

# Finding Purpose Beyond Pasties: How We Rebuilt Cornish Bakery for a New Era

# A·SIDE

DBA Design Effectiveness  
Awards Entry – 2026

## For Publication

Client: Cornish Bakery

Cornish Bakery  
↓ Exeter





Image 1 – Cornish Bakery branded takeaway cup.

# Executive summary

In 2020 The Cornish Bakery set out to radically transform its brand to evolve beyond its pasty-shop roots, we delivered a bold redefinition of the brand – transforming it from a coastal food stop into a contemporary, premium bakery café that now thrives on inland high streets and designer outlet centres.

Our strategic foundation was rooted in a new brand purpose, ‘(we exist) to nourish people,’ broadening the offer from simply feeding to nurturing communities, culture, and ambition. We articulated a powerful brand vision – ‘to redefine what a bakery is, does and can be’ – which acted as a rallying cry for innovation and disruption. This was underpinned by values that celebrated simplicity, individuality, and ambition, helping to shape the internal culture as much as the external experience.

Visually and verbally, we reimagined every brand touchpoint to support this repositioning. We developed a distinctive identity system centred around the ‘Rise Up’ icon, supported by warm, expressive typography and a confident, contemporary colour palette. We evolved the brand tone of voice and personality – unconventional, optimistic, and brave – helping Cornish Bakery break free from the predictable norms of its category by celebrating Cornish produce and giving the staff a voice. From packaging and uniforms to signage, interiors, and merchandise, the identity was built to be flexible, human, and confidently Cornish. The result was a brand with depth and commercial power – emotionally resonant, operationally scalable, and culturally magnetic.

In the 3-year period since the launch of the re-brand in December 2021, Cornish Bakery has:

**Repositioned within the eating out market, from the lower end Bakery Shop subsector, to the more premium and faster growing Bakery Coffee Shop subsector (4.4% Vs 11.4% market growth 2022-24) ❶.**

**Opened 20 new bakeries and refurbished 14, bringing the portfolio size to 66 bakeries, making it the second largest brand in the quality Bakery Coffee Shop sector (under Gails).**

**Increased annual revenue to £29.4 million in 2024, a 68% increase since pre-covid revenue of £17.5m.**

**Grown the Cornish Bakery team by 59% (from 421-671) and increased staff retention from 10% to 39%.**

By placing design at the centre of brand and business strategy, Cornish Bakery has achieved scalable, sustained success – redefining not just its future, but the high street itself.

❶ Source: Future Foodservice Segmentation, incorporating bespoke retail segments in collaboration with Juniper.

## Context and overview

Originally founded as Pasty Presto in 1994, The Cornish Bakery had grown steadily since a rebrand in 2015, expanding from 30 to 47 stores in the proceeding years, in primarily coastal tourist locations. In 2020 Steve Grocutt (founder and owner) was met with his greatest challenge yet - the Covid-19 pandemic which underscored the business's vulnerability to seasonal footfall and an ageing demographic, reluctant to socialise.

In 2021, Steve contacted our agency in search of a new design partner to rebrand the company and transform its market positioning — asking: “What is a Cornish Bakery on today’s high street?” His aspiration was to move beyond the limitations of the coastal market and connect with a more progressive vision of Cornwall — one that left behind the clichés and championed quality: fresh produce, inspiring spaces, and a motivated workforce. The goal was to position Cornish Bakery apart from the tired high street bakery chains, moving closer to the more premium, experience-led independents — with the ambition to “become the go-to brand in our sector.” Achieving that vision, however,

would be no easy feat against the backdrop of a pandemic that had devastated the UK high street.

The fee for the rebrand project was £30k, it was launched to the public in December 2021.

A substantial investment was also made in renovating existing bakeries and designing the interiors of new bakeries. Working alongside their existing interior design partner, our agency acted as brand custodians, leading the visual direction of implementing the new brand, designing shop fronts and curating original artworks for the interior - commissioning a range of Cornwall-based artists. With the interior design company managing each bakery site map, curating componentry and managing the renovations - we have developed a scalable formula for growing the bakery portfolio - with the ambition to open 6 new bakeries a year.

Image 2 - Cornish Bakery shop fronts, before rebrand (left) & after rebrand (right).



In 2021, at the time of rebrand, Cornish Bakery had a number of challenges to contend with. The ongoing pandemic brought all kinds of societal and business challenges that had not previously been experienced. Lock downs and government legislation led to unpredictable footfall and spatial restrictions, fluctuating supply chains and costs, which created an atmosphere of uncertainty and low public confidence or spending. With changing consumer behaviours, new opportunities emerged for brands willing to adapt.

The rebrand would mark a pivotal moment to redefine the brand strategy for today's evolving landscape, elevate the brand positioning, and rearticulate a clear vision for the future aligned with the growth objectives.

② *“Across the pandemic we have all worked harder than ever, fuelling our hunger for determined growth. That growth will never come from us doing the same-old, same-old, no matter how successful we have been.”* – Steve Grocutt, Cornish Bakery founder.

The Bakery Coffee Shop sector - offering premium baked goods alongside high-quality coffee - was identified as the fast growing subsegment within the wider retail hospitality market. Key trends driving this shift include:

**A declining reliance on tourist-heavy trade, prompting brands to seek more resilient, year-round income streams.**

**A surge in consumer appetite for premium, ‘affordable luxury’ experiences - reflecting a growing demand for quality, authenticity, and comfort.**

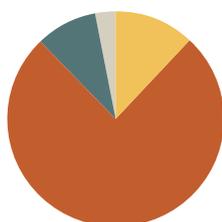
**The rise of remote and hybrid working patterns, increasing demand for welcoming, flexible café spaces where people can meet, work, and socialise.**

Cornish Bakery recognised the opportunity to align with these shifts and wanted to reposition itself at the heart of this growth category. By evolving from a regional pasty brand to a national Bakery Coffee Shop brand, Cornish Bakery would not only future-proof its business model but also unlock scalable expansion into new, high-performing market towns, and meet the company growth targets ③.

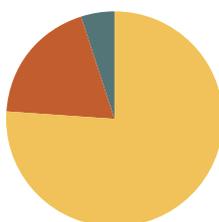
Another key ingredient to the success of the rebrand would be the team at Cornish Bakery, predominantly made up of in-bakery workers in customer facing roles. The design agency would need to build a strategy that helps deliver a positive working culture with increased staff retention and satisfaction. Before the launch of the rebrand in Dec 2021, the company had just over 400 staff members, with a retention rate of just 10%. Cornish Bakery set the target to double this rate within the preceding 3-years, create more jobs in the industry and nurture talent.

Shift from tourist sites, to high streets and premium outlets.

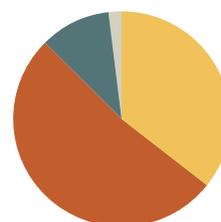
Bakeries Opened Pre 2022 (35 sites)



Bakeries Opened 2022+ (21 sites)



Bakeries Opened Present day (56 sites)



- High Street
- Tourist
- Outlet
- Event

② Source: Rise & Shine' article, December 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/stevegrocutt>

③ Source: Cornish Bakery accounts.

# Project objectives

Market position

**Reposition Cornish Bakery from a traditional pasty shop to a premium bakery café.** To broaden appeal, modernise perception, and enable meaningful growth beyond its regional roots.

**Drive consistent commercial performance and scalable expansion.** To support the founder's ambition of opening 6 new bakeries per year and doubling the annual revenue in 3 years, with design as the foundation for growth.

People & Culture

**Attract a younger, more diverse customer base.** To shift beyond the 'holiday treat' market into everyday coffee, breakfast and lunch occasions.

**Elevate the internal culture and customer experience.** To create jobs & support recruitment, boost staff engagement and deliver a brand that people feel proud to work for and visit.

# Design solution

When The Cornish Bakery approached us with this project, we agreed that one of the key elements of making the re-brand successful would be to drastically simplify the brand values and engage with all levels of their team - making decisions in the bakery (not the boardroom).

## Brand Strategy

The process began with our Brand Workshop, a collection of focused exercises that allow us to dig with optimism (for strategic insight), play with creativity (exploring ideas and boundaries) and craft with precision (for considered brands, built to last). Through this process that included input from staff members from all areas of the business, we arrived on the these focused strategic foundations:

Brand purpose (why we exist) -

**To nourish people.**

What we believe in (our values) -

**Keep it simple, Be yourself, Aim higher.**

Where we're going (our vision) -

**To redefine what a bakery is, does and can be.**

These concise foundations are easy to communicate, making them both practical and scalable for business growth. These ideas guided all the design ideas throughout the rebrand project, and continue to inform all design decisions today; online, in print, on product packaging and environment.

## 'Nourishing people'

The new brand foundations shaped not only the external visual brand, but also the internal culture. The purpose extended beyond customers to include the team, creating a culture where staff felt valued and part of something meaningful. They weren't just working in a bakery; they were part of a bold movement to reshape the industry. These foundations, supported by a new internal training program - 'Rise & Shine', designed to boost staff satisfaction, improve retention rates, and build a more cohesive, forward-thinking team culture.

## Brand Identity

To modernise the brand, we stripped back the identity to its most essential elements. We began by simplifying the name, removing the redundant 'The' for a cleaner, more confident presence. The dated seagull motif was replaced with a semi-circle symbol - a nod to rising dough and rising sun - a simple, versatile mark that brings both flexibility and approachability to the brand. A new design system was developed, evolving the typography into a modern, accessible scheme that balances clarity with utilitarian character. Finally, we introduced a flexible colour palette designed to adapt seamlessly across high streets nationwide, ensuring the brand feels both locally relevant and consistently recognisable.

# Design solution

## Modernising perception

Another way in which we premiumised the brand, was to connect with Cornwall in an authentic way and remove clichés, including the seagull from the brand identity. We audited and decluttered the bakeries of posters, POS and loud messaging, creating a calmer and confident space where the product becomes the focus. We also removed the imagery of sunny beaches and turquoise seas, and commissioned a number of

emerging Cornwall-based artists to create original artworks for the brand, championing creativity and offering a platform to promote their work to a wider audience.

Image 3 - Cornish Bakery logo, before rebrand (left) & after re-brand (right).



Image 4 - Cornish Bakery interiors & artworks, before rebrand (left) & after re-brand (right).



# Design solution

## A new audience

To appeal to a younger audience, we wanted the bakeries to feel like an accessible alternative to independent coffee shops, rather than the typical high street chains. An example of this is the individually designed shop fronts which were tailored to reflect the character of each location while maintaining a cohesive, artisanal feel. To encourage more frequent visits, we introduced clear messaging on the exteriors – “Coffee and Pastries”. The clarity of this line reassures customers of a new focus – in-bakery and takeaway artisan coffee and a varied offering of baked goods – not just pasties, which are a less frequent, less profitable, purchase.

Image 5 - A collection of shop fronts, each designed individually for an independent feel.

Image 6 - Gift card. Each touchpoint considers our new target demographics, with considered creativity and sustainable materials.

By introducing more premium, independent-style shopfronts, Cornish Bakery could move beyond coastal locations and strategically target more affluent market towns – often rich in heritage architecture and supported by consistent, year-round footfall. Securing these high-quality sites would help cement the brand’s repositioning

from a traditional pasty shop to a modern Bakery Coffee Shop. This shift enabled the business to serve broader coffee, breakfast and lunch occasions – ultimately driving stronger commercial performance and unlocking scalable growth.

To this day, we continue to design each individual shop front, commission interior artworks, and conceptualise the visual direction for the interior. The interior design company then design each bakery space, and curate furniture and materials.



## Repositioning

The key objective of the rebrand was a strategic shift to reposition the brand from a lower end, traditional bakery (predominantly serving Cornish pasties), to a modern, high end Bakery Coffee Shop, characterised by both a premium coffee and food offering, at a midlevel spend point.

*“A–Side’s work has not only dramatically repositioned our brand from top to bottom but enabled us to plan for a very exciting future to build the brand in to one of the most impressive and successful ever created.”* – Steve Grocutt, Cornish Bakery founder.

## Scalable expansion

By 2024, the annual revenue had grown to £29.4 million, a 68% increase since pre-covid revenue of £17.5m <sup>4</sup>. The new visual identity and repositioning into the Bakery Coffee Shop subsector enabled the company to secure strategic bakery locations in more prominent, affluent market towns – shifting away from limited, seasonal coastal sites and unlocking meaningful, sustainable growth.

In the 3-years preceding the launch of Cornish Bakery rebrand, 20 new bakeries were opened, growing the portfolio to 66 bakeries. This is an average of 6.6 new

locations per year – beating the growth target and doubling the rate of openings from the previous 3-year period. On top of this, 14 bakeries were refurbished. <sup>4</sup>

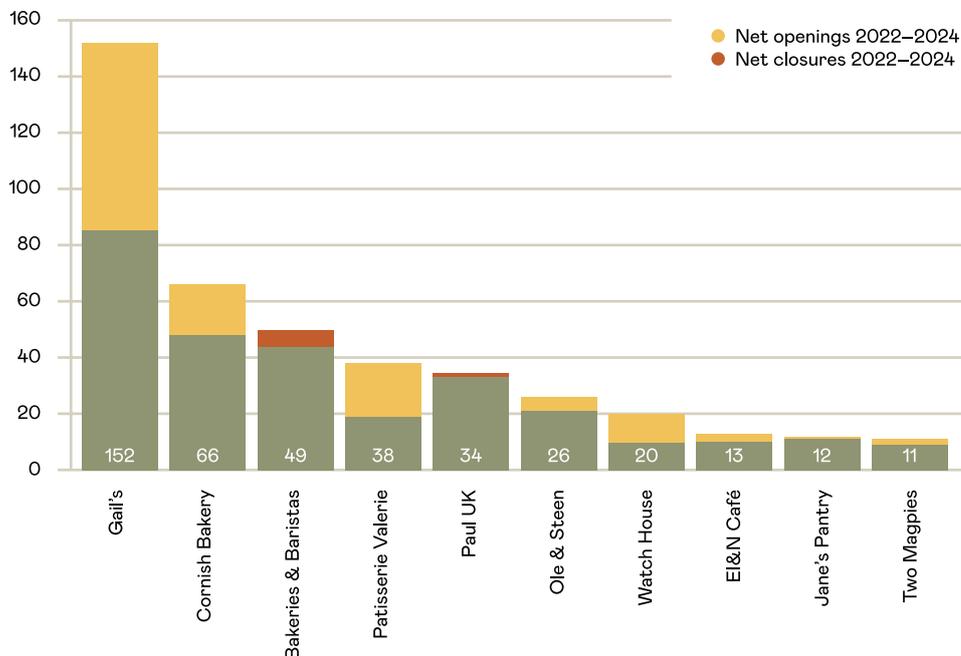
This was the second largest growth of a brand in the Bakery Coffee Shop sector (under Gails), proving the consumer demand for high-quality coffee alongside artisanal baked goods. Although Gails still dominates the overall sector, this demonstrates the growth potential in this category.

Bakery Coffee Shops are a high growth category, poised to capture market share from traditional Coffee Shops. As the Retail High Street market is set to grow by 2.9% annually, the Bakery Coffee Shop segment is set to outpace this, at c.9% per year from 2025–2027, stealing share from other segments. This growth is fuelled by rising demand for premium baked goods paired with high-quality coffee. Unlike traditional Coffee Shops, Bakery Coffee Shops offer greater versatility and stand out through their food-led approach. This positions Cornish Bakery as a stronger, more distinctive competitor in an evolving market, an essential ingredient to ensure continued scalable expansion <sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Cornish Bakery accounts.

<sup>5</sup> Source: Future Foodservice Segmentation, incorporating bespoke retail segments in collaboration with Juniper.

Bakery Coffee Shop Net opening and closures 2022–2024



# Results & other influencing factors

## Customer base

Prior to the rebrand, the company’s founder was increasingly concerned that the core customer base was aging, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic had caused much of this demographic to avoid high streets altogether – a key motivator to broaden the brand’s appeal. By elevating its positioning and aligning with high-end bakery trends, Cornish Bakery successfully attracted a wider, more diverse customer base. Research has shown that since the launch of the rebrand, their customers skew young and affluent, reflective of the broader market of those who frequent coffee shops ⑥.

## Internal culture

Between May 2022 and May 2024, growth in the brand and bakery portfolio led to a significant increase in employment – from 421 to 671 team members, marking a 59% rise. This expansion not only created meaningful opportunities within the hospitality industry but also added considerable value to the business. The team at Cornish Bakery ensured there was a strong focus training and nurturing during this period, instilling the new brand values in their team, which led to a significant increase in staff retention, rising from 10% to 39% in the same period ⑦.

Since the rebrand launch to June ‘24, their Indeed ‘star rating’ has also increased – from 3.5 to 3.9. Cornish Bakery now achieves the top score on Indeed when compared against other benchmark brands, with the highest ‘star rating’ and highest percentage of staff who would recommend them as an employer ⑧.

## Other contributing factors

During the time of the rebrand, Cornish Bakery engaged in PR opportunities to promote the relaunch, including national media companies as well as news outlets local to new or renovated bakeries. They also promoted and celebrated the rebrand via their own social media channels. To ensure these communications were inline with the new brand, we developed tone-of-voice guidance, photographic art direction and photo shoot management.

As described earlier, the incumbent interior design partner, design each bakery space, and curate furniture and materials.

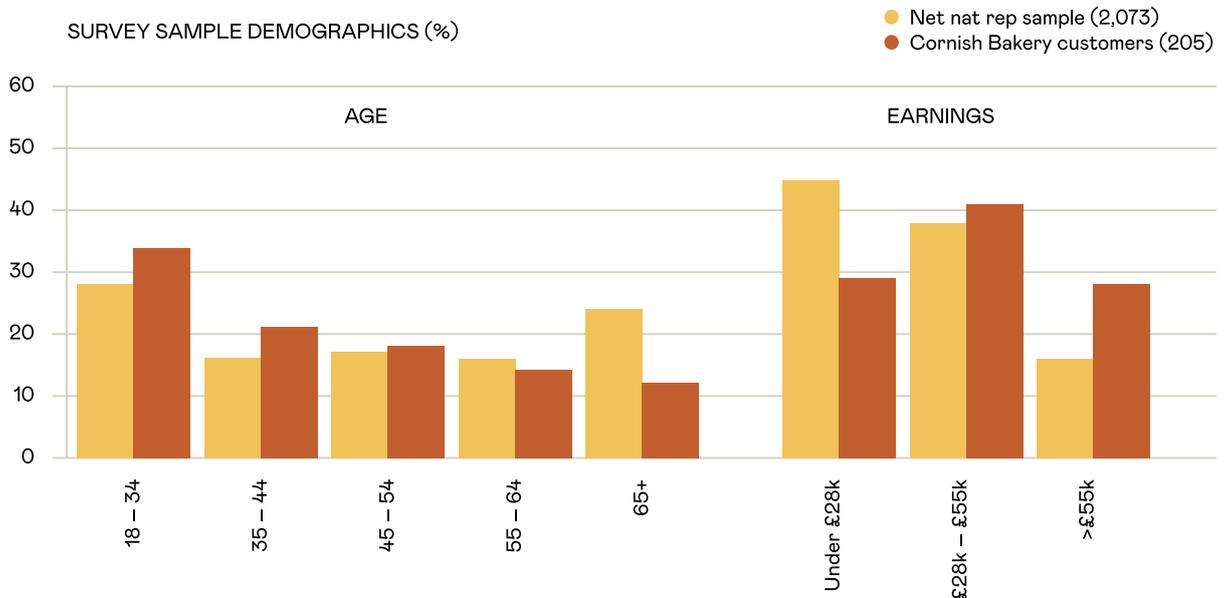
While the rebrand project boosted the team morale and supported recruitment efforts, Cornish Bakery’s long standing commitment to staff training, benefits and career progression also played a key role in their strong retention and overall team satisfaction.

⑥ Source: Juniper Omnibus Study of Nationally Representative Consumers.

⑦ Source: Cornish Bakery accounts.

⑧ <https://uk.indeed.com/cmp/The-Cornish-Bakery>

Cornish Bakery customer demographic - Age & Earnings (annual) - 2024.





Uniforms that staff are proud to wear



Branded merchandise



Moving produce to the window to draw in passing trade



Original artworks created in house @ A-Side



Credits:

A-Side:

**Cat Aylwin** Project Manager  
**Ross Imms** Creative Director  
**Alex Rowse** Creative Director  
**Peter Kirby** Strategist/writer

Cornish Bakery:

**Steve Grocutt** Owner  
**Stephen Evans-Wroblewski**  
Director of commercial operations