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# Place Making Programme – Report and Action Plan



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# Foreword

Earlestown and the High Streets Task Force (HSTF) began working together following an expert visit in May 21. Based on discussions with the council, the subsequent *Unlocking Your Place Potential Report* outlines how the Task Force can provide further support for Earlestown. It was agreed there is a sensible vision and masterplan to regenerate Earlestown, but it was recognised this may take several years to complete and bear fruit. The pressing challenge is the need to activate the town centre now. Consequently, the Taskforce recommended Earlestown begin a process of **reinvention**. This entails developing a programme of activities which will increase footfall and spend, through interventions to attract a wider range of people to visit more often, linger longer, spend more, and go home with positive stories to tell. This could include events, festivals, pop-up retail, more frequent and varied uses of the Market Place, reuse of vacant premises, and basic improvements to the appearance of the town centre. New activity might also trial new opening hours which will begin to adapt the offer to modern consumer behaviour and expectations.

To help places tackle reinvention, the Taskforce offers the Placemaking Workshop developed and delivered by the IPM, which is designed to bring together key stakeholders to identify the challenges and opportunities for their high street and to agree short term and long-term priorities for its future sustainability.

In Earlestown the workshop took place on 19 May 2022 and included representatives from education, housing, landlords, independent business and market traders, health, youth, and faith communities, as well as resident representatives. Council representatives were also present. The Task Force would like to thank all who attended the workshop for their active contributions and to thank St Helen's Borough Council for organising the session.

This report summarises ideas provided by local stakeholders, but also reveals barriers they identified which they think currently blocks activity from happening. Based on the workshop discussion and findings, the High Streets Task Force has developed a series of short and long-term recommendations to inform a strategy of reinvention for Earlestown.

The recommendations outlined in this report mark the end of the High Streets Task Force Place making Programme. Further support to support the stakeholders and Council to take the next steps will be provided by the appointed Expert. In addition, online resources, training and support is available through the website<sup>1</sup>.

**Thank you for participating in the High Streets Task Force Programme. With your permission, the High Streets Task Force would like to check in with you after 12 months to evaluate how delivery of your transformation plan is progressing. Please indicate whether this is possible in your response to this report.**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk/resources/>

## About the High Streets Task Force and Report Authors

### The High Streets Task Force

The High Streets Task Force is an alliance of placemaking experts working to redefine the high street. We provide guidance, tools, and skills to help communities, partnerships and local government transform their high streets. The programme, funded by HM Government will run in England until 2024.

### The report authors

Dr Steve Millington is a Reader in Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University. His academic career spans over 20 years, he is currently a director of the Institute of Place Management, where he leads on several projects including the IPM's Vital and Viable programme, the Interreg ABCE Cities project, and coordinating research for the High Streets Task Force for England.

Jean Ball has experience across the private, public and community sectors. She has worked in place management for over 20 years including 5 and a half years as Stoke-on-Trent City Centre Manager. As a freelance professional during the last ten years Jean has supported 40 Town Teams across the Midlands, worked for LOCOG to help deliver the 2012 Olympics, and nearly 20 Wild in Art sculpture trails. She is co-author of '100 Ways to Help the High Street', a long-time member and Senior Fellow of the Institute of Place Management and one of the High Streets Task Force Experts supporting a range of towns and cities with their revitalisation plans.

# The need for reinvention

High street revitalisation is complex and challenging. Although they face common challenges, places are unique and there are no easy prescriptive solutions for regenerating high streets and town centres. Whereas the Taskforce can provide expert guidance and frameworks to help, it is incumbent on local stakeholders to use their insights and capacity to create and deliver bespoke programmes of change to ensure their high street or town centre is both attractive and prepared for the future.

The *Unlocking Your Place Potential Report YPP* written by Taskforce experts, draws on the IPM's 4 Rs Framework of Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding and Restructuring. Based on the results of a major research programme, the Framework is designed to help places make a town centre action plan. It is important to acknowledge the 4Rs are not mutually exclusive but are connected to one another; each is a potential start point on a journey to transformation; and different places will be at different stages on the journey.



Fig 1: 4 Rs Framework Outline Summary

**Reinventing** is recommended as a starting point on a place's transformation in a situation where there are clear and evidence-based plans for how the town needs to change to better serve its catchment communities, but where little is currently happening in the town to deliver the vision. Reinventing is prescribed when there is a lack of activity in a place, or there is too much reliance on the existing offer to drive footfall. It may be the case local people are having to travel elsewhere to access the products, experiences, and services they need or want, rather than use their local centre. Although the focus is on developing a programme of short-term priorities, places also need to consider how they can introduce new activities which will begin to

adapt the town centre to meet the needs of future users. It is important, therefore, that local stakeholders share a common understanding of broader structural change affecting the high street. High Street Taskforce learning and research resources are available online.

## The need for Reinvention in Earlestown: Expert's summary

The Taskforce's evaluation of the plans for Earlestown town centre concluded that there is a clear vision and Master Plan in place. The local authority has taken Taskforce advice on board, restructured internally around Place to usher in a new era of open collaborative working. The Master Plan projects will deliver transformative change in the town, but it will take several years to fully realise. In the meantime, the Taskforce concluded that Earlestown needs to focus on Reinvention through increased and improved;

- communications amongst stakeholders and with the local authority,
- appearance of the town centre,
- activity levels
- and collaborative marketing.

By undertaking a Placemaking Programme workshop the stakeholders have been able to identify quick wins that will also diversify the offer and increase the attractiveness of Earlestown in the medium term. Based on workshop discussions, the UYPP Report, and tours of the town centre, this section of the report outlines in more detail the need for Reinvention by illustrating several placemaking challenges, linking each challenge to the IPM's 25 Priority Interventions.

### Challenge 1: Place Management, Networks/Partnerships

Earlestown needs to work together for collective benefit. There is currently no Traders Association, Town Team, Town Centre Partnership, Business Improvement District or similar entity through which collaborative efforts can be channelled. There are some passionate proactive business owners and community representatives. The local authority has restructured to be more open and interactive. Now the private, community and public sectors need to come together through an Earlestown group entity that will drive change, influence priorities, and deliver activation and communication for their town. The local authority have secured funding for key infrastructure improvements which provides a real opportunity for the local stakeholders to prepare for and harness the physical improvements to create a thriving place. Collaborative working will also help to overcome general apathy and negativity. **The challenge, therefore, is for Earlestown to establish an effective local entity to coordinate a Place Making Action Plan.**

### Challenge 2: Appearance & Attractiveness

Earlestown has been neglected and looks it. Short opening hours and shuttered shops give an appearance of a higher vacancy rate than is actually the case. Evening businesses look closed during the day, others only open some days and / or short hours. Only the chain brands like Tesco, Wickes, and Home Bargains appear to open consistent hours – unsurprisingly these businesses seem to be doing well whilst the local independents are not. The Master Plan projects will improve the public realm and key gateways, particularly the station, and the local authority undertakes regular cleaning and planting. However, the facades and shutters in private ownership need to be incentivised to improve and sustain a high standard of well cared for appearance. When an active business is not open, information about how to interact with them online and when they are open should be clearly displayed. Pop-up and meanwhile uses need

sought for vacant premises and opening hours need to reflect modern consumer needs and expectations. **The challenge here is securing the buy-in of the owners and landlords to activate and improve shop fronts and opening hours in the town centre.**

### Challenge 3: Activity, Markets and Diversity

As it stands, the existing offer does not reflect the diverse resident community and is unlikely to appeal to visitors. With competition from St Helens, Warrington and Newton-le-Willows, and Manchester city centre just 25 minutes away by train, many Earlestown residents perhaps avoid the town centre for these other destinations. There is little happening in the town centre which might provide people with reasons to choose Earlestown.

The Market Place, which will get a re-vamp as part of the Master Plan projects, is at the heart of the town centre, but vastly under used. Unfortunately, the traditional market has dwindled to just two mornings a week on Friday and Saturday. On the other days the space is occupied by haphazardly parked cars despite it being illegal to park there. A prolonged lack of enforcement of the parking restrictions will increase the challenges for utilising this prime activation space in the town centre. Similarly, the market traders seem to have been left to their own devices in terms of operating hours resulting in shorter trading days.

More markets, on different days and extended hours would make an enormous difference to life in the town. The Market Place is also the obvious place to try out events from family fun days to evening bands to provide social activity and entertainment. More activity should improve the pattern of footfall throughout the year providing a basis on which to build. Addressing these issues might also require responding to a concern expressed during the workshop about difficulties experienced in the past when the Council responded to suggestions and requests for community led activations with forms to fill in and fees to pay, rather than advice and support. **The challenge is to expand the offer though new themed markets, cultural and community events, and appropriate opening hours to encourage users to visit more often, dwell for longer, enjoy their town centre, and also appeal to wider audiences.**

### Challenge 4: Place Marketing

The challenges described in this report and reflected in the Master Plan priorities for Earlestown will take time to address. For too long Earlestown has been the 'secondary' town in St Helen's Borough. Now, with much greater focus and investment coming through, the opportunity to Reinvent and establish Earlestown as a welcoming multi-functional place of character is here. Vital to the process is communication – locally and externally. As one workshop participant put it "*stop talking the place down*".

The stakeholders need to work together to share positive stories, provide activations to build on, shout about the good things, and improve perceptions of the town for both residents and investors. The proposed Earlestown Partnership (name and structure tbc) can establish on and offline Events listings, social media activity, information, and positive messages. Signage and street dressing can be used to reflect a positive image of a place with civic pride making the most of the people, spaces and resources for their community. After many years of 'everyone doing their own thing' this may take some time to embed. **The challenge, therefore, is what could be done quickly to improve place communications, branding and marketing?**



# Recommendations

## 1. Establish an effective local partnership / network to coordinate a Place Making Action Plan

### Quick Wins

Create a Earlestown Partnership or Town Team, made up of local stakeholders from the private, public and community sectors. Those you participated in the Place Making Workshop on 19 May, as well as those who sent their apologies would be a good starting point. It is important that the group includes but is not led by the local authority. The new group would have a remit to:

- Work together for collective benefit.
- Enable communications between local stakeholders.
- Identify and lead on collaborative activities and interventions to improve trading conditions.
- Develop a programme of events and activations supported and delivered by the stakeholders.
- Communicate a positive image of the town centre, the changing centre offer, and increase visibility to existing and potential users. To include social media campaigns.
- Monitor, measure and evaluate the effectiveness of placemaking interventions. Share and communicate to build on success, finesse and learn from experience to maximise further impact and engagement.
- Function as a key consultation conduit for new ideas, proposals, and projects for change.

St Helens Borough Council will need to identify a small number of key personnel to be part of the Earlestown Partnership. It would also be helpful if the Council could provide and maintain a directory of who is responsible for what within the authority and how to contact them. An online searchable directory complete with names, roles (not just job titles), email addresses and direct phone numbers could be a good start, but a short list in a printed form would be needed for those less inclined to use the internet.

### Longer term

Once established as a legal entity, with a bank account, and a track record of results achieved, the Earlestown Partnership may wish to take on a broader role including some delegated responsibilities from the local authority. This may include establishing a Business Improvement District to sustain and grow capacity.

### Supporting resources

Diagnostic: capacity and structures for managing change (IPM):

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/details/?id=ef1f3e38-3cd4-4241-82ac-9785e146b334>

High Streets Taskforce Webinar: Reinventing – Making Vital and Viable Multifunctional Hubs:

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/transformation-routemap-webinars/reinventing-making-vital-and-viable-multifunctional-hubs-5-5/>

High Streets Taskforce Online Learning: Understanding Future Users of the High Street:

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/understanding-future-users-of-the-high-street/>

BID Feasibility Case study: Strategic Management for sustainable high street recovery:

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/details/?id=304fe763-f947-4d00-a576-09cc6992b8db>

## 2. Place Marketing

### Quick Wins

Create a shared 'What's on in Earlestown' listing site, both online and in the public realm that all can access and contribute to.

Build an ongoing list of all the social media accounts of Earlestown high street businesses and share it so that they can follow, like and share each other's messages to amplify the reach.

Provide funded digital skills training for SMEs from basic through quite advanced for those starting at different levels of familiarity. Is this something that the Chamber could provide / support?

Create a Welcome to Earlestown information panel or artwork at the station to improve the sense of arrival.

Develop and share positive stories to purvey to the press and influencers to start to change perceptions.

### Longer term

Consider developing and deploying a brand for the town.

### Supporting resources

[Rebranding: engendering pride, commitment and attachment through communication \(4/5\) | High Streets Task Force](#)

### 3. Put our best foot forward – improve the visual appearance of the town centre

#### Quick Wins

Undertake an audit of street level frontages in the town centre identifying owners. Encourage all owners and occupiers to take pride in their unit(s), undertake affordable improvements, and maintain their premises in good condition.

Develop a Shutters artwork scheme so that when the shutters are down they are attractive and the place looks cared for. Identify a local cultural / visual arts group or individual to coordinate the project. Seek funding for the shutters project from a range of external and local sources. Provide design guidance (artwork not ads) and artist contacts to make it easy for businesses to get their shutters transformed. Consider incorporating a standard panel that says the business website, social media accounts and normal opening hours in the shutter decorations.

Council to explore possible funding for another Shop Front Improvement grant scheme to support those who were unable to access the recent scheme. Not necessarily heritage related / restricted.

Introduce basic signage and pathfinding information as an interim until the new wayfinding signage that will come with the public realm improvements can be put in place.

Consider a Britain in Bloom initiative of planting, planters and hanging baskets.

#### Longer term

As the fresh investment to improve the public realm in and around the centre starts to be realised, look for new opportunities to enhance and sustain the appearance of the town, including more greenery to improve air quality. Could Earlestown have some living walls to soften the look and feel?

Adapt to and support improved gateways, new public spaces, pedestrian routes, removal of some physical barriers and obstructions, creation of contiguous and green walking and cycling routes into and through the town centre. Are there courtyards and hidden spaces that could come into use?

Celebrate heritage offer through architectural conservation, installation of signage or interpretation boards, walking tours and trails, more ambitious mural schemes e.g., see New Brighton Street Art Project.

Consider shop front or window display schemes and competitions to reward businesses for their efforts.

#### Supporting Resources

[Ground Floor Frontages - 237 'Vital and Viable' Factors | Resources | High Street Task Force \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](https://highstreettaskforce.org.uk/resources/ground-floor-frontages-237-vital-and-viable-factors)

[National Design Guide: Planning practice guidance for beautiful, enduring and successful places | Resources | High Street Task Force \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](https://highstreettaskforce.org.uk/resources/national-design-guide)

[How do I improve the image and perceptions of my town centre? | Resources | High Street Task Force \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](https://highstreettaskforce.org.uk/resources/how-do-i-improve-the-image-and-perceptions-of-my-town-centre)

## 4. Activation, Markets and Diversity

### Quick Wins

Increase the frequency, trading hours, and types of markets to potentially include; Evening Markets, Farmers Market, Craft & Artisans, World Foods, Teenage Market, Vintage and more.

Trial events at different opening times e.g., evening events, different days of the week, seasonal programming, working with local traders to maximise trading opportunities.

Vary events and activities to attract different demographics including; families, employees, underserved communities, visitors from nearby, younger people, and for the aging population.

Include playfulness for old and young. Incentivise exploration with free fun trails with a reward – see the Strawberry and Bee trails discussed in the workshop.

The Council should review procedures for licensing of events, street trading, temporary road-closures, and outdoor performance to enable local stakeholders to undertake activations more easily and with confidence. Best practice includes an easy to download and use Events Guide with someone to phone for advice if you need support.

### Longer term

Establish an annual programme of events and activations.

Evaluate the potential of bigger events e.g., review GlastonBuryBury – a music festival in Bury town centre – involving 13 pubs and six temp outdoor performance venues. See: <http://www.glaston-bury.com/>

Link activation projects to other strategic policy goals for Earlestown e.g., to promote health and wellbeing, safety, business support, skills training/updating and multi-generation engagement outcomes.

### Supporting resources

Case study: Non-retail offer

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/details/?id=91ee3eda-d1fc-4cf0-ae3a-26cdeeca8c5b>

Festive Cheer: The local impact of Christmas markets

<https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/resources/details/?id=74cace59-3795-4432-aa0f-d6cd454f416b>

# Conclusions: A Framework for Action

It is vital stakeholders have a well communicated plan that recognises the tasks which need to occur to manage recovery and longer-term transformation. This is effective place management and is what gets places from a collection of investments and actions onto a path of transformation. The 4 Rs Framework below distinguishes between the processes of analysis and decision making (*repositioning*), effecting change (*reinventing*), communication (*rebranding*) and governance/spatial planning and development (*restructuring*). The High Streets Task Force encourages town centres to use this framework in their recovery and long-term planning.

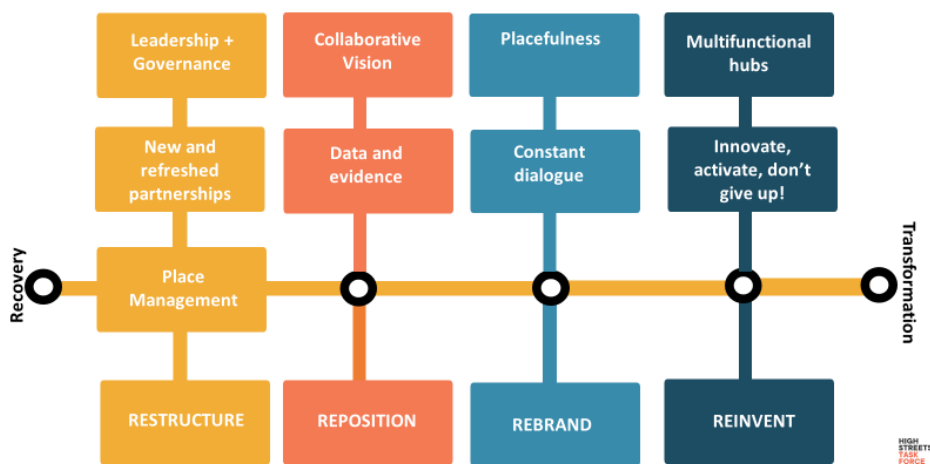


Fig 2: Transformation routemap

An editable version of the transformation routemap with instructions can be downloaded<sup>2</sup> to help you plan the Action Plan. Depending on where you start, this Route Map will take time to deliver but is a useful tool for planning both short and long-term priorities. Actions under each R may happen simultaneously, consecutively, or repeatedly.

If delivered correctly through effective leadership and collaboration with all key stakeholders, placemaking has the potential to improve the local economy, environment, and society, as well provide cultural benefits. **The underlying aim of any placemaking intervention should be to create and promote places that are sustainable, attractive, sociable, accessible, active, secure, welcoming, healthy, and friendly.** Temporary activation of underutilised or neglected sites can showcase these to potential investors. Reinventing, however, is just one element of the routemap. It is important, therefore, to work through the implications of the recommendations above in terms of the other Rs on the routemap.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/transformation-routemap-webinars/create-a-transformation-routemap-for-your-town/>

# Appendix 1: Workshop Findings

## The future of Earlestown town centre: stakeholder perspective

In the first interactive session, workshop participants were asked to individually identify **one broad change** that should happen to attract people to the town centre and to ensure the centre's future sustainability. Each table was then asked to agree what the most important change should be. The Table below summarises the views of the stakeholders. Where appropriate these are aligned with several of the IPM's 25 Priority Interventions, with suggested indicative interventions to address each one. The views expressed obviously only represent those who attended but there was quite a diverse range of stakeholders with different perspectives on the town.

IPM Priority	Stakeholder comments	Indicative short-term interventions
APPEARANCE	Image – run down looking Brighten up Shop frontages More green space & street trees Remove all shutters	Businesses to be encouraged to undertake basic improvements to the appearance of their premises. Seasonal window display competition? Introduce another shop façade scheme including support for offline applicants. Shutter artwork scheme. Planters & hanging baskets
ACTIVITY	Opening hours / days too short Lack of evening & cultural activity Family friendly play space – waterslide? Seating where children can play whilst adults relax Promote Heritage Trail Develop a Rail Heritage attraction Evening premises look closed during the day.  Also see Market	Analyse modal opening and closing times to see if there is alignment with user activity patterns then experiment with new opening times if there is mismatch. Use evening markets & events to extend opening hours. Encourage pavement cafes through simple license process Develop an events support package to empower local groups and businesses to run events. Explore what young people need & want. Make the Heritage trail modular to make it easier to enjoy a section & creatively promote. Long term redevelopment to include play spaces.
INNOVATION	Outdoor living / Covered market	Training support for SMEs

	<p>Increase local employment opportunities</p> <p>Not more of the same</p> <p>Massive waterslide!</p> <p>Day time uses for premises that only open at night.</p> <p>Start up support &amp; grants</p>	<p>Business mentoring scheme</p> <p>Business partnership(s) &amp; collaborations</p>
NETWORKS & PARTNERSHIPS	<p>Advertise &amp; promote Earlesfield</p> <p>Businesses networking together</p> <p>Consider BID, retail and/or industrial</p>	<p>Establish new group to work collaboratively to animate and promote the town.</p>
ACCESSIBLE	<p>Concern about unsafe pedestrian crossings / links.</p> <p>Unclear wayfinding signage</p> <p>Get parked cars off the Market Place</p>	<p>Redevelopment plans will improve pedestrian linkages / routes.</p> <p>Market Place parking prohibition to be enforced.</p> <p>Wayfinding signage to be part of redevelopment plans.</p>
NON-RETAIL OFFER	<p>Need for Nightlife, Leisure, hospitality offer</p> <p>Please can we have community, youth and family activity facilities</p> <p>Need more commercial employment</p>	<p>Create an event space on the Market Place &amp; programme &amp; promote events.</p> <p>Long term development plans to create a multifunctional community hub</p> <p>Support start-ups, apprenticeships, and skills development.</p> <p>Promote, attract and support inward investment</p>
WALKING	<p>Create safe linkages across the town and make them more accessible</p> <p>Connectivity between the various areas within Earlestown.</p> <p>Softening of road infrastructure to create better pedestrian and cycling environment including narrowing some roads and more crossing points.</p>	<p>Basic improvements to signage and wayfaring, including dropped curbs and greenery as part of public realm works.</p> <p>Long term physical change to road layout to support increased use of public transport and active travel modes.</p>
PLACE MARKETING	<p>Media coverage</p> <p>Negative perceptions</p> <p>Promote rail heritage</p>	<p>Stakeholders to work together through new town group.</p> <p>Coordinated, low-cost social media led by stakeholders.</p>
DIVERSITY	<p>Activities/offer for young people</p> <p>Extend hospitality offer to include more eateries / NTE</p>	<p>Pop-ups, markets</p> <p>Work with landlords on tenant mix</p>

	<p>Consider the elderly including pedestrian routes, noise, and access to services.</p> <p>Re-visit history re slavery and street names.</p>	<p>Long term development plans to include leisure/recreational facilities</p> <p>Look at road and place names – any changes appropriate?</p>
ATTRACTIVENESS	<p>No purpose to stay</p> <p>Shops appear empty / closed during the day - shutters</p>	<p>Shutters artwork scheme</p> <p>Change retail opening hours.</p> <p>Consider destination attraction(s)</p>
EXPERIENCE	<p>Unattractive gateways to town centre (rail and pedestrian) whilst we await station infrastructure changes.</p> <p>Poor wayfinding signage</p>	<p>Improve appearance of the station including cleaning / repainting the railings, plus signage at, within and to/from the train station.</p> <p>Secure use / uses / users for the station retail space.</p>
MARKETS	<p>Needs to open longer, more often, plus themed and special markets. Suggestions incl; evenings, daily, indoors, covered, youth, world foods.</p> <p>Use Market Place as a venue for events &amp; entertainment.</p>	<p>Introduce one off specialist markets to test viability – repeat those that work.</p> <p>Traders, businesses and authority to promote markets.</p> <p>Create a temporary events space on the Market Place and programme entertainment.</p> <p>Long term plans include revamped Market Place &amp; surrounding area.</p>
RECREATIONAL SPACE	<p>Spaces to socialise safely</p> <p>Need family friendly venues for activities like holiday cubs.</p>	<p>A series of one off entertainments in the public realm to test what will work – consider all generations.</p> <p>Create a ‘What’s on in Earlestown’ platform on and off line.</p> <p>Gauge needs for venues and facilities to inform long term development plans</p> <p>Consider bus station site for a new public green space with play facilities.</p>
REDEVELOPMENT PLANS	<p>Town Hall to come into use as community facility.</p> <p>Relocation of Bus Station to develop interchange with trains.</p> <p>Development of Bus Station site as a new green public / leisure space.</p>	<p>Clarify priorities, establish viability, involve the community in town hall redevelopment.</p> <p>Create easy, clear, safe access routes to / from new transport interchange.</p> <p>Create new town centre public green space on current bus station site.</p>

The exercise reveals how the views of local stakeholders align with the Taskforce recommendation that Earlestown pursues a strategy of reinvention. **Reinventing involves activating and animating the town centre in the short term, but with the long-term goal to become more multifunctional by diversifying what is on offer.**



## Activating Earlestown town centre: a stakeholder perspective

The second workshop exercise asked participants to suggest 'Quick Wins' that could be organised quickly to activate the town centre whilst the big infrastructure and capital projects progress. They were then asked to prioritise their top 3 on each table. The responses are in the table below.

<b>Top Priority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Events programme @ the right times</li> <li>• Shared business adverts on social media / Facebook</li> <li>• Street Entertainers</li> <li>• Markets – different, young people, night-time</li> <li>• Live bands (local)</li> </ul>
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Priority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evening Markets</li> <li>• Talking the place up!</li> <li>• Pop up stalls on Market Street &amp; Bridge Street</li> <li>• Different types of markets.</li> <li>• Opening outside working hours</li> </ul>
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Priority</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try new things – don't be shy</li> <li>• Trial longer / different opening hours</li> <li>• Pressure for affordable space</li> <li>• Monthly activities; Bike rallies, History Groups, Car Rallies, Heritage Groups, Art displays, Church meetings, Photographic groups, Lots of nature photos, Charity fundraisers</li> <li>• Engaging public art</li> </ul>
<b>Other Suggestions from the Stakeholders</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More effective advertisement</li> <li>• Cooperation between businesses and community groups</li> <li>• Longer opening hours – set shop hours</li> <li>• Advertise on Facebook</li> <li>• Share pictures of market on Facebook</li> </ul>

- Mental health benefits of sharing
- Trails – free and accessible
- Affordable permanent stalls
- At Market Place – Live music on Friday nights & pop-up bars
- More covered area so that activities are not weather dependent
- Farmers Market
- Temporary stage on the Market Place
- Food pop up Market x 2
- More town events to attract families
- Evening markets, events, concerts, etc.
- Jubilee celebration
- Business incentives; reduced business rates, rents
- Links with industrial estate
- WW2 to help with market / small business set-ups.
- Look at what gaps there are in the existing market
- Demolish toilets & markets buildings?
- What will make shops stay open? Footfall
- Target other markets for new opps
- Christmas Market
- Barn Dance / Line Dancing
- Food Festival
- Lighting heritage assets
- Niche event – Ghost? Spiritual?

The local authority will take all these suggestions on board and where possible empower stakeholders to make some of these things happen. If only a selection of these ideas become real activity the town will be ready to take on and adapt to the new facilities and infrastructure that is on the way.

## Barriers to activation: a stakeholder perspective

For the final exercise workshop participants were asked to consider what barriers need to be removed to enable change to happen. Their views are summarised in the table below, grouped to align with the IPM 25 Priorities:

Main Barriers	Indicative interventions
<p><b>Lack of Place Management, Networks and partnerships</b></p> <p>Engagement / lack of engagement, apathy, negativity, Community buy-in, lack of trust, nostalgia.</p> <p>Need for joined up working and better communications amongst businesses.</p> <p>“Old town needs new methods – need to think differently”</p>	<p>Establish Earlestown Town Team / Partnership to lead on activations, collaborations, and promoting the town.</p> <p>Potential to develop a BID, including the industrial estate, in the medium term.</p>
<p><b>Functionality: Council remote / impenetrable</b></p> <p>Knowing who to ask / involve / engage.</p> <p>Red tape / huge forms – please simplify!</p> <p>Advice &amp; business support unavailable, particularly if not very computer literate.</p>	<p>SHBC has restructured and implemented substantial change to focus on Place and increase the resource available to implement improvements. New names, faces and roles becoming known.</p> <p>Council to review regulation of events/markets/pops-ups/street trading, etc.</p> <p>Provide free business support training and mentoring, possibly via the Chamber, including digital.</p>
<p><b>Attractiveness: Negative Perceptions</b></p> <p>Historic perceptions of us today</p> <p>Negative people of social media</p> <p>Fear of failure, Apathy</p>	<p>Earlestown Town Team to undertake social media marketing and campaigns to support and promote positive activity and perceptions.</p> <p>Physical/visual improvements to the core town centre</p>
<p><b>Accessibility: Physical &amp; Tech Barriers</b></p> <p>No town centre Wi-Fi</p> <p>Weather – covered areas?</p> <p>Limited / absent social media skills</p> <p>Connectivity &amp; Transport – no lift at rail station, unclear where you are when you exit station</p>	<p>Introduce Wi-Fi in the public realm</p> <p>Revamp Market Place with new canopy / canopies</p> <p>Provide training &amp; support to help businesses get online and adapt to technology</p> <p>Station renewal is part of the agreed Redevelopment programme</p>

## Why did the Earlestown stakeholders give up an afternoon to take part in the Place making Programme Workshop?

At the start of the workshop participants were asked what brought them to this event – why they felt it was worth an afternoon of their valuable time. Responses gathered on paper at each table are transcribed below. Different folks interpreted to question differently.

- Because I like it here.
- Interested in Earlestown
- I want the town to thrive and be prosperous again.
- To find out plans for the town.
- What will replace the bus station?
- For the future of our children and grandchildren.
- For the future of Earlestown.
- What will the Town Hall be used for?
- Want to know how the town can be improved.
- Passionate about property and the future of my home town.
- Family approach + business investment – born & bred Newton-le-Willows
- To network with others
- Maintain facilities
- Looking to the future and to discover how we could be involved, part of the community
- We are investing in Earlestown; Rams Head to become 14 affordable apartments, 4 commercial / retail ground floor
- To improve our future; use the town hall, thriving market, accessible station
- Information to pass on.
- To observe, contribute, understand the challenges.
- To listen and understand what ‘quick wins’ are achievable to assist the masterplan.
- We have passion about our home town and would love to see it back to its former glory.
- Its my job to support existing business & develop new opportunities.
- Believe in better life opportunities for our young people.
- History around Earlestown is fab – more than St Helens e.g. Rocher Vulcan, Villiers
- Find out how Crownway Community Centre can get involved with the regeneration plan and help the plans create an inclusive space.
- Community Interest Company

- I have invested in the town and brought in other investors since 1982. I want to ensure the future of the town.
- Town Hall development, Carbon Reduction, NADOS
- Town Hall refurbishment & how it can support High Street regeneration.
- As a Community Leader and voice for BAME Community in Earlestown.
- To help in any way that improves the vibrancy of our town!
- Domestic abuse WA12
- Road safety and consider others.
- It would be nice to just enjoy Earlestown in a new way.
- Concerned – no IT
- Big resident no's to moving bus station – road safety at crossings, particularly for older people.
- Young people's gap.
- Education – business education & training to break cycle of low income
- Training for young people
- Interested in local views to help drive regeneration forward
- To understand what are most important local priorities
- Business owners invested in Bridge Street property
- 52 years in business in Earlestown
- Play Centre
- Supporting St Helens Borough Council to develop the Levelling Up Fund Bid.
- Terry told me to come.

# References/further reading

## Underpinning research

25 Priority Interventions: e-learning <https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/frameworks/25-vital-and-viable-priorities/>

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