



How can we make the Intra High Street better and bring the history and heritage back to life?
Open Space session 24th October 2020

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GJG Consultancy supported by evaluation and research specialists Ruth Melville Research (RMR) and The Audience Agency (TAA) are working with Medway Council to develop community engagement in the High Street Heritage Action Zones (HSHAZ) scheme running from Sun Pier to Star Hill. This scheme is backed by government funding, and aims to help with the recovery of local high streets, from regenerating historic buildings to helping to engage local communities through art and cultural projects.

Forced to be online due to the restrictions in place for Covid-19, almost 60 people turned up to take part in the online Open Space workshop. The overarching question for the morning was “How can we make the Intra High Street better and bring the history and heritage back to life?”

The online Open Space session was hosted on Zoom as an opportunity for deeper engagement in the HSHAZ. The session was designed for wider and less formally linked parts of the community, including more engaged members of the public, to engage in the theme setting for the HSHAZ and to explore the themes where greater community engagement might be needed. The workshop used Open Space Technology (OST).

OST¹ is a great way for groups to think, talk and take action together. It can work for as few as five people, and as many as 5000. Participants self-organise to create their own agenda on the day, allowing a dynamic and immediate response to the issues at hand. The OST process allows free-flowing conversations about the things that really matter to the people in the room. Open Space Technology can shift cultures both towards a more responsible and more pragmatic outlook. Over the last 25 years OST has been used across the world in an incredible range of contexts: to design aeroplane doors, resolve land disputes, address economic, environmental, social, political and artistic issues of every kind. Harrison Owen invented the process.

GJG Consultancy will use this Open Space to help develop a hierarchy of needs that will be addressed through the HSHAZ steering group and inform future consultation, as well as informing the setting up and themes that can be discussed with a new Cultural Consortium.

We hope that those who attended will use the energy and passion from the day to develop their ideas, find partners and initiate new schemes, plans and ideas of their own.

Thank you to everyone who came and gave so generously of their time, passion and belief that together we can use the HSHAZ to make the Intra High Street better and bring its history and heritage back to life.

¹ <https://www.devotedanddisgruntled.com/about-open-space-technology>

A rough sketch of what happened on the day:

There were nearly 60 people in our convening circle. It was hard for everyone to engage with the technology and a few people had troubling joining the session.

The facilitator began with an invitation to do what everyone had already been doing; looking around the Zoom, saying hello and seeing who was there, signalling good morning or using the CHAT function.

The facilitator then restated the context for the meeting: the High Street Heritage Action Zones scheme, backed by government funding, aims to help with the recovery of local high streets, from regenerating historic buildings to helping to engage local communities through art and cultural projects.

The theme for our Open Space was “How can we make Intra High Street better and bring the history and heritage back to life?”

There was a short story of how we got here with slides from Anne Knight, Principal Economic Development Officer at Medway Council (anne.knight@medway.gov.uk), and a short film from Rob Flood introducing the Ebb & Flow Festival and the Chatham Intra Heritage Action Zone.

We were reminded that everyone in the Zoom was there because they care about some aspect of this theme — and have chosen to be here, to learn from and contribute to the work at hand.

We used Mural as a virtual noticeboard where we set out our agenda. It started empty but within the first hour it was filled with discussion topics related to the theme. These breakout session topics were proposed by the participants, the people sitting in the Zoom call. These issues were typed up by our team and added to the Mural board and then assigned to a virtual break out space and a time (from a pre-arranged set of space/time choices).

Once the board was full, we broke out into the different digital spaces to discuss the topics. We had a few issues getting everyone into the right rooms. However, after a few attempts and signalling with fingers we were able to start the first session.

After the first session, which lasted forty five minutes, we had a fifteen minute break.

Conveners of discussion topics and note takers added their typed notes or photographs of notes directly to the Mural board where all participants could see what had been discussed.

Then we started the second session. At the end, we brought everyone back together and talked about about the next steps...

The notes that follow in this report are those recorded in the breakout sessions - they are the opinions of those present. Sometimes they are not complete or full but give an impression and a summary of some of the concerns and issues that the High Street Heritage Action Zone will need to address and be aware of as it looks to develop its plans and implement its projects.

The Next Steps

Following this Open Space meeting, a number of steps are already happening.

Cultural Consortium

A Cultural Consortium is being formed. The Consortium will be made up of arts organisations and community groups which operate in the local area. Working with Medway Council, the Cultural Consortium will be responsible for using available grant funding from Historic England and The Arts Council to create an arts and culture offering that will encourage people to enjoy their local High Street as well as set a long-term vision for what arts and culture might look like there. The programme of art and cultural offerings over the next few years is to be designed and commissioned by the community and for the community, celebrating the High Street in whatever way the community sees fit.

GJG Consultancy are hosting three meetings to help set up the Consortium. At these meetings, we will work with you to create a vision for what the future of culture on the High Street might look like, how the Consortium will be run and how we ensure we consult with everybody needed to make it properly represent the community. Collectively, we will look to support the writing of the grant application with ideas and information so that there can be funds available to deliver our ambitions.

These are the three dates for initial meetings which we are hosting in advance of submitting the funding application. They are:

12th November 1-3pm
26th November 7-8.30pm
3rd December 1-3pm

Further Consultation

In addition to the Cultural Consortium, the High Street Heritage Action Zone steering group will use this report and its own face to face and stakeholder consultation to define a series of themes where further consultation can inform and develop the project. We propose to identify a number of key themes or strands that those interested in engaging in the Intra HAZ can coalesce around.

These themes will be guided by the Open Space participants' notes on identifying the appropriate groups for more detailed consultation and engagement. GJG will help facilitate the setting up of these groups, supporting the development of a set of terms of reference for each group, developing a vision for each theme, and understanding how it will feed into and develop the action plan.

If you have any questions relating to the project or would like to get involved, please contact the project team by emailing HAZ@medway.gov.uk. Or you can contact info@gjgconsultancy.com



Open Space first session.

Agenda topics for session 1:

1	How do we make this area a desirable one where people will want to live, want to work and want to visit? / What should the identity of the area be?
2	How are we going to ensure that the work we do is embedded in the public realm with legacy?
3	What do we provide for the student populations - accommodation and night-life? / How do we engage students in the designing of the project?
4	How can we ensure that regeneration doesn't lead to gentrification?
5	How should Medway Council support projects and people in the area? / How can the libraries support the project?
6	How can / should we rebrand and rename the area?
7	Should we have a community centre with aspects of community heritage and facilities that the communities can all use for our health and wellbeing?
8	How do we use walking and cycling to boost the economies of local business? / How can we encourage people to linger in Intra-Chatham? / How can we advertise Intra-Chatham on Rochester High Street?

1. Making it desirable

Martin: How do we make this area a desirable one where people will want to live, want to work and want to visit?

Robert: What should the identity of the area be?

Vince: How do we ensure that people moving into area know what Intra is? and that they know they can do everything they need here?

In the 'name of the area' group, we talked a lot about the look and feel of the area - how it looks a little unloved generally and perhaps that making it look nicer and more welcoming is even more important than what it's called.

- 1 – We want to be the Lanes in Brighton / Old Town in Margate / Folkestone Creative Quarter and we absolutely can be
- 2 – Need to be balancing the tension between residents and nightlife
- 3 – Needs a level of expectation management - this isn't going to happen overnight
- 4 – Cultural quarter ambitions need to have priority over housing
- 5 – People need to feel safe (does it get missed as it isn't Rochester or Chatham?)
- 6 – Need for community structures in particular an Intra Business Forum (which I believe has already started to be formed up) and also an Intra Residents Association
- 7 – Recognising the need to have both Young People and Older People as part of the conversation
- 8 – UCA must be part of the conversation - they need to be more outward looking
- 9 – Need to recognise potential pressures of Government White Paper on planning although being a conservation zone assists with that
- 10 – The management of HMOs will be important moving forward.
- 11 – Let's have more tree planting and greening please
- 12 – Look at good community examples elsewhere like "Guerrilla Knitting" on bollards to help (sometimes it's the little things)
- 13 – Some examples of residents, particular those from other countries, being made to feel unwelcome in the community – need to be aware of that in moving forward.

2. Legacy of this work

Janet: How are we going to ensure that the work we do is embedded in the public realm with legacy?

Digital technology developed to supplement and augment user experiences and business & cultural organisations

Embedded histories on buildings and in public realm - surprising & delighting, catching the eye, something new every time

Leaflet with history of the area - digital & analogue

How can we embed the legacy of the cultural & regeneration work into improving the public realm?

Lots of very interesting buildings that are unintelligible to external visitors

Safety is a serious concern for the area, especially around walking

How can we make the area desirable for young people – what possibilities are there for young people, affordable housing?

The area needs attention

Beautiful examples of historic buildings

Information about the history is needed

Two serious fires in Chatham, exploring the legacy and rebuilding of the area

Currently no way of connecting with the history of the area

Has as much history as Rochester but less known

Unitarian church has a large wall that could house a mural of the history of the area (Fort Pitt, Social History – hunger marchers)

Blue Plaques on the wall / information panels

Always been a marginalised area

Most unsafe area of town historically

Music halls & marginalised communities

Irina has compiled 15 years of research

Very creative area – hub for creative businesses

We should acknowledge the moving boundaries of Chatham moving into Rochester

Very hard to define the boundaries historically

Public Realm improvements – embedding into pavements and on buildings (etched pavings etc.)

Young people need technology to access QR codes /shared cloud space

Allowing businesses to share what is going on

Embedding tech in realm

Geo-tagging informations

Maps – updating existing guides

You can easily drive down the High Street and not know about the river

Hard landscaping that shows we are riverfront area
Wharves along the Intra are extremely important
Traditional space for dock workers going to the pub
Great topical paintings of the work at the dockyards in the 1700's
How busy the river was
Have painting screened on walls
Visual arts responses needed – example murals in British Colombia Canada
Encouraging use of Sun Pier as an active pier
Using phone technology to show before and after
Connecting with students to create augmented reality videos
Multitude of layers of voices, communities and public realm that should be shared and explored

THREE CLEAR LEGACY IDEAS/OPTIONS/REQUESTS

1. Leaflet with the history of the area available in digital and analogue format
2. Embedded histories in the buildings, pavings, public art responses / 'surprising and delighting' / Eye-catching (not just another blue plaque) / Something to find new every time
3. Digital technology developed to supplement and augment user experiences and businesses and cultural organisations

The names and emails of the people who were part of this discussion:

Janet Fischer – janetfischeric@gmail.com

Irina – Medway libraries

Beryl – local resident living on High Street, working with Unitarian church

Mina – local resident living on High Street

Simon – Councillor

Sam Fentiman-Hall

Margarita – 51 Visual Arts

3. Students - including them in the design and providing for them

Simon: What do we provide for the student populations - accommodation and nightlife?

Phil: How are we engaging students in designing the project?

School trips to London - Why?

Low engagement from students at events Sun Pier House

Some pockets of students at Loco Poco

To engage students in our culture and events not just getting pissed

To create festivals and events in our road. "Carnivals" - so we are highlighted as a location

Creation of a new Town Centre Forum - just for Intra

Youth engagement / consultants to work with us / sit on an advisory board

Maps in the student halls / flyers

Create more engagement on the curriculum to attend local events / exhibitions - learn how to talk to us

Stop helping the London Drain Effect

4 Regeneration without gentrification

Jane: How can we ensure the regeneration doesn't lead to gentrification?

It was flagged up that Chatham House to Star Hill is in need of more attention, for example the cafe on the corner of Star Hill is/was often well used but is falling into disrepair.

Hope comes with this process and a determination to make this HAZ project an example of how openness and community involvement can make this work across the towns.

Will grants to landlords businesses come with conditions that protect the investment and the communities? Real concern of being priced out.

Concern about façadism. There are concerns that facades of buildings only will be retained.

Keen to acknowledge the 'protected characteristics of spaces, places and people' - there is a rich cultural diversity not necessarily reflected in the group today.

We should ensure a balance between cultural, arts, shops, community, nightlife & non-arts activity to keep it a dynamic diverse real place that's interesting to come to because the community feel a sense of belonging and in turn visitors feel welcome. Not to fall into a trap of art-washing or monopolies of one thing. A physical meeting space as mentioned by Hilary etc in other discussion.

Talked about the area as a connector or intersection between good and bad perceptions of the Medway Towns. Where Chatham is perceived as undesirable and Rochester desirable.

"wiping away the old buildings is the worst thing that can happen"

5. How can the council support?

Robyn: How should Medway Council support projects and people in the area?

Irina: How can the libraries support the project?

One of the errors the Council has made is abolish locally based Community Wardens but we are where we are: there should be a 1st to go to/ Council person for this area.

Talked a bit in the 'Name of the Area' group. The HSHAZ project will only fund consultation and a plan that will inform future work in the area - not the work itself (apart from the capital works outlined by Anne). But Regeneration and Arts Teams and feedback to other council teams can inform decisions about how to use existing budgets to meet the wants and needs of the area while taking care of normal council business, e.g. maintenance, cleaning, replacing street furniture, etc.

Nobody joined me in the room but do feel free to follow up on this at future meetings or via direct contact haz@medway.gov.uk

6. What's it called?

The Dead Pigeon: Do we need a rebrand? What is the name of the area?

Not keen to call it a Cultural, Creative or Heritage Quarter - lots of towns already have that - it's nothing new. Should let it organically develop its own reputation for what it is, rather than forcing it - it's too contrived otherwise.

Want the area to develop reputation as a destination in its own right, not an extension of Chatham or Rochester High Street, or a route through.

Bryan: It's Chatham Intra.

Intra Old High Street was suggested.

7. A community centre

Hilary: Should we have a community centre with aspects of community heritage and facilities that the communities can all use for our health and wellbeing?

Could use a space like the commercial building last used as a church at 259-261 Rochester High Street for example or similar large space.

I would like to see a community space for the LGBTQIA+ Community who historically have been based in the INTRA area. If any premises along the High Street become available and are suitable for meetings and activities where we can have a LGBTQIA+ Heritage centre.
Hilary Cooke, MGSD Centre.

This would be a community space run for the provision of LGBTQIA+ services and services for the wider community. It would be a safe space for minority communities and a centre to build social cohesion across all communities in Medway.

If would act as a Health & Wellbeing Centre, Providing
Information
Activities,

It would be accessible including Accessible language and languages.

It could provide a history space for the LGBTQIA+ community looking at people's history in the area.

I would be a Fun place providing help and support to people of all ages.

It would need to be self sustaining generating an income with the space utilised by the community as a performance, meeting venue and social café etc.

We would like to build the centre by bringing the community with us to develop the services they need locally.

8. Access and movement in the areas - cycling and walking in particular

Tomos: How do we use walking and cycling to boost the economies of local business?

Economy

How can we encourage people to linger in Intra-Chatham?

How to advertise Intra-Chatham on Rochester High Street?

Cycle users and pedestrians are more likely to stop to make purchases than motor users

Stakeholders

Arriva, Network Rail, residents, elderly, visually impaired, and disabled people, cycle users, businesses

Access

One way system?

Restrict through-traffic using 10mph

Movement of traffic is key - should we close it for through traffic or even put in a carbon neutral tram?

Long-term idea: river buses for Medway?

Bus gate in the middle of the street to prevent rat-running?

Don't forget that existing businesses and their clients also need access to local car parking which is not too restrictive on time to allow them to access the business services. If access for cars etc is prevented to existing car parks it could lead to businesses losing custom or looking to relocate to survive

Disability and visual impairment

Benches and places to rest

Parking access is needed but can create problems for the disabled and partially sighted community in some areas

Brian: ease of access for everybody (accessibility - clear walkway without curbs, cycle track)

Guide dogs and wheelchair users have difficulty navigating parked cars

Connectivity

Connectivity from Rochester High Street to Intra-Chatham

Larger buses can be intrusive and hazardous. Replace with smaller 'Hopper' buses?

Investigation into the high street - A2 junction for easier movement of pedestrians and cycles?

Anna: Movement - how improve movement for pedestrians/cycling and improve traffic?



Open Space second session.

Agenda topics for session 2:

1	Would like to see events and acknowledge those who are forgotten in history but contributed so much to what Medway towns have. / Whose history are we capturing and how are we going to capture those of people we don't hear?
2	What do we need to do about access, lighting, seating to ensure that people can use the area and appreciate eg the river?
3	How do we make that vision stack up economically whilst keeping hold of vision? Who do we need to work with?
4	How does the project use and address the river?
5	How do we raise awareness of this area nationally - linked to 2025 UK City of Culture bid too?
6	What are the possibilities for young people to move into, live and work in the area?
7	How can we improve character of area - make it a hub for creative arts?
8	Can we have / do we need a town centre forum / residents association / business association specifically for this area?

1. Hidden Voices

Irina: Would like to see events and acknowledge those who are forgotten in history but contributed so much to what Medway towns have

Janet: Whose history are we capturing and how are we going to capture those of people we don't hear?

Make sure the methods for reaching out to and approaching people are right for that group/ that person. Draw on existing contacts and relationships. Conversations. Find out what is of interest to different groups / people in the area and find the hook that makes the project/ area relevant to them.

Community mapping process has not been carried out for Chatham intra.

Consider unconscious bias, unfamiliar language, and the importance of lived experience when engaging with people. They may not be familiar with what you're talking about, and may feel isolated or that their voice is not heard if you approach a conversation on only your own terms. Dig deep with empathy in gathering feedback.

Military history is significant and shouldn't be forgotten.

Should be sharing assets from across communities eg. Sikh films.

Important to amplify current voices and historic voices.

Very important that we look at creative engagement practices to connect. Also central to this is understanding the intersection of individuals with their lived experience and the built environment/community environment.

Chatham Intra focused not Rochester focused.

Missing voices: African, Caribbean, Eastern European, Thai, Asian, Chinese, LGBTQIA+, 60's migrants, those with access needs, disabilities, mental health needs. Critical to all of this is bringing voices with lived experience in a meaningful and non-tokenistic way.

Jas: It's hard for all communities to be involved and come together if they don't have the same relationship with spaces and don't have a seat at the table for dialogue. Work needs to be done first before a fully inclusive unified community audience can be realised.

Wants to connect across different voices

Problem with open spaces is they include those who are engaged

Lots of people do not have digital access

Need to find ways of communicating with other people

Clearly hugely experienced people living in Medway but not necessarily working here that need to be brought together and their skills utilised here

Need to acknowledge the military history of the area

Intra is not really a boundary but appears to be one

People want to know more about what is going to happen

Not a lot of evidence of the history of the area

Area feels forgotten

Need to develop footfall

Include the whole of the High Street in the regeneration, not just the station end

There is significant power in the community, collaboration and healing especially around structural inequalities like racism

Important the whole neighbourhoods are included and we reach out to hear the voices of those people

Missing Voices

- African / Caribbean diasporas
- Eastern Europeans
- Thai
- Asian
- Chinese community
- LGBTQIA+
- 60's migrants
- Those with access needs
- Disabled people
- Those with mental health concerns

Need to bring those voices to the table as lived experiences not representative

There is focused research going on into the LGBTQIA+ community

Very few street festivals in the Intra

- Medway Pride
- Chinese New Year
- Why is the intra area not included in the big Rochester festivals like sweeps.

Council needs to be more engaged in this space

City of Rochester Society has guided tours in Rochester High Street but everything stops at Star Hill.

They want to bring more people down into Intra

Marginalised communities are not centred on the castle.

Pedestrianising the High Street - Raised before with Medway Council – told it was too expensive.

Controlled traffic is possible - This is key to getting pedestrians down the High Street.

Mini-buses instead of city buses.

Possible to close High Street on weekends only or festival days?

Re-routing buses on weekends.

Understanding that not everyone wants to talk

More exploration of creative outreach – speech bubbles example given by Xtina

Can we engage directly with people?

Important to understand their frame of mind and their position within the community. Do they feel the spaces/community includes them?

Very important to avoid tokenism

Understanding the intersection of communities relationship with civic spaces and their lived experience

Need a serious look at how we are reaching out to users of the High Street

Are we/how are we sharing assets?

Gathering the histories of the area through stories and research.

Important to find underrepresented voices from the past and the present

Key is to open the conversation and just listen

Find out what is relevant for them in the space

Has to be a reason for interest/hook

There are ways around cold reaching out and running into barriers

Should be drawing on personal networks as a gentler way in

Robyn & Arts team happy to be connectors and join the dots

No community mapping has been done

The process has been started by Arts officers

Some mapping pre-Covid was funded by ACE

Arts events need to be broadcast better

Jewish community is very active in schools outreach

Sharing assets from across communities. There is excellent footage from the Sikh community when they moved the temple.

Should we not be looking to bring all the communities together into one big community?

The names and emails of the people who were part of this discussion:

Janet Fischer – janetfischeric@gmail.com

Irina – Medway libraries

Xtina Lamb – Ebb & Flow Festival

Robert Flood – Chair of City of Rochester Society

Kate Mechedou – Resident of Luton, Ms Bakers Medway Theatre Company

Joanna – Local resident, blue badge guide in London

Rosemary Dymond – City of Rochester guide, lives in a Dickensian village, retired head teacher

Jas Dhillon – Local resident, member of local arts community, Indian diaspora, marketing director for Whitechapel Gallery, volunteers with a homeless shelter, trustee for Margate Arts

Richard Collins – Business owner in Intra

Robyn Goldsmith – Medway Council Arts Officer

2. Access, Lighting, other practical issues

Robyn: What do we need to do about access, lighting, seating to ensure that people can use the area and appreciate eg the river?

The High Street can get dark at night

Parking and unloading

Jody: practical issue of unloading/parking issues

Parking restrictions feel too strict

Footway

Pavements can be extremely narrow in places

Pavements are dirty and unclean

Businesses

Having space for tables and chairs outside is key, especially post-Covid

3. Keeping the vision while stacking up economically

Martin: How do we make that vision stack up economically whilst keeping hold of vision? Who do we need to work with?

Purposefully get Network Rail & Mapeley Estates (Anchorage House) round the table and ask them how they can contribute.

Incremental change is important

Soft touch social policing to help issues with antisocial behaviour

Regeneration not gentrification

The frontage of the buildings is important, people need to be held accountable for peeling paint, damaged frontages etc

Fixing the pavement, clearing the rubbish

How do we get the brand out there, example, how do we attract a Shoreditch based architectural studio.

Social media campaign to make the area attractive.

We need a clear cut identity.

Clearing business waste, have a designated area that everyone chips into?

Businesses that are not in keeping with the conservation area, do they need to change?

Should the area be treated more of a commercial area more than a residential area?

How to make the Economy stack up?

Choice-

economy must be based on character and opportunities of the existing area- not wholesale large redevelopment of large blocks of flats. Reuse buildings and area.

The future is a Cultural/Creative Quarter of small businesses but has got to be viable – so that properties pay for themselves and the economy of the area is self-sustaining.

Opportunities:

Covid- work and live local

Working from home or smaller shared workspaces

Creatives slowly establishing themselves. Area is changing. How to nurture this?

Vibrant arts community in Medway and the University of the Creative Arts just up the hill.

Student community – could be attracted to an 'alternative' area – cheaper restaurants, bars, music venues that would sit well amongst creative uses.

Has been a focus for the LGBT community in the past. Could be again if it maintains key elements of its character.

The group felt this could be a buzzy youthful area. Got to be cool.

Ideas:

Establish a big creative hub in a warehouse of mortuary- big studio/ shared facilities- 3D printing etc plus smaller studios/ café. Emphasis on making things

Business incentive scheme- advice hub for small business and start ups- marketing/ branding/ selling, running the business. Cheap space to rent made available.

Location for a Student Union

A campus for the University of the Creative Arts - or workspace to help former students into business. BIG OPPORTUNITY

Co-working hub giving access to admin services, printers, wifi , business address and email handling, cafe.

Fantastic former brewery complex- easy to market this on its own and as a location for businesses- The Old Brewery.

Making it happen:

Partnership with the University of Creative Arts, other Arts organisations (Nucleus etc.)

Council should lease empty shops space from absentee/ can't bothered landlords- re rent it out to small business and creatives

Grants for bringing workspace back into use with possible option for Council/ other organisations to lease. Grants could be small - replacing asbestos roofs, installing WC's power/ water and wifi.

Reuse of mortuary as a community hub.

351 is a key landmark- finding a future for this is crucial.

Role of Council in Compulsory Purchase Ordering' derelict properties in order to reuse.

Partnership with owners of Railway arches/ house-builders. Also major land owners who hold the key to the development of the area- greys, Featherstone's.

In anticipation of local plan workspace targets not being met- Dedicated Community Infrastructure levy for provision of workspace in the area to be applied to wider Chatham regeneration area. Section106 for developers in wider area who do not provide workspace on their own sites (workspace/ office/ mixed use Supplementary Planning Documents) to be produced by the Council to justify this. With a bit of savvy and determination A LOT of money could have been squeezed out of Quinn.

Encourage micropubs

Marketing the area is important – not nationally or internationally but at least locally and Kent-wide. Market its unique character and opportunities- especially at key milestones - opening of creative hub for example. The name INTRA should be promoted- it suggests somewhere in-between, somewhere alternative.

Partnerships

Universities, University of the Creative Arts

Arts organisations

Major landowners- Featherstones/ Greys - must be aware that its not all about maximising housing numbers but preserving what's best and creating mixed use schemes - a quid-pro-quo for development. The Council must lay down development expectations.

Owners of railway arches

Many companies are used to running co-working space - seek a partnership with one - even if it is just a five year lease of Featherstone properties.

Role of Council in Compulsory Purchase Order-ing derelict and empty property and putting them to new uses with co-working businesses, University of Creative Arts etc.

Essentials

The area is run down but has its own unique character. Its future depends on maintaining and enhancing its character - not destroying it, and managing the area well to make it safe and accessible

Planning policies and Supplementary Planning Documents, adoption of Conservation Area Appraisal to ensure sympathetic new development and maintenance of character.

Grants for doing up buildings, rigorous enforcement action over litter/ derelict buildings etc.

Maintenance and enhancement of public realm. Make all alleyways to the river accessible to the public as a condition of any planning permission, arts projects - murals on buildings, multi-coloured bollards etc.

The area must be safely and easily accessible for residents and visitors - safer cycling, widened pavements, alternative pedestrian routes through backland area.

Area should be safe - make it busier, better street lighting police etc.

Although not fashionable in planning circles - car parks are essential if visitors and businesses are going to be attracted. Maintain existing car parks and most of on street parking (apart from build-outs to make egress from alleyways safe). Consider business parking on-site.

Manage conflicts of uses - night-time economy versus residential amenity - licensing hours, location of venues - area forum, residents associations etc.

IT WILL TAKE MANY YEARS TO TURN AROUND – BE PATIENT. BUT ITS WORTH IT.

BOTTOM LINE- MULTI PRONGED APPROACH - must be regarded as a key historic regeneration area with huge potential - not just a place for building conservation geeks. The potential to reinvent INTRA and put it and Medway on the map is HUGE.

4. Use and access of the river

Jane: How do we include the river - environmentally and in terms of repair to wharves?

Simon: How do we ensure use of river and access to the river?

Talk to those who use the river - please! The Council are not the best people to know about this side of business/culture and tourism.

- How do we open up access to river?
- Pedestrianised/cycle path essential
- Current river walk starting in front of Sun Pier House toward Rochester a 'dead space' with antisocial behaviour.
- There used to be a sandy/gravel beach for swimmers on the foreshore
- Brian Corbett has been advocating for a Heritage Harbour to be based in Medway - could Chatham Intra be the home for this?
- Sun Pier is one of the only access points for the whole river - this should be promoted
- Can we attract heritage vessels to the area - paddle steamer Waverley would be a throw back to history of area with Medway Steam Packet Co.
- Medway Council already contacted about creating an active wharf in front of Sun Pier House - mix of floating allotments, good quality houseboats and heritage vessels (Thames sailing barges/traditional fishing smacks/tugs/steamships) - as seen in Paris.
- Developments bring opportunities - Strood-Chatham river ferry?
- Who are the landowners?
- Need to engage with developers - how to encourage them to invest in river access?
- Need to consult houseboat community
- How does the river fit into future events? Council Run River Festival in Rats Bay was not a great success.
- What are the 'protected characteristics' of the river frontage we want to preserve?
- Support for Riverside Market - use Sun Pier? Sun Pier House pre-Covid started an arts market
- Environmental impact on river - plenty of bins required! Need to be able to keep foreshore clean - access is currently difficult.
- Clean foreshore to make it useable - large debris (shopping trollies etc) make it unusable for vessels - Peel Ports responsibility?
- Sail cargo - three Thames barges are now set up for carrying over 100 tons of cargo - they are looking for wharves to distribute their loads - could Intra be one? Good for green credentials

Potential partners:²

Living River Foundation, Towards Plastic Free Medway - facebook page, and the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership at Riverside Country Park

<https://www.facebook.com/towardsplasticfreemedway/photos/a.117603116249097/356061122403294/>

² This note was moved to this group as deemed the most relevant area.

5. National awareness and UKCC

Paul: How do we raise awareness of this area nationally - linked to 2025 UK City of Culture bid too?

- Incremental change – small improvements lead to gradual change – garbage, sidewalks, light touch (social) policing
- Branding / identity “ –The Old High Street – Intra”
- Social media - How to improve?
- How to attract people, small businesses?
- Area treated by the Council as a residential area – makes events, etc difficult
- Planning is disjointed - Listed vs non-listed

6. Young people and the area

Margherita: What are the possibilities for young people to move into, live and work in the area?

Council is well placed to connect youth organisations and youth projects to the area/project.

We talked about the real issue with INTRA, which is lack of jobs and no kudos, for young people who want to move in from the universities and create the vibrancy needed in the area. We recognised that it is not just a problem for INTRA but for the whole of Medway.

For this to happen, the local small organisations and business of people like us that come from the local universities and are the very few that have not moved to London and do work hard to create jobs for young people (and vibrancy), should be the first to be supported because we do in turn support the students to stay here by giving them a job in an environment that is relevant to them and their studies.

It is very straightforward economy and way to implement 'vibrancy'!

If we go under, Medway loses another bit of 'vibrancy' and credibility as a cultural economy place... This is a lot more important than changing the name or adding a muralyoung people do not mind a bit of rough edge, they need jobs to stay here, like all of us! and they will create the funkiness, once they are settled here.

If the idea is to clean up the area and gentrify it where rent will be higher and houses unaffordable to buy, and business rates impossible, INTRA will become something not for the people from the area, or for young people, but a more corporate thing where wealthy businesses will move in.....like they did in the Dockyard....

No young people stick around the Dockyard, it feels very money orientated only, definitely no funky vibrancy, not young people friendly, it is all in the grip of the dockside and universities...

Regeneration should first of all enable small businesses to flourish, enable them to move in very cheaplyand let us to do our thing and the young to be young!

7. Hub for Creative arts

Anna: How can we improve character of area - hub for creative arts?

Important to acknowledge the existing creative venues as the core of a hub: the spaces of INTRA Arts, Mess Room, Sun Pier House, HL Darkroom to name a few, already house and organise a wide range of workshops, studios, exhibitions etc.

Priority to local community

Notes:

1. Get the UCA involved with the area and the arts community
2. Get arts students engaged with the area, not just to walk through.
3. Allocate spaces for creative people:
 - students
 - young artists
 - established artists
 - teachers
 - adults willing to start a creative activity

Spaces to create art, sell art, learn/provide art courses. ideally the Council taking over empty spaces to offer creative people even on a temporary basis for open pop-up art spaces.

Provide also business support.

4. Allocate a major space to host arts exhibitions in addition to point 3. spaces.
5. Turn abandoned building not easy to allocate in visually engaged spaces with temporary murals, photography to apply on walls or shop windows.
6. Link to digital art platforms to provide information about the street artistic features and buildings, inform on events and opportunities, as well as info on artists' studios and artworks.

8. Town Centre Forum for this area

Heather: Do we need a town centre forum / residents association / business association for this area?

Vince Maple / Heather Burgess / Stuart Fromount / Mandy Daws

We do have a business WhatsApp group if anyone would like to join. We are one of the admins of the group so just drop us a message at The Dead Pigeon page if you wish to join and we'd gladly add you.

Shared marketing plan and shared paid positions to support our business and events programme. Clear brand / name / place-making

Business support inc. logistical support and network - BINS! and litter / lighting

Encourage collaboration - unite the businesses
events / markets / festivals / deals

BID (Business Improvement District) - look at as a model and community structures <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/business-improvement-districts>

Neighbourhood plan to guide the new housing developments and regeneration plans

Play to our strengths of arts / heritage / artists / creatives to self-fund projects & improvements for the community

Be proactive at 'improving' the area without reliance on the Council.

Find the time to launch this, some businesses are exhausted and facing closure - and this is not a priority