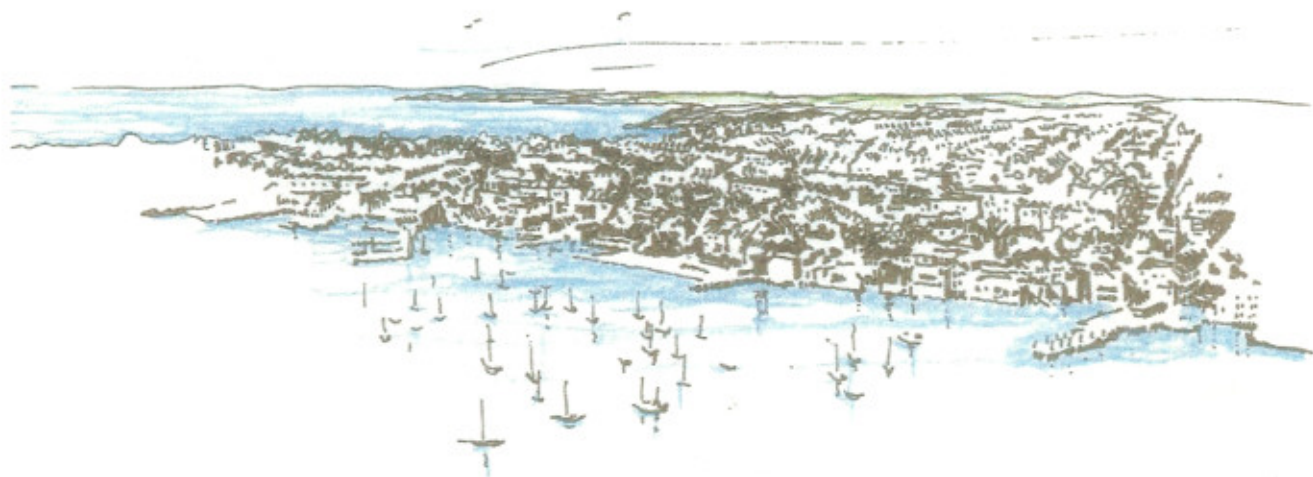


FALMOUTH HARBOURSIDE – A WAY FORWARD



Falmouth by Design

M.J.Long

Chris Smith

Tim Kellett

Richard Thomas

David Buurma

John Stanley

Anne McPherson

January 2004

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Key issues to be resolved
3. Further regeneration opportunities
4. A way forward
5. Traffic , parking and pedestrianisation
6. Development opportunities for the public sector
7. Development opportunities for the private sector
8. Public realm enhancement schemes
9. Conclusion

Appendix I : Opportunities plan

Appendix II : Characteristics of Falmouth



1. Introduction

This document has been produced by a group of people motivated by their desire that the unique character of their town centre and harbourside is protected and enhanced by any new development. It presents a regeneration strategy, building on the towns strengths and providing significant new opportunities for, housing, retail, tourism and much improved environment and facilities for the local population.

Whilst welcoming sympathetic new development the group is anxious that the town changes in ways which respect its unique character as a historic port.

The group has identified characteristics of Falmouth which contribute to its special nature. It is felt by the group that these should be respected by any scheme or schemes which are adopted. These characteristics are listed in Appendix II.

The group would like to think that this document supports the perceived aims of the people of Falmouth.

We propose that this document should take its place in the discussion which has been encouraged by Carrick's document "Falmouth Harbourside -Use Your Voice-make a Choice. We believe that many of the aims of Options 2 and 3 are achievable, but that the specific focus of new development should be more carefully thought out.

The group have held several workshops where a series of goals and strategies were evolved. These were based on a series of assessments of the towns characteristics, its opportunities and the key issues that must be resolved in a successful regeneration. These are described in the following document and should form the basis for a vital and attractive Falmouth in the twenty first century.

2. Key issues to be resolved

The group feels that the following key issues must be resolved in any regeneration strategy for the town:

- 1) Vehicular/pedestrian conflict on the town's main streets. This is the core issue.
- 2) Pollution in the main street from traffic.
- 3) Very poor quality of the public realm – streets, pier, quays.
- 4) Lack of quality, sheltered, space to stop and enjoy the environment.
- 5) Very poor quality of building frontage between the pier and Fish Strand Quay especially viewed from the pier itself.
- 6) Lack of affordable housing in the town.
- 7) Lack of accessible and good quality public transport within the town and serving its attractions.
- 8) Poor links between the town, the Maritime Museum and the docks.

5. Traffic, parking and pedestrianisation

It is felt by the group that the town should overcome pedestrian/vehicle conflict by:

- 1) Closing Church Street Car Park.
- 2) Significantly expanding parking facilities at the Quarry and in the Grove Place area.
- 3) Closing Market Street/Church Street/Arwenack Street to private vehicles apart from those accessing private spaces.
- 4) Restricting deliveries in these streets.
- 5) Reserving spaces for disabled motorists at the Well Lane Car Park.
- 6) Introducing residents' parking schemes.
- 7) Providing a year-round park-and-ride scheme for town centre workers, building on the Ponsharden seasonal scheme for visitors.

Parking proposals

The possibility of providing an alternative central car park at the end of New Street to enable the closure of the Church Street car park has been dismissed in the past and as a consequence the group believes that the way forward is to develop a strategy to increase parking spaces at both ends of the town centre, at the Quarry and in the Grove Place area, preferably by maximising use of the T.A., site. These are identified as opportunity sites 1 and 5 on the plan.

Although the Ove Arup report into car parking, commissioned by Carrick District Council, recommended further studies into the Quarry and the Harbourside the group does not consider the Harbourside to be a realistic or desirable option for an underground car park. The Harbourside parking option perpetuates the high levels of vehicular movement into the town centre [perhaps more than at present] and will retain pedestrian vehicular/conflict in already busy pedestrian areas.

Financing improvements

The strategy to provide substantial parking at both ends in multi-storey buildings can be further complemented by adding residential development on top of or wrapped around the building or both. This is in accordance with government urban design guidance and could significantly increase the financial viability of these projects. It could also increase their ability to contribute to public transport and highway improvements.

Public Transport improvements

Taking into account the linear nature of the town centre and the positioning of these car parking facilities, the building projects must be complemented by improved links and public transport into the heart of the town.

A major expansion of the Quarry Car Park would need to be accompanied by the provision of an appropriate link to The Moor. This might be achieved by an escalator within a retail development to the rear of the shops and new pub that front onto the Moor. As a minimum a regular bus service to the car park should be provided from The Moor. The excavation of the existing car park to provide parking at a lower level might be accompanied by the formation of a shopper's underpass under Quarry Hill, leading to the escalator.

The introduction of a shuttle mini-bus service could provide a continuous link between shopping areas, attractions and car parks. This could be a more up to date version of the land train and could be complemented by green initiatives such as the use of electric vehicles charged in the car parks overnight, and even private sector initiatives such as pedicabs which have been successful in other towns. In addition the improvement of water taxi services between key harbourside locations could provide a good alternative service and an added attraction

3. Further regeneration opportunities

The group has identified the following additional goals which could bring huge benefits to the town if they are encompassed by a regeneration strategy:

- 1) Improve the physical access to points along the waterfront, not necessarily continuously along the waterfront.
- 2) Develop the Quarry Car Park, resolve the access and take advantage of this huge brownfield site.
- 3) Diversify the uses in the town centre by taking opportunities from new development – aim for less reliance on seasonal business.
- 4) Promote eating/drinking/leisure opportunities on superb waterfront sites.
- 5) Develop opportunities at the Docks to bring new businesses and visitors.
- 6) Improve accessibility by water (water taxis etc).
- 7) Promote the outstanding quality of the main street – this is the backbone and is a superb feature of the town.
- 8) Undertake quality environmental schemes on key heritage sites, e.g., the pier and quays.
- 9) Improve potential of underused buildings and sites.
- 10) Consider Grove Place/T.A., car parks as key opportunity sites.

4. A way forward

The components of the strategy are identified as a number of key projects. These are building development and building improvements, public realm enhancement schemes and transportation improvements. These are identified on the accompanying plan [appendix I] and described in principle below. Some of these schemes are essential to resolve the key issues. Some provide opportunities to achieve additional improvements and create a more vibrant and attractive waterfront town.

These proposals do include elements from Options 2 and 3 of the consultant's report to Carrick District Council, as described in the handout entitled "Falmouth Harbourside – use your voice – make a choice". However it is intended that none of the ideas promoted in this document would compromise the distinctive character of the town centre and harbourfront.

Some of these projects are in the control of the public sector, but some would offer new opportunities for private sector enterprise or partnership working. At this point the proposals have not been discussed with private building owners but are being put forward for further consideration and feasibility studies.

6. Development opportunities for the public sector

Opportunity Site 1 : Quarry Car Park

As discussed above this is a key site in the regeneration strategy, taking advantage of the site topography and providing multi-storey parking and residential units above and in front of the development. This scheme could be undertaken in conjunction with other retail improvements providing an internal pedestrian link down to the Moor. An new access from Kimberley Park Road, similar to that proposed in the Local Plan, could be funded by additional housing on the site. Consideration might be given to cars exiting from the top deck onto Tresawna Terrace [becoming one-way], from which motorists would return to Kimberley Park Road via Trevethan Road.

Opportunity Site 3 : Church Street Car Park

The closure of this car park provides a rare development opportunity for Carrick to provide a more attractive waterfront. This area could permit a mixed development of some residential, retail and leisure. The building heights should be low to retain views of the historic buildings on the east side of Church Street. The grain of new building plots would run east/west. New buildings in private land behind could be incorporated into a comprehensive scheme, controlled by a development brief. The area could include a small public space, with some enclosure from buildings which could house A3 uses. It could also incorporate some residential, shops and new public toilets. Further enhancements could be carried out to the waterfront promenade, commemorating historic events, and improving the route between the Fish Strand Quay and Upton Slip.

Opportunity Site 5 : TA Site

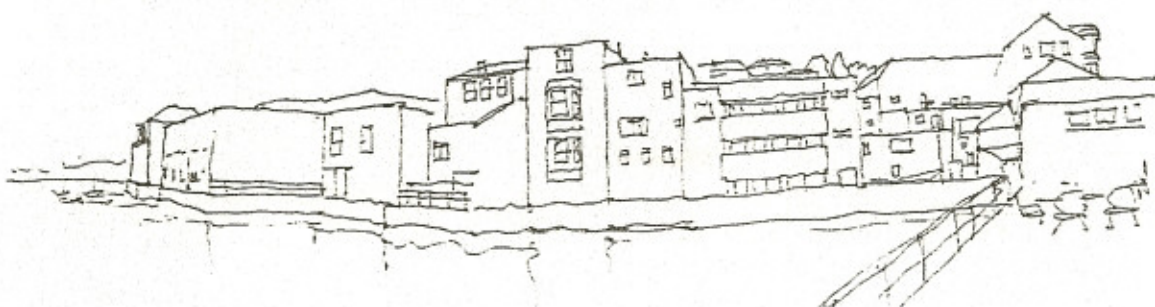
As discussed in the traffic and parking section, this site presents an opportunity to provide a multi-storey car park. By developing residential units above and/or adjoining the block, the development can become more financially viable and could support other improvements. The design and scale of the development would require further consideration, as would any opportunities to combine with adjoining sites.

7. Development Opportunities for the private sector

Opportunity Site 2 : Prince of Wales Pier to Fish Strand Quay

This area presents the prime retail opportunity for the town with its central location. However it has several poor quality buildings, especially when viewed from the water and the pier. The potential of these key sites is not fully exploited in either the use of the space, the advantage of the views or the quality of the building design. Here is a major private sector opportunity to improve the attraction and the activities in these buildings.

A minimum regeneration scheme should achieve improvement to building facades, fenestration and roofs along the waterfront. This could involve internal alterations to provide new uses such as cafes that overlook the water. The removal and replacement of the café, gift shop and toilet on the pier would significantly enhance the public realm and opportunities for a more open view of the water from the street. These facilities could be replaced in other buildings.



At the other end of the scale, a co-ordinated redevelopment of selected buildings could create a significant improvement of the uses and activities. This could include opportunity for larger retail units, and new restaurants or cafes facing the water. It could incorporate residential flats at higher level and new public facilities. Such a scheme must still incorporate key historic buildings and structures but may, if properly justified, take advantage of a limited infilling between pier and quay walls as well as redevelopment of some buildings. The corner site is highly prominent and deserving of quality architecture. The scheme could achieve a shorter section of waterfront walkway connecting the pier with a new opeway or arcade through the buildings bringing pedestrians back to Market Street.

Another opportunity includes the provision of a seasonal pontoon walkway between the Pier and Fish Strand Quay. This project should be undertaken in conjunction with the public realm improvement of the pier itself.

Opportunity Site 4 : Grove Place

The waterfront from Custom House Quay to the Maritime Museum presents a major opportunity to improve the link and activities between the town centre to the new maritime developments and docks beyond. Here is another significant private sector opportunity to develop new uses taking better advantage of the waterfront location and creating a quality townscape more appropriate to this setting.

Should owners consider redevelopment options, the watersports centre could significantly expand its facilities in better quality buildings, and provide some complementary, finance generating uses such as leisure and retail.

The Trago Mills site provides an excellent in-town store but servicing clearly causes difficulties for the company and pedestrians. Should the company ever consider relocation there is still a great opportunity for a mixed use development on this site, maintaining a retail element but adding to it leisure and residential uses.

If such opportunities are pursued then re-planning the Grove Place car park could provide added benefits. Car parking increase on the TA site may reduce demand here and provide opportunities for a new route and built frontage leading more directly into the Maritime development.

Opportunity Sites 6 : Backland developments

To the west of Market Street and Church Street are a number of derelict brownfield sites on the land that rises between the central shopping area and the residential area above. Most of these were cleared during the slum clearance programme and were once densely inhabited. Individually they may seem insignificant but put together they represent a major brownfield site. There is a great opportunity for co-ordinated development to provide much needed affordable housing, mixed tenures and even small workshop and studio space. These buildings can heal the scarred and neglected townscape and improve community safety bringing permanent residents back into the town centre. Some of these sites are in public sector ownership but it is clear that a number of privately owned sites would form the major part of this development.

8. Public realm enhancement schemes

Public Realm Scheme 1 : Prince of Wales Pier

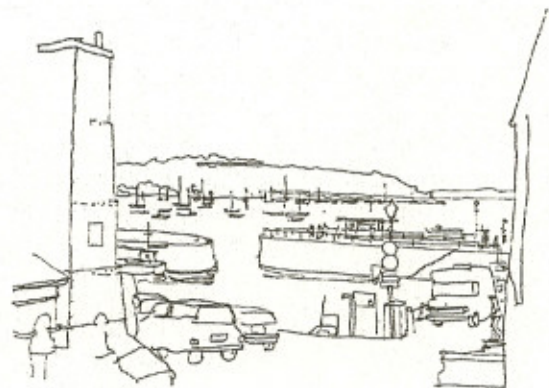
This is a major public space, a listed structure and presents superb views and a range of activities central to the attractiveness of this town. However this is let down by the quality of design and condition of the environment. A co-ordinated scheme providing new paving, shelters, lighting, signs and other street furniture would increase its attractiveness and use by visitors and residents. This would be complemented by improved kiosks and replacement facilities such as toilets and café in a new location allowing improved views of the water from the pier approach which should be a part of this scheme.

Public Realm Scheme 2 : Main Street

The main street with its changing name from High Street to Grove Place is the single greatest asset of the town. It has a unique townscape, tightly enclosed with glimpsed views to the sea, an exciting townscape of varied historic buildings and a wonderful choice of shops all along its length. The re-paving of Market and Church Streets was carried out several years ago but it is clear that it will not be completely successful until it is resurfaced in such a way that does not present a trip hazard to users or is uncomfortable for wheelchair users and pushchairs. The opportunity and incentive to extend a quality scheme into Arwenack Street will come with the proposed pedestrianisation. This scheme can provide a safe, quality surfacing reflecting the historic character of the street. It can include new street lighting and special features at important locations such as the space outside the church.

Public Realm Scheme 3 : Custom House Quay

The quality of this piece of townscape, its historic associations, and the nationally important quay walls is second to none. This is a prime asset to the town and one that has undiscovered potential. It is let down by the visual impact of excessive parking, the poor quality of surfacing, street furniture and uncoordinated signing. The harbourmaster has an important role to play in the future development of this place along with adjoining property owners. Its potential could be realised by the implementation of a major enhancement project. This would tackle the design of the public realm, not only in the quality of surfacing and street furniture but also in the way the spaces are used and their relationship to the buildings that surround them.



Public Realm Scheme 4 : Grove Place/ Killigrew Monument

The link between the town centre and the maritime museum developments presents a very poor public realm and does little to encourage pedestrian movement between them. There is an opportunity to improve the street design with new lighting, tree planting, boundary enclosures and re-paving. This could lead to a specially designed public space focused on the Killigrew monument and its trees, that directly leads in to the events square. Currently the monument is enclosed and not well integrated into the life of the street. Part of the Grove Place car park may be redesigned to incorporate into this space and create a more direct and accessible pedestrian route.

9. Conclusion

The unique geography of Falmouth and its historical development have evolved a special character that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. It attracts new residents, visitors and watersports enthusiasts throughout the year thanks to great efforts to provide new attractions in buildings, services and events. We have a duty to recognise and protect those assets that make it special, and take care not to hide them behind a false veneer.

The group would like to think that its stated goals are in accordance with the perceived aims of the people of Falmouth. However we firmly believe that the proposed solution indicated in Option 3 of the consultants report to Carrick District Council is in fact not viable. In the light of current government legislation and guidance on Transportation, Planning, Conservation and Urban Design it is neither achievable nor desirable. This document hopes to show an alternative strategy that is achievable and brings together the best elements of previous consultation work in the town.

The recent support for significant change in the harbourside demonstrates an overwhelming recognition that we are underselling Falmouth and can achieve much more. However it is this group's view that completely obscuring the historic waterfront with a new pastiche townscape, and the intensification of vehicular use in the town centre would be a retrograde step. We would lose that important connection with the past, the reminders of the lifeblood of the town with its working buildings rising from the granite and killas quay walls. The group believes that physical and environmental impact on the town would be on a scale that would not pass scrutiny at a public enquiry.

Major changes and substantial investment is needed by both the private and public sector. In order to spend this wisely we must seek to enhance the town centre for pedestrians without compromising accessibility. We must find ways of achieving the quality of street environment that this special town deserves. We must identify development opportunities that are viable and attractive without destroying that special character that makes Falmouth unique and memorable.

These proposals are put forward, not to prolong the debate, but to focus on delivering a realistic and achievable strategy to reach the main goals. The group believes that the elements of this strategy can be achieved, and the time is right to move forward with the private and public sector working in partnership.

Our goals are to resolve the key issues that are detracting from Falmouth's potential, and to take opportunities where they arise to further strengthen the quality, choice and attraction of this historic town.

Appendix II:

Special Characteristics of Falmouth

These were considered by the group to be very important factors that should inform the design and components of any regeneration project.

1. The maritime heritage
2. The working town, not just apartments and tourism.
3. Big Ships! – the docks, working boats, tall ships, water taxis – not dominated by private yachts.
4. Water – views, contact with, the sound and smells,
5. The narrow plots and fine grain of the townscape, small scale – avoided big boxes.
6. Narrow building frontages on the main street creates rhythm and diversity.
7. Quaysides, buildings on the edge – ‘with their feet in the water’
8. Opeways - narrow routes – giving access off the main streets and glimpsed views.
9. Common scale to buildings, with few exceptions of public buildings.
10. Differences and diversity: in building styles, in spaces, open/closed, narrow/wide.
11. Harbourfront and Seafront two different characters : two sides
12. Points of contact with sea and boats – quays, pontoons, piers. beaches.
13. Points of contact on harbourside traditionally ‘fingers’ into sea rather than continuous promenade as on seafront.
14. The continuous street – the big asset and strongest man made feature.
15. Waterviews, some open expansive some glimpsed and framed – reminders
16. Coastline views – see beyond to the Roseland and its features
17. Topography, hillside town, terraced development, looking over each other.
18. Tight spaces, strong enclosure to the townscape until opened to water views.
19. Seagulls and other wildlife habitats – strong contact
20. Richness in materials, use of characteristic materials – slate hanging, limited brick, killas stone and granite, ship lap, render.
21. The traditional way materials are used, historic quaysides – vertical stones, historic roofs and hanging in scantle slate, horizontal feather edge board
22. Variety of colour, richer in Arwenack and high street, poor in ‘commercial’ market st.
23. Festivals – events and their places, people and decorations. Falmouth Week, Oyster festival, Green Festival, - growing tradition.
24. History – stories to be told everywhere you go.
25. Night life, places to go for all ages – increasing opportunities.

Public Realm 1

- Prince of Wales Pier - major improvement
- repaving and street furniture
- New shelters and kiosks
- New toilets, café and shops

Opportunity Site 2

- Incorporate poor quality or underused buildings into major regeneration scheme
- Limited extension into sea may be possible
- Retain listed and good historic buildings
- Waterfront walkway and opening views from pier
- New opeways or arcade from Market St
- Outdoor café space on main street
- New uses taking advantage of waterfront

Opportunity site 3

- Smaller scale development
- Mixed uses - leisure, food retail and some housing
- Rear courtyard access
- Reflect grain and roofscape of historic buildings
- Waterfront walkway and small space to the south.
- Include public toilets and facilities

Public Realm 2

- Pedestrianisation of main street
- Resurfacing of highways and pavements
- Improved lighting and street furniture
- Improve disabled access through town

Public Realm 3

- Custom House Quay improvements
- quality paving and street furniture
- increase outside seating areas
- reduce car parking
- Historic quay walls and buildings retained on view along harbourside

Opportunity site 4

- Development opportunity for private sites and car park
- Mixed use, leisure, retail, residential.
- Public access to waterfront
- Improved waterside activities
- Improved street frontage and route in to Maritime Museum

Public realm 4

- Extend public space around Killigrew monument
- improved public pedestrian link to docks redevelopment and cruise ships
- New street scheme to link to town.

Opportunity site 1

- Develop Quarry site as multi storey car park
- residential accommodation above and to frontage
- new pedestrian link to Moor via lifts/escalator in existing or redeveloped buildings

Opportunity sites 6

- Private and public sector opportunity
- redevelop all derelict brownfield sites West of main street
- provide significant number of affordable houses

Public Transport

- New innovative public transport links between key car parks and destinations
- Electric mini shuttle buses, pedicabs or 21st century 'road train'
- Link town centre with docks, Pendennis and seafront
- Water taxis between key destinations

Opportunity site 5

- Multi storey car park on TA site.
- Residential accommodation above and on side if possible.
- Incorporate further sites if available.