

## Contributor

# Hollaway

Architects / Master Planners / Interior Designers

### Recognising opportunity

**In a year of uncertainty when the future is unknown, can we see opportunity? Are we able to take the long view and look across the valley? Opportunity comes in many guises, but recognising the right opportunity has never been more important. Quite often it takes a disaster to bring about positive change, and Kent is well positioned to emerge stronger in the future in a post-Covid society.**

#### Living

As our houses have become places we socialise, relax and work, the definition of home has changed. Space has become a premium, we need more defensible space, a place to work or study, areas to relax and to be able to lock ourselves away. It is now difficult to put a value on outdoor space, be it as small as a balcony, a garden or a large public open space.

We have seen an increase in the number of people seeking houses with gardens and good transport links into London for the occasional weekly meeting. Could the 'Dormitory Town' be a thing of the past? In the same way these gardens will need nurturing so will the communities in which they live, could our towns & cities become true 'Garden Towns' nestled within the 'Garden of England.'

We have become more invested in our local, whether it's getting to know our neighbours or exploring our beautiful countryside, we are creating a new sense of community with shared values. Becoming less reliant on our cars we, instead, enjoy long walks and our bicycles now take pride of place.

“**NetAnAgent.com, the Estate Agent Comparison website, has seen a 97.5% increase in the number of properties selling within the last 90 days until October compared to last year, and this number is likely to grow further. This is suggesting a strong market with an influx of purchasers moving to Kent from other areas.**

Alex Thorpe MD, NetAnAgent

#### The High Street

Is this a new opportunity for us to rethink our High Streets? As big retailers suffer could the local prosper, and create new opportunities for home-grown talent and small businesses.

Can we finally reverse brain drain, where before we would lose the brightest talent to London with the promise of greater prosperity, now they can prosper working from home or locally, creating greater prospects to invest in their community. The traditional wealth divide can then be distributed more evenly.

Platforms such as 'Zoom' and 'Teams' have brought virtual mobility yet face connections still are incredibly important. We re-imagine our High Streets as places to socialise in a new café culture where we can buy local produce, and smart working environments that our home-grown talent can flourish in. Could we create places of



Proposal for Leas Pavilion, Folkestone – performance venue and flats.

well-being and super surgeries for health care, that are preventative focused, putting fitness and diet first.

Our town centres need to become cultural hotspots, celebrating the arts and our identity attracting tourists & thus creating demand for overnight stays.



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**New Town Works, Ashford – creating jobs in a creative industry.**

“ Lockdown became a real challenge to all of us to get food, which brought out the best of local suppliers, a lot of our trade suppliers that had previously only operated in a trade environment, had to switch their models very quickly or see their businesses go under. I think people have started to support local farmers, cheese makers, local egg suppliers, jam makers and our brilliant local wine makers in Kent. I believe a lot more people have started to appreciate the seasonality of the produce that they eat. All our venues have been focussed on seasonality and where possible we only buy local, I hope this pandemic has taught us all, that we all need to do our bit and support local suppliers and farmers.

Josh De Haan, Rocksalt Group

### 3P's (Public/Private/Planning)

Never before have these sectors needed each other more, as central and local government grapples with trying to change a system which is steeped in legislation, the planning system has had to adapt quickly. We have seen local planning authorities change to virtual planning committees, we are now seeing a more ordered and sometimes measured planning response & committees who are more driven to keep our economy stimulated.

As businesses, both private & public, learn to trust their work force to produce remotely, we are learning new technologies which can make us more efficient and are swapping the commute to invest in our families and communities.

Can big business adapt as well? if the work force is wanting to smart work, then is there an opportunity for business to relocate with the smart workforce. For example, Dyson has created a multi-billion business in the Wiltshire countryside, is there not an opportunity for Kent to attract big business with its willing workforce. But to do this we need the public sector to create the economic conditions for change and attract this type of investment. New Town Works in Ashford will hopefully attract Netflix and other film makers predicting in excess of 2000 jobs, this will only be possible with strong links to the universities and colleges thus making sure we have the talent pool to satisfy the demand.

### Sustainability

Can we run towards a circular economy, and move away from the take-make-waste linear model. As we become more invested in our communities, we have a shared responsibility to support the local. The more time we spend in our homes the more we want them to be efficient and reduce energy consumption. If we invest more in our own shores then we are more likely to want to holiday within them. The more sustainable we are the healthier we will become as a society.

As we emerge, can we move towards a hybrid model of living, that can take the small but important positives from our time in lockdown and enable more people to work remotely in a smart way, and at the same time reduce our dependence on the car.

### Hollaway

As a practice Hollaway is completely invested in Kent, we seek to employ home grown talent and nurture them through the practice, we are invested in making positive change within the community, designing buildings and places which are sustainable and of the highest design quality.

Guy Hollaway Principal Partner Hollaway

[guyhollaway@hollawaystudio.co.uk](mailto:guyhollaway@hollawaystudio.co.uk)

[www.hollawaystudio.co.uk](http://www.hollawaystudio.co.uk)



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**Rocksalt, Folkestone – celebrating its 10th anniversary.**