

"I have lived a few miles away from Swaffham for over 20 years. I have always admired the balance between modernity and tradition that the town has managed to strike and have always felt at home amongst its people. There's something about the place, a perfect market town, perfectly placed in the heart of Norfolk's perfect Breckland.

All of us connected to Kingdom are grateful to the town and its hospitable people for allowing us the opportunity to make the series there. Dozens of actors, production staff and film technicians have fallen in love with the town and with this part of Norfolk.

Swaffham is a wonderful place to visit, a wonderful place to stay and a wonderful place to know."



Stephen Fry



Report compiled by: Dr. David Bek, Project Officer, Swaffham Town Council, London Street, Swaffham, PE37 7DQ.

Email: dave@swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk,
enquiries@swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk

Contributors: Richard Bishop (Town Clerk), David Wickerson (Swaffham Town Partnership Committee Chairman), Dennis Tallon (Iceni Partnership Manager).

Published by: Swaffham Town Council

Photos: The photographs on the front cover along with a number of others within the report were taken by Nick Ford (www.nickpix.co.uk) who has kindly given permission for them to be used in this report. Other photographs were taken by David Bek, Vicky Mason, Craig Wheway and members of the Town Partnership Working Groups.

Front cover design: Nick Ford and David Bek

Printed by Limetree Downham Market

Acknowledgements

Initiatives such as 'Advance Swaffham' can only come about through the collective interest, enthusiasm, commitment and hard work of individual people, the vast majority of whom are motivated purely by a sense of public service. Thus, we all have to be grateful to the many volunteers who devoted time to this project. Equally, the input of paid officers should never be taken for granted and we have been extremely fortunate to be supported by many individuals whose contributions have extended beyond the line of duty and have been crucial to the development of Advance Swaffham. We are grateful to those individuals and the organisations they represent.

Thanks must also be extended to all the individuals who completed questionnaires of one form or another or attended consultation events and workshops. Without this input the process would have lacked the evidence base that justifies its very existence. Swaffham Hamond's High School, to take but one example, provided tremendous support in this regard completing huge numbers of Town Surveys, Youth Surveys and Employee Surveys.

In terms of financial support it is important to acknowledge grants made by Breckland Council and the Norfolk Rural Community Council. These enabled much of the research for the Healthcheck to be conducted. This support was matched by further financial and in-kind input from Swaffham Town Council as well as the Icen Partnership. The immediate continuation of the project is being funded by Breckland Council, Swaffham Town Council and the Icen Partnership.

We have been extremely fortunate that our work has attracted external interest from the academic world. As a result we have been able to collaborate on mutually beneficial projects which have enriched our work and provided an objective insight which has been invaluable. Thus, we thank Craig Wheway and Alison Leflore for their contributions and we wish them all the best as they progress with their embryonic careers. Dr. Neil Powe's research has provided many sources of inspiration and his insight on many issues has been much appreciated. Finally, many thanks to Professor Rob Krueger for offering to facilitate the Green Infrastructure study, which was carried out Alison Leflore.

Finally, thanks to Stephen Fry for suggesting that we use his comments about Swaffham in this document. Thanks to Success Management for creating the Advance Swaffham logo free of charge and thanks to Nick Ford of NickPix.co.uk for providing free usage of his wonderful photographs.

Dr. David Bek, Project Officer, Swaffham Town Council on behalf of the Town Partnership Committee

Foreword

It is hard to comprehend the level of dedication and work that has resulted in the launch of our Town Plan – “Advance Swaffham”.

Since that very first meeting of the original Town Group in February 2007, officers and volunteers alike have spent untold hours in researching, compiling, completing detailed Healthcheck Worksheets and questioning the various aspects of our town through the medium of four thematic work groups – Economy, Environment, Social/Community and Transport.

The resulting reports and surveys, already published, are a testament to that dedication and have been widely praised by external agencies, many of whom have held up Swaffham as an example to other market towns as to how they might shape their own future.

“Advance Swaffham” will be the catalyst to drive forward projects, both large and small which will ultimately be of benefit to the Town and its people. Several such projects have already been identified, now more hard graft is needed to turn those concepts and ideas into reality, which would have been impossible without this volume of preparatory work.

Thanks are therefore due to all concerned; our volunteers, our Project Officer Dave Bek, Dennis Tallon of the Iceni Partnership and Richard Bishop representing the Town Council – a partnership in the truest sense. We are also very grateful for the valuable contributions from academia, both here in the UK and the USA.

We are proud of the positive way that the town has come together to produce “Advance Swaffham”, which will not only form the backbone of future developments but is crucial as it defines the agendas of both the Town Council and the Iceni Partnership in the coming decade. This will ensure that any initiatives are interlinked as part of our joint approach over the next 10 years.

David Harman
Town Mayor
Swaffham Town Council



Tony Dickens
Chairman
Iceni Partnership



David Wickerson
Chairman
Town Partnership
Committee



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Glossary of key terms and abbreviations

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| AMT | Action for Market Towns. National body which promotes development and regeneration in small towns |
| Advance Swaffham | Brand name for the ‘town plan’. |
| BDC | Breckland District Council Local government district covering 113 parishes. |
| EEDA | Eastern of England Development Agency – one of nine English Development Agencies whose task is to drive sustainable growth and regeneration. |
| Green Infrastructure | The physical environment within and between settlements. A network existing between formal parks, gardens, woodlands, green corridors, waterways, street trees and open countryside. |
| Healthcheck | An audit of the economy, environment, community and transport system of a market town and its hinterland. |
| Hinterland | Area surrounding a town. |
| Iceni Partnership | The Iceni Partnership is a local community based organisation which encourages local people to work together for the benefit of Swaffham and the surrounding villages. |
| LDF | The Local Development Framework for Breckland outlines how planning will be managed in different locations within the district. |
| LSP | The Local Strategic Partnership for Breckland aims to create sustainable communities and improve the quality of life for all residents in Breckland. |
| Norfolk Ambition | The Norfolk County Strategic Partnership’s sustainable community strategy |
| NCC | Norfolk County Council. The elected administrative body governing Norfolk. |
| Protocol | A set of rules or standards, e.g. Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change management. |
| Public Realm | Publicly owned streets, pavements, rights-of-ways, parks and other publicly accessible open spaces, and public and civic buildings and facilities. |
| SCALGA | Swaffham Community Allotments and Community Gardeners Association |
| SPA | Swimming Pool Association |
| Stakeholder | In this instance, any individual, group or organisation with an interest in the future wellbeing of Swaffham. |
| Sustainability | A sustainable initiative has the capacity to be long lasting without causing negative impacts elsewhere. |
| STC | Swaffham Town Council. The town’s elected body with responsibility for managing various aspects of the parish’s wellbeing. |
| TPC | Town Partnership Committee. Driving force behind the generation of Advance Swaffham. A community driven organisation involving Swaffham Town Council and the Iceni Partnership. Formerly known as the Town Group. |
| Thematic Groups | The four groups (economy, environment, social/community and transport) that undertook the research for the Healthcheck process. |
| Travel Plan | Promotes sustainable travel choices to reduce negative impacts on the environment, congestion and road hazards. |
| Vision | The overall aims of Advance Swaffham outlining the desired characteristics of the town in the future. |
| Working Groups | The groups who will work on the delivery phase of Advance Swaffham. |

Summary

Back in 2007, following the successful completion of the Breckland CER Package projects, Swaffham Town Council and the Iceni Partnership took the groundbreaking decision to form the Swaffham Town Group - a body embedded in the structures of each organisation. The Town Group was charged with the not inconsiderable task of formulating a '10 Year Plan' for the town, which would ensure that all future projects would be interlinked and mutually compatible. Thoroughness and objectivity have been the central pillars of the Town Group's approach, which has focused upon Economic, Environmental, Social/Community and Transport themes. A vast array of data has been collected, analysed and evaluated. As a result sixteen specific objectives and more than a hundred actions have been identified, which form the backbone of Advance Swaffham. The objectivity and research rigour underpinning Advance Swaffham has been commented upon favourably by a number of external observers and such recognition will stand the town in good stead when support from external policy makers and funding agencies is sought in the future.

This document charts the development of Advance Swaffham. The first section sets the scene and provides an overview of the methods by which Advance Swaffham has been created. The second section summarises the key findings from the underpinning research conducted by the Town Group Thematic Groups and the town's officers and includes a summative SWOT analysis of the main issues confronting the town. The third section sets out the specifics of the plan, including the 'vision' for the town's future, the key objectives and the specific actions that will be focused upon in the coming years. The fourth and final section outlines how Advance Swaffham will be delivered in the coming years.

Introduction

The Norfolk market town of Swaffham enjoys a long and colourful history dating back many centuries. The town is located on the edge of the distinctive Breckland countryside and borders both the North and West Norfolk administrative districts each of which enjoy unique landscapes and characters. Swaffham's hinterland incorporates a number of villages and hamlets and the town's proximity to the A47 trunk road ensures that people from a wide radius are able to access local services and facilities. The town's market place which includes the Butter Cross has traditionally been the town's best known feature as the location for markets and fairs since a charter was granted in 1215. The town grew steadily during the 20th Century, more than doubling its population. Comparison of the maps and aerial photo below illustrates the physical growth of the town that occurred during that time and which, of course, is still ongoing today. Sharp eyed readers will note the existence of a railway line in 1946, which was made redundant by Beeching's axe in the 1960s.

Figure 1: Swaffham in 1946

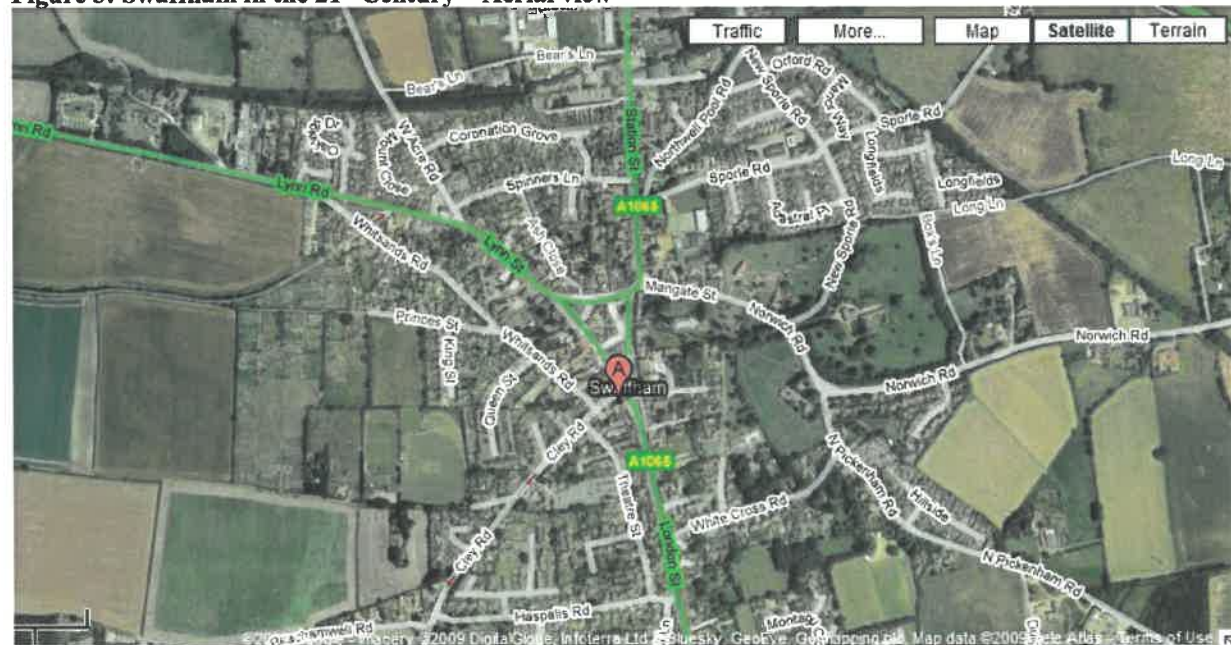


Figure 2: Swaffham in the 21st Century



Sources: Ordnance Survey, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Swaffham_map1946.png, www.mapsgoogle.co.uk

Figure 3: Swaffham in the 21st Century – Aerial view



Source: www.mapsgoogle.co.uk

The account of the town's history on the town council website (<http://www.swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/townhistory.php>) illustrates the turbulent nature of the settlement's progress – population growth, population decline, plague, invasions, legendary figures, economic collapse, economic recovery, shifts in faith systems, shifts in political systems, technological change - they are all in there. So, where are we now? The early 21st Century poses many challenges for small towns almost as though such localities need to prove their right to existence in a world where so many things are judged primarily by their 'cost-effectiveness'. Thus, services and facilities are constantly under threat as healthcare, education, transport, leisure facilities and commercial facilities are rationalised. Yet, such small towns, especially ones that are well located and enjoy a distinctive character are becoming increasingly popular locations for people to live and visit and as a result are growing in size. Clearly, outside forces of one type or another have significant impacts upon the evolution of towns and their communities. By taking the bull by the horns and taking an objective look at the town through the Healthcheck process the Advance Swaffham document has been produced. This document places the town in the enviable position of being able to **'take charge of its own destiny'**, (Mark Stanton, Head of Economic Development, Breckland Council) by identifying social, economic and environmental priorities, which will ensure that the town remains, **'a wonderful place to visit, a wonderful place to stay and a wonderful place to know'**, to quote the town's most famous supporter and star of the locally filmed ITV drama 'Kingdom', Mr. Stephen Fry.

Methodology

Following the successful completion of the CER package which resulted in the rebuilding of the Community Centre, refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms and regeneration of the town centre it was decided to review all aspects of the local partnerships that had been established during that process. It was agreed the way forward for future enhancements would be most fruitfully achieved if they were derived from an all encompassing Town Plan document. The concept of the original Town Group was borne out of the Iceni Partnership's revised structure which was endorsed in the summer of 2007. It has a unique position – on the one hand, being a legally constituted committee of Swaffham Town Council and whilst also being at the heart of the Iceni Partnership. The Town Partnership Committee comprises Town Councillors, Iceni Directors and other members of the community. Four thematic working groups (Economy, Transport, Environment and Social/Community) operate within the Town Partnership Committee structure. The body's key objective has been to identify a clear vision for the town complemented by a comprehensive 10 Year Action Plan.

The Town Partnership Committee is often promoted as a true partnership between the Council and Iceni. Indeed, the value of this arrangement was recognised in 2008 when the Iceni Partnership was granted the 'Partnership and Strategic Working Award' for the Eastern Region by Action for Market Towns. The Town Partnership Committee is clearly an integral part of both organisations and has succeeded in forging its own identity since its inaugural meeting on the 28th February 2007 at the Assembly Rooms.



Community Economic Regeneration Package

Swaffham and part of its hinterland was recognized as a social and economic deprived area under European guidelines. The Iceni Partnership conducted a number of public consultation meetings to gauge the public's view on the regeneration of Swaffham.

The Partnership gained a total package of £3.84 m funded by Swaffham Town Council, Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council, ERDF, HERS and EEDA.

The grant was spent on building a new Community Centre, refurbishing the Swaffham Assembly Rooms and redesigning the Market Place. The total project which lasted three years was completed on time and within budget. The success of the project can be measured by the number of different organizations that use the halls together with the combined footfall of over 60,000 per annum.



In April 2007 the Town Council appointed a Project Officer who has guided the process and provided strategic input. Officers of both the Town Council and Iceni Partnership have met regularly with the Chairman of the Town Partnership Committee ensuring full discussion and consultation on matters of strategy and method. Where necessary, policy matters have been referred through the Town Council and Iceni Partnership. The background research underpinning the plan has occurred by following the Market Towns Initiative's Healthcheck protocol (see box 1 below). The Healthcheck process has been driven by two complementary strands of research; i) each of the thematic working groups, with support from the Project Officer, have devised research programmes based around the Market Towns Initiative Healthcheck worksheets; ii) the Project Officer in collaboration with other Town Council and Iceni Partnership officers has devised a set of methodologically rigorous surveys designed to gain the insight of different stakeholders as to Swaffham's future.

Opinions are all too often disguised as truisms in discussions about the 'big issues' confronting small towns. Thus, statements about the health of the economy, car parking facilities, immigration, anti-social behaviour and the like tend to do the rounds and many become accepted as representing the real state of affairs despite a lack of robust supporting data. Acceptance of such 'wisdoms' is a dangerous starting place for policy making. Thus, a key aspect of this research process has been the adoption of an objective stance when framing questions and designing surveys. Thus, leading questions were avoided so that key issues could be identified from the evidence base that emerged. Such an approach is vital if accepted wisdoms are to be tested. The outcomes have shown that many of these apparent truisms are not as salient as their proponents often claim. Indeed, the evidence-based approach often throws up new issues and identifies new priorities. The neutrality of the research has been recognised by outside observers such as Action for Market Towns Eastern Region co-ordinator Sally Williams who stated that Swaffham's data collection **'has been broad-based and you have not decided what questions you need an answer to but now you are well placed to decide what the answers are.'** Furthermore, **'knowledge gives you power and if you can measure it you can manage it.'**

Box 1

What is a 'Healthcheck'?

The term 'Healthcheck' appears to have strictly medical connotations. In fact a Healthcheck provides a toolkit for investigating Economic, Environmental, Social and Transport issues in a town, thus providing an overview of the 'health' of the town. The toolkit consists of a series of worksheets which ask questions about each theme and provide some ideas as to how the information can be obtained. Such Healthchecks have been carried out by hundreds, if not thousands, of British towns since the inception of the Market Towns Initiative. Healthchecks encourage community involvement and ultimately assist in the identification of a vision for a town's future and the actions that will assist in the fulfilment of the vision.

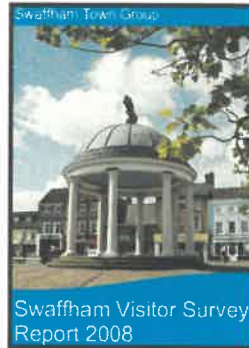
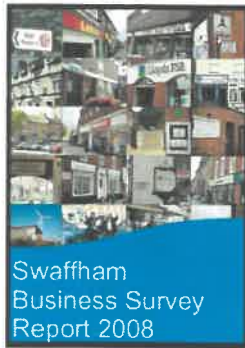
A wide range of data collection methods have been deployed including: questionnaire surveys, face-to-face interviews, workshops and consultation events. Dialogues with a number of local key stakeholder groups have occurred including: local businesses, the Swaffham and District Tourism Association and local schools. The process has been promoted by a number of means including the Town Council's quarterly newsletters, press releases, events and web-based materials. The process as a whole has been strongly supported by substantial inputs from academics based at the Universities of Newcastle, Leicester and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA. Doctoral candidate Craig Wheway spent several weeks in the town conducting surveys and interviews examining the dynamics of social change. This research was valuable for the Healthcheck process as it provided an insight into local people's views on various community related issues. Dr. Neil Powe undertook a survey of people working in the town as part of a major research project. The perspectives of employees are all too often neglected in town-based research which tends to focus upon residents and tourists. This work provided a fascinating insight into this cohort's views of the town and their interactions with its economy and community. Finally, Alison LeFlore from Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA visited the town for two weeks in autumn (or should that be 'Fall'?) 2008 to undertake a study of the town's green infrastructure. Alison's work was invaluable in encouraging us to adopt new ways of thinking about the town's built and natural environment.

Specific outputs:

- Reports based on the MTI Healthcheck worksheets by each of the **Economy, Transport, Environment and Social/Community** Groups.
- **Swaffham Town Group Survey Report** – presents the results of a wide ranging survey testing local people's opinions on aspects of life in the town and asking what they would like to see improved.
- **Swaffham Youth Survey Report** – analyses the results of a questionnaire completed by five hundred local young people and presents findings from a photograph-based consultation exercise whereby Youth Council members identified key issues in the town.
- **Swaffham Visitor Survey Report** – reports upon tourists' perspectives on the town's tourism 'offer'.
- **Swaffham Business Survey** – presents an overview of entrepreneurs' views of the nature of the local business environment.
- **Report on Survey of People Working in Swaffham** – report on a wide ranging analysis of employees' interactions with the town's economy and society. This report also included the results of a survey of migrant workers in the town.
- **Swaffham Green Infrastructure Report** – identifies strengths and weaknesses in the provision of green infrastructure within the central town and using a range of international examples makes recommendations for local enhancements.

These reports can be viewed online at:

<http://www.swaffhamtowncouncil.gov.uk/townplan.php>



The process as a whole has attracted plaudits from external observers including Norfolk Rural Community Council, Action for Market Towns, Breckland Council Officers and the press. The rigour, objectivity and breadth of the process have been considered exceptional putting the town in a very strong position to devise and deliver a challenging vision for the future.

Consultation

The Town Partnership Committee has held a range of meetings, workshops and events since its inception. These have been open to thematic group members and the community as a whole. The thematic groups have held a number of meetings and consultation activities which have been open to the community. In addition a number of specific consultation activities have taken place. These include:

- Brainstorming workshops at the Assembly Rooms and Community Centre, February and April 2007
- Consultation sessions with the sixth form at Swaffham College in October 2007.
- Session with A level Geography students discussing local environmental issues and green infrastructure led by Alison Leflore, October 2008.
- Workshop at the Assembly Rooms at which the Thematic Groups made presentations about their findings, April 2008.
- Displays made by Thematic Groups made available to public for comment at the Annual Town Assembly, April 2008.
- Launch of Survey Reports at the Town Hall, November 2008. The Reports were subsequently made available to the public at the Town Hall, library, Community Centre and online.
- Presentation about Town Plan made to Swaffham Rotary Club by the Project Officer, January 2009.
- Draft version of Town Plan displayed at Town Assembly for comment, April 2009.
- In addition, data from prior local consultations such as the Town Council's Have Your Say Survey 2006 and Northwell Pool and Shambles consultations have been taken into account.



Key information sources:

Whilst local research, data gathering and analysis has been the central focus of the Healthcheck process and the formulation of Advance Swaffham it has been vital to link the findings with the regional and national contexts. It is essential that the town vision, objectives and actions are compatible with the ideas articulated at district, county, regional and national levels. Below a series of references are listed detailing the key information sources which have informed Advance Swaffham.

- <http://www.breckland.gov.uk/brecklandcouncil/community/localstrategicpartnership.htm> - The Local Strategic Partnership aims to create sustainable communities and improve the quality of life for all residents in Breckland.
- <http://www.breckland.gov.uk/brecklandcouncil/environment/planning/planningpolicy/ldf.htm> - The Local Development Framework outlines how planning will be managed in a given area.
- http://www.norfolkambition.gov.uk/consumption/idcplg?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&nodeId=3987 – the Community Strategy for Norfolk 2003-2023.
- <http://www.shapingthefuture.org.uk/images/uploads/PDFDownloads/ShapingTheFutureStrategy.pdf> - Shaping Norfolk's Future Strategy the overarching economic strategy for Norfolk.
- http://www.norfolkambition.gov.uk/consumption/idcplg?IdcService=SS_GET_PAGE&nodeId=3991, Norfolk Action is the delivery plan for the sustainable community strategy – 2008-11
- www.norfolkinsight.org.uk – provider of detailed statistics about Norfolk.
- http://www.gos.gov.uk/goeedocs/Planning/Regional_Planning/Regional_Spatial_Strategy/EE_Plan1.pdf - The Regional Spatial Strategy outlines planning priorities at the Eastern Region scale.
- <http://www.eeda.org.uk/res.asp> - Regional Economic Strategy for the East of England 2008-2031
- <http://www.ruralcommunities.gov.uk/publications/ruraladvocatereport2007>, the Report of the Rural Advocate sets out a wide ranging set of measures to ensure that rural areas thrive.
- Powe, N.A., Hart T., Shaw T. (2007) *Market Towns: Roles, Challenges and Prospects*, London, Routledge, <http://www.routledgegeography.com/books/Market-Towns-isbn9780415389624>, reviews and analyses many of the key issues currently confronting Market Towns.
- www.towns.org.uk – the Action for Market Towns website provides a wealth of case studies and policy briefs related to the management of towns.

Town Partnership Committee Members

| Name | Involvement in TPC | Other forms of involvement in Swaffham society |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| David Wickerson | TPC Chair, Town Councillor, Icen Partnership Director, member of Economy Group, member of Townscape Heritage Working Group | Company Secretary - Swaffham Museum Ltd, Chair Friends of Swaffham Museum |
| Denis Bishop | TPC Vice-chair, Icen Partnership Director (until July 2008), leader of Economy Group, member of Townscape Heritage Working Group | Swaffham Rotary Club, Assistant Governor Rotary District 1080, Chair of Governors St Andrews Primary School, North Pickenham, member of the PCC St Peter and St Pauls Church. |
| Shirley Matthews | TPC lead member, Town Councillor, Icen Partnership Director, Breckland District Councillor, County Councillor (until June 2009), member of Social and Community Group | Governor Swaffham Hamond's High School |
| Sue Chittock (from April 2009) | Joint leader of Social and Community Group | Oasis Centre Secretary |
| Paul Darby | Town Councillor, Icen Partnership Director, member of Transport Group | Scalga member |
| Sheila Lister | Town Councillor, Icen Partnership Director and member of Social and Community Group | Friends of the Rec, governor Swaffham First School |
| Charles Gunner | Town Councillor, Icen Director, member of Environment Group | Red Cross, Vice Chair Swaffham Ex Servicemen's Club, Trustee Swaffham Community Transport, Trustee Swaffham Museum, Swaffham Medical Loans |
| Kate Gordon | Leader of Transport Group | Chair, Queen Elizabeth NHS Hospital Trust Board, Vice Chair, Board of the Peddars Way Housing Association. |
| Don Saunders | Former Icen Director, joint leader of Social and Community Group, member of Cycling and Walking Group | Swaffham Family Action WellFamily Service |
| Sally Palmer (until July 2008) | Icen Director, joint leader of Social and Community Group (until July 2008) | Norfolk Youth Service, UK Youth Parliament regional co-ordinator |
| Pippa Wade | Town Councillor, joint leader of Environment Group, member of Cycling and Walking Group | SPA member, Infant School PTA, helper at Scallywags nursery |
| Stuart Weaver | Joint leader of Environment Group. | Ecotech Centre Manager, Defra member for Regional Flood Defence Committee |
| David Bek | Project Officer, Swaffham Town Council | |
| Richard Bishop | Town Clerk, Swaffham Town Council | Charity Swaffham Relief in Need, Chair of Norfolk Branch of SLCC |
| Dennis Tallon | Manager, Icen Partnership | Swaffham Lions, SPA member, Swaffham and Litcham Hospice |

Summary of Findings

Key statistics:

- Population of town in 2007 – 7,289
- Percentage of population of retirement age 2007 – 33% (c/f Norfolk 24%, England 19%)
- Percentage of population born overseas 2007 – 8% (c/f Norfolk 4%, England 11.5%)
- Mean household income 2009 – £28,000 (c/f Norfolk £31,000, England £35,000)
- Job vacancies at JobCentre Plus June 2009 – 10 (prior to recession usually between 25 and 50)
- Percentage of population that is 'well off' – 30% (c/f Norfolk 45%, England 36%)
- Percentage of population that is economically 'hard pressed' – 19% (c/f Norfolk 16%, England 20%)
- Percentage of adult population with no qualifications – 40% (c/f Norfolk 32%, England 29%)
- Number of retail and service units in the town centre – 110
- Number of clubs and societies – 100+
- Annual footfall at the Community Centre – 28,000
- Annual footfall at the Assembly Rooms – 32,000
- Visitors to Swaffham Museum and Tourism Information Centre, Easter-August 2009 – 5,545

Sources: www.norfolkinsight.org.uk, www.iceni.info and http://www.breckland.gov.uk/updated_retail_and_town_centre_study_-_final.pdf.

The townscape (incorporating the historic centre and the modern Ecotech Centre and turbine) are defining features of the town's identity, which people find attractive. The town's



intrinsic character (historic townscape, market etc) is central to the town's overall sense of identity. Whilst the town is fortunate to contain an urban conservation area and more than one hundred listed buildings there are significant concerns about rundown areas of town such as Plowright Place and inadequate maintenance of many facades. Upgrading these could significantly



enhance the attractiveness of the central town as a whole. There will be opportunities to develop key sites in the centre of the town in the coming years. It is vital that such developments enhance the town's character rather than compromise it.

People are very positive about the range of services available in the town but less so about the range of shops. Many people are positive about the shopping facilities in Swaffham – but many would like to see a greater range of retail, service and social/leisure outlets in the town. The town's Saturday market is an important component of the town's economy but there are concerns that the vibrancy of the market has declined in recent years. Re-vitalising the town's market traditions is seen by many as a priority, whilst the town's economy would benefit from a more co-ordinated approach to promotion.

There is a feeling that the town's overall 'tourism product' could be strengthened and better promoted. For example, more information display boards could be put up in the town. Within this context there is a feeling that the town needs a 'central anchor' to draw in more



people and investment. Many people feel that the town would benefit from being 'smartened up' with greater controls over problems like litter. The overall response to the recent town centre regeneration work has been



very positive with people feeling that the overall environment is smarter and more user-friendly. However, there is still work to do in terms of greening areas of the town centre.

Swaffham's location relative to other places is important. Residents gain access to a wide range of employment, services, goods and diverse leisure activities in the surrounding region. The villages (the hinterland) are very important as they are attractive locations for Swaffham's workforce to live and the rural population provide an important market for the town's businesses. Swaffham is an important provider of services for the neighbouring villages. The town's location is of benefit to many businesses due its situation in relation to the region's road network and thus other key settlements.



Whilst overall employment levels are good in Swaffham, local people can struggle to find reasonably paid work or work with good prospects. People's experiences of seeking employment and working in Swaffham vary greatly. A significant segment of the workforce feel that they are underpaid, have limited promotion prospects and would struggle to find suitable alternative employment in the town. Furthermore, the town does contain pockets of acute socio-economic deprivation. For others, working in Swaffham provides a comfortable living and lifestyle. Recruitment is generally satisfactory, although firms do note skill shortages as a problem in many areas. Housing is an issue with access to starter homes and social housing being difficult for some people. Equally, there are concerns that the town lacks sufficient up-market housing to attract higher earning residents with significant spending power.

People are very supportive of environmentally friendly measures (such as recycling and



renewable energy) but feel that more could be done to support these in the town as a whole. The town has a shortage of public open space relative to the size of its population (according to the National Playing Fields Association



criteria there should be six acres of open space per thousand people) and there is insufficient attractive biodiversity within the town itself.

Traffic flows and associated noise and air pollution are concerns, particularly along the town's north-south axis. HGVs and dense holiday traffic in the summer pose particular problems. Few people travel to work by sustainable means. Those travelling from outside the town almost invariably travel by car. High numbers of those living and working in the town also travel by car. Very few cycle to school and there is concern at the lack of cycle paths around Swaffham. There are also concerns about speeding traffic and inadequate street lighting. There is also a strong feeling that public transport provision could be improved.



Swaffham is a popular destination to move to. People are attracted to the town due to the availability of a reasonable range of services and due to the semi-rural lifestyle on offer. A good proportion of people like living in Swaffham as it is a quiet, relatively crime-free, location but some others do have concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour. In line with national trends the fear of crime exceeds the reality. Recent efforts to tackle petty crime and anti-social behaviour by the Safer Neighbourhood Teams are much appreciated.

The town is also a popular destination for Portuguese and East European migrants who are attracted by the availability of employment within the area. The contribution of in-migrants (including the retired) to the sustainability of Swaffham's social and economic infrastructure should not be underestimated. Retired people are the driving force of many local organisations, whilst European migrants are heavily involved in the local economy as consumers, employees and increasingly as entrepreneurs. However, it is vital that sufficient support services are in place to meet the diverse needs of the community.

The new Community Centre is fast proving a central hub of the community providing a range of valuable services and facilities which are well used. Although the town possesses an excellent range of clubs and societies there is a feeling that the town lacks sufficient sources of entertainment, leisure and sporting opportunities. Communication, or absence thereof, has been highlighted as a significant problem in various facets of town life. For example, many groups and organisations operate in Swaffham but awareness of their activities is not always very high. Equally, awareness of the range of health-related services available in the town is not as high as it might be. A community newsletter and enhanced web-based services are seen as crucial ways forward to facilitate better information sharing between residents, businesses and local organisations.



Young people's favourite aspects of Swaffham include the retail and catering facilities (especially the chip shops), the open spaces (including the Recreation Ground) and certain clubs and groups. Half the young people surveyed belong to a local club, group or society. However, many believe that there are too few things to do whether in the evenings, the weekends or during school holidays. An overwhelming majority believe that the range of activities and



facilities needs improving. Many would like to see a greater range of shops, improvements to the transport infrastructure and for certain social problems to be tackled. There are concerns about safety in a number of locations, most especially in town in the evenings. Young(er) people can feel isolated from certain facilities and social opportunities. A lack of ambition is evident in some sections of the population.

The overall image of Swaffham that has been constructed through the Healthcheck research is largely positive but there are negative perceptions about the health of the economy and the extent of social problems. However, the town is seen as having a great deal of untapped potential which can be developed in the coming years thus improving the quality of life of residents, the prosperity of businesses and the experience of visitors.

People's vision for Swaffham in the future is of a place that is:

WELCOMING, THRIVING, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY and TRADITIONAL.



Swaffham – Summary SWOT Analysis, 2009

Strengths

- 'Crossroads of Norfolk' with easy access to coast, countryside and large urban centres
- Distinctive historical and architectural heritage
- Relatively low crime levels
- Excellent range of clubs and societies
- Good range of local services
- Cultural diversity
- Voice for young people via Youth Council
- Ample free parking
- Diverse economy including some nationally acclaimed businesses
- Renowned features including market and Ecotech centre
- Established community Partnership
- Successful town centre regeneration improving the public realm
- Modern, popular community centre

Weaknesses

- High levels of socio-economic deprivation
- Lack of accessible open space
- Lack of services and entertainment for young people
- Traffic congestion and HGVs cause pollution
- Lack of walking and cycling facilities
- Communication networks often weak
- Shortage of starter and high-end homes
- Town lacks a central attraction or anchor
- Much local employment is relatively low waged with limited prospects
- Town's brand/identity is insufficiently coherent
- Lack of greenery in town centre and across the town generally
- Travel to work patterns are not sustainable environmentally

Opportunities

- Thorough research conducted to inform writing of Advance Swaffham
- Visitor offer can be enhanced and promoted
- Projected population growth may increase viability of services and facilities
- Section 106 agreements provide opportunities for improving town's infrastructure
- Re-development of run-down or underutilised buildings
- Positive publicity via Kingdom t.v. series
- Committed volunteers and strong local organisations

Threats

- Negative local sentiment underplays local strengths and stifles innovation
- Increasing traffic levels
- Landlords paying insufficient attention to upkeep of buildings in Conservation Area
- Centralisation and rationalisation of services and facilities by public and private sector organisations
- Funding constraints threaten viability of community projects
- Long-term legacy of economic crisis

ADVANCE SWAFFHAM

A vision for the next decade



Advance Swaffham – a Vision for the Next Decade

Vision Statements - Swaffham aspires to be a town that:

- Possesses a thriving community in which all feel safe and secure
- Provides for the diverse needs and aspirations of its community
- Provides an excellent environment within which to start up, develop and conduct business
- Respects, enhances and promotes its Heritage
- Promotes its environmental credentials for a more sustainable future
- Responds to the challenges of climate change
- Promotes a clear, confident and positive self-image
- Develops and maintains a balance between its residential, employment, leisure and service functions
- Is perceived to be an appealing locality for residents, visitors, investors and employees
- Promotes modes of sustainable transport and minimises conflicts between people and traffic
- Recognises and enhances its many links with its hinterland
- Enjoys excellent communication between its stakeholders

Objectives

- Obj 1: Enhance the visual appeal and functionality of the central townscape
- Obj 2: Improve visual attractiveness and biodiversity around the town
- Obj 3: Improve services and facilities for all sections of the local community
- Obj 4: Improve communication between organisations and the community to ensure enhanced information sharing and collaboration
- Obj 5: Support all sections of the community in promoting environmental awareness and good practice
- Obj 6: Support the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community and foster an enhanced sense of community pride
- Obj 7: Promote and further develop opportunities for sport, leisure and recreation
- Obj 8: Promote more sustainable movement in, and around, the town
- Obj 9: Promote Swaffham's identity as a 'market town'
- Obj 10: Support and enhance retail/service provision in the town
- Obj 11: Promote a positive image of the town
- Obj 12: Develop business and employment opportunities in the town
- Obj 13: Develop education and training opportunities and links
- Obj 14: Enhance Swaffham's visitor offer and improve promotion
- Obj 15: To improve management of parking in and around Swaffham town centre
- Obj 16: Improve flows of traffic in, and around, the town

Objectives and Actions

| Obj 1: Enhance the visual appeal and functionality of the central townscape | | Key delivery agencies/organisations |
|--|--|---|
| i. | Implement a protocol for shop front design so that these are more in-keeping with the character of the town and the image we wish to convey. Link to formulation of town design statement. | Economy WG and Townscape Heritage Group |
| ii. | Provide maps and interpretation boards at key sites in the centre, including Theatre Street and by bus stop. | STC |
| iii. | Work with landlords to provide a 'Window of Opportunity' for charities to display activities in 'to let' and 'for sale' shops. | Economy WG, Rotary Club of Swaffham |
| iv. | Rationalise road signs to reduce visual clutter and improve clarity for users | NCC Highways and Transport WG |
| v. | Instigate litter picking initiatives | |
| vi. | Investigate opportunities for greening of the town centre, such as additional flowers/planters, tree planting, creation of landscaped areas. | Environment WG |
| vii. | Review provision of benches to ensure that people can enjoy the best views of Swaffham town centre | Environment WG and STC |
| viii. | Investigate opportunities for displays of public art | Rotary Club of Swaffham, Swaffham Art Group |
| ix. | Identify opportunities to regenerate prominent town centre problem areas such as the Shambles and Plowright Place | STC, Townscape Heritage Group, Breckland DC |
| x. | Investigate options for better managing car parking in centre | STC and BDC |
| xi. | Investigate options for centralising management of the central area | STC |
| xii. | Townscape Heritage Group to identify best practice models for management of historic townscapes and to identify opportunities for funding to conserve and enhance the townscape | Townscape Heritage Group |

| Obj 2: Improve visual attractiveness and biodiversity around the town | | |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| i. | Improve the appearance of the entrance points to the town by planting bulbs and/or using planters | Environment WG and STC |
| ii. | Town Council to consider implementation of long term tree management and re-planting strategy for open spaces around the town, including cemetery, recreation ground and Campingland. | STC |
| iii. | Review traffic signage to ensure minimum visual clutter and maximum utility | NCC Highways and Transport WG |
| iv. | Improve physical appearance of Theatre Street car park and access route to town | Breckland DC |

| centre | |
|--------|--|
| v. | Examine options for increasing the quantity of high quality publicly accessible open space in the town, including possible incorporation of Antinghams and open space provision within new developments in the town. |
| vi. | Ensure that all forms of pollution are consistently monitored and tackled. |
| vii. | Examine opportunities for enhancing the town's allotments. |
| | Environment WG and STC |
| | Breckland DC, NCC Highways, Transport and Environment WGs |
| | STC, Scalga and Environment Working Group |

| Obj 3: Improve services and facilities for all sections of the local community | |
|---|--|
| i. | Council to consider reviewing the current provision of affordable and social housing in the town as well as the supply of high quality larger homes to suit professional in-migrants and the subsequent adoption of a policy to support balanced housing provision through the planning process. |
| ii. | Commission study to review public transport links with the surrounding villages and identify the improvements that could be made to better serve the local population in terms of access to employment, goods and services |
| iii. | Support the town's Youth Council and ensure that young people are involved in decision-making that affects the town |
| iv. | Better promote the range of locally available health services to raise public awareness, e.g. via monthly newsletter. |
| v. | Ensure that adequate facilities exist to support newcomers to the town in terms of their needs relating to housing, employment and administration (include provision of local information, specific drop-in services, language classes and multi-lingual documents for overseas migrants) |
| vi. | Ensure that newcomers feel welcomed and given the opportunity to fully integrate into the community |
| vii. | Recognise and provide for the needs of the traveller community |
| viii. | Expand the provision of outdoor recreational facilities in the town |
| ix. | Consolidate and expand current evening provision for young people |
| x. | Examine opportunities to improve out of school provision for young people |
| xi. | Better promote the opportunities that currently exist for young people beyond school hours/terms |
| xii. | Examine ways of improving public/community transport to better meet the needs of local people |
| | STC |
| | STC, village parishes and Transport Working Group |
| | STC, Youth Council, Town Group |
| | STC, Icen Partnership |
| | All local organisations |
| | STC, NCC Traveller Liaison, Police |
| | STC |
| | Youth Council |
| | Leisure centre, Youth Council |
| | Local schools, Youth Council, Youth Service |
| | Transport and Social/Community WGs |

| Obj 4: Improve communication between organisations and the community to ensure enhanced information sharing and greater collaborative working | |
|---|----------------------------|
| i. Improve information sharing and liaison between local bodies such as Town Council, Icen Partnership, Retail and Business Forum, Swaffham and District Tourism Association, Breckland District Council and the town's local groups. | All relevant organisations |
| ii. Publish monthly Town Newsletter which promotes the activities of all the town's organisations | STC |
| iii. Ensure that accurate database of organisational contacts is maintained | STC and Icen Partnership |
| iv. Centralise collation and dissemination of 'What's on' listings, preferably via Monthly Newsletter. | STC and Newsletter editor |

| Obj 5: Support all sections of the community in promoting environmental awareness and good practice | |
|---|---|
| i) Ensure that the town's green infrastructure is enhanced and that people understand the contributions that green infrastructure makes to enhancing quality of life and a town's economy | Environment WG |
| ii) Develop a project to enhance the townscape using the principles of green infrastructure | Environment WG, STC and Icen Partnership |
| iii) Town Council to consider formulating an environment policy outlining principles for sound environmental practice | STC and Environment WG |
| iv) Town's businesses and organisations to be encouraged to adopt and promote environmental principles in line with Council policy | STC and Environment WG |
| v) Create a 'plastic bag free town' with a Swaffham branded re-usable bag | Environment WG, Economy Group |
| vi) Create and publicise a definitive list of recycling facilities in and around the town to encourage greater recycling | Environment WG |
| vii) Develop a co-ordinated plan for cleaning and litter removal around the town. | STC, Breckland District Council |
| viii) Promote local food – links to 'Food weeks' | Icen Partnership |
| ix) Promote 'wildlife gardening' | Ecotech Centre, Environment WG |
| x) Encourage informed debate about environmental challenges and responses via programme of talks and events | Ecotech Centre, Icen Partnership and Environment WG |
| xi) Promote use of allotments and home gardening | STC, Scalga and Environment Group |
| xii) Investigate possibilities for developing community orchard along railway embankment behind Orford Road | Environment and Cycling Group WGs |

| Obj 6: Support the needs and aspirations of all sections of the community and foster an enhanced sense of community pride | | |
|---|--|---|
| i. | Continue to promote Healthy Living, for example through 'Health Week'. | Iceni Partnership, medical practices |
| ii. | Engage with Norfolk County Council's 'Joy of Food' initiative by developing a communal allotment. | Mind, STC, Family Action WellFamily Service, Garden Science Trust, Swaffham Scouts & Cubs, PCT's 'Joy of Food' co-ordinator |
| iii. | Maintain links with agencies and support work already being done to keep levels of crime low, i.e. support Safer Neighbourhood Team meetings and Homewatch scheme | Safer Neighbourhood Teams, Swaffham Homewatch Association |
| iv. | Initiate an education programme highlighting low levels of crime and try to reverse inaccurate perceptions of danger and high crime. | Safer Neighbourhood Teams |
| v. | Town Council to continue reviewing options for CCTV provision in key sites | STC, Swaffham Homewatch Association |
| vi. | Town Council to continue reviewing street lighting options in order to promote safe and easy movement around the town. | STC, Swaffham Homewatch Association |
| vii. | Develop a co-ordinated plan for cleaning and litter removal around the town. | STC, Breckland District Council |
| viii. | Engage with local schools and assist wherever possible in raising aspirations and achievement | Local schools, |
| ix. | Encourage lively, informed and constructive debate on key issues facing the town via the town newsletter and organisations' websites | Newsletter editor, STC, Iceni Partnership, |
| x. | Promote a positive image of the town through the media | All local organisations |
| xi. | Celebrate the high levels of volunteerism that are evident in the town and district. Identify ways of recruiting new volunteers and supporting them in their work. | |
| xii. | Promote the Swaffham Welcome Pack to ensure that newcomers to the town are informed of the various social and support activities available. | STC, Iceni Partnership, Rotary |

| Obj 7: Promote and further develop opportunities for sport, leisure and recreation | | |
|--|---|--|
| i. | Support healthy living initiatives such as 'Health week'. | Iceni Partnership, medical practices |
| ii. | Support the Swimming Pool Association in their quest for a Swaffham swimming pool | SPA, STC, Breckland District Council |
| iii. | Review, upgrade and enhance the around Swaffham Walk (Swaefa's Way) and include an outdoor exercise trail | Cycling and Walking WG |
| iv. | Initiate a whole town sponsored walk using Swaefa's Way | Swaffham Rotary Club,, Cycling/Walking Group |

| | | |
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| v. | Initiate a 'jogging-buddies' scheme for local runners | |
| vi. | Look for ways of making better use of the open space that currently exists in Swaffham, including developing the range of provision for young people | STC, Youth Council, Breckland DC Sustainable Communities team |
| vii. | Ensure that future housing and commercial developments incorporate appropriate provision of usable open space | STC, Breckland District Council, Environment Group, Social/Community Group |
| viii. | Identify ways of using the 2012 Olympics as a catalyst to promote sport and exercise | Breckland District Council, IcenI Partnership |
| ix. | Enhance the physical infrastructure to increase levels of local walking and cycling | Cycling and Walking Group, NCC Highways |
| x. | Examine opportunities to increase the range of daytime leisure activities available | |
| xi. | Examine opportunities for providing enhanced facilities to support local arts, drama and theatrical groups | Swaffham Players |
| xii. | Promote after-school clubs and holiday activities for young people | Schools, Youth Council, IcenI Partnership |
| xiii. | Support local clubs and associations in their efforts to attract new members and enhance their facilities | |

| | | |
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| Obj 8: Promote more sustainable movement in and around the town | | |
| i. | Promote cycling and walking in and around the town whether for reasons of health, recreation (including visitors) or fulfilment of practical needs such as shopping, going to work or school. | Cycling and Walking WG, STC, IcenI Partnership, NCC Travel Plan and Health/Biodiversity Walks Officers, Safer Neighbourhoods Team |
| ii. | Ensure that provision meets the needs of those with impaired mobility. | Cycling and Walking WG, NCC Travel Plan and Health/Biodiversity Walks Officers |
| iii. | <p>Cycling and Walking Working Group set up to contribute to the achievement of this objective. Tasks to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of opportunities to easily improve provision (improvements to footpaths, lighting, better signage, safe storage facilities, changes of use etc) • Mapping of current walking and cycling provision • Identify needs associated with future development in town (priorities for Section 106 agreements) • Identify new/enhanced routes across key sectors of town • Liaise with, and support work of, NCC Health and Biodiversity Walks officer • Identify grant funding opportunities to support these developments | |

| | | |
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| iv. | Iceni Partnership to continue promoting 'walk to school' week. | Iceni Partnership, schools |
| v. | Footway widths and provision be improved in key sites around the town including Whitecross Road (by school), Watton Road, North Pickenham Road. | NCC Highways, Swaffham Transport Group |
| vi. | Improve links with Theatre Street car park. | NCC Highways |
| vii. | Improve availability and management of footways/cycle ways including trimming foliage, clearing fallen leaves, improving lighting etc. | NCC Highways |
| viii. | Implement cycle ways (including dual use with footways) in areas such as Northwell Pool, Castle Acre Road, Ash Close/Spinners Lane/Bears Lane, Brandon Road. | Cycling/Walking WG, STC and NCC Highways |
| ix. | Consider pedestrian needs at sites such as Beech Close and Cley Road. | Cycling/Walking WG, STC and NCC Highways |
| x. | Investigate opportunities for improving facilities for users of mobility scooters and for offering training for users. | |

Obj 9: Promote Swaffham's identity as a 'market town'

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| i. | Promote an overall brand as Swaffham THE 'market town' with a unified approach to promotion of towns different types of market. | Economy WG, STC Market Committee, Iceni Partnership |
| ii. | Continue to support and look for opportunities to regenerate the Saturday Market | STC Market Committee, Economy WG, National Market Traders Federation |
| iii. | Continue to promote themed markets, such as French and Italian markets, and identify ways of best integrating these with the broader town economy | STC Market Committee, Economy WG |
| iv. | Continue to support and seek to enhance the indoor Friday market, occasional craft markets and Ecotech Antique Fairs | Iceni Partnership, Ecotech Centre |
| v. | Produce leaflet promoting markets and craft fairs to visitors. Support via online information | Economy WG, STC Market Committee, Iceni Partnership and Swaffham and District Tourism Association, |
| vi. | Identify opportunities to re-introduce the 'Farmers Market' concept | STC Market Committee |
| vii. | Seek to develop synergies between these different types of market and between the markets and the broader economy. | Economy WG, STC and Iceni Partnership |

Obj 10: Support and enhance retail/service provision in the town

| | | |
|-----|--|---|
| i. | Develop project around the vacant Corn Hall building to create a high profile, thriving outlet for small enterprises in this prime location. | Economy WG, Townscape Heritage WG, STC, Iceni Partnership, Breckland DC and landlord. |
| ii. | Townscape Heritage Group to develop database of all town centre properties indicating ownership to facilitate enhanced communication between landlords, town centre (prospective) businesses and property owners to ensure a | Townscape Heritage WG, Breckland DC's Historic Buildings Officer |

| | | |
|-------|--|--|
| | coordinated, consistent approach to future Town Centre developments. | |
| iii. | Review and learn from examples of good practice in other towns | TGPC |
| iv. | Revitalise the Business Forum | Economy WG |
| v. | Ensure that local organisations work together to promote local businesses | |
| vi. | Ensure that parking and traffic movement around the town is appropriate for local business needs | Economy WG, Transport WG, STC, NCC Highways |
| vii. | Encourage people to shop locally | Economy WG, business community |
| viii. | Upgrade the appearance and facilities in the central townscape so that it becomes renowned as an attractive 'space of consumption'. | Environment WG, Economy WG and Townscape Heritage WG |
| ix. | Promote the town's retail offer more proactively | Economy WG, STC, Icen Partnership and local businesses |
| x. | Identify ways of encouraging people who work on the Ecotech site (and shop at Waitrose) to visit the town centre for shopping, services and leisure. | Economy WG, STC, Icen Partnership and local businesses |
| xi. | Ensure that the town's offer is promoted effectively within the rural hinterland | Economy WG, STC, Icen Partnership and local businesses |
| xii. | Engage actively in the development of the Corn Hall, Plowright Place & the Sixth Form Centre | Townscape Heritage WG, Economy WG, STC, Breckland DC |

Obj 11: Promote a positive image of the town

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| i. | Use enhanced town newsletter as a medium for promoting all facets of town life | STC, newsletter editor and all local organisations |
| ii. | Businesses, organisations and community to support one another by promoting positive aspects of town, especially when communicating via print media | All local organisations |
| iii. | Use twinning links as a mechanism for promoting the town's strength of community | Twinning Association, STC |
| iv. | Identify a positive brand image for the town | Town Group Partnership Committee |
| v. | Ensure that 'Swaffham brand' is promoted consistently | All local organisations |

Obj 12: Develop business and employment opportunities in the town

| | | |
|------|--|---|
| i. | Introduce a calendar for business activities and support events for Swaffham and District businesses. | Economy WG, Icen Partnership and Breckland DC |
| ii. | Engage proactively with the broader policy and decision making environment. | STC, Icen Partnership, TGPC |
| iii. | Develop a coordinated approach to bring business support organisations into the town on a regular basis. | Economy WG, Icen Partnership and Breckland DC |

| | | |
|-------|---|--|
| iv. | Promote the town as a good place to invest, live and work | STC, Icen Partnership and Breckland DC |
| v. | Engage actively in the future development of the Corn Hall and Sixth Form Centre | STC, Icen Partnership, Economy WG, Townscape Heritage WG, property owners and Breckland DC |
| vi. | Establish a long term plan to create additional commercial and industrial land. | Breckland DC and STC |
| vii. | Create opportunities for new businesses to start up – starter units | Breckland DC and STC |
| viii. | Provide enabling environment for business start-ups in the town including e-commerce, home-based and migrant entrepreneurs. | Breckland DC, Icen Partnership and STC |

Obj 13: Develop education and training opportunities and links

| | | |
|------|---|--|
| i. | Establish regular business/education events and activities using the existing networking and support organisations i.e. Connexions, Train 2 Gain, Business Link, NWES etc | Economy Working Groups, Swaffham Hamond's High School, Sacred Heart, Connexions, Business Link |
| ii. | Review education provision with the local schools and how this can be better linked to local business needs | Economy WG, Swaffham Hamond's High School and Sacred Heart |
| iii. | Review how local business can better support local schools in terms of sponsorship, mentoring, work placements, talks and so forth. | Economy WG, local businesses and schools |
| iv. | Coordinate the links between the schools and employers. | Economy WG |
| v. | Provide work placement opportunities and business/education links | Economy WG and local businesses |

Obj 14: Enhance Swaffham's visitor offer and improve promotion

| | | |
|-------|--|---|
| i. | Develop and implement a strategy to develop tourism by seeking to attract more people and encouraging them to spend more time in the town | STC, Economy WG, Swaffham and District Tourism Association, Visit Norfolk |
| ii. | Develop the products and services available at the Tourist Information Centre. | Museum, Swaffham and District Tourism Association, Visit Norfolk |
| iii. | Improve signage on all major routes into town ('Welcome to Swaffham', references to 'Saturday Market'). | STC and NCC Highways |
| iv. | Improve information provision in the town, for example visitor friendly maps and interpretation boards at key sites. | STC, Museum, Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| v. | Develop the town-based tourist product – leaflets to promote themed trails (Heritage, Kingdom, markets, food and drink, public art/sculpture). | STC, Museum, Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| vi. | Complement the 'About Swaffham' leaflet with an enhanced Town Visitor Guide | STC |
| vii. | Develop the delivery and distribution of the 'Welcome to Swaffham' pack | Rotary Club of Swaffham, STC, Icen Partnership |
| viii. | Enhance web-based visitor information about the town (targeted Visitor's | STC, Icen Partnership and Swaffham and |

| section on STC website for example) | | District Tourism Association |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| ix. | Identify ways of encouraging more of the Ecotech Centre's business and leisure users to visit the town centre | Ecotech Centre, STC, Museum, Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| x. | Use the opportunities created by town's points of interest/strengths: The Pedlar of Swaffham, Howard Carter, Kingdom, proximity to Oxborough, Castle Acre, West Acre; town's built heritage; local sites – church, museum, Ecotech Centre, quality hotels. | STC, Museum, Economy WG and Swaffham, District Tourism Association and attraction managers |
| xi. | Work closely with the tourism promotion bodies in Breckland, North Norfolk and West Norfolk as well as with Visit Norfolk. | Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| xii. | Encourage close working links between Swaffham & District Tourism Association and local bodies and businesses with interest in improving tourism revenues. | Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| xiii. | Seek financial support from public and private sector bodies to actively promote the area. | Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| xiv. | Generate additional activity from 'film tourism' and 'environmental tourism' eg: walking/cycling, local foods. | Economy WG and Swaffham and District Tourism Association |
| xv. | Encourage investment in more accommodation facilities. | Economy WG, STC and Breckland DC |

| Obj 15: To improve management of parking in and around Swaffham | | |
|---|---|--|
| i. | Investigate options for bringing management of parking under a single-authority | STC, Breckland DC, NCC, Police |
| ii. | Increase monitoring of parking and enforce restrictions | STC, Breckland DC, NCC, Police |
| iii. | Ensure that visitors have maximum access to parking spaces | Economy WG, STC, Breckland DC |
| iv. | Encourage more efficient usage of town centre parking | Economy WG, STC, Breckland DC |
| v. | Encourage greater usage of Theatre Street car park | Economy & Transport WGS, STC, Breckland DC |
| vi. | Reduce parking of cars in unofficial areas | STC, Breckland DC, NCC, Police |
| vii. | Reduce parking on pavements | STC, Breckland DC, NCC, Police |

| Obj 16: Improve flows of traffic in, and around, the town | | |
|---|--|---|
| i) | Maintain effective dialogue with Norfolk County Council Highways Department | STC, Transport WG, NCC Highways, Icen Partnership |
| ii) | Consider ways of improving traffic management at the following sites: Haspalls Road/London Road, Watton Road/London Road and Turbine Way/Castle Acre Road. | Transport WG, NCC Highways |
| iii) | Review traffic, pedestrian and cycle movements in the Northwell Pool area. | NCC Highways, STC, Cycling/Walking Group |

| | | |
|-------|---|---|
| iv) | Identify locations where traffic speed is a problem, such as Norwich Road, and take appropriate measures | Transport WG, NCC Highways |
| v) | Ensure that levels of congestion and pollution are constantly monitored | Breckland DC, Environment WG, Transport WG, NCC Highways, Swaffham Traffic Action Group |
| vi) | Investigate options for implementing 20mph zone outside school in Whitecross Road. | NCC Highways, Transport Working Group |
| vii) | Review impacts of mini-roundabout at Whitecross Road/London Road and consider implications for traffic management elsewhere in town | NCC Highways, Transport Working Group |
| viii) | Review local and long distance signage ensuring that this is user-friendly and promotes local leisure and tourism services | NCC Highways, National Highways Agency |
| ix) | Continue to monitor traffic flows, especially HGVs, through town and consider implications for traffic management schemes | NCC Highways, Transport WG, Swaffham Traffic Action Group |
| x) | Continue to review air pollution levels at key sites | Breckland DC, Environment WG, Transport WG, NCC Highways, Swaffham Traffic Action Group |
| xi) | Maintain dialogue with Breckland Council regarding air pollution monitoring and consider imposition of air quality management area if required. | Breckland DC, Environment WG, Transport WG, Swaffham Traffic Action Group |
| xii) | Review implications of future residential and commercial developments, lobby for infrastructural improvements and assess options for implementation of traffic diversions or by-pass. | Breckland DC, Transport WG, STC |
| xiii) | Review the Route Hierarchy and its impacts upon traffic management in and around Swaffham | NCC Highways, National Highways Agency, Transport Working Group |

How will Advance Swaffham be delivered?

The delivery of Advance Swaffham will occur primarily through the Town Partnership Committee. The four thematic groups will re-form as Working Groups, overseeing the initiation and delivery of the projects and actions contained in the Advance Swaffham document. Thus, the delivery process will seek to retain the ethos of community participation that characterised the production of Advance Swaffham. Each group will work with a designated Town Council or Icen Partnership official and regular reports will occur to the Town Partnership Committee. These groups will play an important role in moving projects forward and supporting the production of grant applications. Key working groups which will operate during the first phase of Advance Swaffham include: Townscape Heritage Group, Economy Group, the Environment Group, the Community-Schools Group, the Cycling/Walking Group, Transport Group, Markets Group and there will be enhanced liaison with the Town Council's Recreation, Open Spaces and Market Committees.

Given the current travails in the global economy and the severe impacts upon market towns the initial priorities of the Town Partnership Committee will focus upon measures which will bolster the local economy. However, it must be emphasised that there are strong inter-linkages between economic, social, environmental and transport issues. For example, measures to improve the physical environment will have beneficial impacts upon the economy by increasing the attractiveness of the locality. Below are two examples of themes that will be prioritised during the first phase of Advance Swaffham. It should be noted that these will not be the only priorities and indeed, that a town plan is very much a moving target with new opportunities and priorities emerging on a regular basis. However, it is clear from the Healthcheck research that the two themes outlined below are absolute priorities for the future of the town, its economy and identity.

Swaffham – Marketing Tradition

Swaffham's identity is closely bound up with its Saturday market, which for many years has been renowned throughout (and beyond) the town's hinterland for its auction and livestock market. However, in common with many other towns Swaffham has witnessed a decline in the size and scope of its main market. Crucially, this decline is affecting people's perceptions of the health of Swaffham's economy and community as a whole. Yet, such a decline is not necessarily inexorable. Indeed, there is evidence that market-type activities more generally are actually growing in Swaffham – there is a highly successful Friday morning market in the Assembly Rooms, regular antiques fairs at the Ecotech centre and continental markets are proving popular. Thus, there is an opportunity to create a 'markets brand' for the town which draws together and jointly promotes these various styles of market and fair. Such a process would draw together the relevant stakeholders and seek to develop creative synergies. The overall

objective will be to create a brand that promotes Swaffham as a Market Town of distinction, thus demonstrating that a town with a tradition of markets can simultaneously market its tradition. Measurable outcomes will include the production of promotional materials, increases in the number of market-style events, a broadening of the range of commodities and services available at the markets and increases in visitor numbers.

Developing the Visitor Offer

Swaffham has tremendous, yet unfulfilled, potential as a visitor destination. Its assets include: a heritage packed central townscape containing more than 100 listed buildings, the multi-award winning Stratton's hotel; the Ecotech Centre which draws thousands of visitors every year, a locally managed museum which exhibits the town's links to Tutankhamen and houses the town's Tourist Information Centre and free international promotion via the ITV series 'Kingdom'. Yet, the Town Group's Visitor Survey revealed that many people only stay for 2-3 hours, many are unaware of the range of attractions that the town possesses, too few visitors to Ecotech come down to the town and there is an overall sense that the town's offer is limited. Indeed, improving the visitor offer and its associated promotion is favoured by more than 80% of residents as a means of boosting the local economy.

The overall objective will be to undertake some simple steps that will rapidly improve Swaffham's offer and associated promotion. Measureable outcomes will include; Swaffham Town Council devising a tourism strategy for the town, the production of themed walking trails (for example, a Heritage Trail and a Kingdom Trail) supported by high quality leaflets; the provision of information and interpretation boards at key sites around the town (for example the town centre, Theatre Street car park and the Ecotech Centre); improvements to the web-based advertising of the town (for example development of the 'Visitors' section of the newly launched Town Council website) and closer strategic co-operation between town-based visitor-focused businesses and support organisations such as the Tourist Information Centre.

Potential Project Bids during the First Phase of Advance Swaffham

Below are three ideas for major funding applications that could be compiled during the first phase of Advance Swaffham. Again, it must be emphasised that these are very much initial ideas. It is inevitable that other ideas and opportunities will emerge as the programme unfolds and, indeed, that the precise form of the ideas below will evolve. However, these are provided here as an indication of the types of initiative that are under consideration.

- i) ***Developing Swaffham's Green Infrastructure.*** Green infrastructure (GI) is a concept which highlights the importance of the natural environment in decisions about land use planning and comprises parks, trails and open spaces that link communities

together. It provides a solution to urban challenges associated with stormwater, waste management, mobility, public health, local food, and energy security. The Healthcheck process has revealed significant shortfalls in Swaffham's GI, such as a lack of open space, absence of greenery in key places spaces and poor provision for pedestrians and cyclists. This project would seek to develop Alison LeFlore's work by devising a GI strategy for Swaffham in the first instance, which will require the hiring of consultants and a programme to develop the town's GI. This work will link in with similar programmes in Dereham and Thetford. As GI is based around the concepts of corridors and linkages between settlements it is logical for Swaffham to enhance its neighbours' work thus ensuring that GI has a sub-regional component within Breckland. Furthermore, the project would link in with Norfolk County Council's Health and Biodiversity Walks programme.

ii) ***Transforming Swaffham's Corn Hall.*** Swaffham's historic Corn Hall is located in the town centre. Currently this building is unoccupied as the Department for Work and Pensions recently closed the Job Centre which had operated in it for some years. This building has tremendous potential to act as a central focus within the town of value to locals and visitors. The lack of an obvious 'anchor' attraction within the town centre has been noted during the Healthcheck process as a significant issue. Options include re-developing the interior of the Corn Hall to create spaces for themed customer-focused units which could then be leased individually. In order to take this project forward it will be necessary to hire consultants to carry out feasibility studies, to re-fit the interior and to recruit appropriate investors. Such a project would make excellent use of this historic building and significantly improve Swaffham's 'offer' for visitors to the town centre.

iii) ***Enhancing the Central Townscape.*** Swaffham's town centre contains more than 100 buildings with listed status, including a number within a designated conservation area. These buildings provide a significant heritage resource, which should provide the town with a high quality public realm. However, a number of these buildings require some work to restore them to their optimum state. Thus, it is proposed to apply for a fund which will support landowners in upgrading the appearance of their facades. This would be linked in with the development of a code of practice to guide shopkeepers in the most appropriate ways of presenting their shopfronts. This will ensure that the public realm is enhanced and in keeping with town's architectural heritage.

'The ultimate aim for the town of Swaffham is to thrive, to develop and to retain its character as a bustling market town. Advance Swaffham will be a working document that is constantly under review. Swaffham Town Council and Iceni Partnership with their officers, councillors, directors, volunteers and the community that they serve should be rightly proud of the achievement to get this far.'

Richard Bishop, Swaffham Town Clerk

