

# 1. Full Baseline and Top Priorities Baseline

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## What do we know ?

### Baseline review

We have undertaken a two phase baseline review that firstly looks at the general context of Helensburgh, then as the projects emerged a secondary baseline has been integrated into each project.

**The following presents a summary of where Helensburgh is currently, growing from its 1776 foundation as a tourist centre into a busy suburban town with a thriving community and unique attributes including: fantastic natural heritage, an inspiring volunteer network, and its relationship to the UK Naval programme.**

<b>15,610</b> Population	<b>200+</b> Volunteer Groups	Growth Area	Waterfront
<b>6705</b> Full Time Jobs	<b>3068</b> Part Time Jobs	Growing Food Offer	Green Spaces
Gateway to Argyll and Loch Lomond			Diverse Retail

The baseline review elaborates on Helensburgh's place within the wider Scottish context, facing some decline in population but with a relatively high diversity of retail and job opportunities in the administrative and defence sectors.

Local groups, long established and experienced form the backbone of the town's development. The 'Vision for Helensburgh' (2004) developed by the Helensburgh Vision Steering Group (HVSG) and Helensburgh Community Council (HCC) sets out a strategy that still resonates today. The aspirations and focus on the Helensburgh waterfront presented in that 2004 Vision are even more pertinent now, considering the opportunities of the MoD Maritime Change Programme, which is estimated to total a £1.3 billion capital investment in infrastructure over the next decade balanced against a potential influx of 1700 personnel to Helensburgh and Couplort by 2032. Along with the benefit of naval investment and involvement in Helensburgh, it is suggested in several quarters that there are opportunities for further integration and cohesion between families and personnel in the service family accommodation (SFA) estate and the general population.

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Reviewing the opportunities of the Clyde Marine Region, it is clear that the wider Argyll and Isles region promises great and growing opportunity for leisure sailing with smaller vessels such as kayaks. The other main development is the current £18 million Helensburgh Waterfront Development Plan, comprising specifically: “the construction of a new Leisure Centre, improved flood defences, new car park with 265 parking spaces and public realm areas as well as the demolition of the existing swimming pool building” (Argyll and Bute Council Property Services, 2017: pp.4). Picking up on **aspirations for the waterfront**, Argyll and Bute Council has recently surveyed the pier while the Helensburgh Seafront Development Trust has its own proposals for innovative ways to reanimate the waterfront area.

Another key area of focus is the presentation and look of the town. Recent years have seen significant upgrades in the facade of Helensburgh with widened pavements, the refurbished Colquhoun Square, increased parking bays and new street furniture. The 2016 Town Centre Health Check conducted by Argyll and Bute Council shows that vacancy rates have reduced from 12% to 10% and that most of Helensburgh’s vacant properties are reoccupied within a year of being made vacant.

This would suggest that the focus of efforts on the town’s buildings are less concerned with vacancy but should consider the ongoing need to better maintain and look after buildings, in certain instances. In the context of an internationally distinct built environment, including Charles Rennie Mackintosh’s Hill House which attracts 20,000 visitors annually (Hague, 2013: 2), the preservation, use and value as an attractor of local building stock must be seen as a priority.



*Figure 2. Helensburgh listed buildings (orange markers) and conservation area (shaded area).*

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Linking back to the opportunities along Helensburgh's waterfront, and in line with opportunities to get active in the town, it is worth highlighting the town as starting and finishing point of both the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail and John Muir Way (134 Miles from Helensburgh in the West to Dunbar in the East) - two of the numerous connections out from the town. Cycle networks and important walking routes are being developed by Helensburgh and District Access Trust, along the John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way. There are also ambitions to develop the cycle connection from Helensburgh to Dumbarton (SPT partner update at the Nov CPP meeting).

Helensburgh has an enviable geographical position on which to capitalise in terms of greater opportunities for tourism and business, with the potential to extend cycle networks in the long term, through Rhu to HMNB Clyde, and in the other direction to Cardross and Dumbarton. There is due to be further consultation on the aspirations for active travel in the local area, focusing on what the local community want to see in terms of cycle pathway connections and any opportunities to enhance path networks.

Opportunities to get active are also related to provision of indoor flexible space - including all-weather sports space, halls and soft play. There are a range of spaces available for activities and meeting points that have different rates and associated costs. A list of available spaces can be found on the Live Argyll website (<http://www.liveargyll.co.uk/local-halls>).

Regarding Naval provision, the Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare (RNRMW) Community Needs Analysis for 2017 - 2018 notes that the Drumfork Club renovation with "funding from RNRMC and HMNB Clyde" is driven by a "vision of providing improved childcare options for service families" (pp.2). This service will also be available to the general public. Further to this developing provision of activities and space, the report underlines that a strong volunteer network within the naval families community has enabled forward strides where "volunteers have either initiated the group/ project or have worked alongside community staff to ensure their sustainability" (2018: pp.2). The drive of volunteers, and "a sense of can do attitude" (2018: pp.22) is mirrored across the whole Helensburgh community and underlines a strong foundation of a shared approach in volunteer action moving forward with community activities, events, and community space.

As in many towns and cities, traffic and parking are hot topics with numerous different perspectives. Recent infrastructural enhancements have altered traffic flows in Helensburgh and there are issues of congestion exacerbated by the road closure on East Clyde Street during the course of this study. Parking surveys conducted by JMP (2007) and AECOM (2018) have both concurred that there is a sufficient provision of parking within the town centre, although anecdotal evidence suggests signage and awareness of the full extent of this provision could be improved.

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*Figure 3. Current off street parking in the town centre, outlined in red.*

Generating a collective vision for Helensburgh, as with any area, is a challenge noted in the Built Environment Forum Scotland (Hague, 2013) review: “The town has many voluntary organisations and an articulate population who are keen to have their say in Helensburgh’s future. The challenge then is to harness what are at times disparate enthusiasms into a shared vision - or mutually reinforcing set of visions - for the town” (2013: 5).

This challenge: one of cohesion and sharing, is a goal articulated by naval families desiring “more engagement with civilian families” (RNRMW, 2018: pp.5). It is clear then that harnessing the collective work, of some 200 voluntary organisations, and ensuring a full sharing of knowledge and skills between different groups is a broader goal perhaps best centralised in an online dashboard or a town connector to act as a forum that would support communication, and skill and knowledge sharing, between groups.

Tied into the opportunity to outline a collective vision, is the chance to promote the offer of Helensburgh in a holistic manner, linking with much of what is outlined here: green networks, tourist attractions, business development and family spaces. Groups including Helensburgh and District Access Trust, the Central Scotland Green Network Trust and Helensburgh Community Planning Group have achieved or begun great work in this direction. However it is noted that the town does not have an active tourism group that links with the Argyll and Isles Tourism Collective, although Helensburgh features in their Best of Both campaign (<https://www.wildaboutargyll.co.uk/destinations/loch-lomond-and-clyde-sea-lochs/clyde-sea-lochs/>). A number of businesses do however work with the Love Loch Lomond tourism group.



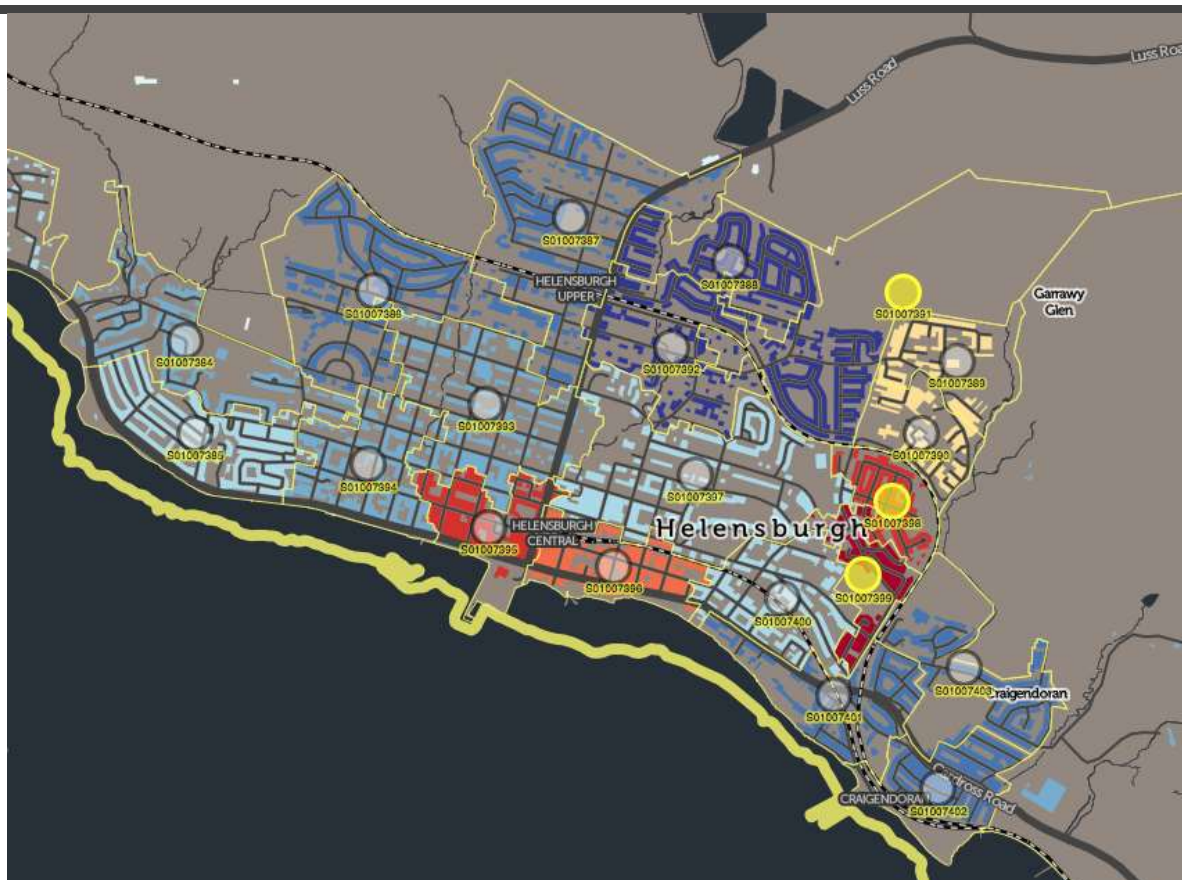


*Figure 4. Current green space designations.*

Facilitation of clear channels of communication has been a marker of success in the recent Hermitage Park regeneration project, utilising ‘user groups’ with a clear remit to report back to other groups within the town about the project’s progress and ways of getting involved.

Hermitage Park is part of a network of green spaces including the Duchess Woods Local Nature Reserve, the stalled spaces projects at the former James Street play park, links to the John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way, and Colquhoun Square. These connections provide numerous opportunities including the John Muir way recently (July 2018) securing marketing funding to support businesses that lie on the John Muir Way.

Taking into account the proximity to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, and benefits of connecting to and along the Helensburgh waterline - there is a blossoming range of exciting opportunities to further grow business, tourist and cultural benefits along these natural trails, ways and walks.



*Figure 5. Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Most deprived 20% in red. Most deprived 5% in dark red. (SIMD Scotland, 2016)*

This must be balanced with ensuring the preservation of the Helensburgh Green Belt, however the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) for Argyll and Bute identifies that “there is currently sufficient development land identified in the LDP to avoid immediate need for a review of the Green Belt” (2017: pp.27).

At the same time, restrictions on the Green Belt have been recently relaxed and therefore more development is now taking place, but this has not affected the current market as yet and land availability has remained a challenge (North Star, Rettie & Co., Research Resource, 2018: pp.130).

This challenge will be heightened given the increase of naval personnel with the Maritime Change Programme. A recent Helensburgh and Lomond Housing Market study (North Star, Rettie & Co., Research Resource, 2018) has specifically examined the impact of the Maritime Change, noting that with an estimated rise in personnel of 32% between 2017 and 2032, and single living accommodation within HMNB Clyde being fully occupied by 2021 (2018: pp.30), there will be increased housing demand in the Helensburgh and Lomond area that the study outlines in two possible scenarios.

Both scenarios posit a surplus of Service Family Accommodation (SFA), while there being increased pressure on, and thus a deficit of, Single Living Accommodation (SLA) (2018: pp.90-92). Therefore there

is a clear opportunity to plan for more accommodation, thinking as well about opportunities for single personnel to settle in the area.

While the Housing Market study does outline this opportunity for planners, it also adds, “it should be remembered that service personnel seeking accommodation between nine and fifty miles from the base may wish to live in West Dunbartonshire, Inverclyde, Renfrewshire, Stirling, East Dunbartonshire, East Renfrewshire, North Ayrshire, and Glasgow all of which include settlements less than fifty miles from the base”. (2018: pp.142). As such, it is difficult to calculate the true demand that will eventuate from the increase in personnel at HMNB Clyde.

Current allocations within the LDP Main Issues Report are identified in the map below.



*Figure 6. Adopted Land Allocations, LDP Main Issues Report. Community facilities in red; Housing orange; Waterfront Development in pink; Local Nature Reserve in Green; Area of Action outlined in yellow.*

Reviewing the jobs and economic opportunities suggests an optimistic picture, given Helensburgh’s gateway situation with close transport links to Glasgow and access to jobs locally - especially within the HMNB Clyde supply chain.



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The local economy gets a significant boost from its links to HMNB Clyde, as Scotland's largest single site employer with private companies like Babcock playing a large role in the local community (Scotland Correspondent, 2013).

Recently the town has also seen an influx of high quality restaurants servicing the commuter population. The nature of property ownership and pockets of wealth in the town prioritises high yield businesses in the town centre, however Helensburgh also contains some areas of severe deprivation, with one section of Helensburgh East being in the most deprived 5% nationally (SIMD Scotland, 2016).

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2016) identifies three datazones in Helensburgh and Lomond within the 20% most deprived in Scotland. These are within Helensburgh: in the East and in the Centre. One of these datazones has the highest rate of income deprivation in Argyll and Bute (34%). Therefore, efforts to build on possible successes of the HMNB Clyde expansion and to support local business are a key priority to avoid a "future scenario of genteel decline" (Hague, 2013: 5).



*Town Centre Core Shopping Area outlined in blue. Main town centre in dark orange. Edge of centre in orange.*

Across the board, Helensburgh is in a strong position; however, there are clear areas where improvements can be made.

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## Priorities Baseline

A specific baseline review has been undertaken for the areas of priority which generated the highest level of overall feedback and comments

### Waterfront : Baseline



Helensburgh has a waterfront area composed of beach, esplanade, retail, pier and parks. It is located on the Firth of Clyde and is part of the Clyde Marine Region. It has long been considered that the waterfront is an area of primary focus, one which could benefit from enhancement as it is one of Helensburgh's key assets. The 2004 'A Vision for Helensburgh' produced by the Helensburgh Vision Steering Group (HVGS) under the Helensburgh Community Council states that:

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/chord-project/helensburgh-west-bay-esplanade-and-transforming-town-centre>

**“Helensburgh needs a stunning waterfront. Being next to the sea differentiates Helensburgh from most other towns. Furthermore, Helensburgh is built on sloping ground on the north bank of the Clyde, enjoying the sun and the views. But it needs a waterfront which excites.”** (HVGS, 2004: 6).

Given the wider context, in which a 2015 Scottish Government survey on Scottish Marine Recreation & Tourism (the first of its kind) has identified that the marine recreation and tourism sector generates **£3.7 billion annually, a focus on Helensburgh's waterline is economically imperative**. The 2016 report on the survey findings underlines that, in the Scottish context, the £3.7 billion figure is “an important finding and underlines the significant economic value of the sector, placing it alongside other industries such as fishing, energy and shipping” (LUC, 2016: pp.81)

The completion of the recent CHORD project aimed to enhance the heart of the town centre and update the West Bay Esplanade, with an overarching objective of retaining visitors and

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combating leakage in regard to spend on retail and leisure (EKOS, 2010: i). This £7 million worth of investment - winning a Scottish Design Award - has made a series of enhancements:

- Widened pavements;
- Improved access to shops;
- New parking bays;
- New street furniture;
- Linking up the front and the town centre;
- Redevelopment of Colquhoun Square and creation of Scotland's first outdoor museum.

This project has reconfigured the heart of Helensburgh, delivering within budget this series of changes that have so far rejuvenated the town centre and created a more hospitable area for recreation and events. The level of visual enhancement provides a strong basis for the **'Helensburgh Waterline'** proposal.

The project was often cited in this work's feedback as making a positive impact on the overall impression and attractiveness of the town. Aiming to create a string of "event points", this has begun to be realised through things like the Outdoor Museum and weekend markets, with future potential for small scale events.

The Outdoor Museum utilises over a hundred bollards proposed with the regeneration of Colquhoun Square and in collaboration between WAVEparticle and Austin-Smith:Lord has created a Scottish first in this permanent display of items celebrating local heritage and artworks. Some artworks were created for the museum's inception, but there are still spaces for future works, with funding currently being allocated on an annual basis.



Helensburgh Outdoor Museum, developed and delivered by WAVEparticle (<http://portfolio.waveparticle.co.uk/helensburgh-outdoor-museum>)

A+G Waterfront  
Development  
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/helensburgh-waterfront>

Additionally, the current Waterfront Development Plan is being undertaken with a view of "creating a vibrant and attractive waterfront for the town. The main feature of the project

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will be a new leisure facility incorporating a swimming pool, with associated parking and public realm” (Argyll and Bute, 2018).



Argyll and Bute Council - current swimming pool, 2017, and proposed design within Waterfront Development Plan, 2018.

### Water Recreation

The ‘Vision for Helensburgh’ (2004) set out that Helensburgh needs a pier area designated for leisure tourism and recreation, and that the waterfront should be well designed, providing leisure facilities for both residents and visitors.

In addition to the local desires, the wider context of Helensburgh must be considered, such as within the Clyde Marine Region (CMR) with its complex and varied seascape. This provides a landscape that is “appreciated by locals and visitors to the CMR”. It must also be noted that although Helensburgh has to consider that “marine litter is an increasing problem on the shoreline and can have an impact on ecosystem services”, nonetheless there has “been improvement over the last 5 years in the water quality of bathing waters”.

The richness and opportunity of the region for watersports is reflected in the recently established Argyll Sea Kayak Trail, which runs 150 km from Oban to Helensburgh. The Clyde Marine Region Assessment (2017) describes the growing popularity of coastal rowing, with 12 clubs currently active in Argyll and Bute; a popularity in part fueled by the formation of the Scottish Coastal Rowing Association in 2010 (Clyde Marine Region Assessment, 2017: pp.162).

The report goes on to outline the small number of diving charter operators running in the CMR, as well as several dive clubs, and it advocates for increasing “use of the CMR by both local and other dive visitors in the future” (2017: pp.162). This work undertaken by the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership, therefore earmarks a clear potential for growth of water sports and activities in the region, one which Helensburgh can tap into.

Within the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report, Helensburgh is noted as being part of the Helensburgh and Lomond Growth Area with upcoming impacts for growth such as

Helensburgh Vision Steering Group - ‘A Vision for Helensburgh’ 2004

Clyde Regional Marine Plan  
<http://www.clydemarineplan.scot/marine-planning/clyde-regional-marine-plan/#CMRA>

Clyde Marine Region Assessment  
<http://www.clydemarineplan.scot/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Clyde-Marine-Region-Assessment-2017.pdf>

[https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ldp\\_2\\_main\\_i](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/ldp_2_main_i)



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the HMNB Clyde development to become the UK's only submarine base by 2030. This could see an increase in population due to the increased personnel of approx 1500 that would be stationed here. The LDP2 Main issues report is currently under consultation.

[ssues\\_report\\_draft\\_august\\_2017\\_formatted\\_on\\_121017\\_web4.pdf](#)

### **Socio-Economic Baseline**

One of Helensburgh's key sectors is Tourism, making up 13.9% of total employee jobs (Argyll and Bute, EDAP, 2014). Therefore Helensburgh has a solid base to develop tourism in relation to the waterfront. While tourism could be a potential avenue for developing waterfront activity, the CHORD programme socio-economic baseline produced by EKOS (2010) notes that, though based on the waterfront, Helensburgh does not have significant levels of employment associated with the waterfront, such as fishing or marina activities (2010: pp.ii). There is then an opportunity to develop this strand of activity, especially in the wider context of Argyll and Bute as a whole, having shown employment growth in "tourism, food and drink (including aquaculture) and tradable services" (EKOS, 2015: pp.8).

In relation to the ongoing regeneration developments, the socio-economic baseline asserts that the waterfront development, in tandem with the now improved streetscape and traffic system, can help increase visitor numbers and draw in new residents. This then has a beneficial impact on increased spending in the town centre with a consequential reverse on the observed reduction in the distribution, hotels and restaurants sectors (2010: pp.ii).

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Helensburgh%20Socio-Economic%20Baseline.pdf>

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## Built Environment: Baseline

The Town Centre Health Check conducted by Argyll and Bute Council for 2016 - 2017, indicates that vacancy rates in Helensburgh have dropped from 12% to 10% across the year, although since 2010 there is a general upward trend of vacancy despite recent decline. Therefore, while this recent improvement is good news, there is still progress to be made.

Furthermore, the wider context demonstrates a drive for change to help owners look after buildings. March 2018 saw Helensburgh host Scotland's first Listed Property Owners' Forum, exploring national changes to VAT and planning rules that could make it easier for owners to update and conserve their properties. It is on this basis that these proposals are put forward to address concerns around building use and maintenance, and to suggest innovative approaches to more fully realising the great potential of Helensburgh's building stock. While being an important issue in itself, the condition and upkeep of buildings often dovetails with other priorities, whether that is providing suitable spaces for new enterprises, or impacts on traffic due to road closures caused by unstable structures.

(<https://thelochsidepress.com/2018/03/10/helensburgh-listed-building-forum-will-be-the-first-in-scotland/>)

As has been discussed, Helensburgh currently has building issues relating to both maintenance and vacancy. This is set within a general context of an extensive historic built environment that forms part of Helensburgh's unique character, as noted by both architectural experts and the people of the town:

“Helensburgh still benefits from the legacy of the original plan. The formal grid layout of the town with its wide streets echoes the elegance of the Edinburgh new town (Hague, 2013: 2).”

“Lovely old public buildings” (Survey respondent).

Buildings as Risk  
<https://www.buildingsatrisk.org.uk/search/keyword/helensburgh>

Empty Homes Strategy  
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/housing/empty-homes>

SMALL TOWNS  
AUDIT (Hague, 2013)  
<http://www.befs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/SMALL-TOWNS-Helensburgh-Report.pdf>



*Municipal Buildings on the junction of East King Street and Sinclair Street, due to be reopened as a branch Peckham's delicatessen. Figure 18. Potential Zone for Building Maintenance and Improvement.*

Architecturally significant buildings like Hill House, Charles Rennie Mackintosh's "domestic masterpiece" designed for Glasgow publisher Walter Blackie (National Trust, 2018), or the original Clyde Street School by Alexander Nisbet Paterson (Fullarton, 2013) are integral to the town's character and future - the Hill House attracts 20,000 visitors a year (Hague, 2013: 2). More broadly, there are 13 'A' listed buildings, 112 'B' listed and 78 'C' listed buildings in the Helensburgh area, with three buildings currently on the Buildings at Risk Register (Helensburgh Community Council, 2017).

### Helensburgh's Character Areas



Helensburgh's Character Areas

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Helensburgh town centre contains seven character areas. Understanding the essential components of these areas is a positive way of thinking about their future in terms of use and building form but the presence of the Upper Helensburgh Conservation Area is an inescapable and significant source of the town's character. This Conservation Area is not part of the town centre, but its character permeates the central area through the street grid which links down from the high ground of this prestigious residential area through the town centre to the shoreline. A significant part of the character of the Conservation Area lies in the spatial arrangement of non-formal elements - individual houses, gardens and walls - set within the formal pattern of the street grid. While the street grid is common to all the character areas, the placement of buildings in plots and different uses creates a series of very different character areas.

**1 - Conservation Area Transition Zone:** This area lies between the Upper Helensburgh Conservation Area and the Town Centre – East and West areas. It incorporates the best of the Conservation Area while being less precious about building styles and position in the plot. It contains a broader range of building ages but generally retains the tree-lined street format with remote footways behind grass strips. While most of the buildings are residential, the area also accommodates the excellent modernist Helensburgh Telephone Exchange on the West Princes Street/Glasgow Street corner.

**2 - Civic and Retail Core:** This is unmistakably the centre of Helensburgh. In this area, buildings are built as unified street frontages rather than detached buildings in the centre of plots. Building heights are typically two and three storeys but occasionally rise to four storeys. The character area is relatively small, focusing on the intersection of Sinclair Street and West Princes Street, and on Colquhoun Square which is the significant set-piece civic space in the town. Most of the buildings in this area are traditional with some Victorian, Georgian and Baronial styles present. There are also several sub-optimal architectural missteps around the south side of Colquhoun Square and on the west side of Sinclair Street, suggesting that at one time, developers and their architects did not value the dominant character of the area.

Generally, the area is attractive and appears to be successful with a wide range of uses and street life contributing to the bustling and vibrant character.

**3-4 - Town Centre – East and West:** These areas are the unglamorous working parts of the town centre. They contain a wide range of uses – from residential and retail to car repairs and from builders' merchants to contractors' yards. The eastern area also includes the Argyll and Bute Council Civic Centre as well as significant car parks. The area is not especially attractive but is valuable for jobs, economic activity and the provision of accommodation for a wide range of businesses. There is a higher number of vacant properties in these areas than in the Civic and Retail Core but much of this is likely to be churn rather than an endemic problem.

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Buildings in this area range from single to three-storeys built mainly to the heel of the pavement/footway, mostly traditional in style with several relatively recent industrial sheds accommodating auto-related businesses.

The east area is somewhat cut off from the shoreline although the Council's new Civic Centre addresses this in part. However, the lack of clear, convenient and continuous shoreline access is a disadvantage.

**5-6 - Shoreline Residential East and West:** The residential areas along the shoreline to the east and west of the town centre are fundamentally attractive and desirable areas with great views over the Clyde Estuary. Both east and west areas have honoured or positively adapted the street grid providing an elegant setting for residential plots. Some of the recent architectural interventions are highly questionable both in style and materials, but somehow the relaxed, pleasant and open seaside character of the areas has survived.

**7 - Helensburgh's Shoreline:** This area is what most visitors and residents would describe as Helensburgh's shoreline or waterfront. It is highly accessible from the Civic and Retail Core and the railway station. It includes the busy A818 (Glasgow-Dumbarton-Garelochhead and beyond) and much retail activity including cafes, restaurants and souvenir shops. The buildings along the street frontage adhere to the Helensburgh grid but vary in height between one and three storeys. There is a higher degree of vacancy in these buildings than in other parts of the town centre, but this may be seasonal and temporary.

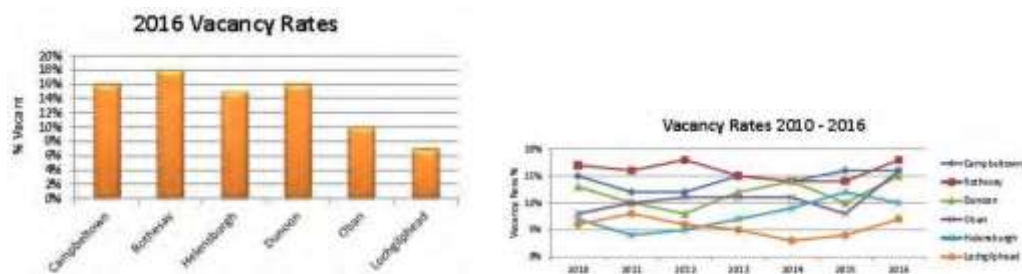
The shoreline itself is a promenade overlooking a rather scruffy seaweed and rocky waterline rather than a beach. However, it is pleasant enough and views south and west are interesting and special.

The pier area is a major shoreline disappointment – a grim car park around a swimming pool – rather than for example the iconic piers of the south coast of England or the Thames estuary. The pier area desperately needs a new role in the town. It also needs better connections to the east to create a more integrated shoreline experience.

### **Vacancy**

Considering vacancy in Helensburgh, it has been noted that there is concern around a perception of vacant buildings leading to a downward trend in the appearance of the town. Vacancy levels are the third highest in the region, and as such it is clear there is still progress to be made. On a positive note, Argyll and Bute Council data shows that the majority of Helensburgh's vacant properties have only been left unoccupied for a year or less.

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*Figure 19 and 20. Argyll and Bute, Town Centre Health Check Vacancy Data, 2016. Argyll and Bute, Town Centre Health Check, 2017.*



*Figure 21. Length of Vacancy. Argyll and Bute, Town Centre Health Check, 2017.*

Argyll and Bute Council has an Empty Homes Strategy and provides various support mechanisms to both landlords and potential purchasers. When considering empty property in the town centre we must also remember that an element of that will be made up by residential stock.

From the small towns audit of 2013 there was a concern that although there are a “relatively small” number of owners of property and that some are local, they generally “have confidence that they can achieve high rents” and will therefore allow property to lie empty, believing a tenant willing to pay the requested rent will come along.



*Vacant property in Helensburgh Town Centre - November 2018*

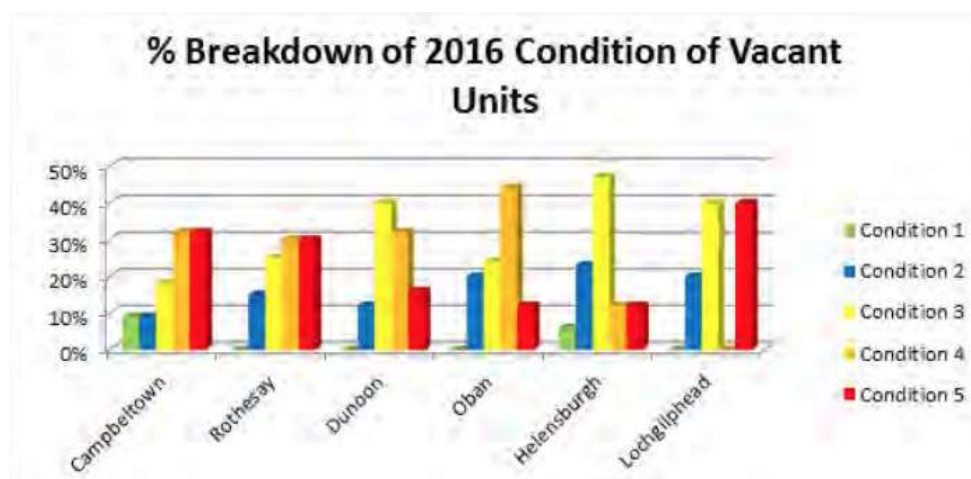
## Maintenance

During the process of Helensburgh Making Places a section of East Clyde Street has been closed due to a dangerous building. In this circumstance, the community have repeatedly expressed concern at the condition of individual buildings in or close to the town centre, which is certainly heightened within this context. Looking more closely at the data available for vacancy and building condition there does not appear to be an endemic problem, however there is room for improvement as well as opportunities for innovative and enterprising approaches. After all, the building stock, especially along and close to the waterfront, is one of Helensburgh's key assets and presents a chance to enhance and grow economic benefits as Built Environment Forum Scotland have highlighted: "let no one doubt the contribution that planning and good design can make to sustainable economic growth in Scotland."

There are critical areas of blight where buildings are in obvious disrepair and also evidence of gap sites where buildings have been removed in the past.

In terms of recent key planning and infrastructural developments, as previously mentioned, there has been investment in the town centre, upgrading and significantly regenerating key aspects, including building maintenance and shopfronts: 12 buildings have received awards to improve the appearance of their premises, and since 2014 "£75,000 has been earmarked to upgrade the frontage of 20 businesses in Helensburgh town centre" (Argyll and Bute Council, 2016).

Focusing on the data available, Helensburgh's vacant building stock (10% for 2016) mainly sits at a Condition 3, meaning the property is in "fair condition" but there may be noticeable issues such as "window frames that require painting, paint peeling on the facia, parts of signage damaged or missing, or a cracked window" (2017: 70).



*Figure 22. Vacancy Condition. Argyll and Bute, Town Centre Health Check, 2017.*

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### **Enterprise and Innovation**

There is a precedent in Helensburgh of engaging vacant or unused space for new purposes, with projects recently developed that provide a guiding light in this endeavour including Helensburgh Heroes, the Submarine Centre, Stalled Spaces, The Tower and Helensburgh Hermitage Park. Furthermore, work already underway to develop a business hub in the town will add to the mixed uses of space in the centre, and generate enterprise and innovation opportunities.

### **Summary**

Reviewing the available information on building vacancy and maintenance in Helensburgh, the overall picture is a mixture of positive and negative. Recent town centre enhancements have regenerated the facade of much of the town, though likely, by contrast, show up where urgent improvements are needed. The closure of East Clyde Street and resultant impact on traffic and movement has had a clear impact on Place Standard responses, with repeated mention of the situation and an overall sentiment demanding improved maintenance of buildings. Looking at the actual data, the picture is more positive, as Helensburgh has recently reversed the trend of vacancy, although it remains to be seen if this can be maintained. In regard to maintenance, again the situation is still pliant, with much of the vacant building stock sitting in a 'fair condition' and thus opportune for repurposing. Overall, this serves to underline the fantastic potential for Helensburgh to reutilise vacant and dilapidated spaces for new and exciting purposes, as has already been achieved in the town via projects instigated by organisations including Helensburgh Heroes and The Tower Digital Arts Centre.

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## Indoor Flexible Space: Baseline

The current most accessible indoor play facilities for people in Helensburgh are in Erskine or Clydebank, with the most local facility - Gogglebox - having closed in 2015. Addressing the feasibility of childcare in the town is important given this context, however it is also worth considering the increase in population, given the Maritime Change, that will create increased demand for childcare (EKOS, 2018: 3.1). There are a number of council and private facilities accessible at a cost, and naval facilities in the Churchill area.

The Monitoring Report for the Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) notes that new developments should aim to “create places people want to live, work and play in” (Argyll and Bute, 2017: pp.33). This key concern around ‘play’ falls into line with a desire for more provision of indoor play/activity and accessible facilities, presented in feedback from the 2017 Place Standard exercise:

“Helensburgh has very limited resources available to the younger generation... Leisure facilities are nowhere near the standard they should be for such a large community. Oban, for example, has a large leisure complex catering to all ages. Locals are forced to attend West Dunbartonshire Council to access leisure facilities such as gym halls to play sports such as badminton, football, netball etc. Skate parks are available in a safe environment in neighbouring West Dunbartonshire, but again Helensburgh lacks any of these facilities.”

“The town could do with a new leisure centre but one which could include indoor football, badminton etc. not just a swimming pool and a gym.”

This sentiment is felt as early as 2004, in the Helensburgh Community Council Vision for Helensburgh which particularly underlines ‘Young People’ as key to this vision, and one of the six vision strategies:

“Helensburgh has more families with children / young persons than the Scottish average. Each is a resident of the town and should have their needs provided for; they are our future. Each should have access to, and be involved in, some kind of leisure, cultural or recreational activity.” (HCC, December 2004)

Priorities for young people include: ‘Children / Young Persons need increased sports facilities’, ‘Children / Young Persons need their own informal meeting place’. This therefore highlights an existing and long term need to develop a provision of indoor flexible space that caters for younger people.

In the decade or more since the publication of the HCC Vision, a number of developments have taken place to cater for more social and activity hubs in the town, including **The Tower** - operating as a digital hub, and **Helensburgh Heroes** - creating a social and cultural space, celebrating historic figures from Helensburgh. These developments have connected people more to the local area and local heritage, creating groups and activities to get involved in.

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## Argyll and Bute, Helensburgh Waterfront Development

The most recent, and most pertinent development in this particular discussion is the ongoing progression of the Helensburgh Waterfront Development Plan. This £18 million infrastructural investment will see the demolition of the current Helensburgh swimming pool, with a new leisure centre constructed in its place as well as improved flood defences, and a new car park (Argyll and Bute Council Property Services, 2017: pp.4). This will extend public space and leisure provision. June 2018 saw progression of the project as councillors approved for detailed planning applications to be made. This would enable the leisure centre and swimming pool to be ready and open in 2021.

### Naval facilities

The Drumfork Club, off Churchill Square, is to undergo a £2 million redevelopment with joint funding from the Royal Navy Royal Marines Welfare (RNRMW), HMNB Clyde and Argyll and Bute Council. The redevelopment will include five multi-purpose function rooms and aims to support greater community cohesion as well as improved childcare facilities. This drive to revitalise provision for naval families in the Churchill area, who currently use facilities that have long been in need of updating, will provide better childcare options and more spaces for the immediate local area. Additionally, it is worth noting that the RNRMW Community Needs Analysis, 2017 -2018, outlines a range of community led initiatives where volunteers have instigated childcare and communal activities, open to everyone.



Drumfork Club in 2015, before its redevelopment gets underway.  
Helensburgh Advertiser, 2015.

“After speaking with numerous users of the Drumfork Centre and those in the nearby community, the feedback we received was that what was needed today was childcare provision and a flexible space which could be used by various clubs, groups and organisations active in the area.” (Commander Jim Hayle, Royal Navy MoD, 2018).

<https://www.royalnavy.mod.uk/news-and-latest-activity/news/2018/march/02/180302-local-community-set-to-benefit-from-drumfork-renovation-work>

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## Parking and traffic, Community Participation and Getting Active

### Parking and Traffic: Baseline

Previous studies undertaken exploring traffic, parking and transport in Helensburgh are:

- *Helensburgh Waterfront Development Masterplan - Town Centre Car Parking Review and Strategy* (AECOM, 2018);
- *Helensburgh Traffic Management and Streetscape Report* (JMP, 2007).

Traffic management within Helensburgh has been recently and extensively reviewed due to the CHORD improvements undertaken in the town. The *Helensburgh Traffic Management and Streetscape Report* (JMP, 2007) is a traffic management strategy commissioned by the Helensburgh Partnership and Argyll & Bute Council, underpinning the regeneration aims of the CHORD project.

#### **CHORD Helensburgh West Bay Esplanade and Transforming Town Centre**

Completed in 2015, Transforming the Town Centre - Traffic Management and Streetscape Improvements carried out “road narrowing and widening of adjoining pavements”, implemented shared surface areas, installed new street furniture, and adjusted traffic flow and parking in the centre of Helensburgh.

In the lead up to this work, the Helensburgh Traffic Management and Streetscape Report noted that “while the accommodation of vehicular traffic is integral to the economic regeneration within the town centre, it is vital to ensure that all modes of travel are appropriately considered when examining the accessibility to and around the town centre” (JMP, 2007: 1.4).

Primary outcomes from consultation were an accepted consensus for a Park and Ride sited at Craigendoran, enhancing the Co-op station car park and a commitment to “shared space”, as long as appropriate community involvement was ensured through the development phase (2007: 4.7).

#### **Parking**

Within their report JMP analysed parking provision, carrying out surveys of on and off-street parking. They found that off-street car parks were generally under utilised throughout the week and at weekends, “with only the King Street (Lower) car park observed during both survey periods to, at times, operate at 85% of its maximum capacity” (2007: 9.22). AECOM’s survey highlights that, in general, the off-street provision is “underutilised” or “operating at effective capacity”. The ‘Mariners Section’ of the Waterfront Car Park, was the only area noted to regularly achieve maximum capacity due to its unregulated nature.

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Excluding the waterfront car park, the three town centre car parks (Maitland Street, Sinclair Street and the Co-op Multi-Storey) together provide 420 spaces, and at busiest surveyed periods, 322 spaces were occupied (77%). Combined with the provision of the Waterfront Car Park, AECOM summarise that “there is sufficient off-street capacity for parking in Helensburgh compared to demand” - however, the designation and cost across this capacity varies, which impacts parking behaviour (AECOM, 2018: pp.25).

Contrasting this, on-street car parking was under higher demand despite the availability of free off-street parking in Helensburgh. The JMP report summarises that it “would be reasonable to assume that this demand is due to the convenience of the location of the identified streets in relation to local shops and amenities” (2007: 9.23). AECOM surveyed on-street parking capacity, concluding that “overall on-street parking works well in Helensburgh town centre, with occupancy figures well below capacity during all times of the day” (pp.34). It is noted however that some streets operate at over-capacity, largely due to parking on double yellow lines and in loading bays. Overall, the peak occupancy across summer and winter surveys for on-street parking is approximately 60% (pp.29), although James Street, West King Street, and East Clyde Street did at times operate over-capacity (pp.31). While the impacts of inconsiderate parking should be kept in mind, AECOM highlight that “levels of inconsiderate parking are not considered high for a town centre location” (pp.34). In regard to inconsiderate parking, JMP point out that little to no enforcement has exacerbated the issue (2007: 9.28-9.30).

AECOM has reviewed the parking allocation proposals of the **Waterfront Development Masterplan**, outlining that the proposed allocation of 265 spaces is “in keeping with the minimum [space] requirement” (pp.41). The report does underline that any shortfall due to the reduction of spaces would need to be addressed, although a further 158 off-street spaces have been provided which could offset and shortfall (pp.41).

Finally, AECOM’s report notes that a review of parking designations and charging across the Helensburgh and Lomond area is still to be undertaken by Argyll and Bute Council, and this would include focus on the Waterfront site (AECOM, 2018: pp.11).

### **Traffic Management:**

Approaching traffic management, the JMP report underlines a key point of consensus being that traffic on Sinclair Street and Clyde Street is at such a level that these streets are “perceived as vehicle dominated barriers which are difficult to cross” (2007: 11.2).

With regard to improving traffic flows, the report outlines a series of measures that could be implemented, including one-way systems, traffic calming and pedestrianisation, but puts forward community buy-in and participation as fundamentally crucial to the success of any future traffic management plan.

<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/heltrafficstudy2007.pdf>

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## Getting Active: Baseline

### Water Recreation

The potential in the region to facilitate and escalate water related activities is clearly put across in the Clyde Marine Region Assessment 2017. The key example of this, already mentioned above, is that Helensburgh forms part of the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail: running 150 km from Oban. This potential, extending into a range of activities coupled with forecasts for increased economic benefit outlined by the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership (2017: pp.172), means that there is real potential for the region and thus for Helensburgh to capitalise on recreational water activities.

As outlined, there are a number of diving charter operators operating within the region and there has been “general improvement in the condition of bathing waters in the Clyde Marine Region (CMR) over the last five years [that] can support increased sport, tourism and recreation” (2017: pp.60).

In the wider context, the Marine Tourist Plan for Scotland has outlined its vision that -

‘By 2020 Scotland is a marine tourism destination of first choice for high quality, value for money and memorable customer experience delivered by skilled and passionate people.’ (2017: pp.172)

Therefore, there is a drive within the sector to grow and succeed, especially in terms of sailing and boating, but also with smaller operations as “anecdotal evidence suggests that watersports such as kayaking and coastal rowing are also growing in popularity. There could also be potential to increase the number of divers visiting the area” (2017: pp.172).

It is clear then that the CMR is a growing and thriving area with opportunities to diversify water recreation and succeed in a sector that is confidently set to develop. Helensburgh has the capacity to be further involved in this development over the coming years, enhancing its already solid foundation as a key point in the Argyll Sea Kayak Trail.

### Pathways and Connectivity

Information on long distance pathways is detailed further in the following section. Focusing on the town centre, pavements have recently been upgraded and widened due to the Helensburgh CHORD project. Connectivity in the west of the town remains inconsistent due to ownership issues around grass verges. There is currently a planned £84, 250 investment planned for 2018/19 in the Helensburgh and Lomond area to improve pavements (<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/roads-capital-programme#hlpavements>).

### John Muir Way and Three Lochs Way

As highlighted already, Helensburgh has access to the unique Clyde Marine Region, and national walks including, notably: The Three Lochs Way that runs 55 km from Balloch to Inveruglas and taking in Gare Loch, Loch Lomond, and Loch Long; and the John Muir Way, running 215 km coast to coast across central Scotland from Helensburgh to Dunbar which is a collaborative

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initiative between local authorities along the route, led by CSGNT (Clyde Marine Region Assessment, 2017: pp.170).

These routes have been promoted locally, especially the Three Lochs way, through the hard work of the Helensburgh and District Access Trust (HDAT), who first conceived of the route in 2010. The trust has installed and repaired 12 km of paths and walking routes and with the Three Lochs Way is actively focused on another 50 km, while raising £140,000 for access work. HDAT have also developed a guide in 2012 for the Three Lochs Way (Helensburgh and District Access Trust, 2018). The wider region has a series of other accessible trails including the Clyde Coastal Path and Cowal Way, and is close to cycle routes including Regional Route 40 and National Route 7 (<https://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/route/route-7>).

In mid-2018 the Central Scotland Green Network Trust (CSGNT) obtained funding for a two-year marketing initiative to boost promotion of the John Muir Way in an effort to attract more walkers and cyclists: a central part of this work will be to link with businesses along the route, in order to support and promote their offer as part of the JMW experience (CSGNT, 2018). This development will build on the growing potential of walking and cycling tourism being felt across the UK (CSGNT, 2018).

As of July 2018, CSGNT have a survey live in order for businesses along the route to provide information and get involved with the initiative: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/johnmuirway-business>

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## Community Participation : Baseline

The 2018 Place Standard feedback highlights community cohesion has been a topic of discussion throughout the project, and a brief review of feedback develops a picture of a busy and vibrant town actively pursuing projects, with a strong volunteer base, but for some in the community this is hard to access or there are challenges in getting different volunteer groups together. Therefore, discussion around ways to more consistently disseminate information about what is going on in the town have resonated with many respondents.

### **Pathways and Partnership (PaPa)**

Currently ongoing in Argyll and Bute, this project has recently received funding for 3 years of development. PaPa is a tool that has been developed by Argyll and Bute Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP). It supplies clear visual data about the “areas of work of individual services under 10 different categories of health and wellbeing” (Argyll and Bute, Community Planning Partnership Bulletin, May 2018).

The tool therefore allows individuals and organisations to more readily access information on services provided in the local area. “It is hoped that this ‘PaPa’ tool will be a really useful – and usable – information resource to make sure you know what services exist, how to access them and how they link up to ensure people are supported to deal with all aspects of their health and wellbeing.” (Argyll and Bute, CPP Bulletin, May 2018).

[https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Unknown/argyll\\_and\\_bute\\_cpp\\_bulletin\\_18.05.25.pdf](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Unknown/argyll_and_bute_cpp_bulletin_18.05.25.pdf)

### **Participatory Budget Tool - Supporting communities fund**

Argyll and Bute Council have recently trialled an online tool to allow the community to vote on projects that receive funding. Local groups and organisations were able to share project ideas via a specifically created website, explaining how they would use £2,500 per project in order to aid the local community. In April 2018, residents were then able to vote on the projects they wished to be funded. This pilot process is now being evaluated. (<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/abpb>)

These projects demonstrate a need - already being addressed in specific areas - to more widely and transparently share information on what is going on in the region. Helensburgh can tap into this ongoing work, and explore new ways to share information between community groups and about community projects so that more people from different backgrounds can get involved.

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The screenshot displays the Argyll & Bute Beta website interface for Participatory Budget voting in 2018. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the text "Argyll & Bute" and a search bar. Below the navigation bar, there is a header section with a map of the region and a title "Helensburgh and Lomond".

The main content area is a grid of project proposals, each with a title, a description, and a set of voting icons (heart, comment, and share). The proposals are:

- Helensburgh and Lomond Autism SC045096**: Recently we have been able to fund a number of cooking lessons for a group of our junior members and... (53 likes, 4 comments)
- Access to a Unique Marine Environment on Loch Long, Arrochar**: The Loch Long Jetty Association, a newly formed charity run by volunteers, aims to install a picture... (18 likes, 18 comments)
- Gareloch Riding for the Disabled Association**: The project involves the upkeep of 2 of two horses suited to the needs of smaller children with disa... (17 likes, 11 comments)
- Route 81 Friday Night Youth Provision**: Do you think teenagers need somewhere positive, supportive, safe and fun to go on a Friday night and... (16 likes, 10 comments)
- Rhu and Shandon Community Centre family activities for 2018**: The local committee of volunteers have raised money to put the Centre into good condition and are wo... (13 likes, 11 comments)
- Colgrain Primary School Community Garden**: Colgrain PTC is working alongside the Pupils Council - Eco Committee and the teachers to support the... (11 likes, 6 comments)
- Cobbler Climbers**: To set up a local climbing club for young people in the Arrochar area. They will experience climbi... (11 likes, 13 comments)
- Mental Health Hub - Jean's Bothy**: We are creating a warm and welcoming community space in Jean's Bothy, which is a cottage at the hear... (10 likes, 11 comments)

*Argyll and Bute Beta website for Participatory Budget voting, 2018.*

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## Baseline Literature Review

Presented here is the baseline literature review conducted during the course of Helensburgh Making Places. Key reports are reviewed, and then key thematic issues are explored.

### Helensburgh - Understanding Scottish Places

Helensburgh in the Scottish context - 'Understanding Scottish Places' was commissioned by the Scottish Government to provide a tool for comparing and contrasting Scottish towns and cities. Helensburgh is in Argyll and Bute. Helensburgh was founded in 1776 by Colquhoun of Luss as a spa town and who named it after his wife. The town developed as a tourist centre. The steamer trade and the railway made it accessible to Glaswegians enjoying a day trip. The town was also popular with wealthy businessmen in the Victorian era. Today it is a commuter town.

This type of large town is a suburban or commuter locality with a prevalence of higher income and private housing. A large proportion of the population are over 45, and many are retired. Many people own their home. There is also a high proportion of people in professional employment and a high proportion of residents are educated to HNC level or above. Many residents own two or more cars.

Utilising the USP we can compare towns that are classed as most similar. The most similar towns according to Understanding Scottish Places are Bishopbriggs, Linlithgow and Prestwick. Similarity is framed in the context of the socio-demographic typology. The towns are then classified by population size and finally ordered within groups based on their interrelationship scores.

The notable differences between the similar towns and Helensburgh are:

**Social Grade** - Professional and Managerial are on the lower end, however the white collar administrative and clerical are higher than the other similar towns.

**Jobs** - Helensburgh has had the highest reduction in job of the similar towns at -11% with the closest comparison being Giffnock with -5% the other towns saw an increase in jobs.

**Commercial** - Helensburgh has the highest diversity of shops and more shops per person.

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## Population

### Population

14k

Bishopbriggs 23k

Giffnock 12k

Linlithgow 13k

Prestwick 15k

### Households

6k

Bishopbriggs 9k

Giffnock 5k

Linlithgow 6k

Prestwick 7k

### Population change 2001 to 2011

-3%

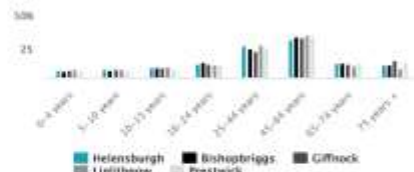
Bishopbriggs -2%

Giffnock 2%

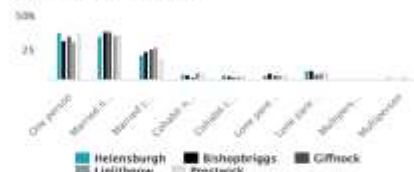
Linlithgow -3%

Prestwick 0%

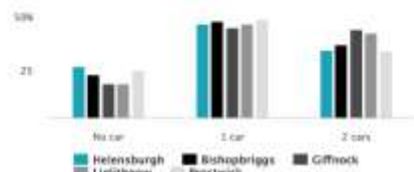
### Age



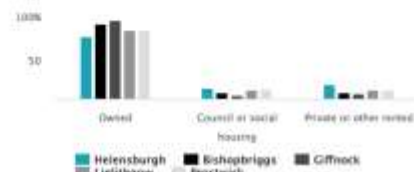
### Household composition



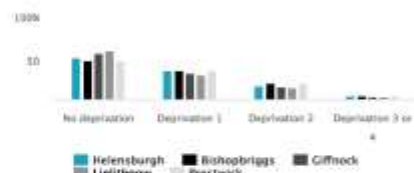
### Car ownership



### Tenure



### Deprivation dimensions



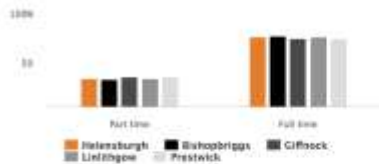
## Commuter Flow Map



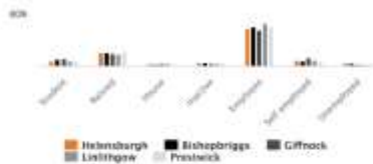
Coloured and grey lines/pins show the main and smaller commuter flows, respectively, between this town and the other towns in Scotland.

## Employment

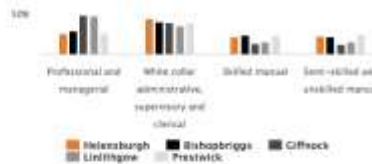
Employment (% working age 16-74)



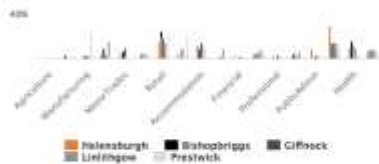
Occupation (% aged 16-74)



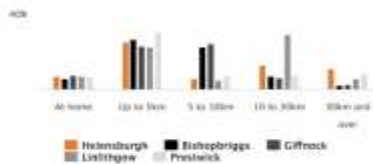
Social Grade (% households aged 16-64)



Sector Diversity



Distance travelled to work



Jobs

4k

Bishopbriggs 5k

Giffnock 3k

Linlithgow 5k

Prestwick 7k

Jobs change 2009 to 2014

-11%

Bishopbriggs 5%

Giffnock -5%

Linlithgow 5%

Prestwick 5%

## Commercial

### Number of people per shop

58

Bishopbriggs 173

Giffnock 132

Linlithgow 109

Prestwick 99

### Diversity of retail offer (%)

62

Bishopbriggs 54

Giffnock 43

Linlithgow 54

Prestwick 46

### Number of tourist beds

83

Bishopbriggs 0

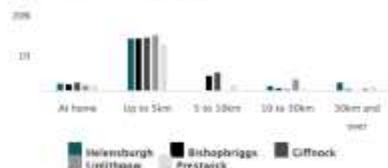
Giffnock 25

Linlithgow 14

Prestwick 391

## Social

### Distance travelled to study



### Number of residents per charity

200

Bishopbriggs 416

Giffnock 213

Linlithgow 204

Prestwick 392

### Amount of grant funding (£)

565k

Bishopbriggs 84k

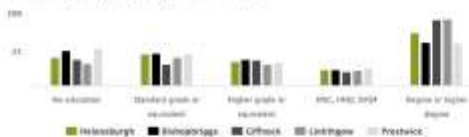
Giffnock 1,012k

Linlithgow 589k

Prestwick 59k

## Public

### Education (% all people aged 16 and over)



### Children in primary schools

1k

Bishopbriggs 2k

Giffnock 582

Linlithgow 1k

Prestwick 944

### Children in secondary schools

2k

Bishopbriggs 2k

Giffnock 2k

Linlithgow 1k

Prestwick 1k

### Hospitals

1

Bishopbriggs 0

Giffnock 0

Linlithgow 1

Prestwick 1

### GP's and dentists

36

Bishopbriggs 36

Giffnock 6

Linlithgow 22

Prestwick 28

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### **Helensburgh Vision Steering Group: ‘A Vision for Helensburgh’**

The Vision for Helensburgh (2004) was developed by the Helensburgh Vision Steering Group (HSV) under the Helensburgh Community Council (HCC). The vision is articulated in the lead statement “*Helensburgh - Be better: Be excellent*”. Central to this Vision, the HSV highlight three key areas of the Town Centre, The Waterfront and The Pier. The Vision report particularly identifies the Pier Site as “possibly the single most important site, [it] should be the jewel in the crown of Helensburgh” (pp.5). The report foreshadows many of the developments that have taken place in intervening years, including redevelopment of the town centre and the upgrading of Colquhoun Square, grounding these - at the time, proposed changes - in a strong leisure and tourism focus.

The Vision underlines a need for incremental change and improvement, and details a wider context of Helensburgh as a town that is, by many criteria, successful. Keeping this success in mind, the HSV fundamentally call for Helensburgh to be improved - not reborn or transformed (pp.6).

Underlying the Vision: “*Helensburgh - Be better: Be excellent*”, are ten concepts that outline the aspirations for Helensburgh:

1. Helensburgh needs a vibrant town centre;
2. Helensburgh needs a stunning waterfront;
3. Helensburgh needs to cater for its young people;
4. Helensburgh needs high quality public facilities and services;
5. Helensburgh needs to remain a source of employment;
6. Helensburgh needs to grow not sprawl;
7. Helensburgh needs to provide for tourists and visitors;
8. Helensburgh needs to remain a green place;
9. Helensburgh needs to recognise its strong links with Greater Glasgow;
10. Helensburgh needs to be a safe and clean town.

The active process going forward from the Vision was structured at four levels: The overall agreed vision; Six strategies that go together to achieve the Vision; The Priorities within each strategy; The proposed Initiatives that address those priorities.

The six strategies that underpin the Vision: “*Helensburgh - Be better: Be excellent*”, focus on six key areas: The Town Centre, The Waterfront, Young People, Tourism, The Town Environment, The Town Infrastructure.

### **Faslane Marine Change Programme: Draft Research - Scoping Report**

The report details outputs of a workshop aimed at identifying research points that will help define the potential economic opportunities of the Naval Base expansion at Faslane - in order to better support future decision making.

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HMNB Clyde is one of three active bases for the Royal Navy in the UK. It is the largest military base in Scotland and is home to the UK's strategic nuclear deterrent: a fleet of Vanguard-class nuclear-powered and nuclear-armed submarines.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) is planning to expand operations at the HM Naval Base Clyde at Faslane, in what is identified as the Maritime Change Programme. This programme will see the Base become the single operating base for the Royal Navy's nuclear submarines, and the UK centre of submarine specialisation by 2020 (1.3). The scale of this change, the report makes clear, will need investment of £1.3 billion, that has potential to stimulate new economic opportunity across local employment, investment, supply chains and infrastructure. In tandem with these opportunities are increased responsibilities and requirements within the local community in relation to provision of housing, education, health, transport, social services, leisure and sport. (1.2)

Currently, HMNB Clyde is home to 6 submarines and 8 crews along with military, engineering and logistical support. The base supports 3,400 military personnel and about the same number of civilian contract staff employed in the main by Babcock International, Lockheed Martin and Serco. (1.3)

The Maritime Change Programme will see 8,200 service personnel and families living in the local area and 1000 construction jobs created. The Programme is envisaged to require investment of £1.3 billion, and this investment "could generate and support demand for 26, 000 jobs through the supply chains" (2.3). This may be a liberal estimate, however, clearly with increased investment HMNB Clyde, opportunities for the supply chain: encompassing main contractors, subcontractors, service providers and construction, will increase.

The scoping report concludes by broadly outlining both the challenges and the opportunities associated with the Maritime Change Programme. Challenges highlighted include:

- School capacity;
- Environmental impact;
- Traffic and Transport capacity;
- Service infrastructure;
- Skills capacity.

While opportunities include:

- Combined public/MoD leisure facilities;
  - Transport interchange improvements;
  - Improved rail service and new rail halt;
  - Increased housing demand;
  - Increased local retail spend;
  - Improved integration of base occupants and employees with the local area;
  - Increased population;
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- Upskilling of local business to support base contract work;
  - Promotion of opportunities to resettle incoming naval personnel within Argyll and Bute.
  - Firms servicing the existing submarine base in England to relocate to Argyll and Bute.

### **The Buildings at Risk Register**

The Buildings at Risk Register for Scotland records three entries for Helensburgh. These are:

1. Cairndhu House, Rhu Road Lower, Helensburgh was designed by William Leiper 1871 with additions in 1902. It was built in the French Renaissance style and is a Category A Listed Building
2. Morar House, 17, Colquhoun Street Upper, Helensburgh was designed by William Leiper in 1901 and built in 1902 in the Scottish Arts and Crafts style. It is a Category A Listed Building
3. Old Millig Toll, 137, Sinclair Street, Helensburgh is a Category B Listed Building dating from the early 19th century

Restoration is in progress at both Old Millig Toll and Morar House. These buildings are therefore not at risk and in any case, are some distance from the town centre of Helensburgh.

Only Cairndhu House is still at risk. It lies some distance west of the town centre. Originally built for John Ure, flour miller, merchant and Lord Provost of Glasgow, the building was briefly a nursing home before it became vacant. A recent residential development occupies part of the grounds of the house.

### **BEFS Small Towns Initiative: Helensburgh Report, (Hague, 2013)**

The BEFS report concluded that:

*"There are other small towns in Scotland that would envy Helensburgh's fortunes in terms of its location, built environment heritage, access to jobs and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, and local housing demand".*

The report also states:

*"However, the town also has some areas of serious deprivation and affordable housing is limited. There is a risk that the population becomes increasingly elderly, and that sclerosis settles over the retail properties in the town. A future scenario of genteel decline could be sketched."*

### Threats and opportunities facing the town:

- The historic environment needs regular maintenance if its quality is to be retained and this will not be easy in an extended period of economic difficulties.
  - Planning control of new development is essential especially in relation to the waterfront and concern is expressed about the limited value of existing uses. Important to think about is the kind of tourism offer Helensburgh can make in the 21st century and match uses and designs to that.
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- The Scottish Submarine Centre, founded in 2014, is a major new attraction capitalising on Helensburgh's rich and growing association with submarine history and expertise.
  - Pressure for new housing development is entirely understandable given the attractions of the town, but this should sustain services and offset demographic ageing. The report calls for imaginative design in new housing.

#### The local economy:

- Helensburgh is a commuter town with a significant local economy. HMNB Clyde is the biggest single-site employer in Scotland. However, its local economic significance is less than it might be as the base is self-contained. Therefore there would seem to be a case for forging stronger links between the base and the local area.
- Local businesses of note include GSS Marine Services operating from Rhu Marina and the innovative Helensburgh and Lomond TV. Use of broadband and mobile technologies can help to promote places, events and culture to local people and creates significant opportunities for Helensburgh to attract and foster people working from home (or shared workspaces) but serving wider markets.

#### Retailing and the town centre:

- Retailing in Helensburgh displays many of the trends familiar across Scotland - the growth of larger retail outlets, the decline of smaller shops such as fashion or bookshops and the growth of cafes and charity shops.
- The small size of the town centre combined with overall prosperity, a small number of retail property owners confident that they can achieve high rents. Therefore only high yield businesses are likely to succeed in the town, even if this means leaving properties empty until a willing tenant comes along. Amalgamation of premises may be necessary to counter vacancy and resolve issues around unsuitable floorspace units which are unattractive to many traders.

#### Social cohesion:

- Despite the general prosperity of the town, there are two data zones in East Helensburgh that are highlighted in the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation as being in the 15% most deprived in the country, and indeed one of them is in the most deprived 5%. An ageing population may also present health challenges to Helensburgh in the future.
- The town has many voluntary organisations and an articulate population who are keen to have their say on Helensburgh's future. There is a need to harness disparate enthusiasms into a shared vision for the town.

The overall objective of this study was to provide Argyll & Bute Council with the landscape justification for the extent of the green belt in the Helensburgh and Loch Lomond area.



*Figure 24. Helensburgh Green Belt boundary.*

The study showed that Helensburgh is set within clearly identifiable landscape features on a broad hillside running down to Gare Loch. The twin peaks of Ben Bowie to the east and Tom na h-Airidh in the west form the broader setting to the town and a backdrop of open moorland and forestry. The town lies below a distinctive ridge line around the 100m contour and this together with the distinctive, linear Blackhill Plantation marks the upper boundary of the settlement. A clear undeveloped ridge above the town is significant in preserving Helensburgh's landscape setting.

The assessment determined that the majority of the green belt is of high landscape value and the main areas of the green belt between the border with West Dunbartonshire and Rhu meet the principal Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) objectives by providing a setting for the principal settlements, preventing coalescence and providing, to various degrees, a gateway to these settlements.

The proposed changes address the SPP objectives in the following ways:

- Protecting the approach to Helensburgh from the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and the setting of Helensburgh when viewed from across the Gare Loch by incorporating new areas between the A818 and the National Park Boundary.
- Improving the consistency and robustness of the green belt by rationalising its coverage to areas in which it can meet core SPP development control objectives. In all cases, these areas have been reassigned to other protective landscape designations more suited to their character and location.
- Improving the robustness of the inner green belt boundary by making recommendations for the improvement of existing boundary features.

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- Providing a framework for the controlled expansion of settlements without damaging key green belt protective functions, by assessing inner green belt sites for potential release or continued green belt protection according to a hierarchy based on clear landscape criteria.

The report concluded that in most areas the inner green belt boundary is robust and easily identifiable on the ground. However, there are eleven relatively minor areas of concern and the report contains proposals for these including new areas of tree planting to improve boundaries, particularly in the east of the town.

### **Hermitage Park Activity Plan (2015)**

This report is part of a second-round application to HLF for the Hermitage Park project. The project is taking place in Hermitage Park in the town of Helensburgh; this is the only urban park in Argyll and Bute and covers an area of approximately 3.8 hectares. It is located within the conservation area of the town and contains significant heritage features, gardens and recreational space. These require investment to enable the restoration of heritage features, to undertake repairs, to reconfigure the recreational space, to increase the number of people using the park and to engage with its heritage, enabling a better understanding of it.



*Hermitage Park*

The vision for this project is to conserve, repair and interpret this heritage, attracting more visitors to the park to learn about its history and to take part in its ongoing development. The project will offer engagement with heritage through activities which are inspired by the park's past. Skills will be developed, and volunteering will increase. Hermitage Park has played a crucial role in the regeneration of Helensburgh, making it a better place for the community and another reason to visit the town.

The report contains a summary of the current position, an assessment of strategic directions, and an action plan. The project is significant for the town - not only as an example of successful project implementation and all the work that has gone into achieving it, but also the considerable effort made by the community to make it happen and to keep it going through volunteering, learning, Friends Associations, leadership and marketing.

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### **Empty Homes Strategy**

The Local Housing Strategy identifies a key action to bring empty properties in Argyll and Bute back into use. With limited resources for new development, The Council has to make the most effective use of existing stock. The Strategy will not only help address housing need and demand but help regenerate and support sustainable communities.

Shelter Scotland estimates “an empty house can cost an owner over £7000 per annum. That includes the cost of council tax, minimal security and lost potential rental”. There are significant benefits to owners and local communities by bringing empty homes back into use:

- cost benefits to the owner if they rent or sell;
- condition of a property won't deteriorate as quickly if occupied;
- the outlook of a neighbourhood can improve reflecting on local house prices;
- the local economy benefits;
- social, education and transport amenities are utilised minimising the risk of losing services, particularly in rural areas;
- the property will be providing accommodation for someone in housing need.

Argyll and Bute Council has discretionary empty homes grants and loans available to support owners of long-term empty properties in bringing homes back into use as affordable housing.

### **Clyde Regional Marine Plan**

Marine planning, or marine spatial planning, is similar in a number of ways to town planning on land; both consider how the environment is used by people and the impacts of economic growth and development. Marine plans strive to manage resources effectively and sustainably for the economic, social and environmental needs of an area. Marine planning involves the public as well as interests such as shipping, fisheries, aquaculture, defence, transport, conservation, recreation, local authorities and central government. The marine planning process brings all these groups and interests together with the aim of creating well-coordinated policies and plans which meet the desired outcomes for the area.

This plan is an up-to-date and comprehensive review of environmental, social and economic trends and issues at the Clyde Marine Region level. It provides a baseline from which to measure progress and identify issues which need to be addressed in the region, which may be suitable for policy within the Regional Marine Plan.

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SECTION	CHAPTER	ASSESSMENT		CONFIDENCE
Physical	Climate change – impact on marine life	Concerns for the future	Many unknowns	Low/medium
	Climate change – sea level rise	↓		High
	Seabed and coastal geology and sediments	Not Applicable		Not Applicable
	Coastal change	Not Applicable		Not Applicable
	Water circulation	Not Applicable		Not Applicable
	Landscape – Seascape	Not Applicable		Not Applicable
Clean and safe	Water Framework Directive – transitional and coastal waters	↑		High
	Hazardous substances including biological effects	↔ Clyde estuary, Inner Firth, Holy Loch, Garroch Head	↑ Other lochs and outer Firth	High
	Microbiological contamination – Shellfish water protected areas	↔		High
	Microbiological contamination – Bathing waters	↑		High
	Eutrophication	↑		High
	Oil and chemical spills and accidents	↑		High
	Dissolved oxygen	↑ Inner Clyde Estuary	↔ Rest of CMR	High
	Marine litter	↓		Low/medium
	Noise	↔		Low
Healthy and biologically diverse	Habitats – Intertidal rock and sediments	↓		High
	Habitats – Sub-tidal rock	↔ Sub-tidal rock	↓ Biogenic reefs	Medium
	Habitats – Shallow and shelf subtidal sediments	↔		Medium
	Marine fish (demersal and pelagic) and shellfish	↔		Medium
	Sharks, skates and rays	↑ Basking sharks	↓ All other elasmobranchs	Medium
	Whales, dolphins and porpoises	↔		Low
	Seals	↑		High
	Seabirds and water birds	↓ Seabirds – some species	↓ Water birds – some species	High
	Protected areas – nature conservation	↔ Others	↓ Seabirds	High
	Marine non-native species	↓		Medium

Figure 25. Clyde Regional Marine Plan, summary of current assessment of CMR. (2017)

## Helensburgh Waterfront Development Masterplan - Town Centre Car Parking Review and Strategy

This report, commissioned in 2017 and completed in June 2018 is a Town Centre Car Parking Review and Strategy (TCCPRS) report in support of the proposed Helensburgh Waterfront Development (HWD) Masterplan.

The proposed HWD Masterplan is expected to include demolition of the existing Helensburgh Swimming Pool, construction of new expanded swimming pool(s) with ancillary facilities, new retail units, changes to car parking/coach parking, changes to vehicular access arrangements, enhanced pedestrian links and



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public realm improvements. The proposed HWD Masterplan is based on a need to regenerate the dated swimming pool and to mitigate against seawater flooding.

In terms of addressing the ‘shortfall’ in car parking at the Waterfront site (88 spaces) in respect of the town centre provision, ABC have already provided 158 off-street car parking spaces which could be used to offset this ‘shortfall’ as well as 48 on-street spaces. Moreover, the parking spaces demonstrate that there are other available on and off-street parking options within the town centre.

The reduction in coach parking as a consequence of the HWD Masterplan proposals have also been addressed, with the provision of two coach parking spaces and a dedicated drop off area. There is also the option to provide coach parking at the east end of Station Road.

The TCCPRS recommendations do not consider revenue or parking enforcement and it is recommended that this is considered in more detail going forward to support the HWD Masterplan (as per ABC wider review). A recommendation has also been identified to improve the operational performance of the existing Craighendran Railway Station car park, through white lining delineation.

### **Royal Navy & Royal Marine Welfare Scotland, Community Needs Analysis 17/18**

This report was prepared as part of RNRMW Scotland’s annual analysis of community profile and needs. The information in this report was intended to be used to influence future community engagement priorities for RNRMW Scotland staff.

Helensburgh & Lomond has an actively supportive service community which is highlighted not only by the number of RNRMW projects and community groups underway but also mirrored in the discussion/strengths identified by the community members themselves.

The main concerns are community outreach to families who reside outside in the main SFA estate, outreach with the single service/inliers community at HMNB Clyde and the improvement of communication, integration between micro-community groups and wider civilian groups within Helensburgh & Lomond and the flow of information to all community groups/members.

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