

Note of Open Meeting Discussion

Final: 6 April 2017

Note: a post script on 'Comments with Applause' has now been added at the end.

Bury Society and Churchgate Area Association

Local community response to Issues and Options

Bury St Edmunds Town Centre Masterplan

Martyn Taylor, Chairman of the Bury Society, and Vivien Gainsborough Foot, Chairman of the Churchgate Area Association, welcomed everyone to the Open Meeting on the Town Centre Masterplan Issues and Options report. They thanked St Edmundsbury Borough Council for making The Athenaeum available for the meeting.

Richard Summers gave a short presentation on the consultants' Issues and Options report to set the scene for the discussion and acknowledged the agreement of Matthew Lappin, David Lock Associates, to allow him to use an abbreviated version of the consultants' presentation. He then outlined the agenda and the programme for the local community Open Meeting.

It should be noted that the extensive agenda had to be limited to the time available for the meeting. The sections of the agenda that could not be covered in the time available are shown in grey. Richard Summers thanked the volunteer registrars, tea and coffee servers, photographer, vote counters, Stephen Moody (time keeper) and Rachel Hogger (note taker) (applause).

It should also be noted that the agenda for the Open Meeting and this note of the discussion have been structured as far as possible to reflect the structure of the consultation questionnaire circulated by St Edmundsbury Borough Council. This note of the Open Meeting discussion therefore represents a local community group response to the Issues and Options consultation.

Agenda for Discussion

- 1 Profiles
- 2 Issues
- 3 Objectives
- 4 Options
- 5 Summary

Rolling bullet point summary of the discussion

Thanks to Rachel Hogger MRTPI

1(a) Profiles: Who we are				
Gender	Male	Female		Total
Age	Under 24	25 to 64		Over 65
Resident	Town centre	Rest of Bury		Elsewhere
Occupation	Student	Worker		Retired
Visits	Daily	Part weekly	Weekly	Monthly

1(a) Profiles: Who we are

Questions 24 to 27

- 79 male (54%) / 67 female (46%) = 146 total
- 0 under 24 / 55: 57 aged 25 - 64 (38%), 91 over 65 (62%) (146 total)
- 83 town centre / 47 rest of Bury / 8 elsewhere (138 total)
- 89 town centre (61%) / 48 rest of Bury (33%) / 9 elsewhere (6%) (146 total)
- 0 students / 49 workers (34%) / 97 retired (66%) (146 total)
- x daily / x part weekly / x weekly / x monthly

1(b) Profiles: What we do		
Visit shops Visit cafes Cultural visits Go to school	Use services Visit pubs Leisure visits Go to work	Visit the market Visit restaurants Faith visits Resident

1(b) Profiles: What we do in the town centre

Question 28 (Questions 29 to 33 could not reasonably be asked at a public meeting)

- x visit shops / x use services / x visit the market
- x visit cafes / x visit pubs / x visit restaurants
- x cultural visits / x leisure visits / x faith visits
- x go to school / x go to work / x resident
- All do some of these things some of the time

2: Town Centre Issues <i>problems and opportunities</i>		
Access by car Open to all Preserve identity Mix of uses	Access on foot Links to stations Preserve history New shops	Access by bus Links to the arc Public spaces New leisure

2: Town Centre Issues

Questions 1 to 2 *problems and opportunities*

- x access by car / x access on foot / x access by bus
- x open to all / x links to station / x links to the arc
- x preserve identity / x preserve history / x public spaces
- x mix of uses / x new shops / x new leisure
- Issues generally agreed
- Also access by bicycle; lorry deliveries to shops and businesses; dust carts and Greene King (other breweries too); mobility scooters; disability access;
- Also school drop off (e.g. Guildhall Feoffment and the Catholic school) and construction sites impact congestion and parking;
- Also road safety for children and carers due to inconsiderate driving and parking; access for emergency vehicles in the grid when there are obstructions;
- Also Skinner Street eyesore;
- Also conflict between residents and evening economy; violence to property due to evening economy; industrial operations in the Medieval Grid.

3: Town Centre Objectives

what we want to achieve

1: Accommodate growth

2: Maintain historic heart

3: Arc of opportunity

4: Neighbourhoods

5: Approaches

6: Streets and spaces

7: Access for all

8: Green and blue spaces

3: Town Centre Objectives

what we want to achieve

the town centre objectives were not included in the questionnaire

1: Accommodating Growth:

- Infrastructure required alongside growth; infrastructure is already insufficient so what is going to happen when town gets bigger (e.g. parking our cars)?
- How about **not** accommodating growth? – growth affects quality of life for some; does Bury need to keep up with other towns? – people matter rather than growth; stress is placed on towns by town planners; let's not destroy what we have in Bury just to keep up with others;
- It is not clear to us that growth is needed here; we want this town to stay a special place as it grows; we don't want to be as big as Cambridge; why do we need to keep up with other towns? – there isn't sufficient capacity to serve the existing people.
- Facilitator: growth and conservation need to be balanced; they are not mutually exclusive; retired residents in one seaside resort on the south coast blocked all development projects and ended up at the bottom of the list of the index of local deprivation
- Councillor: no objection to growth but concerned about inequality where growth doesn't benefit those most deprived; we need to make sure growth benefits all; growth has impacted upon Cambridge in a negative way; we don't want the same.

2: Arc of Opportunity:

- The proposed changes to improve train services to London will almost make Bury into a commuter town; what are the implications? – disconnection from London is an advantage.
- No mention of arts provision (we have a theatre but we need more to support growth)
- What will happen to Ram Meadow and The Butts water meadows? – they are both potential areas for flooding; they have important wildlife value and need nature reserve designation.

3: Maintain Historic Heart

- We have an amazing historic heart; these objectives should cover the bigger picture to include keeping pollution to a low level for children
- What do the planners have in mind? – we need to know the numbers to assess the scale of future development
- Maintaining the historic heart is important for residents and visitors both young and old.
- Protecting the historic environment is also important but we have to adapt to change so it can still be used; Bury has adapted over time and still functions well.

- 4: neighbourhoods
- 5: approaches
- 6: streets and spaces
- 7: access for all
- 8: green and blue spaces

4: Town Centre Options

how we can achieve our objectives

4: Town Centre Options <i>how we can achieve our objectives</i>	
1: Accommodate growth	5: Approaches
2: Maintain historic heart	6: Streets and spaces
3: Arc of opportunity	7: Access for all
4: Neighbourhoods	8: Green and blue spaces

The Open Meeting considered the options for each of the eight town centre objectives in turn.

4.1: Accommodate Growth <i>capitalise on sub-regional status</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development sites • Efficient use of land • New retail locations • New leisure locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor growth • Economic growth • Hotel growth • Better marketing

4.1: Accommodate Growth

Questions 3 and 4 capitalise on sub-regional status

- **Development sites:** houses should not be built too close together (eg Westgate Street); it is overdevelopment; the site at the end of Newmarket Road is suitable for park and ride (query land availability?); the site used for motorcycle scrambling is suitable for development; concerned about the sewers underneath this historic town; the large area of old railway sidings could be developed for housing, employment and leisure
- **Efficient use of land:** all our ground level car parks are an inefficient use of land.
- **New retail locations:** Cornhill Walk needs to be redeveloped; retail uses should be in the town centre (not outside the town) if it is to survive (applause); St. Andrew's Street North is also suitable for development
- **New leisure locations:** we need a purpose-built arts, leisure and community centre in the town centre so that older people can come in from outer areas like Moreton Hall
- Visitor growth
- Economic growth
- Hotel growth
- Better marketing
- **Other points:** we need multi-storey car parking with lots of electrical charging points for residents in walkable distance to town centre facilities; we need to look at park and ride and alternatives such as a tram services close to town (this could be a new attraction).

4.2: Maintain Historic Heart <i>destination for visitors and tourists</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic character • Abbey Gardens • Medieval grid • Tourist attractions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities and services • Attractive routes • Support street market • Street vitality

4.2: Maintain Historic Heart

Questions 5 and 6 *destination for visitors and tourists*

- **Historic character:** already mentioned.
- **Abbey Gardens:** we need to modernise the facilities in the Abbey Gardens; we need investment in new tennis courts on the Eastgate Nursery site; the new Abbey of St Edmund Heritage Partnership is working with Historic England to make progress on all this; we used to have bandstand near Alwyne House and there is potential for a new bandstand to widen entertainment opportunities; we also need facilities for disabled people to play tennis.
- **Medieval grid:** there have been conflicts in the Westgate Street YMCA area; not sure if this is the best place both for the young people and for local residents and businesses.
- Tourist attractions
- Facilities and services
- Attractive routes
- Support street markets
- Street vitality
- Public realm issues: we need better paving and footpaths, better controlled parking and 'mixed use' of pavements and roads (ie 'shared space').
- We need to maintain the historic heart for younger people as well as the rest of us.
- Skinner Street has looked a disgrace for many years; now it is time to improve it; it is in the heart of town.
- Please protect our green spaces and the trees in St Andrew's Street North (applause).
- Improve pedestrianisation in Abbeygate Street – it is a mess
- What about water features? – we don't have any – yes we do, the Rivers Lark and Linnet and the Water Garden in the Abbey Gardens.

4.3: Arc of Opportunity

development sites next to the town centre

- | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| • Integrated approach | • Link with masterplans |
| • New mix of uses | • Tayfen Road area |
| • New job opportunities | • Ram Meadow area |

4.3: Arc of opportunity

Questions 7 to 9 *development sites next to town centre*

- Integrated approach
- New mix of uses
- New job opportunities
- Link with masterplans
- Tayfen Road area
- Ram Meadow area
- This is a great concept but it's impossible to drive from Risbygate to Tesco because it's nearly always grid-locked
- We must keep Ram Meadow open (applause)
- Traffic is a challenge for the integrated approach; we need north to south access for residents and provision for parking and deliveries.
- People in Eastgate Street would be concerned if the arc of opportunity was extended into Ram Meadow because of the traffic into Cotton Lane for the long stay car park.

4.4: Neighbourhoods

maintain mix of uses in mainly residential areas

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| • Town centre quarters | • Innovative design |
| • Mix of housing sizes | • Community facilities |
| • Housing for the elderly | • Youth facilities |

4.4: Neighbourhoods

Questions 10 to 13 *maintain mix of uses in mainly residential areas*

- Town centre quarters
- **Mix of housing sizes:** it would be fantastic to restrict housing densities in the town centre; where are there any sites for housing in the Medieval Grid? – there are lots of empty premises above shops; we should try to use pre-fab housing to deliver new housing; there must be provision for affordable housing
- **Housing for the elderly:** this is always more popular in the town centre; housing for the elderly in rural areas does not get taken up; accessibility to services and facilities is important for elderly people; there must be 40% social housing in new development.
- Innovative design
- **Community facilities:** we need a good arts centre in the town centre (applause).
- Youth facilities
- Councillor: all the areas that have been mentioned this evening have been discussed by the Borough Council; the difficult issue is how to manage the finance; we have a lot to do but with fifteen year view we can make a lot of progress to accommodate growth.

4.5: Approaches

better arrivals and better links within town centre

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| • Improve key routes | • Better bus services |
| • Enhance connectivity | • More car parking |
| • Address congestion | • St Andrews St car park |
| • Address severance | |

4.5: Approaches

Questions 14 to 17 *better arrivals and better links within town centre*

- **Improve key routes:** we need better signage for tourists (more tourists will help to grow the local economy); many people who come into the tourist centre do not realise that the arc shopping centre exists a short walk away
- **Enhance connectivity:** we need infrastructure to enable people to get into the town centre.
- Councillor: we need to see better accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Address congestion
- Address severance
- Better bus services
- More car parking
- St Andrews Street car park
- Access from the railway station to the town centre is shockingly poor; it is dangerous for pedestrians trying to cross Tayfen Road (applause).
- We should improve access to the retail outlets on Robert Bobby Way (Halfords and TK Max).

Approaches ... continued

- Access from the railway station should be via St. John's Street rather than St. Andrew's Street North; we need better access for cyclists and pedestrians from the railway station to the town centre (proposed improvements just announced by Suffolk CC)
- We should limit delivery times to the town centre – lots of other towns do this
- What about park and ride?
- There should be a sign on Angel Hill to show visitors where to go for long term parking facilities rather than taking up short stay spaces.
- Westgate Street is a main road but the Guildhall Feoffment and the Roman Catholic schools are getting bigger; traffic problems during school drop off and pick up times are getting worse; we need parking places for school drop offs and pick-ups.
- The masterplan should propose improvements to Culham Road and Wilks Road to provide two lanes to help with hospital traffic to reduce congestion.

4.6: Streets and Spaces	
<i>improve attractiveness of public realm</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better public realm • Appeal to everyone • Better public squares • Pedestrian environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better signage • Good detailing • Simple street furniture

4.6: Streets and Spaces

Questions 18 and 19 *improve attractiveness of public realm*

- **Better public realm:** we want pedestrianisation from the arc shopping centre to the Abbey Gate; we also want a plan for traffic circulation around the town centre; Risbygate Street needs improvement; we want better use of Risbygate (doubts about the St Edmund statue); we need more green features as a focal points in the town centre
- The pavements on Churchgate Street are too narrow; we want to extend 'shared space'; cars should only go at the same speed as pedestrians (applause).
- We must ask drivers to turn off their engines to reduce pollution and help the environment.
- *Appeal to everyone*
- **Better public squares:** the best public space in the town centre is Angel Hill; why is it filled with parked cars? (applause) – why is Charter Square used as a car showroom? – we need a nice plaza to link the arc shopping centre and the main town centre.
- **Pedestrian environment:** there was going to be link from the arc shopping centre to the old part of town; we hope this will be included in the town centre masterplan (applause); the link from the arc shopping centre through to the Abbey Gardens should be pedestrianised; parking should be provided outside the town centre; transport should be provided from those car parks for visitors to come into town centre.
- Better signage
- Good detailing
- Simple street furniture

4.7: Access for All	
<i>accessibility for all types of mobility</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared space • Cycle friendly facilities • Enable deliveries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and comfortable • Meet age demographic • Mental health needs

4.7: Access for all

Questions 20 and 21 *accessibility for all types of mobility*

- **Shared space:** many people support pedestrianisation (with exceptions for the disabled and out of hours deliveries) in Cornhill and the Buttermarket.
- Councillor: if we are going to extend shared space we should do it properly; we should extend the 20mph speed zone.
- The junction on the Denny Brother’s corner is badly signed; the Abbey Gateway shared space works well; no extra signage is needed; it is difficult to cross the busy road between the Cathedral and the Norman Tower next to the junction with Churchgate Street (strictly speaking Angel Hill rather than Crown Street); there should be a raised roadway pedestrian crossing there to slow traffic speeds and increase safety.
- Cycle friendly facilities
- Enable deliveries
- **Safe and comfortable:** a safe environment is important for pedestrians; pavement surfaces are not good and it’s easy to trip (applause); we want ‘clean air’ and we need a local study about traffic pollution (applause); all planners should have to get on a bike!
- Facilitator: many planners do get on their bikes!
- **Meet age demographic:** we need to cater for college and new sixth form and upper school students in the Risbygate area; we need to think about younger people getting across town.
- Better signage
- Mental health needs

4.8: Green and Blue Spaces	
<i>leisure and health benefits of green infrastructure</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link character areas • Protect views in and out • Enable healthy lifestyles • Better foot / cycle ways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More tree planting • Conserve wildlife • Address flood risks

4.8: Green and Blue Spaces

Questions 22 and 23 *leisure and health benefits of green infrastructure*

- Link character areas
- Protect views in and out
- Enable healthy lifestyles
- Better foot / cycle ways
- More tree planting
- Conserve wildlife
- Address flood risks
- We must protect the town’s green spaces and not develop Ram Meadow (applause).

5: Summary

5: Summary	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree issues ? • Agree objectives ? • Agree options ? • Anything else ? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report to St Eds BC • Press release • Draft Masterplan • Next open meeting

Summary ... continued

- **Agree issues: most people (105) (72%) broadly agree with the issues** – some other issues were noted
- **Agree objectives: many people (83) (57%) broadly agree with the objectives** – some other objectives were noted
- **Agree options: some people (55) (38%) broadly agree with the options** – some other options were noted – it was generally accepted that the options will be refined during the next stage of the consultants study.
- **Anything else:** the order of discussion meant that the “green and blue spaces” weren’t sufficiently discussed;
- Street lights were not mentioned but LED lights or sensors could be used to improve personal safety at night;
- ‘Rat running’ should be reduced.

Conclusions

- The Southgate RA, Eastgate RA and Moreton Hall RA were all present.
- A report to St Eds BC will be based on the discussion at the Open Meeting
- A press release will be issued as soon as possible to summarise the results
- The draft masterplan will be produced by the consultants during the summer
- The next Open Meeting will be held in late July.

Vivien Gainsborough Foot and Martyn Taylor thanked everyone for attending the Open Meeting and taking part in a very productive discussion; Vivien offered particular thanks to Rachel Hogger for recording the discussion so professionally (applause); Robert Everitt thanked the Bury Society and Churchgate Area Association teams for organising and running the event so well (applause).

Post Script: Comments with Applause

- Richard Summers thanked the volunteer registrars, tea and coffee servers, photographer, vote counters, Stephen Moody (time keeper) and Rachel Hogger (note taker) (applause).
- Retail uses should be in the town centre (not outside the town) if it is to survive (applause).
- Please protect our green spaces and the trees in St Andrew’s Street North (applause).
- We must keep Ram Meadow open (applause).
- We need a good arts centre in the town centre (applause).
- It is dangerous for pedestrians trying to cross Tayfen Road (applause).
- Cars should only go at the same speed as pedestrians (applause).
- Why is Angel Hill filled with parked cars? (applause).
- We hope the link from the arc shopping centre to the old part of town will be included in the town centre masterplan (applause).
- Pavement surfaces are not good and it’s easy to trip (applause).
- We want ‘clean air’ and we need a local study about traffic pollution (applause).
- We must protect the town’s green spaces and not develop Ram Meadow (applause).
- Vivien Gainsborough Foot offered particular thanks to Rachel Hogger for recording the discussion so professionally (applause).
- Robert Everitt thanked the Bury Society and Churchgate Area Association teams for organising and running the event so well (applause).