



## strategy

Tuck's Plot and Brookdale Terrace



### 9.1 Guiding principles

The vision is **challenging but eminently achievable**, and we believe that it reflects the aspirations and values of the community which were expressed at the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event. The scale of what is proposed is ambitious, but no more so than the programmes that have been delivered in Weymouth, Bridlington, Whitehaven and many other coastal towns in the past decade. It reflects the community's shared recognition that small scale tinkering is not enough. That has been the approach in Dawlish for years and it has not made any difference. Indeed the CABA report, *Shifting Sands*, has argued that seaside regeneration needs to be more ambitious: **bigger, better and more inventive**.

The people of Dawlish recognise the **need for change**: the town centre is under-performing and it falls short of the expectations of local people and visitors; action is needed to break out of the **cycle of decline**. However, they do not want change at any price. People are disappointed with the state of the town centre, but they have a **passionate commitment** to – and affection for – the town. They do not want Dawlish to change beyond recognition; rather, they want this strategy to:

- **celebrate** what is best and most distinctive about the town



- **rediscover** attributes that have been neglected and abused
- **create** new assets which will enhance the town and promote its prosperity, and
- **change** the town centre with tact and sensitivity so that it is attractive to a wider range of people.

It is also important to emphasise that the vision of Dawlish Tomorrow cannot be achieved by administrative *diktat*. New shops, restaurants, businesses and property will be created by **entrepreneurs and investors**, not the public sector. **Community and voluntary effort** have a vital role to play in championing the vision and devising and delivering cultural projects, the carnival and other events.

It follows that one of the key roles of the strategy and master plan is to create a **climate of confidence** in Dawlish. Potential investors want to see evidence that the town knows where it is going, has an exciting vision that they can buy into and a plan for making it happen. At present, the town is locked into a **downward spiral**: poor trading conditions have resulted in business failures and underinvestment in business premises. The resulting air of shabbiness and neglect undermines the confidence of surviving town centre traders and is a barrier to prospective new investors. The problem is compounded because the public realm – streets, parks and open spaces – looks



the historic station environment



tired. Regenerating the Lawn and creating Piermont Square are two **flagship projects** which will transform perceptions of the town, attract new visitors and create the conditions which will encourage residents, visitors and businesses to **invest in Dawlish**.

**Public sector funding** from a variety of sources will be required to deliver the major public realm projects described in the master plan. Competition for these resources is intense, and there is no guarantee that Dawlish will get all that it asks for. But the pre-conditions for success in the **regeneration game** are well known:

- a robust, **evidence-based analysis** of conditions and prospects in the town centre
- a clear and compelling **vision** of the town's future direction
- evidence of **community involvement** in the visioning process
- the support of key **partners and stakeholders**
- a challenging but practicable **action plan**
- a robust **funding strategy**, and
- a **delivery partnership** led by a skilled and energetic professional.

## 9.2 Strategic objectives

The town centre regeneration strategy is based on **5 key objectives**:

- encouraging more people, and a more diverse range of people, to **choose Dawlish town centre** for shopping, eating out and entertainment
  - success will be measured by (a) an increase in the **number, frequency and duration of visits** to the town centre by local residents, day visitors and tourists, and (b) a shift in the **demographic balance** of visitors, with more visits by younger people and higher income groups
  
- raising the level of **consumer expenditure** on goods and services
  - success will be measured by increases in (a) average **expenditure per visit**, and (b) the **turnover and profitability** of town centre businesses
  
- **diversifying the economy** of the town centre
  - success will be measured by increases in (a) the number of jobs in sectors other than retail, tourism and caring, and (b) average weekly earnings



above: the east section of Dawlish Water below: mid section of Dawlish Water



- **attracting private sector investment** to the town centre
  - success will be measured by increases in (a) business start-ups and relocations, (b) investment in existing businesses, and (c) the number and value of property developments
  
- mobilising the **knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of the community**
  - success will be measured by increases in (a) the number of active **community projects and initiatives**, and (b) the number of people **participating** in them.

## 9.3 Spatial structure

The **spatial structure** of Dawlish town centre is based on two main elements, Dawlish Water and the seafront. Each has a linear form and both contain distinct **zones**, shown in Figure 9-1:

- **Dawlish Water**: the river flows through the centre of the town and decants into the sea at Tuck's Plot, close to the railway station; the river corridor comprises 5 character areas:
  - (1) the river enters the town from the west; the original village grew up here, and these **western**



**approaches** form a transitional zone between town and countryside

- (2) next the river flows through the **Manor Grounds**: tucked away at the back of the town, this is an attractive and well-used neighbourhood park
- (3) beyond the Manor Grounds, Dawlish Water passes through an **urban corridor** of mixed character: on the right bank, the hospital and Barton Hill car park; on the left bank, the backs of densely packed cottages on Brook Street
- (4) the river now enters the **heart of Dawlish**, with the Lawn and the Strand on the north side, and Brunswick Place to the south: this the most important townscape ensemble in Dawlish
- (5) as the river approaches the coast, **Tuck's Plot** forms a discrete character area; dominated by heavy traffic and home to a surviving pocket of traditional seaside businesses.

- **The Seafront** also comprises five character areas within the study area boundary:

- (1) the **central promenade** is an important node in the urban structure: this is the point where most people pass through the sea wall to reach the seafront: with boat trips, a kiosk and access to the beach, it is the busiest part of the promenade



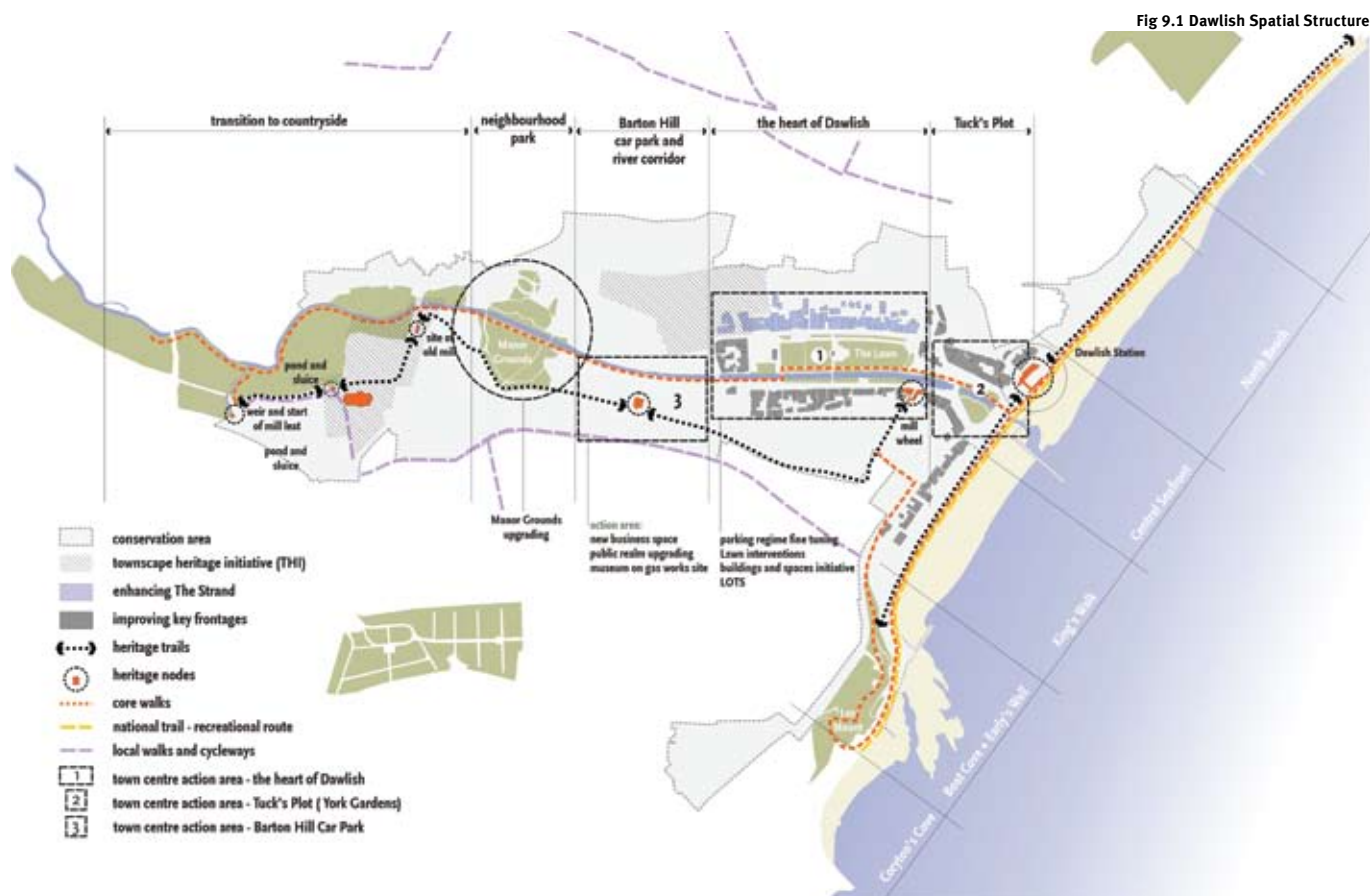
above: King's Walk below: the town from Lea Mount



- (2) the natural flow of pedestrian traffic is to the south, so the **North Beach**, though close to the town centre is relatively quiet and secluded and is the only part of the beach open for dog walking throughout the year; the North Beach forms the first part of the seawall path to Dawlish Warren.
- (3) to the south, **King's Walk** is a narrow path along the sea wall next to the railway; at high tide, the beach here is almost covered and in certain conditions waves break over the wall
- (4) **Boat Cove/Lea Mount** is a rewarding corner of the town with traditional boat sheds and beach huts; from here you can climb up to Lea Mount, a superb vantage point
- (5) though some distance from the town and accessible only on foot, **Coryton's Cove** is a hidden gem and the town's best bathing beach.

#### 9.4 Priorities for action

We have assessed the case for intervention in these 10 character areas, ranking them in terms of **need** and **opportunity**, both on a scale of 1 to 5. The scoring reflects a combination of the feedback received at the *Dawlish Tomorrow* event, and the professional assessment of the yellow book team:



- a **need score** of 1 indicates that conditions in the area are generally satisfactory with no significant cause for concern; a score of 5 indicates that the area falls well short of expectations, and that conditions in the area are having a significant negative impact on the town's performance and image.
- an **opportunity score** of 1 indicates that intervention would have little or no impact on the strategic objectives; a score of 5 indicates that the area has the potential to make a significant contribution to realising the Dawlish Tomorrow vision and achieving the strategic objectives.

The results of this exercise are summarised in Figure 9-2:

Figure 9-2: Character areas – priorities for action

	Need	Opportunity	Total score	Rank
Western Approaches	1	2	3	8=
Manor Grounds	2	3	5	5=
Barton Hill Corridor	4	4	8	3
Heart of Dawlish	5	5	10	1=
Tuck's Plot	5	5	10	1=
Central Promenade	2	3	5	5=
North Beach	1	2	3	8=
King's Walk	3	2	5	5=
Boat Cove/Lea Mount	4	3	7	4
Coryton's Cove	1	2	3	8=

This assessment confirms that **top priority should be given to the Heart of Dawlish** (the area around the Lawn) and **Tuck's Plot**. These areas scored top marks for both need



above: the Heart of Dawlish - the Lawn and surrounding area below: Barton Hill car park



and opportunity. The need scores reflect the message from our earlier consultations that these areas are vital to the well-being of Dawlish, and that both are under-performing badly. This is not to suggest that everything here is broken, but simply that the condition of the Heart of Dawlish and Tuck's Plot falls far short of expectations. Conversely, the opportunity scores reflect our view (and that of the community) that these are the key locations where the fortunes of the town centre can be turned around. The combination of river, open space and historic urban form has enormous potential; using these ingredients to create memorable and beautiful urban spaces will play a key role in the regeneration of Dawlish.

These two areas are, predictably, well out in front. In third place is the **Barton Hill corridor**. Here, the strong urban form of Dawlish becomes scrappy and fragmented, especially around the car park. This is an important arrival point for visitors to the town, and there is an opportunity to improve its appearance, create a better setting for the museum and enhance the riverside walkway.

**Boat Cove/Lea Mount** ranks fourth. Boat Cove itself is charming and should be left alone, but Lea Mount is in a disappointing and unkempt state. With its fine views out to sea and across the town, it should be a natural destination for walkers and a delightful cliff-top park used by locals and visitors.

Based on this analysis – which is consistent with the messages from our consultations and the *Dawlish Tomorrow* – we have concluded that:

- **the master plan should give top priority to delivering transformational change in the heart of the town** in an area including the Lawn, the Strand, Brunswick Place and Tuck's Plot
- the transformation of the heart of the town should be complemented by **action plans for Barton Hill, the seafront and Lea Mount**.

In addition, we propose:

parking and traffic congestion on the Strand



artisan housing: Brook Street



- a **townscape heritage initiative** for the whole of the conservation area, with early action in the artisan quarter bounded by Queen Street, Brook Street, Old Town Street and Park Road, and
- an initiative to make Dawlish a **hub for walkers and cyclists**, including action to create a town-wide network of heritage walks,
- a no-frills set of proposals for **traffic, parking and movement** designed to strike a better balance between people and cars, and
- active **management, maintenance and promotion** of the town centre.

The master plan proposals are described in more detail in Sections 10-12.