

# Unlocking Your Place Potential – Report and Feedback: Margate



# Table of Contents

About the visit and this report.....	2
Margate – Strengths .....	3
4Rs Framework and our method .....	4
Fishbone Analysis .....	6
Diagnosis of main barrier to transformation .....	7
Recommendations .....	8
High Streets Task Force Product Prescriptions.....	9
Appendix 1 – List of town attendees.....	11

# About the visit and this report

The High Streets Task Force visited Margate in the District of Thanet on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2021 to undertake an *Unlocking Your Place Potential* diagnostic visit. Graham Galpin was the High Streets Task Force Expert undertaking the visit.

The attendees representing Margate can be found in Appendix 1.

**The purpose of the visit was to diagnose the main barrier to your transformation.** In other words, what problem, if not resolved now, will make it difficult for the town to change. To do this the Expert wanted to understand more about the challenges facing the town, your plans for transformation, meet key stakeholders, ask questions and tour the town.

**As a result of the diagnostic process, the Expert has identified poor connectivity between the New Town and Old Town as the main barrier to transformation in Margate.**

The rest of this report identifies the strengths of the town, the main barrier to transformation the Expert found, as well as clear recommendations the Local Authority and partners can action now to accelerate the transformation process. The report ends with a list of High Streets Task Force Products that the Expert has prescribed.

On behalf of the High Streets Task Force, may I take this opportunity to thank attendees who gave up their time to attend the meeting, and who contributed to a frank and positive discussion. Thank you to Louise Askew and her team for organising the session and those that led, and contributed to, an informative and well-planned town tour.

From reading the feedback from the visit, and this report, I can see you have a lot going for you in Margate – and many strengths both in the town and in your people. The High Streets Task Force is here to help you build on those strengths, and I hope you find it useful.



Matt Colledge

High Streets Task Force Project Director (interim)

## Margate – Strengths

- ✓ Architectural heritage
- ✓ Many visitor attractions
- ✓ Strong array of independents in the Old Town and Northdown Road
- ✓ A nationally recognised cultural offer
- ✓ Cultural curation and championing from an internationally known artist
- ✓ Fine beaches
- ✓ A history as a prominent seaside resort
- ✓ Nationally famous and historic fun fair at Dreamland
- ✓ Significant support from FHSF and Towns Fund
- ✓ Some events and festivals
- ✓ Strong community
- ✓ Evidence of some partnership working
- ✓ Evidence of community engagement

Margate is a town with a remarkable seaside heritage and more recently a growing cultural offer catalysed by the opening of Turner Contemporary above the harbour. This has resulted in considerable reductions in vacancy rates in the Old Town with higher quality food and beverage outlets opening. Tracy Emin, who was born in the town, is opening a gallery and workshop on the redundant site in the New Town and other galleries are already open nearby.

Improved train services from London are changing the visitor demographic, bringing visitors with greater spend power into Margate. Travel to Canterbury and the Kent countryside adds to the appeal and the town also enjoys a relatively large catchment within the District. Much of the centre retains the original streetscape with architectural assets remaining from the Holiday resort heyday of the town, with significant buildings from other eras also.

In summary, the town has many strengths and although it is facing challenges, these strengths put the town at a significant advantage in relation to other similar towns of its size in the region.

# 4Rs Framework and our method

The aim of the Unlocking Your Place Potential workshop is for our High Streets Task Force Experts to identify the key barrier(s) to the improvement of your high street and recommend an appropriate strategic response. To enable our experts to do this in an evidence-based way, the High Streets Task Force uses the '4Rs Framework'.

Research has identified 237 factors that impact on the success of the high street. However, it is too overwhelming to think of all these at once, so we have developed the '4 Rs' framework to provide some structure to the incredibly complex practice of place transformation. Without a framework, it is easy to be drawn into so much detail that you cannot see the big picture.

When you simplify the process of renewal, the reasons why so many regeneration plans do not result in the changes people expect fall into 4 categories:

- The problems facing the centre were not accurately identified
- The plans were good but not enough changed
- The place changed but people's perceptions didn't
- There were fundamental issues with governance or the spatial layout of the place

We looked at these problems and identified 4 strategies to address them, *repositioning*, *reinventing*, *rebranding*, and *restructuring*. So, the framework distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (repositioning), effecting change (reinventing), communication (rebranding) and governance/spatial planning (restructuring). More detail on each of the '4R's' is set out below.

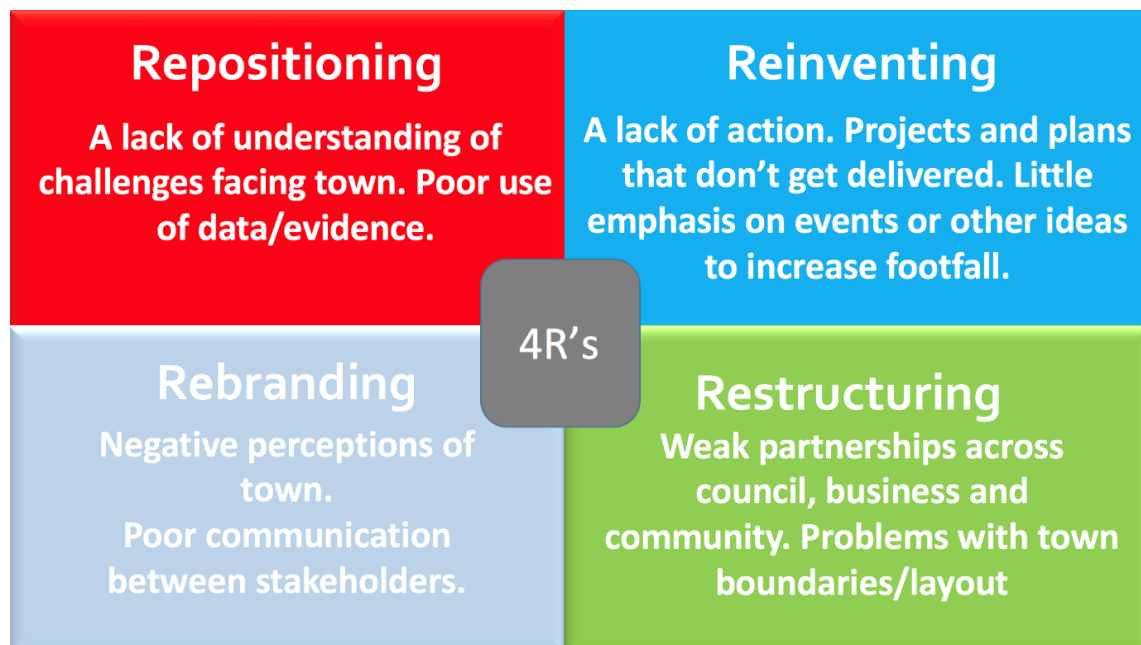


Figure 1: The 4Rs Framework

# Applying the 4Rs to Margate

Although the town and its people have many strengths, we did identify a number of weaknesses. We have grouped these using the 4Rs framework – see below.

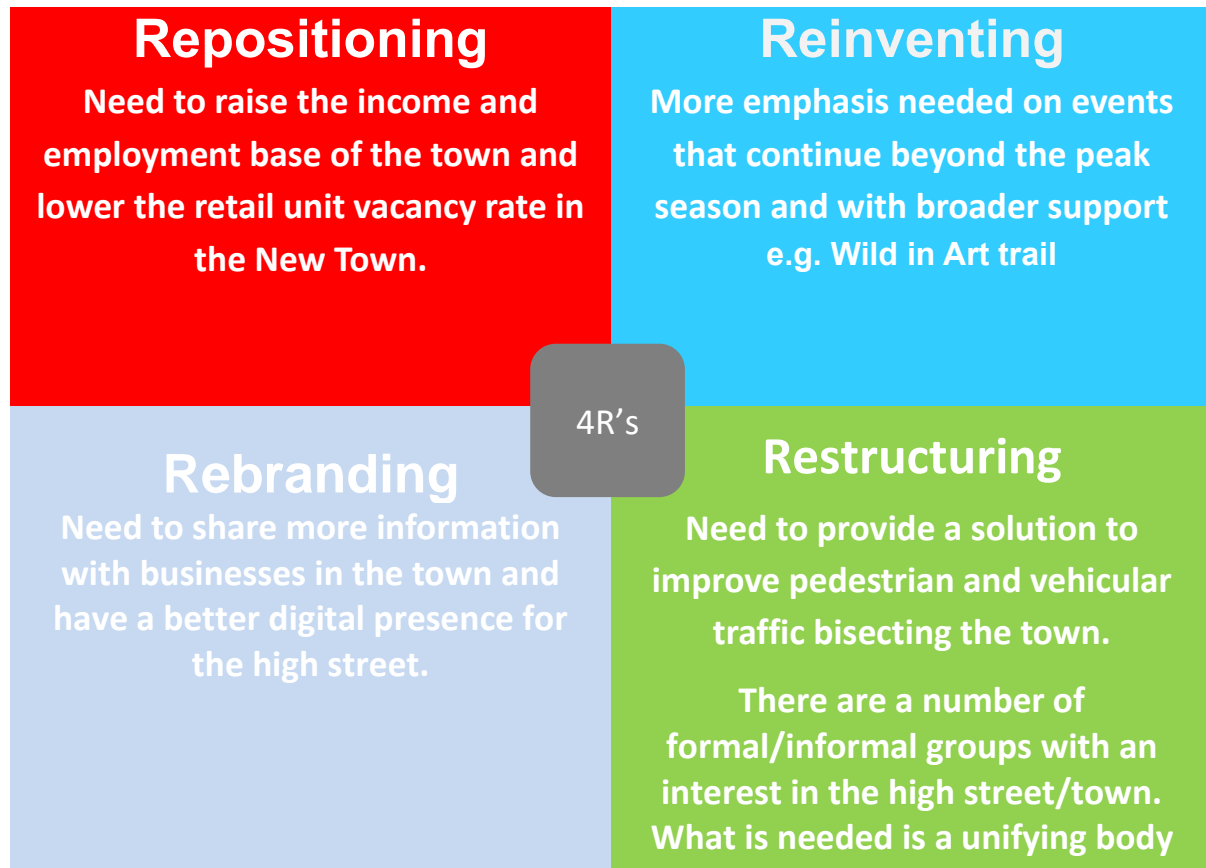


Figure 2: Margate analysed using the 4Rs Framework

We used all the information we had to identify which of the descriptions above fitted the evidence we had collected. We collected this evidence from looking at our desk research on Margate, The Towns Fund plans, the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, including our meeting, discussions, exercises and the town tour.

We then grouped each piece of evidence under the 4R headings of Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding, and Restructuring. You can see our working on the Fishbone Sheet included in this report.

By classifying every clue, we could see how these are grouped and where Margate is facing major barriers. This then allows us to recommend suitable strategies to overcome these (see Figure 2). These strategies are *ways of working*, rather than ‘magic bullets’ relating to any particular intervention in your town. As mentioned at the start of the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Margate, and all of Thanet.

You can see the major barriers to your transformation in the next section.

# Fishbone Analysis

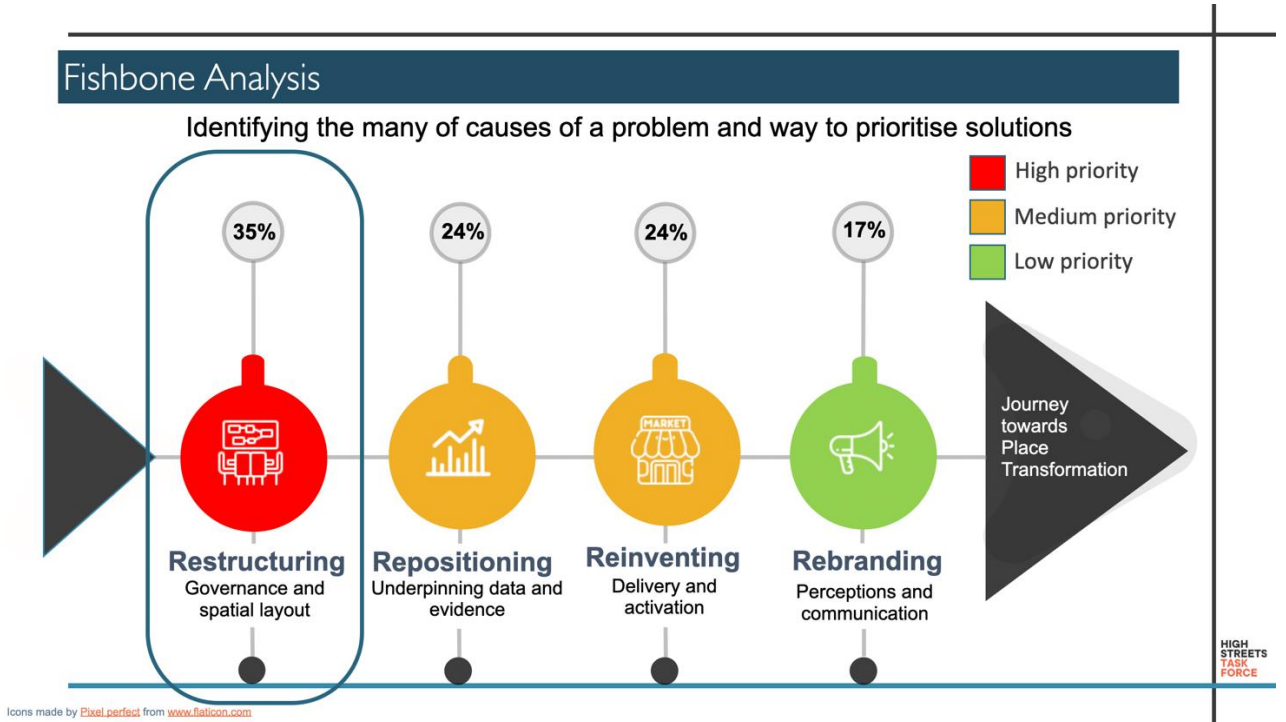


Figure 3: Fishbone Analysis

# Diagnosis of main barrier to transformation

**As a result of the diagnostic process, the Expert has identified poor connectivity between the New Town and Old Town as the main barrier to transformation in Margate.**

We believe Margate needs expert advice on potential ways and means for improving the pedestrian flow and enhancing personal safety. This should involve planners to advise on the development of potential route maps for pedestrians and motorists.

It is clear that the increased interest in the Old Town has shifted towards the New Town, but comes to an abrupt stop where people cannot cross the road easily. By removing this barrier, it will open up the continuity of both parts of town and give better access to the Turner Contemporary. This should assist in scaling up cultural employment and earnings in both the New and Old town.

Stronger partnerships between council, businesses and the wider community will also build more capacity for making change in the town. A more coordinated approach will ensure more impact from the investment and interventions, whether they are initially led by the public, private or voluntary sector.

It was very clear from our meeting 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, particularly to include businesses in the dialogues.



# Recommendations

To improve connectivity from the new and old town, we are recommending a strategy of *Restructuring* to assist your road and footpath redeployment. We understand it is not always easy to come forward with new and practical ways to re-arrange the road and footpath network but, to help you on your journey to transformation, we have provided a number of recommendations.

1. Arrange to receive an Expert from the RTPI to liaise with Thanet District Council and Kent Highways. The expert will review the present network and advise on how to overcome the challenges facing the town and feedback from the UYPP visit.
2. The outcome of the Expert's advice should be presented to the Town Board and members of both local authorities with suggestions for progress. These will include identifying who will be responsible for carrying the work forward, and when.
3. Share the final version of this report with everyone that attended the Unlocking Your Place Potential meeting.

Furthermore you might wish to consider the following recommendations:

4. Bring the various town centre groups together to form a united Town Centre Partnership which works collaboratively with the local authority, so that communication is improved.
5. Increase the number of events to encourage more people into the town centre.
6. Improve local trader's access to an interactive website to encourage them to advertise their wares and services online and, where necessary, trade online.

We hope these recommendations are useful. As we explained in the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit, you are the experts in Margate, not us. Nevertheless, we have experience of working with many towns around the country that face similar challenges – so when we undertake a diagnostic visit we are well trained in looking for strengths and weaknesses in the town's offer, as well as the structures and processes that manage and change the town.

# High Streets Task Force Product Prescription

Based on our recommendations, we would like to offer you the following products. This has been decided after considering your key barriers to transformation and what we have concluded as the best way to help you achieve your transformation goals.

Product prescribed	Rationale
<p><b>Expert support - RTPI</b></p>	<p>The road and footpath layout are poorly set out as a result of the changes to the town and the differing important nodes.</p> <p>Roads now have their routes directly across the desire line between the New Town and the Old Town, that makes pedestrian flow challenging. This is therefore a physical barrier to the continuity with a cultural centre in the Old Town and Turner Contemporary at its heart.</p> <p>The council, along with Kent County Council Highways are keen to address this and I must agree. Therefore, they would benefit from an expert with specialist knowledge of transport issues.</p> <p>Further detail regarding this support can be found in the attached product summary/guidance documentation.</p>
<p><b>Online learning/resources</b></p>	<p><b>Restructuring: building capacity, partnerships and assessing the need for spatial change</b> – this webinar helps place leaders to consider the role of partnerships and capacity building for high street transformation. You can access this online resource <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <p><b>Reinventing: making vital and viable multifunctional hubs</b> - this webinar helps place leaders to consider the role of their local high street in a broader context and look at approaches to reinvent places with economic and social vitality. <a href="#">You can access this online resource here.</a></p> <p><b>Repositioning: developing collaborative, inspiring visions that achieve change</b> – this webinar helps place leaders to consider their local vision, how this can be formed most effectively, and how it can impact the transformation of high streets. <a href="#">You can access this online resource here.</a></p> <p><b>Delivering change through Landscape:</b> In this webinar, the Landscape Institute discuss how landscape architects, designers and planners can bring change to high streets. <a href="#">You can access this online resource here.</a></p>

**Next steps:**

Please liaise with your Operations contact to make arrangements for the delivery of the next stage of your support. The Operation team are available to assist with any queries relating to the delivery of the above support, so please do not hesitate to get in touch if any aspect is unclear. More information about all of these products can be found on the HSTF website [here](#).

## Appendix 1 – List of town attendees

<b>Full Name</b>	<b>Job Title</b>	<b>Organisation Name</b>
Cllr Reece Pugh	Cabinet Member for ED	Thanet District Council
Natalie Glover	Project Manager	Thanet District Council
Louise Askew	Director of Regeneration	Thanet District Council
James Wraight	Principal Transport & Development Planner	KCC Highways
Sharon Davies	TDC Business Consultant	Thanet District Council
Richard Ash	Chair	Margate Town Team
Cllr Mick Tomlinson	Mayor	Thanet District Council
Polly Donger	Representative	Old town Margate
Roxy Nancy	Organiser	Old Town Market organiser and business owner
Kayleigh McMahan	Manager	Margate Grotto and Caves
Louise Fuud Halswell	Representative	Northdown Road businesses
Cllr Helen Whitehead	Ward Councillor	Thanet District Council