

Advantage Alcester
Action Plan 11/09/02

An Action Plan
For
Advantage Alcester

Advantage Alcester Action Plan 11/09/02

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1. Introduction

Background

The Market Towns Programme is a joint initiative promoted by Advantage West Midlands and the Countryside Agency to direct support for regenerating selected market towns and their rural surroundings. Alcester has been identified as a priority town for target funding for regeneration projects within the Market Towns Programme. It is the only town selected for the Market Towns Initiative by the Countryside Agency within Stratford on Avon District. It has been designated a Tier Two town, which has the potential to benefit from the regeneration programme.

Alcester is located in the extreme south west of Warwickshire, bordering Worcestershire. Alcester is a small historic town, which has Roman origins and possesses an important historic core. Although it has grown considerably in the last forty years, it has retained its individual small town character. The main components of the town are denoted by its busy High Street, with significant landmark buildings. It is situated on the confluence of two Rivers, which have influenced the historical development of the town. The hinterland is one of contrast, particularly in terms of its diversity, ranging from intensive horticultural activity on the borders of the Evesham Vale to the pastoral and mixed woodland areas of the Arden landscape. The local architecture indicates contrasts in building styles from brick and timber framing to natural stone and thatch.

The town experienced a relatively rapid rate of housing and industrial growth in the 1960's and 1970's, but in recent years this slowed as development opportunities reduced and other commercial centres such as Warwick, Leamington Spa and Stratford upon Avon continued to expand. The Alcester Bypass was opened in the 1990s taking through traffic around the western and southern sides of the town. This resulted in some environmental benefits to the town with reduced traffic noise, pollution and severance.

The Alcester Market Town Partnership

The Market Towns Programme has been the catalyst for setting up the Market Town Partnership, which is the first multi-agency/organisation partnership in the area to oversee regeneration issues and take responsibility for the Health check Process. The Partners represent the interests of a broad range of organisations within the local community.

Launch of "Advantage Alcester"

The partnership was launched in January 2002 as "Advantage Alcester" comprising a core steering group. Further members have been identified since the official launch that represents local organisations and agencies that will play a key role within the Market Town Initiative. The current structure of the group is illustrated in Appendix 9.2 Members of the Steering Group and Workshop Groups are set out in Appendix 9.3

The Market Towns Healthcheck Process

The health checking process has been carried out in accordance with the guidance from the West Midlands Market Towns Programme and the Countryside Agency Market Towns Toolkit.

The market town healthcheck is an important part of the process to establish factual information and establish the community's aspirations for the town and its surrounding countryside. The healthcheck identifies key issues affecting Alcester and its hinterland, which will require a range of activities and will feed into the action plan.

The health check worksheets consist of questions that cover all aspects affecting peoples' quality of life. It starts with a factual snapshot of the market town and continues with worksheets covering four main topic areas: environment, economy, social and community, transport and accessibility. The Healthcheck has been co-ordinated by CD Rural Associates with a major contribution from the Advantage Alcester Steering Group and workshop group members.

Following the completion of the health check worksheets, an evaluation of the health check has been carried out to create a vision for the town and surrounding countryside, setting out the community

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objectives. From this vision, an action plan has been developed which will be used to guide and plot the progress of the implementation plan. Only selected regeneration projects that accord with Advantage West Midlands's criteria will be assembled into the implementation plan for funding throughout Year One of the Market Towns Initiative.

Other projects, equally deserving of support, but not meeting Advantage West Midlands' funding criteria, will be progressed using alternative sources of funding.

The Market Town and Rural Hinterland

The initiative has been based upon the town of Alcester acting as the service centre and an identified rural hinterland. The hinterland represents an accurate geographical area within which a range of retail and local services is carried out. (See Appendix 9.1). Members of the steering group agreed the extent of the rural hinterland as the following:

The town of Alcester and the parishes of Arrow, Aston Cantlow, Coughton, Exhall, Great Alne, Haselor, Kinwarton, Salford Priors, Temple Grafton, Weethley and Wixford

2. Summary of Healthcheck Process to Date

The local community has been extensively involved in a wide range of recent consultation and research activities, which were described in the Healthcheck application prior to the introduction of the Market Towns Initiative. In order to meet with the tight timetable for submission of the completed Health check and to avoid duplication of effort on previous consultation exercises, it was decided to utilise key documents, which have been recently produced including town and parish appraisals plus community consultation exercises and other core references. In addition, a series of interviews were carried out with key workers, local organisations and agencies and these are listed under Key Interviews in Section 9.4 and References 9.6 respectively.

Advantage Alcester Workshop Groups

The Steering Group employed several methods of attracting wider community involvement. These included an open meeting, community consultation and contact sheets and suggestion boxes. An excellent response enabled a wider representation of views and experience to contribute to the healthcheck process and the establishment of four working groups dedicated to each of the topic areas for the worksheets outlined above.

The questions within the healthcheck were split between the topic workshop groups and healthcheck co-ordinator according to the nature of the questions. Some questions required extensive research and surveys to achieve the depth of information required by the healthcheck.

Discussion Forum

A discussion forum was established on the Advantage Alcester web site. This acted as a medium for identified users of the working groups and steering group to contribute to the answers within each worksheet and also to view all the other responses.

A draft of the worksheets was launched on the web site and core members of the steering group were appointed to edit the document before a final draft document was produced. The Steering Group finally endorsed the findings of the healthcheck and action plan on 29 May 2002. The completed healthcheck will be put up on the Advantage Alcester web site for access by the community and will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. It is hoped that this will become a useful source of local information and a resource for identifying and promoting projects in the future.

Working Group Findings and Projects Workshop

A series of meetings with the steering group and workshop members have contributed towards the Action Plan process. Feedback from the workshop groups on the findings of the healthcheck led to the next stage, project identification that highlighted themes of potential projects and defined responsibilities and actions for the group. These themed projects have been prioritised by the Steering group and fed into the action plan.

A list of potential projects that could be supported by Advantage West Midlands have been outlined in the implementation plan and have been appraised by a sub-group of the Steering group.

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3. Identification of Key Issues

A summary of issues arising from the healthcheck was identified by each of the Workshop Groups and these are listed in full in the Appendix 9.4. A summary of the key issues by topic area is outlined below, of which some of the issues overlap between topic areas.

Economy

- The need to improve the environment within the town centre for the local community and to attract visitors to Alcester
- The need to promote Alcester as a shopping destination and tourist attraction
- The need to capitalise on neighbouring major tourist attractions
- The need to support diversification opportunities within the rural areas
- The need to provide support for business start ups
- The need to address local skills gaps, increase training and life-long training opportunities

Environment

- The need to enhance the quality of the town and surrounding villages and countryside
- The need to protect important environmental features such as important local buildings, areas of amenity space, trees, river and countryside
- The need to address flooding, drainage and pollution problems
- The need to create a more sustainable future for Alcester through community led initiatives and links with organisations to improve public transport, open space management and recycling

Social

- The need to examine existing community and sports provision and improve the quality of the facilities
- The need to involve the community in provision of services
- The need for better publicity and information about community opportunities and involvement
- The need to address barriers to community involvement through education
- The need to provide better facilities and involve users more in decision making
- The need to address crime, the fear of crime and public disorder issues
- The need to investigate affordable housing issues and improve access to housing and health advice where there are barriers
- The need for someone to co-ordinate town centre management issues and initiate projects
- The need to consider mobility needs of elderly, disabled and those with young children
- The need to improve communications between the town and the rural hinterland
- The need to improve leisure facilities for youths and to stimulate and attract the interest of young people in community activities

Transport

- The need to improve traffic management and car parking facilities within the town centre
- The need to improve public transport and community transport so that it is a more attractive option to the private car
- The need to improve the condition of footways and links, crossing points and cycle facilities within the town centre
- The need to improve information links on public transport
- The need to examine safe routes to school
- The need to improve traffic management and car parking facilities within the town centre
- The need to improve directional signage and information for visitors, making landmarks such as roundabouts more distinctive and to introduce aesthetic improvements
- The need to maximise planning gain contributions for new development for improving public transport infrastructure

4. S.W.O.T Analysis of Alcester and Rural Hinterland

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of Alcester and its rural hinterland have been analysed as part of the healthcheck process. This analysis helps to assess the positive and negative elements of the area as perceived by a wide range of stakeholders and how they view the future potential for the town and rural hinterland through opportunities and threats. This

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helps to provide a broad picture of the local situation and will help to develop ideas and potential projects to address the issues arising from the healthcheck.

The information has been obtained from existing documents and surveys using information collated from the worksheets, a series of interviews with stakeholders, a community forum and meetings with the Steering Group on key issues and potential projects.

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Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities for Alcester	Threats to Alcester
There is much commitment within the town towards making Alcester a better place to live in.	There are hotspots of social deprivation in parts of the town denoted by people on means-tested benefits and higher than average levels of unemployment. Lack of fully accessible venues	Local initiatives can be targeted to address these problems. Alcester has a resource of community buildings, which could be utilised to provide many of the things missing in Alcester.	There is a lack of facilities and services, which affects all age groups. The Greig Hall is currently under threat due to lack of funding
People within the area are generally well skilled and there is a high level of professional and technical workers.	There is an increasing importance placed on core skills and surveys have identified deficiencies in IT skills across the county, particularly affecting the unemployed or economically inactive.	Training opportunities could be improved within the town itself to serve the local community.	A large number of people use Alcester as dormitory town and commute on a daily basis.
Alcester is generally a popular place for employers to locate due to good road links. Minerva Mill has business start up incubation units available	There are some deficiencies in key skills and gaps in provision for start up businesses.	The development of Arden Forest Industrial Estate has provided a range of purpose built premises for existing and new companies within the locality.	There are still problems for businesses seeking starter units, which are low priced and well appointed. Lack of space severely restricts business expansion
Road links to Birmingham, West Midlands are good and town is surrounded by attractive countryside.	Poor appearance of Alcester's car parks, traffic congestion and poor pedestrian links to town centre could be off-putting to visitors Poor public transport links	Alcester has a wealth of features of interest that are not exploited to their full potential. A long history of local events and festivals exists in the area, which could be further supported and promoted.	Potential visitors to Alcester are increasingly mobile and discerning, and Alcester needs to identify itself as a destination of choice.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities for Alcester	Threats to Alcester
Most of hinterland to nearest town has access to a basic service that could be much improved.	No National Coach Service. There are key gaps in public transport provision, mainly affecting the outlying villages. In particular, there is a lack of evening services, lack of access to services for those with mobility problems. Lack of clear and concise public	There are a number of agencies working together to improve the quality and availability of public transport.	There is reluctance to use public transport, especially for travel to work journeys due to perceived unreliability, slow service and poor quality passenger service.

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	transport information Poor integration between cyclists and public transport and other modes of transport. There is also a lack of cycle parking provision.		
Alcester has a number of key features such as the potential Roman archaeological sites, important historic buildings and attractive High Street and the River.	Much of Alcester's street furniture is in poor condition, out of keeping with Conservation Area and inconsistent in design.	Alcester has some key features, which could be exploited for their tourism potential.	Traffic, congestion and car parking problems within the town centre detract from its environmental quality. Vandalism and petty crime, particularly in some parts of the town centre and outlying residential estates.
Flooding has recently been addressed by new flood alleviation measures. Introduction of a TIC at Globe House in 2002	The town was badly affected by flooding in recent years and a loss of business when roads were closed which has been a recurring problem. No consistent tourism links established with Shakespeare's County.	The area has great potential to benefit from visitors to Stratford upon Avon if its tourism assets are correctly managed.	The tourism industry has been adversely affected by flooding problems, foot and mouth outbreaks resulting in the cancellation of major sporting events

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities for Alcester	Threats to Alcester
This may be a good opportunity to tap into the broadband links to strengthen the existing base for businesses, especially in the rural areas, and encourage new companies to establish themselves in the area.	There seems to be a lack of an overall Information Technology Strategy for the area.	There are already broadband links within Alcester town itself, which could be further expanded to benefit the businesses, community/educational establishments in rural areas.	Some businesses within the rural areas may be hampered without broadband links and may have to consider relocating at some point in the future.
Alcester has a good resource of community buildings and recreational facilities.	Some of Alcester's public buildings have poor access facilities e.g. Town Hall.	Now has a one stop shop for public services which could be extended in its usage.	The dispersal of the community buildings throughout the town adds to the public expenditure burden and to overall management problems.
The town centre has a wealth of architecturally and historically important buildings, which	The process of land and site assembly is very difficult due to the long history of absentee owners.	Key sites identified for redevelopment within the town centre within District Local Plan e.g. Ford	Some of the town centre is constrained by the risk of flooding that will limit redevelopment

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would benefit from townscape improvements.		Garage	opportunities.
High Street frontage still exists with individual high street traders. Strong Chamber of Trade exists with important regional links.	Areas of poorly maintained footpaths and car parks, seating etc may deter shoppers from using local facilities.	Opportunities to promote town as a shopping destination and emphasise independent/specialist nature of businesses.	There has been a marked decline & closure of traditional shops in town centre in recent years.
There is a good network of local businesses, organisations and community groups for the promotion of Alcester as a local service centre and cultural centre.	There are poor communications links between some of the remoter villages and activities taking place within Alcester e.g.. For cultural and leisure activities	Advantage Alcester has already set up its own web site, which could be further, exploited to inform the community and promote local events and activities.	Alcester is on the edge of several areas from a marketing and advertising point of view

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities for Alcester	Threats to Alcester
There are committed groups of people and organisations within the town dedicated to helping young people	Poor range of facilities for youths in the town and very little within villages. There is often resentment of organised activity within the youth culture. This makes them a difficult group to target	There is a range of community/leisure building and land resources, which with future investment could provide better venues for young people to get involved in community activities.	16-34 age group expresses higher levels of dissatisfaction with community's leisure facilities. The lack of adequate youth facilities is seen as a partial reason for crime, vandalism and drug abuse.
The environment in the area is its strength – and must be protected There is a strong interdependency between tourism and food and drink sectors within the surrounding Vale (covering some of the rural hinterland)	A changing environment potentially makes the area less attractive to tourism?	Some of the Hinterland is within the Evesham Vale and there are opportunities for making connections with its focus as a centre for excellence in food and drink.	

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities for Alcester	Threats to Alcester
There is a good stock of social rented housing managed by a number of local housing associations	Plan-led sites for social housing within the rural areas will be dependent on the emerging	There may be an opportunity to achieve valuable town centre homes for smaller	There are hotspots of housing need within parts of Alcester and its rural hinterland denoted

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<p>that have the capability to carry out joint ventures linking housing and local regeneration initiatives.</p>	<p>development strategy of the Local Plan Review. It appears as though the opportunity for new housing in Alcester will be limited to small allocated and windfall sites that will be insufficient to fulfil the perceived need for local affordable housing. Opportunities for the villages are slim other than through the rural exceptions site policy for social housing. These schemes can be difficult to achieve and usually have a long lead in time.</p>	<p>households through the appraisal of redevelopment opportunities.</p>	<p>by households living in unsuitable housing (i.e. too small, too expensive, unsuitable for special needs). There is a shortage of small family housing in Alcester. A significant amount of social housing is being lost through Right to Acquire Legislation in desirable rural locations and Registered Social Landlords are finding it difficult to replace through planning measures and the purchase of existing housing stock.</p>
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5. The Vision for Alcester and Hinterland

The Healthcheck and recent community surveys have identified many aspirations for the community of Alcester and its hinterland. This vision attempts to draw these together in a mission statement against which the focus of future planned activities may be determined.

The Steering Group will seek partnerships with other voluntary and official organisations in order to realise this vision.

Several aspirations may be considered ambitious and more likely to be achieved in the longer term. However, they reflect the Community's desire for the improvement and development of its amenities. These longer-term objectives will be addressed in a series of steps, with clearly marked milestones, the short to medium term actions laying the foundation for future achievement.

- To provide an attractive place to live, work and visit, protecting the natural environment and encouraging environmentally friendly activities and practices. Supporting the most appropriate means of travel for its inhabitants, while recognising the needs of its business community.
- Enhance and preserve a pride in its heritage and support its historic connections, while embracing the best of modern ideas and facilities in the development of its community, contributing to the development and support of appropriate leisure facilities for all its inhabitants, including arts, sports, social and educational activities.
- Create and sustain a healthy economy for its inhabitants, including an appropriate range of shops and businesses, attracting local patronage, tourists and customers from further afield. It will improve the skills of its inhabitants and create job opportunities within the community.
- Encourage a real sense of community, enabling the active participation of all its inhabitants and recognising the needs of families, youth, the elderly and disabled. It will seek to provide an inclusive environment and eradicate areas of social deprivation, ensuring support of its voluntary organisations, encouraging community spirit and the participation of its inhabitants in initiatives to enhance the well being of the community.

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6. Prospective Projects and Timescales

An Action Plan Table has been drawn up to include a range of projects that aim to address the strategic objectives and key issues. These have been given a priority ranking of either high or medium and an indicative timescale is suggested as to how long the project would run for or take to achieve. Lead organisations are indicated for most projects along with other possible funding partner organisations.

The details are simply indicative at this stage. The Implementation Plan that will be drawn up alongside the action plan will develop much more detailed plans and estimated costings. Those projects marked with * are likely to form part of the implementation plan for Advantage West Midlands (AWM) funding over the period 2002-2005 but each will have to be subject to individual applications to Advantage Alcester Appraisal group and there is no guarantee of a successful outcome.

Key of acronyms used in Table:

AWM	Advantage West Midlands	CA	Countryside Agency
SDC	Stratford on Avon District Council	ACS	Alcester Civic Society
EA	Environment Agency	LEA	Local Education Service
RTP	Rural Transport Partnership	MTI	Market Towns Initiative
WCC	Warwickshire County Council	VV	Vital Villages
LSC	Learning Skills Council	RTP	Rural Transport Partnership
	ATC		Alcester Town Council
	SWPIE		South Warwickshire Promoting Inclusion and Enterprise

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Alcester Town Centre Regeneration	
Key Issue Summary Healthcheck:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town has suffered in recent years from flooding and foot & mouth outbreak that has reduced the numbers of visitors to the town. ▪ Some of the town centre offers a poor quality environment, especially at key gateways to the town. ▪ There are some prime opportunities to improve access to the town's best assets ▪ There are a number of redevelopment opportunities within the town centre which could contribute to the regeneration of the town centre
Vision/strategic aim:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an attractive place to live, work and visit, protecting the natural environment and encouraging environmentally friendly activities and practices. Supporting the most appropriate means of travel for its inhabitants, while recognising the needs of its business community.
Action Plan	
By Theme:	Alcester Town Centre Regeneration
Projects:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alcester Regeneration Study to:* <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Detailed analysis of traffic circulation, mobility issues and car parking arrangements within High Street environs ▪ Identification of opportunities for environmental enhancements for key areas including gateways to the town centre ▪ General overview of opportunities for redevelopment of key vacant/underused sites within the town centre ▪ Enhancements to street furniture, signage, landscaping and planting for key sites, plus recycling facilities 2. Improved security to certain locations within town by CCTV 3. Capital improvements as a result of feasibility study*
Priority:	High, Medium, High
Funds:	
Identified Partners:	SDC, WCC, ATC, CoT, local businesses
Impact on Rural Hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improvement of town centre facilities for rural community ▪ Attract visitors &/or increase length of stay in locality which will benefit the rural hinterland
Progressing the Priorities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subject to MTI Approval: 2002/2003* 2. Needs research & discussion with SDC 3. Subject to MTI Approval: 2003/2004 & 2004/2005*
Start date:	
Monitoring Outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Measured economic activity in town centre through follow up surveys ▪ Vacancy levels measured through retail surveys ▪ Monitoring and evaluation by steering group with representatives from other organisations such as the Chamber of Trade

Promotion of Alcester for Business and Tourism	
Key Issue Summary Healthcheck:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The area benefits from visitors all year round, particularly short-break and day visitors but does not reach its full potential ▪ Information for tourists in Alcester is very fragmented in provision ▪ Local businesses have been adversely affected by a series of recent events which have affected its economic stability e.g. flooding problems, foot and mouth outbreak and recent USA terrorist attacks ▪ Many rural businesses are looking to diversify economic base

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	<p>especially farmers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alcester lacks a venue for market to attract visitors on a regular basis
Vision/strategic aim:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and sustain a healthy economy for its inhabitants, including an appropriate range of shops and businesses, attracting local patronage, tourists and customers from further afield. It will improve the skills of its inhabitants and create job opportunities within the community.
Action Plan	
By Theme:	Promotion of Alcester for Business and Tourism
Projects:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Development of Promotional Strategy for Alcester* 2. Development of Tourist Information Point and Heritage Centre at Globe House* 3. Development of business/community web-site 4. Development of Cycle Route around Alcester 5. Development of footpaths/way marked routes around hinterland 6. Development of Heritage Trail in Alcester Town Centre 7. Town Events and Attractions Guide plus support 8. Potential for farmers/provisions market
Priority:	High, High, High, High, High, High, Medium, Medium
Funds:	<p>Resources Available:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support from SDC, WDC, HETB, local businesses 2. Site owned by SDC with opportunity of funding from SDC, Heart of England Tourist Board and Chamber of Trade, South Warwickshire Tourism 3. Support from Chamber of Trade, local businesses 4. Support from SDC, SUSTRANS, Heart of England Tourist Board, local businesses 5. As above 6. HETB, South Warwickshire Tourism Ltd, Alcester Civic Society & SDC 7. Needs further research 8. As above
Impact on Rural Hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help to disseminate information on rural attractions, accommodation and other local enterprises to visitors ▪ Helps to improve awareness and make local services and products readily available to rural dwellers ▪ Improved understanding of food production and encouragement of local food purchasing ▪ Creates linkage via cycleways/footpaths
Progressing the Priorities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Potential feasibility study for MTI funding 2002/2003 2. Initiatives are in progress with SoADC and other organisations giving support for it to be progressed during 2002/2003 3. To be progressed 2002/2003 4. Underway (to be completed summer 2002) 5. As above 6. To be progressed 7. Needs research 8. Needs research with community and local producers
Start date:	
Monitoring Outcomes:	Visitor attitude surveys, feedback from local businesses, footfall surveys through Retail Studies (SDC)

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Sustainable Transport	
Key Issue Summary Healthcheck:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Generally there is a perception of poor public transport links between the town and the rural hinterland and between the different modes of public transport which leads to low usage, particularly for the working population. ▪ Generally, the provision of safe cycle and pedestrian access to school could be improved ▪ There are poor links between certain outlying parts of the town and the town centre ▪ Some of the villages currently have no alternative to the car creating major accessibility problems (health, shopping, education, employment, training and entertainment) for many residents without the use of a car
Vision/strategic objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide an attractive place to live, work and visit, protecting the natural environment and encouraging environmentally friendly activities and practices. Supporting the most appropriate means of travel for its inhabitants, while recognising the needs of its business community.
Action Plan By Theme: Projects: Priority: Funds/Partners:	<p style="text-align: center;">Sustainable Transport</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improved pedestrian/cycle infrastructure 2. Safe routes to school including walking bus initiatives 3. Traffic, parking survey (part of town centre regeneration)* 4. Public transport interchange facilities improvements 5. Information Improvements on public transport 6. Easy Link Flexi-bus – New routes to Alcester from surrounding villages and new routes within town centre* <p style="text-align: center;">High/High/High/High/High/High</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WCC, Sustrans 2. WCC, AO & voluntary support 3. (part of town centre regeneration) 4. WCC 5. WCC, CA 6. RTP, WCC – subject to MTI bid 2002/2003 7. This project will now be achieved with alternative funding to that on offer from the MTI
Impact on Rural Hinterland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improves road safety in outlying rural areas ▪ Increases public awareness of public transport facilities and developments ▪ Improve access to jobs, training facilities and services for those without own means of transport
Progressing the Priorities: Start date:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research and enabling work by RTP and WCC transport division to be progressed during 2002/2003. 2. Survey work carried out by WCC 3. WCC, SDC – feasibility study to be progressed 2002/2003 4. Consultant study now complete 5. Need to follow up with RTP 2002/2003 6. Subject to MTI bid 2002/2003
Monitoring Outcomes:	Public transport user surveys (RTP), reduced accidents (WCC), monitoring by Steering Group Panel for voluntary activities

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Improved Learning Opportunities	
Key Issue Summary Healthcheck:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Alcester has concentrations of areas suffering from social exclusion, reliance on benefits with poor access to learning opportunities ▪ Often lack of transport/personal responsibilities prevents people from attending formal learning centres ▪ There are skills shortages for those who are economically inactive or the long term unemployed ▪ Lack of focussed training opportunities for small to medium businesses ▪ Alcester suffers from a high level of outward commuting
Vision/strategic objective:	Create and sustain a healthy economy for its inhabitants, including an appropriate range of shops and businesses, attracting local patronage, tourists and customers from further afield. It will improve the skills of its inhabitants and create job opportunities within the community
Action Plan	
By Theme:	Improved Learning Opportunities
Projects:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business Start up Centre Training Support* 2. Community Education Review 3. Educational support for local businesses
Priority:	High, Med, Med
Partners/Funds:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. WCC, SDC, SW Business Partnership, CoT, Local Businesses – subject to MTI bid 2002-2004 2. CVS/LSC/SDC/WCC 3. COT, SDC
Impact on Rural Hinterland:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Offers opportunities for access to ICT and vocational training to those unable to access formal training opportunities ▪ Improved skills and business support for those in rural businesses
Progressing the Priorities:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subject to MTI approval: 2002/2003 2. Needs research 3. Needs research
Monitoring Outcomes:	Progress monitored by AA Steering Group and other agencies such as WCC & SW Business Partnership.

Community & Leisure	
Key Issue Summary Healthcheck:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active community, arts and drama group network within the town ▪ Some youth organisations lack suitable community venue ▪ Some of the community buildings are in a poor state of repair and suffering from under-investment ▪ Poor range of facilities for youths in the town and very little within villages
Vision/strategic objective:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcester will develop and support appropriate leisure facilities for all its inhabitants, including arts, sports, social and educational activities. • Alcester will support its voluntary organisations, encouraging community spirit and the participation of its inhabitants in initiatives to enhance the well being of the community.

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<p>Action Plan</p> <p>By Theme:</p> <p>Projects:</p> <p>Priority:</p> <p>Partner/Funds:</p>	<p>Access to Public Art & Leisure Facilities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leisure Feasibility of Alcester's community buildings* 2. Capital Improvements to Alcester's community buildings* 3. Alcester Community and Leisure Centre* 4. Community Development Worker 5. Development of Open Spaces Feasibility Study 6. Public Art Initiative <p>High/High/High/High/Medium/Medium</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. MTI Funding, Greig Centre Trust Fund, SDC 2. SDC, Greig Centre Trust Fund, Sports England 3. 2002/2003 MTI application, ATC, SWPIE Project 4. SWPIE Project, 2002/2003 MTI application 5. SDC,CA (Vital Villages) 6. SDC, West Midlands Art, Alcester Heritage
<p>Impact on Rural Hinterland</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide much enhanced facility for local community within surrounding villages and locality ▪ Help to establish meaningful contact with rural young people to engage in sports, social and leisure activities
<p>Progressing the Priorities:</p> <p>Start date:</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Subject to MTI funding 2002/2003 2. 2003/2004 & 2004/2005 3. Subject to MTI funding 2002/2003 (feasibility study) 4. In post during 2002/2003 5. To be agreed 6. To be agreed
<p>Monitoring Outcomes:</p>	<p>Monitoring mechanisms set up through the A.A Steering Group, Greig Centre Trust, WCC and SDC.</p>

7. The Implementation Plan

The regional funding body Advantage West Midlands (AWM) require Advantage Alcester to develop this Action Plan into an Implementation Plan that must be submitted alongside the Action Plan by 14 June 2002. The Implementation Plan will build on the Action Plan list of projects to firm up details of costs, funding, partners and feasible timescales over the three year Programme set out by AWM.

The Implementation Plan will develop a baseline of information against which to monitor performance and progress and include a brief risk assessment. It will identify key output targets for each project that will be also used for monitoring and evaluation. In essence it will pull the current ideas together into a more detailed plan that will be ready to put into action once decisions on funding are received. The programme manager will be able to take the Implementation Plan and advance the projects for Year One fairly swiftly.

8. Next steps

The following steps will need to taken following the submission of the Action Plan and Implementation Plan to ensure there are clean lines of communication within the Steering Group and with other organisations such as the District and County Councils from whom a considerable amount of support is required:

1. Clarify the role that is required for Advantage Alcester in the future and agree a sensible structure for the Steering Group taking into account existing organisations
2. Appoint Project Manager to take over Implementation Plan for the three year appointment to include following activities:
 - develop projects and establish monitoring groups;
 - facilitate implementation;
 - activate resources;

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- undertake the key functions of reporting progress, monitoring and evaluating;
 - Support Advantage Alcester with promotional material and events.
3. Arrange handover from Healthcheck Co-ordinator to Steering Group including maintenance of healthcheck database and Discussion Forum.
 4. Organise Community Forum to feedback progress to date on activities of Advantage Alcester and launch programme when implementation plan is approved by AWM.
 5. The need to monitor and evaluate projects progressed throughout programme.
 6. The benefit of establishing linkages with other market towns benefiting from the Market Towns Initiative such as Evesham and Pershore to share good practice and results of survey work such as the Evesham ICT Study which could benefit the adjoining rural hinterland of Alcester.

9. Appendices

9.1 Map of Alcester and Rural Hinterland

9.2 Advantage Alcester Proposed Structure

9.3 Advantage Alcester Steering Group and Workshop Group Members

9.4 Advantage Alcester Project Summary

9.4 Interviews with Key Players:

9.5 Key Organisations and Contacts