

Neighbourhood Plan - Town Centre, Visitors & Heritage

Notes of a meeting of the **Topic Group-Town Centre, Visitors & Heritage** held on the **16th March 2017** at **4pm** in the Town Council Chamber: -

Present: Cllr L Scot (Chairman), Mr D Wickerson (Vice-Chairman), Miss K Wells, Mr M Flynn, Mrs V Hutchby, Mrs S Gattuso, Mr J Dean.

Neighbourhood Plan consultant: Mr R Morfey
Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Admin Assistant: Ms K Furnass

1. Apologies

Anne Fairweather.

2. Introductions & Welcome

Attendees gave a brief introduction of themselves and informed the meeting of their areas of experience and relevant expertise.

3. Swaffham's current assets and character

To identify assets and objectives

Assets

- Churches
- Museum
- Eating & drinking establishments
- Shopping, eclectic mix of shops
- Local/in area attractions: Oxborough Hall, Houghton on the Hill, Gooderstone Water Gardens, Castle Acre, Walsingham, North Norfolk Coast. The Brecks.
- Visitors: Long haul, day trippers, passing through.
- Georgian town centre

Objectives

- What would be of benefit to Swaffham?
- How do the group see the future of Swaffham, what sort of shops, big chain stores, niche shop's? Research into what is wanted and the impact of where they would be situated i.e. town centre or outskirts.
- Sustain or improve the openness of the town centre. Pedestrian friendly areas. Re arrange parking spaces to utilise areas for seating.
- Consult Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council on any parking and road issues.
- There are ongoing plans for a refurbishment of the Buttercross, this could be a good starting point and of interest to the group. Obtain a copy for the next informal meeting
- The Town Council and Breckland Council are about to enter discussions on car parks, this also could have an impact on the N-Plan. As Breckland have already achieved a survey on car parking. Obtain a copy of any relevant data.
- To gain local Architects help for designs of possible proposals for any major re-designing.

4. Discussion points

- There are three main groups that will play a part in the N Plan -Breckland Council, Town Council and Town Team. These groups need to work together, share information and influence others to work together.
- Car parks – are there viable options to move the car parks?
- Major chains have shown no interest in coming to Swaffham.
- Waitrose shoppers are of benefit, how do we encourage them to visit the town centre? Would they expand on the land at the back of the store?
- To encourage walking & cycling into Swaffham, healthier, greener.
- Better access into Swaffham from car parks.
- Brand/Image for Swaffham.

Heritage

- Conservation Area – is it up to date?
- Can we extend it?
- How much weight does this have on any planning issues? Signs, colours & materials, these can be details that the N Plan can have input in.
- White Hart – good heritage links.
- Green Britain Centre – good links to industrial, environmental and conference centre.

5. Priority issues agreed

- Vacant shops
- Sustain and improve the openness of the town centre
- Parking
- Pedestrian friendly areas
- Cycle paths

6. Summary

The discussions were positive with many topics being touched on. It was realised that specific research is needed for the different topics raised. Data from Breckland on car parking would be of help in determining how to proceed with any changes to where car parks could be re-sited and any changes to the number of parking bays/spaces. A comprehensive look at shops is needed, which retailers are interested in coming to Swaffham, where they could be sited and how to improve what is already there. Vacant shops and charity shops were both raised as an important issue that they would like to have an input into. Discussions around the Green Britain Centre and surrounding industrial area included how to bring visitors into the town centre and how it was a good opportunity to advertise Swaffham as a “green” town. The conservation area and the heritage of Swaffham is something that the group agreed was of importance and would need to be taken into consideration. The consensus was to keep the heart of Swaffham as a welcoming market town but to improve the pedestrian areas to encompass seating, walking, cycling and an all-round comprehensive shopping experience to locals and visitors.

7. Date of Next Meetings:

- Wednesday 19th April 4.00pm, Town Hall
- Wednesday 17th May 4.00pm, Town Hall

Meeting Closed at 5.35pm