a robust and forward-looking framework long after its initial publication.

Approach to monitoring

Progress will be monitored against the desired outcomes set out in this strategy, focusing on whether Herne Bay is moving in the right direction rather than on the delivery of individual schemes.

Monitoring activity will track changes in the town centre's vitality, accessibility, heritage setting, cultural offer and overall visitor and resident experience.

This will help ensure that future projects, once defined, are targeted where they will have the greatest impact.

Transition to a new unitary authority

We will cease to exist in April 2028, at which point responsibility for this strategy will transfer to the new unitary authority.

To support this transition, a short-term action plan will be developed for the remaining period of our existence (October 2026–April 2028).

This will provide focus and clarity for the final 18 months of delivery before handover.

Once the new authority is established, these strategies will need to be reviewed to ensure they align with the priorities, governance arrangements and strategic frameworks of the new organisation.

An early review within the first year of the unitary will allow for adjustment, confirmation of focus and the integration of new opportunities, funding programmes or policy directions.

Review cycle

To maintain momentum, relevance and accountability, the strategy will be reviewed every two years once within the unitary structure. This regular review cycle will allow progress to be assessed, emerging challenges to be identified and strategic priorities to be refined as needed. It will also ensure alignment with the Local Plan review cycle, which takes place every five years, providing an additional opportunity to refresh the strategic direction where appropriate.

During the remainder of our tenure, monitoring and review will be led by the council's officers working alongside councillors and drawing on the expertise and perspectives of partners, stakeholders and residents. After April 2028, responsibility for monitoring and review will transfer to the new unitary authority. It is expected that the unitary will build on the governance structures already established to ensure that local voices continue to play a central role in shaping Herne Bay's evolution.

Projects and Action Plans

This strategy provides the long-term vision and strategic principles for Herne Bay's town centre.

It does not set out detailed, costed or deliverable projects at this stage. Instead, it establishes the framework within which future activity will be developed, prioritised and delivered.

To support the next phase of work, the council will begin developing a project directory.

This will draw together the wide range of ideas, proposals and opportunities identified through extensive engagement with the public, elected representatives, community groups and stakeholders.

The directory will form a consolidated long list of potential projects that reflect the ambitions, challenges and opportunities highlighted throughout the engagement process.

From this long list, we, working alongside partners and stakeholders, will prioritise which projects should be taken forward during the remaining period of our existence.

This will result in the creation of an 18-month action plan, covering October 2026 to April 2028.

The action plan will set out which projects will be progressed during this period, and to what stage.

Not all projects will be completed within this timeframe. Some will be large, complex or long-term in nature.

Instead, the action plan will identify realistic next steps, such as feasibility work, scoping, design development or partnership formation.

The project directory and action plan will ensure Herne Bay maintains momentum during the transition period before the formation of the new unitary authority in April 2028.

Once the new authority is established, the directory and action plan will provide a clear and organised starting point for future delivery planning, enabling the unitary to align these projects with its wider priorities, resources and governance structures.

Together, the project directory and the 18-month action plan will form the bridge between this high-level strategy and the more detailed programme of work that will follow, ensuring clear direction, transparency and continuity during a period of change.

Local Governance Planning

Introduction

The early years of the strategy will be characterised by some of the most fundamental changes to the democratic institutions and processes of local government in a generation.

These changes will be driven by key events including local government reorganisation (LGR), Kent's drive for full devolution and a Community Governance Review (CGR) in Herne Bay.

Changes present both uncertainty and opportunity which must be addressed directly through a stable and coherent localised governance approach to guide the delivery of the strategy - a model within which communities feel directly empowered and which local identity is maintained will be essential to maintain momentum while the wider system undergoes change and the new landscape of local government settles.

Everyone working together has been central to the development of this town centre strategy and will remain critical to its ultimate success.

The delivery ambitions set out within the strategy will require an effective coordination of effort, resources and investments, including from new sources which must be identified and secured through future targeted action.

As such, coordinated governance and delivery arrangements that genuinely empower communities and wider stakeholders must now be put in place.

The following proposals consider how governance should best be approached within the broader context of the fundamental changes reshaping local democracy over the delivery period and how this approach could evolve appropriately over time.

The changing landscape of local government

Local government reorganisation (LGR), potential devolution to a Kent and Medway Mayor and a future Community Governance Review (CGR) together form the backdrop against which this strategy will be delivered. At the invitation of the government, Kent's proposals for LGR would replace the current two-tier system with new unitary authorities, reshaping

responsibilities, service structures and decision making across the county.

Regardless of which model is ultimately adopted, the transition will create a period of uncertainty, with changes to systems, policies and leadership capacity. These shifts will directly influence how priorities for Herne Bay are governed, resourced and implemented.

Alongside LGR, Kent's continued ambition for full devolution — including the possibility of a directly elected Mayor with strategic powers over areas such as transport, housing and economic development — adds another layer of potential change.

Should a combined authority with mayoral powers progress in the future, some responsibilities relevant to town centres may sit at a regional level, while delivery remains local. This strategy therefore needs to be robust enough to align with any future governance landscape, ensuring the direction set out here continues to hold regardless of where specific powers eventually sit.

At the same time, there is growing interest in establishing new parish or town councils for Herne Bay through a CGR. If introduced, these bodies would reshape local representation and potentially take on responsibilities for services, assets or public spaces that directly shape the experience of the town centres.

Their emergence could provide a stronger community-led platform for stewardship of the places this strategy seeks to enhance. Taken together, these wider governance reforms make it essential this strategy provides stability, clarity and continuity through a period of significant institutional change.

It sets out a long-term framework that can guide future decision-makers, whether within the existing council, a new unitary authority, a mayoral structure or future town and parish councils. This will ensure that the priorities for the town centre remain coherent, community-rooted and deliverable whatever governance arrangements ultimately emerge.

An evolving, community-centric governance model

A flexible, phased governance model is required, which focuses and enables local momentum now while preparing for and adapting to the significant changes that lie ahead:

- Delivering each of the strategies will require developing and embedding new collaborative models for local governance, spanning decision-making, case-making, resourcing, coordinated action and stewardship. This will actively involve public, private, community and not-for-profit partners. There is a clear ambition shared among councillors and wider stakeholders that the community is at the forefront of delivery.
- The differences between each of the three areas also must be accommodated. Canterbury benefits from well-established partnership infrastructure and stakeholder networks, Herne Bay has a more fragmented stakeholder infrastructure with early-stage capacity building underway locally, and Whitstable sitting between the two.
- In all cases, care must be paid to ensure too much responsibility is not delegated too soon locally, which could jeopardise delivery and confidence in the plans.
- As the ultimate custodian of the strategies, we must be prepared to play an ongoing enabling role in delivering the plans, coordinating partners, actions and resources in support of locally-led implementation.
- The approach will need to flex to accommodate LGR, devolution and CGRs, to ensure governance arrangements do not conflict with future local government arrangements but must also ensure continuity of support for local-led delivery.
- The requirement for flexibility and agility extends beyond addressing LGR – a number of the projects and priorities for intervention will need to be matched to future funding streams and stakeholder priorities as the strategies have not been developed in direct response to specific, known funding pots and confirmed partner projects.

An evolving approach to governance is proposed, which can effectively respond to the complex, diverse and changing delivery context within which the strategies will be realised.

Case Study

Connected Coast Board

The Connected Coast Board brings together private, public and voluntary sectors to provide strategic leadership to develop and deliver a series of interventions to secure government funding and assist those interventions with completing business cases and preparing for delivery. Its portfolio of strategic work sets out a clear understanding of the area, focusing on its assets, opportunities and challenges. It will be the vehicle through which the Levelling Up vision and strategy for East Lindsey is defined. Following agreement of the Mablethorpe and Skegness Town Deals with the Government, the Board provides strategic direction and oversight to the delivery of the Town Deal projects.

The Chair is appointed on an independent basis and is not a serving councillor, which is intended to provide impartial leadership and constructive challenge. Board membership is drawn from a range of separate constituencies, including local authorities, business, education, skills, and other key partners, rather than being confined to a single organisation or political body. This breadth of representation is designed to ensure that decisions reflect a wide range of local perspectives and expertise, reinforcing the Board's role as a partnership rather than an extension of any individual council.



Connected Coast Board

Local Governance Planning

Short-term priority: Create local groups that help communities have a real and lasting say in shaping their area

Two place panels should be established initially, one for the Canterbury city centre strategy and one to support both the Herne Bay and Whitstable town centre strategies. This approach recognises both the differences and similarities in capacity and context for these areas as well as an opportunity to develop and share effective coastal expertise through the process. The composition of each panel should include a range of representatives across sectors and backgrounds to ensure there is effective influence over key partners and actions.

Residents, businesses and civil society, must be well-represented and well supported to participate fully and equally. Good practices in how councils approach selections for citizen's panels should be considered as part of determining the appointment criteria and process. The responsibilities of each panel will include coordinating and overseeing the development and delivery of more detailed plans for the key projects and interventions set out in the project directory and action plans, including progress and impact as delivery progresses.

These shaping and stewardship functions may evolve over time as the capacity of each panel builds. We have approved further economic development resource, which could work alongside the panels, providing coordination and capacity support and ensuring each panel is effectively linked into council and partners' activities. A service level agreement should be put in place between the council and each panel setting out responsibilities and expectations. As part of its support and enabling role, we should further develop and establish the governance arrangements for each place panel, addressing matters like panel size, terms of reference, frequency of meetings, chairing and expected conduct. Relevant good practices and guidance from similar regeneration approaches such as Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government's (MHCLG) guidance for the Pride in Place programme should be referenced, where useful.

Medium-term priority: Recalibrate to make the most of LGR, capacity and funding opportunities

At appropriate future points, a governance review will need to be undertaken to take stock of key changes to the architecture of local government, as brought about by LGR, CGRs or progress towards full devolution in Kent. The review will need to ensure compatibility and coherence with the new structures, delivery models and responsibilities within local government, to ensure these strategies remain active and activated within these new structures. Reviews also present opportunities to consider both how the place panels have developed and any key developments and opportunities within the wider landscape of funding, opportunities and policy priorities. For example, there may be an evidenced case for affording greater direct responsibility to each panel over time as capacity and experience builds up and new funding opportunities may emerge which could be accessed through working differently. It would be prudent to conduct this governance review at the first two-year review milestone, soon after the vesting day of the new unitary authority in April 2028.

Case Study

Neighbourhood Area Committees

Surrey County Council formed Neighbourhood Area Committees before a decision on the LGR restructure was made and used this hyper-local engagement as a way of collecting feedback from residents.



Neighbourhood Area Committees

Long-term priority: Explore opportunities for sustainable legacy structures post-CGR and LGR

Important opportunities may be presented over the longer-term to establish one or more standalone legacy structures, which could support, coordinate and sustain community stewardship and influence in perpetuity. Community benefit models, such as community development trusts, community interest companies and charities, enable communities to crystallise and formalise community benefit ambitions within legal, not-for-profit structures that protect community purpose in perpetuity.

There are many precedents across the country for not-for-profit, community benefit structures which have emerged from place-focused renewal programmes and strategies.

For example, Homebaked (case study to the right), was born from the community engagement and stewardship approach as part of the Community Land Trust process. By establishing and supporting community-led governance in the short-to-medium term through the actions proposed above, solid foundations will be established in terms of the capacity, good practices, experience and expertise, future community-benefit structures will require in order to flourish.

At this stage, it is not appropriate or feasible to determine the specifics about the legal form, geographic focus or composition that long-term community benefit structures could or should take for Canterbury, Herne Bay and Whitstable.

At an appropriate future point, an options appraisal, business case and business planning pathway will be required to make and shape the case for such structures.

Many of these decisions will be informed by the progress made in the short-to-medium term, the architecture for local governance that emerges from CGRs and LGR, and the prevailing landscape of policies, funding and partnerships available to each of the three centres.

Case Study

Homebaked CLT

Homebaked CLT is a community-led housing and regeneration organisation based in Anfield, Liverpool. Established in the early 2010s, it emerged in response to decades of housing clearance and stalled redevelopment linked to football-led regeneration.

Homebaked is structured as a Community Land Trust, meaning land and buildings are held in community ownership to provide long-term, genuinely affordable housing. Local residents are members of the trust and play a direct role in decision-making.

Alongside housing, Homebaked runs the Homebaked Bakery, a community-owned social enterprise that provides jobs, training, and a welcoming local space, while helping fund wider community activity.

Homebaked focuses on small-scale, incremental regeneration that protects existing communities, resists displacement, and builds local wealth. It is widely recognised as a leading UK example of community-led development that combines housing, culture, and social justice.



Homebaked CLT

London

Unit 21 Tower Workshops
58 Riley Road
London SE1 3DG

+44 (0)20 7252 3400

Manchester

Jactin House
24 Hood Street
Ancoats
Manchester M4 6WX

+44 (0)161 9743206

studio@wemadethat.co.uk
wemadethat.co.uk

**We
Made
That**

prd

 **canterbury**
city council

We Made That LLP is registered
in England and Wales.
Reg no. OC367789