

# Hastings Town Centre - Past, Present and Future

Part 1 of 3 Zoom presentations on Hastings Emerging Futures.

MC - John Knowles

Some 65 people attended the zoom call with 20 on Facebook live.

Intro - Are we witnessing the death of the town centre? But if we do have one, who's it for and what's it for?

It could be said that we don't actually have one town centre; we have at least two - divided by roads and really only for retail and not for culture (especially high). There's nothing on in the evening apart from drinking and there's no focus like the Old Town has with Jack in the Green, Fat Tuesday, Old Town Carnival Week etc.

Steve Peak then gave a slide show. He demonstrated the origins of the Town Centre as the Port of Hastings and how it declined and was replaced by what we know today as the Old Town. The new town area in the Priory Valley remained a marsh until redeveloped from the early nineteenth century onwards. Even then areas were too marshy to develop and became the cricket ground.

The panel was then introduced -

Kevin Boorman - HBC

John Bownas - Love Hastings BID

James Leathers - Heart of Hastings Community Land Trust

Richard Moore - The Source Park

Jess Steele - The Observer Building and more.

Question posed to the panel was - If you could bring back one feature from Hastings past what would it be and why?

Steve P - A memorial to the Albert Memorial.

John B. - Also something related to the Castle and Hastings connection with the Battle which is seriously underrepresented. Use the connection with the birthplace of TV.

Suggestions were also made to remove street drinkers, re-instate toilets and benches.

Jess S - More focus on living, leisure, well being as well as declining shopping. Involve more people in direct actions. Make sure developments stay as community affordable assets.

Another question posed was -

What has inspired you that you would like to see in the Town Centre?

Kevin B - the streetscape in Lewes, in particular Cliffe High Street and bridge with small independent shops.

John B - Better use of outdoor space. Presently far too much is inside.

Richard M - More walk ways, cycle ways and maximise sea front. (showed slide of Dusseldorf).

James L - Istanbul with its vibrant night life not based on drinking.

Jess S - Commoning in Liverpool. In particular the Granby area. We deserve the high quality they have there without any gentrification prices.

How are we going to deal with climate change? The Town Centre has a history of flooding.

Many more ideas appeared now and throughout the Q and A session.

- Retail has been too dominant. Prices for properties etc are too high as a result
- Encourage more living, working and selling in the same space.
- Debenhams could become a covered market with craft workshops.
- Involve young people.
- Should the council re-invent themselves.
- Opportunities should be created and drag in investment.
- Is there a register of empty buildings? Could any be taken over for community use?

The Zoom call is available here - [\(4\) Live | Facebook](#)