

# 7. A place seeking an identity

**Summary:** People in every conversation had a lively discussion about whether Lancing should celebrate or downplay its village status for future community and wealth building - and whether a new identity tethered to Lancing's location and its aspirations is the future.

## Lancing's story

Lancing never registered as "town" status which is why it still has a parish council. For long-standing residents the village status is something that evokes pride, because it captures the warmth and familiarity that exists between intergenerational families who still call Lancing their home.

For younger people, who have grown up in a place home to nearly 20,000 residents, Lancing feels less like a small community, and more like the size and disconnectedness of a town without much along the high street to draw people in. A common theme in survey responses was investment in the built environment to enhance its beauty and wayfinding to connect the centre to surrounding assets. We also had conversations about whether it sometimes plays to Lancing's benefit to emphasise its size, and the infrastructure it needs to support the people who live here - e.g., banks, diversity of shops, more skills and training.

We had a lot of conversations around the benefits of evoking the village to connect people, to contract the high street so it is less dispersed. This point is echoed in voluntary sector observations about the deed to connect community assets to help solidify and strengthen an active citizenry. These conversations evolved from discussing identity to discussing the centre and its connectivity.

Feedback after the business and traders conversation highlighted another potential focus, away from thinking about Lancing as a village or a town towards a focus on Lancing's natural assets and location - including the South Downs National Park, the beach, Brooklands development and Sussex Bay. The Lancing Business Park's Future discussion paper is exploring how to position Lancing as a place for healthy living. This echoes how respondents to the survey celebrated active lifestyles and the location of Lancing between the South Downs and the Sea.

There was a desire for the quality of the public realm to mirror people's desire to feel proud about living in Lancing. It feels as though people are seeking something distinct that celebrates Lancing's community feel along with its physical location between the South Downs and the sea.

## Quotations

*"What does the community want Lancing to be?" - Business breakfast community conversation.*

*"Definitely a strong village/community feel to Lancing" - Resident, parent / carer, volunteer, aged 30-39, survey respondent.*

*"People say "I'm going down to the town centre" not the village. Yet there is interest in keeping village identity" - A reflection in the councillor and officer conversation.*

*"Lancing is the largest village because it's actually supposed to be a town" - A young person reflecting on the village identity at the Youth Forum.*

*"At a national conference we were grouped as size - and there were many towns smaller than Lancing" - A reflection in the councillor and officer conversation.*

*"Banks and building societies have used the village identity as a reason to leave" - A reflection in the councillor and officer conversation.*

*"I think Lancing has clear divides between North Lancing, Mash Barn and Lancing Beach area. There is a hostility driven by fear of change, in turn driven by the inequalities in the area" - A resident, new to the area, aged 40-49, survey respondent.*

*"I feel the location of Lancing between the South Downs and the sea is perfect for an active lifestyle" - A parent / carer, aged 30-39, survey respondent.*

*"Lancing is in a beautiful location (beach and South Downs)" - A resident new to the area, 40-49, survey respondent.*

## Unanswered questions

- Do we want Lancing to be a tourist attraction? (Asked by a parent / carer)
- Are there benefits to Lancing's 'biggest village' status? (Asked at the business breakfast)
- Village status - does clinging to this status prevent growth? What is the identity of the centre? (Asked at the business breakfast)