

ADVANTAGE ALCESTER

HEALTHCHECK 11/09/02

Section: Environment

Worksheet: Character and Vitality of the Town

EN1 C1 What are the main landmarks or distinctive buildings in the town?

Answer

- St Nicholas Church dominates the end of the High Street and there have been problems funding maintenance as it has had roof problems.
- The Town Hall is a Medieval building built between 1618 and 1641. The upper floors were added in 1874 and the lower floor filled in. It was originally used as Courtroom Lockup, the Market Hall and meeting place. It is in regular use, by playgroups in daytime and numerous Alcester organisations from ballet lessons to Masonic Lodge, wedding receptions to Disco Dances and many other activities. It is in good condition but has no lift to main room and so offers poor access to those with mobility problems.
- Hannah Greig Memorial Hall. This complex is Trustee controlled rather than the District Council, historically it has been under funded. It is used by numerous clubs/societies/groups but the fabric of the building is in need of fairly urgent attention mainly due to flat roof design adopted in the 1950s/160s. The adjacent sports hall is well used by individuals/groups.
- Globe House represents a recent upgrade of old Court House to provide a one stop shop for the District Council Offices and Town Council facilities which is a major step forward for the community. There is the prospect of a heritage visitor centre opening in 2003 with volunteer staffing. This facility would be shared jointly by WCC, Stratford District Council and Alcester Town Council. It also houses the Registrar for Births, Marriages and Deaths plus a part-time Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Globe Island situated on the mini-roundabout opposite Globe House is a landmark feature within this part of the town and marks one of the entry points by road, mainly due to the siting of a wrought iron work sculpture.
- Cruck House, Henley Street. This is the oldest surviving house in Alcester and appears to be in good condition.
- Churchill House is an 18th Century property, probably one of the finest of its type in the area. It is privately owned.
- Angel House is one of many old Coach Houses of Alcester and has associations with Queen Victoria.
- Gunning's Bridge. This was originally one of the marked entrances to the town when approached from Henley in Arden. It recently suffered damage from traffic colliding with its parapet and has now been repaired.
- Oversley Bridge. This was originally one of the marked entrances to the town when approached from Stratford upon Avon.
- Roman remains, Bleachfield Street, lie under the recreation ground and in fields to the West of Oversley Bridge (latter owned by the Marquis) have been excavated and then covered up again so they may not be historically unique but we are very close to the tourist centre of S-O-A. We would probably attract more visitors/shoppers to the town if there were something more to see! A heritage centre is great but there are other unexploited potential historical attractions. The current climate in the Media is one where History is to the fore especially on TV.
- Abbey remains. These are not exposed behind AGS except by river erosion. Not much has been made of the Middle Ages/Norman period of Alcester, as Roman and Tudor periods of development have always been emphasised.
- Timber Framed Buildings, Corner of Malt Mill Lane, Church Street. These are in need of maintenance/re-use.
- Minerva Works. These are now being renovated/converted to an office complex.
- Kinwarton Dovecote. This building is owned and managed by the National Trust.
- Ragley Hall. The Marquis of Hertford owns this.
- Malt Mill Lane development is of Tudor design and has been sensitively restored and converted to sheltered housing and day centre.
- Oversley House. This was built in 1837 as a workhouse now converted into privately owned sheltered housing for the elderly and is in a good state of repair.
- Limekiln, Maltmill Lane

EN1 C2 What are the focal points in the town?

Answer

- Town Hall. This is used all through the year for meetings, social events, lectures, charity events, wedding receptions, afternoon and evening events. There is also nursery school within the building.
- Library. This has a cultural association and is most popular on Saturday mornings.

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- In addition, the parish churches are popular meeting places including St Nicholas Parish Church, Baptist Church, Methodist Church and St Joseph's R C Church.
- There are 3 Secondary and 3 Primary Schools within the town which are focal meeting places by parents, children and for activities outside school hours.
- Hopkins Precinct. Youths congregate in the evening, mainly throughout the year. The play area is used by under 12s during the daytime and older children after school, weekends, holidays and evenings.
- The Greig Hall Community centre and Sports Hall is used extensively throughout the year for social events, clubs and classes.
- Stratford Road Recreational Grounds. Mainly the elderly and those passing through the Town centre use this. In summer people enjoy sitting on benches during the morning and afternoon. Moorfield Park. This is used as a walkway through to High Street. The play area is used frequently, especially during late morning and afternoons. Youths congregate in the evening. The tennis Courts are well used, slightly more in summer, especially at weekends and evenings.
- Various Pubs. These are frequented by the adult population, young and old:

Evesham Street White Lion
Priory Road Lord Nelson
Swan Street The Swan Hotel
Stratford Road Cross Keys
Bleachfield St The Dog & Partridge
High Street The Royal Oak, The Bear, The Turks Head, The Hollybush
Birmingham Road The Roebuck

- Within the town centre, other popular meeting places include the Post Office, doctor's surgery and the Masonic Headquarters. There is also the headquarters for Rotary International.
- High Street. The High Street used for annual events such as The Annual Mop, Pancake Day Race, Annual Street market, Easter Day Parade, Poppy Day Parade Bleachfield Street Play Area. This is used by under 12's and where older children congregate.
- Clubs in Alcester include the Trades and Labour Club (Members Only) It is used for dancing classes on Wednesday night, Conservative Club (Members only) and the Unionist Club
- In addition, other popular streets in the town centre include Church Street, Henley Street and Butter Street.
- Somerfield is the main store in the High Street and tends to be the place to go if you want to run in to anyone.

ENI C3 Is there an historic core to the town?

Answer

- The historic core of Alcester is clearly defined within the Conservation Area on the District Local Plan Proposals Map for Alcester

Key features of interest and historic/architectural importance are set out below:

Roman settlement

Alcester Abbey -constructed 1140 until 1545

Conservation Area (see Appendix 2)

Listed Buildings (see Appendix 6)

Historic core is made up of:

a) High Street (including Market Place) b) Butter Street c) Church Street d) Henley Street e) Malt Mill Lane f) Swan Street/Stratford Road g) Priory Road

Bleachfield Street

Nos. 8-14 even: Grade 11

Nos. 13-25 odd: Grade 11

Bulls Head Yard

Cottage to the rear of No.1 5 High Street: Grade 11

Churtyard wall & gate piers to St Nicholas Church: Grade 11

Nos. 2-6 even: Grade 11

Nos. 1-15 odd: Grade 11

Church House: Grade 11

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The Rectory: Grade 11

Church Street

No.1 and Windsor House: Grade 11
Baptist Church: Grade 11
Nos. 2-10 consecutive: Grade 11
Nos. 11-12: Grade 1
Nos. 13-21 consecutively. Grade 11
Building to the rear of No.18: Grade 11

Evesham Street

Nos. 15 and 17: Grade 11
Acorn House, coach house and walls: Grade 11
Nos. 8-14 even: Grade 11
Nos. 18 and 20: Grade 11

Henley Street

Nos. 28-46 even: Grade 11
Nos. 1-5 odd: Grade 11
Nos. 19-35 odd: Grade 11
Churchill House: Grade 11
Town Hall: Grade 1

High Street

Nos. 2-18 even: Grade 11
The Bear Hotel: Grade 11
No. 26: Grade 11
Nos. 30-34 even and Talbot Cottage: Grade 11
No. 42: Grade 11
Royal Oak Inn: Grade 11
Nos. 46-50 even: Grade 11
Nos. 3-7 odd: Grade 11
Nos. 9 and 9A: Grade 11
Nos. 11-21 odd: Grade 11
Nos. 25-37 odd: Grade 11
Nos. 45-67 odd: Grade 11

Kinwarton Road

Gunning's Bridge: Grade 11
Malt Mill Lane
No.2: Grade 11
Building to the rear of Nos. 4, 6 and 8: Grade 11
Nos. 4-28 even: Grade 11
Nos. 1 and 3: Grade 1
Nos. 5 and 7: Grade 11
Nos. 9 and 11: Grade 11
No. 41: Grade 11
Meeting Lane
No. 2: Grade 11
Old Baptist Meeting House: Grade 11
Priory Road
Nos. 43-65 odd: Grade 11
Lord Nelson Inn: Grade 11
Nos. 71-81 odd: Grade 11
Gresley House: Grade 11
Stratford Road
No. 2: Grade 11
Lloyds Bank: Grade 11
Swan Street
Nos. 7-13 odd: Grade 11
Swan Hotel and Country Fayre: Grade 11

EN1 C4 Are there any individual and/or groups of buildings which display design, detailing or materials which give the town a distinctive character?

Answer

- Butter Street. Half timbered buildings in a narrow street giving medieval atmosphere.
- High Street contains many old shop fronts' with preservation orders. One or two buildings which are not in keeping with the character of the surrounding buildings such as the Post

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Office and building which replaced the Old Corn Exchange. Some shop fronts are totally out of keeping with the rest such as Threshers off-licence for example.

1. St Nicholas Church. This is a 14th century tower with nave and aisles rebuilt in 1733. The chancel and chapels were rebuilt in 1870.
2. Town Hall. This has a half-timbered upper storey and a lower stone colonnade and was completed in 1641.
3. Churchill House. This building is timber framed with fine brick facade of 1688. Churchill House probably one of the finest of its type in the area. Privately owned.
4. Old Malthouse. This is a timber-framed house from about 1500.
5. 18-19 Church Street. This is a 16th century half-timbered house.
6. 4-5 Church Street. This is a timber framed building with plain 18th century facade.
7. 8 Church Street. This is a Georgian house with a classical front.
8. 28 Henley Street. This is a fine timber framed house of about 1600.
9. 19 Henley Street. This is a timber framed house dated 1364.
10. Cruck House, Henley Street. Oldest surviving house in Alcester. Good condition.
11. Angel House. One of the many old Coach Houses of Alcester, has historical associations with Queen Victoria
12. Gunning's Bridge. Originally one of the marked entrances to the town when approached from Henley in Arden. Suffered damage from traffic colliding with its parapet (recently repaired).
13. Oversley Bridge. Originally one of the marked entrances to the town when approached from Stratford upon Avon.
14. Roman remains, off Bleachfield Street, under recreation ground and in fields to the West of Oversley Bridge (latter owned by the Marquis) have been excavated and then covered up again. They may not be historically but we are very close to the tourist centre of S-O-A We would probably attract more visitors/shoppers to the town if there were something more to see! A heritage centre is great but there are other unexploited potential historical attractions. The current climate in the Media is one where History is to the fore especially on TV.
15. Abbey remains. These are not exposed behind AGS except by river erosion. Not much has been made of the Middle Ages/Norman period of Alcester, as Roman and Tudor periods of development have always been emphasised.
16. Timber Framed Buildings, Corner of Malt Mill Lane, Church Street. These are now in need of maintenance/re-use.
17. Minerva Works. An old mill building which has now been renovated for commercial use.
18. Kinwarton Dovecote Owned by National Trust
19. The Old Hospital
20. Oversley House. This was built in 1837 as a workhouse now converted into privately owned sheltered housing for the elderly
21. Limekiln Maltmill Lane

ENI C5 Are there any unattractive areas in the town?

Answer

- Alcester Archaeological Office/Guides Hut, Gas House Lane, Stratford Road
- Two single storey buildings poorly maintained and vandalised in Conservation Area, protected by Environment Agency Flood Defence, close to Scheduled Ancient Monument. Site would be suitable for redevelopment but significant flooding constraint suggests small scale development on footprint of buildings maybe acceptable. It has been identified in SDC urban capacity study as potential windfall site but not included as an allocated site in Local Plan Review.
- Rear of the shops backing onto the main Car Park are very tatty in appearance and give a poor impression to visitors who use the public car park.
- Industrial 'sheds' next to Minerva Mill on the Birmingham Rd are very unattractive as well as an area of land on the main Stratford Rd in front of very nice houses.
- Alliance Group Buildings, Bleachfield Street Occupied by various businesses. Removal of existing use would benefit this largely residential area. Opportunity to enhance street scene and the adjacent listed buildings. Positive effects on local highway network. This site is already allocated for residential development in the adopted Local Plan and would require an archaeological assessment before allocation.
- Brooklyn Motors Garage, Bulls Head Yard - Car sales/showroom and service centre This site is located within the Conservation Area so would make positive contribution by sensitive

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redevelopment and could also enhance adjacent listed buildings. Flooding appears to be main constraint and apparently limits the scope for redevelopment.

- Greig Centre Complex, Kinwarton Road - meeting rooms plus recreation facilities that are actively used but some of which would benefit from restoration/redevelopment to improve facilities. Part of this site is within the Alcester Conservation Area and redevelopment could have positive impact on character of area, subject to finding new site for main hall that requires consultation with the community. Site has been allocated for mixed-use development within the Local Plan Review Deposit Draft.

Other areas that have been highlighted in a local study include the following:

- Rear of High Street properties viewed from main car park.
- Derelict land/buildings off Bulls Head Yard and at rear of I-ISI3C Bank, rear of Swan Court etc.
- The old petrol station, Oversley Green
- Old Cherry Trees site, Oversley Green
- Old workshop/warehouse, Seggs Lane

Much could be done to utilise the potential of these sites, making the town more attractive to visitors.

ENI C6 Do any distinctive features exist which define the limits of the town, such as historic city walls, a river or a bypass?

Answer

- The new flood barrier will form an 'inner wall' beside Bleachfield St, behind Newport Drive and behind School Rd from Gunning's Bridge to Madin Court when it is completed in 2004.
- Alcester has two rivers, the Alne and the Arrow which meet at Oversley Green. Alcester also has a By Pass with clear signs and an old railway line on the western boundary. There is an Industrial Estate on the northern boundary.
- Every entrance is welcoming with floral decor all year round which Alcester In Bloom take on Display areas and troughs are well maintained although the In bloom organisation have to raise funds for the continuous upkeep. There are good road signs to all main entrances.

ENI C7 Are the buildings, streets and furniture in the town centre in good condition?

Answer

- Street furniture is very minimal. Improvements are needed to provide more seating, cycle stands, litter bins etc at focal points. In addition, the streets within the town centre would benefit from dropped kerbs and better footpaths.
- Better lighting would improve safety and security for pedestrians.

ENI C8 Are the 'main gateways' to the town centre attractive and well maintained (including train and bus stations)?

Answer

- Every entrance is welcoming with floral decor all year round which Alcester In Bloom take on with display areas and troughs which are well maintained although the In Bloom' organisation have to raise funds for the continuous upkeep.
- There are good road signs to all main entrances. There is no train or bus station.

Run-down sites include:

- Orchard Rise (derelict bungalow) off Evesham Road/A435 island.
- Various sites off Stratford Road (See C5)
- Unattractive industrial buildings next to Minerva Mill (B'ham Road)

ENI C9 Are the main pedestrian routes between car parks and the town centre attractive, well maintained and safe to use during the day and at night?

Answer

- There are two public passages (called tueries in Alcester) between the Town Centre car park and Alcester High Street known as Market Way and Bulls Head Yard. There is also a private tuary used by the public between the High Street and the car park to the rear of Costcutters.
- CCTV surveillance operates, in both Bulls Head Yard car park, Bleachfield Street car park and also in the High St and at Hopkins Precinct.
- Market Way is safe and well developed with shops and restaurant, however lighting and surfacing could be improved. There is also room for further improvement/development on Barclays' car park. Bulls Head Yard is decidedly unsafe: very narrow, poorly surfaced and badly lit. It also has dilapidated timbered building on one side that regularly has to have the ties on its roof fixed to stop them falling off onto passers. Behind this is an overgrown garden

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that traps rubbish and sends briars out onto the path. On the other side is a 2m high brick wall that leans in places.

- Costcutters; This tuary is one of the distinctive elements of the town. A very attractive narrow tuary overlooked by outstanding half-timbered buildings. The surfacing is of stone slabs that are rather uneven in places.
- Lighting could be improved but needs to be subtle. The state of the turies should be linked to the dilapidated state of much of the area at the rear of the High Street.
- A popular route has developed between Gateways car park and Priory Road by Globe Island. Although a single line of slabs has been laid most of the pedestrian traffic crosses through the old shrub bed. The route then threads through the cars parked for sale at
- Brooklyn Garage out onto the Priory.
- The route to the town centre from the Bleachfield St. car park crosses Swan Street at its junction with the High St. There is a pelican crossing in Swan Street but few people use it.

ENI S1 Are there any townscape or heritage initiatives currently underway in the town?

Answer

- Alcester Heritage Trust is in the process of creating a museum in Globe House. However there are no other initiatives active at present.

ENI S2 Is the town centre dominated by shops or are there a range of other uses which take place such as housing and employment?

Answer

- Town Centre mainly comprises shops and housing with some offices. Employment areas are mainly outside centre (e.g. Bleachfield Street, Seggs Lane, Station Road, Arden Forest). Shopping facilities are mainly located along High Street, together with Somerfield and a number of smaller units around the Bulls Head Car Park to the rear. The balance of shopping tends to provide for convenience goods with a good supply of retail services including restaurants/takeaways/public houses. In addition, there are some flats above the shops that appear to be occupied.

ENI S3 Are there areas in the town which are over-cluttered with signs, street furniture, advertising hoardings etc?

Answer

- The street furniture is minimal. Two more litterbins are required and a bench outside Barclays' bank might be an asset. The gates of the entrance archway to the car park and Somerfield Supermarket could do with painting or varnishing and the out of date posters removed.
- Signage is fairly well controlled with some fly posters to gates to Market Place and car park from High Street. This area could be improved to provide a more inviting entrance to the "alleyway".

ENI S4 Are there important groups of trees which are either covered by TPOs or are important to the character of the town?

Answer

- There is a row of elderly chestnuts in Gashouse lane. One was recently felled, being unsafe.
- There is also a row of Scotch pines on Arrow-road bridge worthy of noting.
- Tree Preservation Orders within Alcester:
 - Brookes Croft, Seggs Lane, Alcester
 - Oversley House, Kinwarton Rd, Alcester
 - Land opposite Station House, Station Rd, Alcester
 - Cold Comfort Lane, Paddock to Field House, Alcester
 - 27 Alne Bank Rd, Alcester
 - Alcester Conservation Area
 - 40 Hortan Close, Alcester
 - 17 Beacons Close, Crooks Lane, Alcester
 - Land adjacent Roebuck PH, Birmingham Rd, Alcester
 - Alcester Hospital site, Fields Park Drive, Alcester
 - Kensall House, Oversley Green Alcester
 - 14B High St, Alcester
 - Land to east of Alcester Bypass, Alcester

References for the above section

Local Survey - A.A
Regeneration Study of Pershore Town Centre

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Civic Society 2000/2001
M Madge (A.A)
SDC Planning Department - Alcester TPO Map (see Appendix 3)
Alcester Town Trail, Alcester Civic Society.
Alcester Parish Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural and Historic Interest (DETR)
A.A - local information
District Local Plan Proposals Map for Alcester - First Deposit Draft 2002 (see Appendix 2)
Alcester - Parish Listing of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Importance (DETR)
Local Knowledge & Information provided by A.A
Alcester Town Guide
Alcester Chamber of Trade & Commerce
Urban Capacity Study - SW (January 2002)
Urban Land Capacity Study 2001
A local survey was carried out by Maggie Payne, Margaret Moore, Mary Madge & Bob Petherbridge
(A.A)
Local Plan Review Inset Map - Alcester (Appendix 2)
Aerial photographs
SDC Information
Alcester Heritage Trust
Retail Study - Coffiors Erdman Lewis (1997)
Town Centre Enhancement Programme Report - WDC (October 2001)

Section: Environment

Worksheet: Links between Town & Country

EN3 C1 Are there natural or man-made features such as rivers, canals, roads or railway corridors that link the town and country?

Answer

- Alcester is linked to the surrounding countryside by eight roads. The most recent and major one being the dual carriage way A46 which comes from the Evesham side and bypasses Alcester on its way to Stratford upon Avon. This road links into the A435, which leads to Studley Redditch and eventually Birmingham. The A422 is smaller leading to Worcester, the B4089 to Evesham, the B4089 to Wootton Wawen and the old Stratford road leading to Haselor and Walcote.
- Rivers Two rivers pass through the town. The Alne starts in the region of Tamworth in Arden and passes via Ullenhall, Henley in Arden and Aston Cantlow through Great Alne, Kinwarton, Alcester to Oversley Green where it joins with the Arrow on its way to join the Avon near Bidford. The river Arrow starts in the Wheatheroak area and passes via Redditch and Studley before it gets to Alcester.
- Railways None are still in use but originally went to Redditch, Evesham and Stratford via Great Alne. Some parts of the tracks are still unused and could make ideal walking and cycle tracks.
- Foot Paths and Bridle Paths Trevor Wraight has produced a paper on the Possible Cycle routes from Alcester.

EN3 C2 Are there distinctive design elements found in both the town and the surrounding countryside?

Answer

- Throughout Alcester and the surrounding villages the majority of 14, 15 and 16 Century timber framed buildings display a box-framed construction with plain square panels and straight bracing typical of the West Midlands area. In the town many buildings have jettied first floors to the street. Brick being the preferred material for contemporary or later panel infilling, under building or refacing.
- With little or no stone available locally, brick built buildings predominate with local days providing a uniformity and consistency of colour and texture throughout the area. Traditional vernacular buildings tend to be unadorned having little more than a dentilated projection at the eaves and visible segmental arches or lintels over openings. Although some of the steeply pitched roofs still retain straw thatching, the majority is covered with clay tiles.

EN3 C3 Are there any memorable views either from the town to the countryside or from the countryside of the town?

Answer

- Partially obstructed view of the town from the clearing on the ridge in Oversley wood - OS Grid reference SP1 04564 but the light coloured, Arden Forest Industrial Estate buildings on the NE of the town are more prominent.
- The town can be well seen from various points in the Alne Hills to the NE but the light coloured, Arden Forest Industrial Estate buildings on the NE of the town are more prominent and other topography gets in the way.

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- The town can be seen from the top of Coughton Court tower but the Arden Forest Industrial Estate buildings on the NW of the town are more prominent.
- As the town is on a slight rise where the flood plains of the Alne, Arrow and Spittle Brook meet, it is overshadowed by higher ground on most sides giving views of Oversley Wood, Primrose Hill silos and Oversley Castle to the SW from sites in the town.
- Unfortunately the A435 bypass cutting obscures any view from the town to the W, unless you are on top of St Nicholas's Church tower. The Church Tower does have town views in all directions, but many are intra-town. (Views of the old part of the town are outstanding from High Street, Henley Street, Church Street, Butter Street and Malt Mill Lane, but short range due to the irregularities in the streets in question.)
- There are pleasant views along the river Arrow but these too tend to be short range due to the meanders in the river. It is possible to see Oversley Woods and Primrose hill from the river and other parts of the town.
- View of Town from: Primrose Hill (footpath) Trig. Point (Kinwarton) Stratford Road Weethley (distant)

EN3 C4 Are historic commercial links between the town and country still apparent?

Answer

- Alcester Town Hall was built as a Market Hall in 1620. The area around the Town Hall and the Church of St. Nicolas has been used as a Market Square, leading off is Butter Street. Alcester streets have names linking town and country, e.g.. Malt Mill Lane, Ragley Mill Lane.

EN3 C5 Does the character of the surrounding countryside become less distinct the closer it gets to the town edge?

Answer

- There are several features which have had an influence on the development of the town and in recent years this has undoubtedly been the formation of the Alcester Bypass, running north-south and enclosing an area of land on the western perimeter of the town. This land was formerly dedicated as land for residential development in the Adopted Local Plan but its future is less certain now and is formerly safeguarded as an area of Special Restriction. The land is marginalised by the bypass, vacant and used for informal recreation purposes by residents living nearby.
- Parcels of land to the north of the Arden Forest Industrial Estate are still in agricultural production and offer attractive views out of the town. There are however pockets of land which have been marginalised and appear to have high value for redevelopment, typically comprising market garden land, pony paddocks and other urban fringe activities. (See Appendix 14 - aerial photos).
- Land to the south of Alcester towards Oversley Green remains largely rural and some areas are protected by its status as Ancient Monument Land. There are a couple of derelict sites such as Cherry Orchard and the Petrol filling station that are visible on the approach from this direction.

EN3 C6 How does the town sit in the landscape?

Answer

- As the centre of the town is situated on only a slight rise in the flood plains of the Alne, Arrow and Spittle Brook is set fairly deeply into the surrounding topography.
- The urban edge is delineated by the N and E edges of the Arden Forest Industrial Estate to the N/NE. This gives views immediately onto farmland.
- The E side at the lawn, faces up the Alne valley and is limited by the presence of the river Alne. This joins the river Arrow and the latter skirts the southern edge of the town, before flowing off S towards Wixford, Broom and Salford Priors
- The following roads are the main ways in which the town is approached as we no longer have a railway connection: The route from A46 can lead to traffic missing the town completely as it is only sign posted at the Little Chef roundabout.
- From the Arrow roundabout, the 30 limit signs are followed, by the Blue Town twinning/Alcester in Bloom etc. sign and flower trough.
- Roebuck roundabout has small Alcester 1 sign and blue Town twinning/Alcester in Bloom etc. sign. 40 limit carries on for 2110m and then becomes 30 at the boundary of the Grammar School playing Field.
- B4089 Approach from Henley via Great Alne has 30 limit at the top of Captain's Hill closely followed by a Blue Town twinning/Alcester in Bloom etc. sign.
- Trench Lane/old Stratford Road exit from A46 is only sign posted to Oversley Green not Alcester. The blue Town twinning/Alcester in Bloom etc. sign is just before the Oversley turn and is closely followed by the 30 limit and traffic calming.
- Arden Road/ Kinwarton Farm Road B4089 is only sign posted Arden Forest Industrial Estate and Great Alne at the Roebuck roundabout.

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- Alcester is not indicated at all, except perhaps by the 30 limit signs. There is only a small River Arrow sign at the bridge an Arden road and no indication that this is actually part of Alcester (no blue Town twinning/Alcester in Bloom etc. sign). However, at the roundabout at the Kinwarton Road end of Kinwarton Farm Road, there is indication that Alcester town centre lies to the right and Great Alne to the left.
- Unattractive run-down sites on approaches should be re-developed to meet
- Local needs and are described in earlier questions.

EN3 S1 Are there any long distance or locally important footpaths, cycle paths or bridleways linking town and country?

Answer

- Alcester has for many years been a centre for walkers due to its attractive countryside and accessible footpath network. There are four long-distance routes passing through the town: -
 1. The Heart of England Way; 100 miles from Staffordshire, where it connects to the Staffordshire Way,
 2. to Chipping Campden where it connects with the Cotswold Way and on to Bourton-on-the-Water to meet the Oxfordshire Way.
 2. The Arden Way; A 26-mile circular walk through the Forest of Arden.
 3. The Monarchs Way U821 1; A 610-mile route following the supposed route of King Charles escape after the Battle of Worcester.
 4. A 5000-mile trans-European route from Ireland to the Mediterranean coast at Nice.
- The Alcester Civic Society publishes a series of circular walks around 5 miles in length centred on Alcester. They have also published four books of longer walks covering the area.
- The National Cycleway runs through Great Alne and Coughton just north-east of Alcester. Attached map.
- A feasibility study was done a few years ago looking at possible cycle routes from Alcester to Bidford and Salford Priors. This is still relevant.
- Alcester is very short of bridleways. Two bridle bridges were built across the bypasses. The one at Primrose Hill is well used connecting with a bridle path and quiet lanes around Exhall and the Graftons.
- The bridge at Cold comfort does not connect to a bridle path though horses often use the footpath to the Ridgeway. The bridle path following the old Roman road to Wixford crosses the bypass by the roundabout and is consequently extremely unsafe to use.
- There is a tunnel under the bypass at the main entrance to Oversley Wood. This is a footpath that links to a bridleway through to Exhall.
- Though intended, this tunnel and path have not been upgraded into a bridle path.
- A glossy leaflet sponsored by HETB & SDC will be published soon with details of a cycle route connecting Alcester and leading cyclists around the town. It will detail good places to eat and drink in Alcester. As part of this project, a cycle parking area is to be created in Bulls Head Yard, in the untidy area, which will be tidied up just below the CCTV camera.

References for the above section

Stratford on Avon Local Plan Review 1996-201:
Proposals Map (November 2001)
Sites of Scientific Interest - see Appendix 5
Appendix 3 Local Nature Reserves
English Nature - detailed maps showing location of SSSIs

Section: Environment **Worksheet: The Countryside**

EN2 C1 Does the local countryside have a distinctive character?

Answer

- The majority of the hinterland lies within one of five main character areas within Stratford on Avon District known as the Arden area that is a medieval term meaning high, steep. Early settlements tended to centre on river valleys, principally the Avon, Arrow and Alne Valley Floors
- The middle reaches of the Alne and Arrow have distinct river basins, the edges defined by narrow floodplains extending to large scale rolling land-form. There are winding hedgerows along the edge of the floodplains, grazing meadows, often with patches of wet grassland and a semi regular pattern of medium to large sized fields, with mature hedgerows and roadside oaks.

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- There is a varied settlement pattern of small villages and scattered farmsteads, generally lying near a river or stream. The main building materials are timber frame, brick and Blue Lias Limestone.
- Arrow Ridgeway Slope This includes the higher side of the River Arrow basin, including dividing ridge and ridgeway with large-scale rolling land form with occasional steep scarp slopes. There are large woodlands, often associated with rising ground, mature hedgerow and roadside oaks and a semi-regular pattern of medium to large sized fields. There are few small villages and scattered farmsteads. The main building materials are timber frame, Blue Lias Limestone and brick.
- Arden Parklands They mainly found to the north of the Arden area and are a planned landscaped associated with an area of former wood pasture and historic deer parks. Some of these parklands were formed around the estate or hall and some still remain, however others have been converted to arable land but can still be recognised by the isolated mature trees and pollarded oaks.
- Throughout Alcester and the surrounding villages the majority of 14, 15 and 16 Century timber framed buildings display a box-framed construction with plain square panels and straight bracing typical of the West Midlands area. In the town many buildings have jettied first floors to the street. Brick is the preferred material for contemporary or later panel infilling, under building or refacing. With little or no stone available locally, brick built buildings predominate with local clays providing a uniformity and consistency of colour and texture throughout the area. Traditional vernacular buildings tend to be unadorned having little more than a dentilated projection at the eaves and visible segmental arches or lintels over openings. Although some of the steeply pitched roofs still retain straw thatching, the majority are covered with clay tiles.

EN2 C2 Is the landscape of high quality?

Answer

- The Warwickshire Structure Plan Key diagram indicates the general extent of the Arden Special Landscape Area which extends to the North of Alcester and washes over the villages of Coughton, Great Alne, Aston Cantlow, Haselor and Wilmcote. The District Planning Authority (DPA) has defined the boundaries more clearly on the District Local Plan Review First Deposit Draft (November 2001) on the basis of landscape quality using identifiable features of the landscape such as hedges, roads and canals. Smaller villages have been included within this designation. The DPA is concerned to protect the scenic quality of these areas with suitable planning policies of restraint but accepts the need to enhance local services and employment opportunities.
- Within Alcester, the DPA have designated an 'Area of Restraint' to the north of the town centre an land which is within the River Arrow recreation area. This designation is intended to protect the open character of the area within the town and restricts forms of development to those activities of a recreational or agricultural nature.

EN2 C3 Is the countryside important for agriculture?

Answer

- Parts of the area adjoin the Evesham Vale and are in the higher band of land quality defined by DEFRA. Areas around Salford Priors, Wixford, borders of Bidford on Avon are important for market gardening.

EN2 C4 Is the countryside important for nature conservation?

Answer

- River Arrow Local Nature Reserve is one of the most well known features created in 1993 by SoADC and English Nature. It is for the benefit of the local community in Alcester to preserve natural habitats and provide an opportunity to study birds, flowers, fungi and insects associated with the variety of habitats.
- Statutorily Designated Nature Conservation Sites:
Aston Cantlow - Copmill Hill, Wilmcote Quarry
Haselor, Aston Cantlow, Aston Grove & Withycombe Wood

EN2 C5 Are there areas of historic importance?

Answer

- There are 13 conservation areas within the catchment area which have been defined by the District Council and these are kept under review, covering Alcester town and a number of villages within the rural hinterland.
- The conservation areas include:
Abbots Salford (Salford Priors)

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Alcester,
Ardens Grafton (Temple Grafton & Arrow)
Arrow (part in Alcester)
Aston Cantlow
Coughton (part of Sambourne)
Exhall
Great Alne
Haselor & Walcote
Salford Priors
Temple Grafton
Wilmcote (2 parts - Aston Cantlow)

- The area is covered by a significant number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, both within the town and in parts of the rural hinterland:
Alcester - Oversley Castle, Beauchamp Court Moated Site, Alcester Roman Town and Abbey
Aston Cantlow - Ringwork Castle, 80m NW of St John the Baptist Church
Coughton/ Alcester - Dane's bank
Coughton - Medieval Settlement at Coughton Court, Medieval Settlement at Mill Ford Farm
Kinwarton - Kinwarton Dovecote
Kinwarton - Standing Cross in St Mary's Churchyard
Salford Priors - Enclosures 314 mile (800m) N of Salford Priors
Temple Grafton - Settlement Site W of Welford Weir
Parks & Gardens of Special Historic Interest:
Arrow - Ragley Hall
Great Alne Village Hall and
Churches in the surrounding villages

EN2 S1 **Is the countryside being actively managed?**

Answer

- Some of the areas of urban fringe around Alcester are quite fragmented in terms of use and ownership. There are a couple of areas identified as Areas of Special Restriction in the Local Plan Review which are effectively blighted at the moment, namely land to the north of Arden Forest Industrial Estate and land formerly allocated for residential development off Cold Comfort Lane in the Adopted Local Plan. This land is close to housing and local businesses and it is recognised that as such it has development hope value as housing/industrial allocations. However this land is also potentially valuable to the community as open space or community woodland if its use was confirmed and a management plan was drawn up to secure its future.
- An area being actively managed is the Arrow Nature Reserve that is a valuable asset to local people, schools and visitors to the area.

EN2 S2 **Are there plans for major change on the urban edge?**

Answer

- The West Midlands Green Belt that is defined on the proposal map to protect the area from inappropriate development encloses the town. Permitting only uses which would preserve the openness of the Green Belt and uses associated with rural areas such as farming, recreation and housing to support local needs or employment which will allow for minor infilling to established developed sites.
- There is a significant area to the west of the town within the limits of the Alcester Bypass Road which was previously allocated for housing development in the adopted Local Plan which has now been reallocated as an area of Special Restriction for the time being. However this is a significant swathe of land that offers the opportunity for redevelopment in the future pending a further review or its reversion to formal Green Belt. In addition there is an area of land comprising 5.3 ha west of Fairwater Crescent allocated for public open space which may be used to secure recreation facilities which may require upgrading of access links to make it more accessible by foot and cycle.

References for the above section

District Local Plan Review Proposals Map 1996-2011 Deposit Draft (November 2001)
Heart of England Way
National Cycleway.
Local Knowledge - A.A
Possible Routes from Alcester by Trevor Wraight. Website

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District Council Design Guide 2000
Village Design Statements
District Local Plan Review (English Heritage)
Registered parks and gardens, Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Listed Buildings - see Appendix 6
Conservation Areas - see Appendix
Ancient Monuments - see Appendix
Local Plan Review (First Deposit Draft)

Section: Economy Worksheet: Business Support

EC6 C1 Do the banks, financial institutions and other business support services offer a full range of business advice and support?

Answer

- Most high street banks offer a business start up service and follow up package, mainly in conjunction with the Business Link Start up
- Programme. Barclays, HS1BC, Lloyds and Nat West provide a business start up pack that offers free banking for 12 months and followed by reduced charges for 6 months. Increasingly, high street banking services are being centralised and often have a remote business manager who is not branch based but maybe at a regional headquarters. This is means that the branch cannot always provide the same level of back up and business advice provided by the remote business manager. There are three high street banks in Alcester.

EC6 C2 Does the town have a town centre manager, town centre forum or similar organisation?

Answer

- The County Council has a Regeneration Team which seek to instigate and develop projects that address social, economic and environmental disadvantage in urban and rural areas, encourage revitalisation of market towns and town centres and influence regeneration policies and activities. There is a town centre liaison officer who is responsible for the strategic management and regeneration of town centres and market towns across the whole of Warwickshire. Projects have tended to be focussed on selected pilot towns to date such as Southam and Coleshill. The Market Towns Initiative is partly funding a Project Manager whose role will be split between Alcester and other towns in the County.
- There is no town centre manager to handle day to day management and operational issues plus the promotional events so resources are rather stretched.
- The Economic Development and Tourism team at the District Council hold important information on town centre issues and are supporting the Market Towns Initiative for Alcester. Their role is again more strategic in promoting business support, economic and tourism initiatives across the District.

EC6 C3 Is there a presence of the following organisations in the town: Small Business Service, Business Links, Chambers of Trade or Commerce, Learning and Skills Council, TEC, Enterprise Agency?

Answer

- The area is covered by Business Link 1 Coventry & Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce which has a local office in Stratford upon Avon but its main office in Coventry. The area generally has a low membership due to its perceived remoteness from Coventry and links with rural businesses.
- Alcester has a Chamber of Trade which is run by John Madge and is now part of the wider South West Business Partnership which gives the group more strategic influence on policy decisions. it also has direct links with AWM for funding opportunities and has become involved in issues concerning the Local Plan Review and Disability Discrimination.
- The Learning Skills Council is based Coventry and offers training support to businesses and has carried out research on business advice services.
- Warwickshire Investment Partnership responds to inward investment enquiries from all over the world and expansion requirements from thriving local companies. The Partnership is a working arrangement between the Economic Development Inward Investment functions of Stratford on Avon District Council. The range of services offered includes:
- Relocation property/site searches on all offices, factories, warehouses, development sites and retail sites in Warwickshire that are currently available for sale or to let.
- Project management service for any company considering a move or developing within Warwickshire.

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- Managed Workspaces however the nearest is under construction and none are available in Alcester
- Aftercare - companies are brought together at regular meetings
- Other services including social, demographic information, staff recruitment & training, grants & funding, joint ventures and acquisitions plus an employment service.

EC6 C4 What business support or initiatives have proved successful?

Answer

- Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce have very low membership in South Warwickshire. South Warwickshire district Partnership is supported by SDC and Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber. Progress House, Stratford is the local base for Business
- Link and UK-online for Business and offers limited space for meeting rooms and some office space for start up businesses with administrative support and IT support.
- From Minerva Mill experience, the companies who have received SMART Awards (new technology 1 new product development initiatives) have found them useful & valuable.
- For the first time, Coventry and Warwickshire Companies are amongst those eligible to apply for Rural Recovery Funding with grants of up to £15,000 available to help eligible businesses recover from the effects of last years foot and mouth crisis. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of this initiative.

EC6 C5 Are there regular events which have the potential to draw the business community together, e.g. trade fairs?

Answer

- A new business forum has just been established in the District which was well attended and covered issues such as the Local Plan Review which will have an important impact on the areas economic health. It is hoped that this **will** become a regular event.
- South Warwickshire Business Partnership represents business support agencies in the area and arranges seminars 1 meetings to keep businesses informed of issues 1 funding etc. 'Businessline' the partnership newsletter goes out to all businesses in South Warwickshire bi-monthly.

EC6 C6 What is the current and likely future demand for broadband (>2Mbs) communication services?

Answer

- The current availability of broadband communications seems to be good in the Alcester area, certainly when compared with nearby centres such as Redditch and Worcester. It is not thought that there are currently any private users of broadband communication. There are 5 businesses known to currently use such communications. It is thought that there will be demand for growth to an estimated 20 -30 users over the period to 2003, although there seems to be widespread ignorance of the matter as 95% of those contacted in assessing this information had no knowledge of what broadband was. The Alcester telephone exchange is ISDN enabled and is subscribed to by about 500 users. SDSL is available from an independent provider based in Alcester. There appears to be little or no private demand for broadband yet, but growth is felt likely to be market led, and growth in the area is likely to be above national average About 99% of industrial and commercial enterprises in the area use e-mail communication, but only about 20% of retailers do so. Broadband may be accessed currently from BT directly or from its wholesalers, who, because BT's lowest price is regulated, are able to compete. Satellite access is also an option. Cable is provided along the trunk road, and is available near AJcester, but does not yet access Alcester. Access is therefore unlikely by 2003, but is possible should any operator consider it viable. LLU is theoretically available from BT at present, but it is thought to be expensive at present. All the major mobile telecoms can be accessed in the area with reasonable coverage It is estimated that up to 70% of private homes in the area have internet access.

EC6 C7 What is the current and likely future status of the supply of broadband technology (>2 Mbs) communication services?

Answer ..See EC6 C6

EC6 S1 Is there a Business Directory or web site for the town, or any arrangements for networking local suppliers?

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Answer.

- There is a business directory and guide for the District of Stratford on Avon which offers background information about the District, list of key contacts and company listings

EC6 S2 Are there adequate business meeting and conference facilities locally?

Answer

- Please refer to question number EC5 S8. The area relies on facilities provided within Stratford upon Avon, with just a handful of hotels in the area that could provide conference facilities and the two large stately homes - Coughton Court and Ragley Hall.

EC6 S3 What results have there been from any existing town centre management work?

Answer

- Information can be sought from neighbouring towns such as Evesham and Pershore which has an active town centre initiatives programme for capital improvements and management issues. An annual town centre walkabout with the town centre manager and representatives from the community has proved to be very successful in identifying the issues. It must be backed up with resources to fund the town centre manager post to follow through management issues and project manage identified environmental enhancements.

EC6 S4 How well are the agencies such as Small Business Service, Business Link, Chamber of Commerce, LSC, TEC, Enterprise Agency performing (evaluate number of enquiries in relation to total number of businesses)?

Answer.

EC6 S5 Is there a published strategy relating to the use of IT?

Answer

- None appears to exist. 2 Internet points are available for public use at Alcester Library. Recent survey estimates suggest that around 70% of households have internet access. Information on schools is not available, however it is notable that Alcester High School has recently attained the status of becoming a centre for technology and has good information technology facilities.

References for the above section

*Reference: Economic Development Team - SDC
Information provided by Minerva Mill*

*Banking information available from branches.
District Council Economic Development & Tourism Team
County Council Town Centre Liaison Officer*

*Discussion with 3 Local IT professionals and a random sample of shoppers and local businesses (AA)
WIP*

The Business - Directory and Guide for the District of Stratford on Avon 2002

Section: Economy

Worksheet: Commercial & Industrial Property Needs

EC4 C1 How much new commercial or industrial floor space has been built or let in the last three years?

Answer

- The majority of new commercial space has been developed at the Arden Forest Industrial Estate, but this has been fairly limited in the last three years. Minerva Mill is a recent project which comprises a converted needlework factory in the centre of Alcester and will provide floorspace as an incubation unit for starter businesses offering ICT support. It currently provides two areas for commercial tenancy - 20,000 sq ft of industrial workshops and linked offices, and 20,000 sq ft of office space in the Mill itself (currently being refurbished and let). This appears to be an issue in the sub-region. Warwickshire County Council indicate that South Warwickshire is the second highest choice for companies relocating into Warwickshire (second to Warwick/Leamington). Warwickshire Property Services (also WCC) indicate a shortage of commercial sites in South Warwickshire and particularly of managed workspace. Warwickshire Property

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- Services monitor all calls and enquiries relating to property requirements in the area

EC4 C2 How much good quality office or industrial floor space is vacant or on the market?

Answer

- Minerva Mill - some start up premises are available in converted factory premises offering office space with business support. The premises currently provide two areas for commercial tenancy - 20,000 sq ft of industrial workshops and linked offices, and 20,000 sq ft of office space in the Mill itself (currently being refurbished and let). There is some anecdotal evidence that, over the last four weeks
- Minerva Mill has been trying to rent out a technology workshop and office space (1460 sq ft @£4.50 /sq ft) and so far without success (advertises in local press and large roadside sign during May 2002).
- There is a limited range of office and industrial space available to let on the Arden Area Industrial Estate.

EC4 C3 Are there sufficient premises at affordable rents for new small businesses?

Answer

- This is seen by Minerva Mill as a real issue. It is not simply a matter of 'affordability' although this is undoubtedly of importance. It is more a question of 'value for money' especially for start-ups who, having paid out for office rental, are then faced with additional costs of administration and services. Discussions with other incubation centres indicate also that access to broadband technology was also an important factor for incoming new businesses.
- At Minerva Mill, rents for technology workshops average out at £4.50 1 sq ft. Offices at Minerva Mill will range from rents of £6.50/sq ft to £ 12.00/sq ft. If businesses want serviced workspace, an additional charge is made /sq ft dependant upon the level of service e.g. telecoms, reception required.
- In the incubation unit at Minerva Mill there will be an opportunity to have small office space (appropriate to start up businesses) with short licenses 1 tenancy agreements giving companies flexibility to move to facilities to suit individual company requirements as the companies develop.

EC4 C4 Has there been an increase or decrease in the rents of industrial and commercial property in recent years?

Answer

- We have found quite a range of rents across the sub-region. However, this range denotes the variety of commercial sites available and the obvious supply and demand equation. Alcester has limited availability of commercial property.
- The High Street and the Kinwarton Industrial Estate provide the main source of property. The High Street is only suitable for certain businesses and is relatively expensive, but does provide an important location for those businesses requiring a shop window - literally. On the other hand, Alcester Estates at Kinwarton Road, provide out-of-town location at lower rates but many of the rental properties are too large for small businesses. Minerva Mill aims to provide an alternative office 1 industrial site that is complimentary and additional to existing sites in the town.

EC4 C5 Have vacancy levels for commercial properties increased or decreased in recent years?

Answer

- These have remained fairly static over recent years, however supply of commercial properties has increased with additional units being provided on the Arden Forest Estate and more recently at the newly renovated Minerva Mill building.

EC4 C6 Are there any planned expansions of existing commercial and industrial firms?

Answer

- The nature of business would appear to be moving away from traditional component supply, manufacture and engineering towards more design, process technology and service businesses. Such a transition requires a local workforce with appropriate skills (all be they transferable) and offers the opportunity for a higher skilled (and therefore higher paid) local

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workforce. Also, appropriate business services must be accessible (IT, telecoms/broadband, transport links). Rover Task Force highlighted the need to change business focus in this area (many automotive supply chain manufacturers - 2nd and 3rd tier suppliers - have been located in the area - Redditch, Studley, Alcester, Bidford). The challenge is to develop new manufacturing business foci, and to ensure that skills upgrading/retraining is in place well before business survival is put at risk.

EC4 S1 Are there economic development and funding initiatives in place to assist incoming firms and the expansion of local firms?

Answer

- South Warwickshire, including Alcester, has never been included within any of the UK or EU regeneration areas (Obj 2, 5a etc). However, EU Objective 3 type projects and funding are now accessible to the whole of Warwickshire and organisations such as Warwickshire County Council and Chamber/Business Link are active in submitting bids which will be county-wide. South Warwickshire is benefiting from SR136 funding through AWM for the PIE Project that does have a business needs sector included. Funding currently is directed to training for farmers and rural business (RED I ~ Warks College) and to the development of a start-up fund for new rural businesses in the area.
- Minerva Mill hosted the Warwickshire County Council project ICT@Work (ESF part-funded) 1999-2001 which raised the profile of ICT amongst South Warks SMEs, through training, business support and extranet pilot activities. Minerva Mill is also a local delivery partner in the CAWSkills pr~ (AWM funded) designed to encourage local businesses to adopt e-learning (internet-based) as part of their staff development strategy. The CAWSkills will use the ICT skill course European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) as the pilot e-learning activity, and this will be offered FOC to participating SMEs.

References for the above section

*Economic Development Team (SDC)
South Warwickshire Commercial Vacant Property Register
County Property Database
Minerva Mill*

Section: Economy Worksheet: Employment

EC1 C1 Are local unemployment rates high?

Answer

- There is an unemployment rate of 1.2% (Feb 2001) which is well below the regional average of 3.7 and the national average of 3.1

ECI C2 Has unemployment fallen or risen in recent years?

Answer

- Generally unemployment in Warwickshire has fallen at a faster rate than in the West Midlands region as a whole. Stratford District has the lowest rate of unemployment, not only in Warks but also in the whole of the West Midlands region. There are pockets of higher than average unemployment within Alcester itself.

ECI C3 What are the labour market participation rates?

Answer

- There are significant differences between SDC and the rest of Warks and indeed the region and UK. SDC has the highest concentration of unemployed people within Warks aged over 45. Conversely it has the lowest number of people aged under 25 unemployed. Unfortunately information is not available at a more local level than this.

EC1 C4 What are average household earnings?

Answer

- Average household income for the District is taken to include income for the head of the household and their partner (if applicable) and is around £484 per week compared with £385.90 for the region and £410.60 for Great Britain. The headline figure appears fairly high taken in isolation, however it disguises the extreme values provided by the respondents in answer to sample interviews with households. The survey revealed that whilst a total of 62%

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of District households have annual incomes of less than £25,000, some 8.9% of households earned over £60,000 per annum. The median income estimate was shown to be £19,500 or £375 per week.

- More specific data from CACI Ltd Pay check data indicates that around 44% of the households within the catchment earn below the median household income banding and 58% earn below £25,000 per annum which is the County average figure. This average is generally higher in the town of Alcester than the surrounding parishes. Around 67% at households earn below £30,000 per annum which is the District average figure.

EC1 C5 What proportion of the unemployed have been unemployed for over 6 months or one year and what sectors of the population are most represented by age/gender?

Answer

- There are lower levels of long term unemployed in Warwickshire than elsewhere. In the District as a whole 33.1% of unemployed people have been unemployed for over 6 months compared with around 39.2% in West Mids and 37.1 % in UK. Figures elsewhere (except Warwick) in Warks districts are lower than the SDC levels.
- There were only 10 registered claimants in Alcester ward who had been unemployed for over 6 months during January 2002 and this level has steadily fallen over the last few years on a ratio of 6 males to 4 females. Unfortunately, data is not available at a more local level than this.
- There are significant differences between SDC district and the rest of Warks and indeed the region and UK. The District has the highest concentration of unemployed people within Warks aged over 45. Conversely it has the lowest number of people aged under 25 unemployed.

ECI C6 What proportion of residents in employment commute elsewhere to work?

Answer

- Using travel to work data, it is possible to conclude that 78% of the economically active, work within the County 19.6% work in the West Midlands and 2.4% work within another region.
- A significantly high proportion travel to Stratford upon Avon from Alcester and the rural hinterland, with a smaller proportion travelling to Birmingham, Coventry and Black Country. A small number of the population also commutes to the south-east that could include Oxford within this radius. A small minority outside the UK and some are not stated so could be employed in the Armed Forces.

EC1 C7 Is the local economy particularly dependent on specific industry sectors?

Answer

- There is a fair mix of employees within the area and this is probably helped by the fact that Alcester is well located with good transport links to main centres and the highway network serving the West Midlands.
- It is readily apparent that distribution, hotels and restaurants predominantly employ the highest proportion of employees at 34.6% which is above the national average at 24.2% and this sector is significant in the rural areas, in particular in Aston Cantlow and Kinwarton.
- Public administration sectors also employ a high proportion of people in Alcester town, which is far less significant in outlying villages.
- The agricultural sector only appears to be significant in terms of employees within Salford Priors where 41.7% of the workforce are occupied in this sector.

ECI C8 Is the local economy dependent on a small number of large employers?

Answer

- There are handful of companies within Alcester and the rural areas which employ over 100 staff which comprise a mix of hauliers,
- Travel and freight agents, manufacturing and service sectors:
- Express Chilled Distribution
- KAC Alarm Company
- Alcester Hospital
- United Carders
- Seco Tools Ltd
- This represents a good mix of employers of a medium size with no significant dominance by any one employer or employment sector

ECI C9 Is the number of jobs available locally increasing or decreasing?

Answer

- The major employment area in Alcester is the Arden Forest Industrial Estate. This houses more than 80 different businesses and employs around 800 people (1998 figures).

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- The number of jobs over the last few years appears to be remaining largely static, with some companies having expanded slightly, and a few new companies relocating to the area. The dawn-turn in the manufacturing sector has caused some contraction in the number of employees as there are quite a few companies on the Arden Forest Industrial Estate who are linked to this sector. However it appears that this downturn maybe bottoming out aver the next six months or so.

EC1 C10 What are the rates of business start ups and failures?

Answer

- It has not been possible to retrieve this information.

EC1 S1 What opportunities are there for new employment from the expansion of existing local firms?

Answer

- There have been a number of proposals for expansion of the Arden Forest Industrial Estate to accommodate existing businesses to enlarge their operations. The Estate lies to the North of Aicester and has good access from a spur road from A46 (Birmingham Road). Most of the land surrounding the Estate is surrounded by Green Belt which restricts development opportunities. The current Local Plan Review (First Deposit Draft) **will** only accommodate modest expansion on land that has already been allocated for development due to the restriction of the Green Belt. There is an Area of Special Restriction to the North of the Industrial Site that may be considered suitable for expansion in the future (See Appendix 2).
- There is at least one company looking to expand at present (Sunfit Packaging) and a company known as New Dawn & Sons who have already expanded within their operations.

EC1 S3 What economic development/inward investment grants are available?

Answer

- Alcester is not in the Objective 2 area, Technology Corridors area, in a Cluster Group or regeneration zone so the opportunity for grant funding from AWM is limited for existing or new businesses.
- Businesses within Minerva Mill have utilised SMART Awards from the DTI which specifically support the development of innovative products.

References for the above section

Minerva Mill
Warwickshire County Intelligence Team - ONS
Labour Force Survey 2001, ONS
Stratford on Avon District Council *Housing Needs Survey 1999*
Warwickshire County Intelligence Team (CACI Lid Paycheck Data) 2001/2002
Employees by Industry 2000
Warwickshire County Intelligence Team - Nomis 2001
1991 Census Travel to Work Statistics 10% Sample. *Warwickshire County Intelligence Team*
Economic Development Team (SDC)
WCC Economic Assessment 2001-2002
Comments from *Management* - Alcester Estates
Economic Development Team (WDC)
Local Plan Review (First Deposit Draft)

Section: Economy

Worksheet: Retail & Town Centre Services

EC2 C1 How much of the local shopping provision is in the town centre, out-of-town centre or in the villages?

Answer

- Shopping facilities in AJ1cester are mainly located along the High Street and offer a range of convenience and comparison shops. In addition Somerfield supermarket and a number of smaller units are centred around the Bulls Head Yard car park to the rear. The balance of shopping provision tends to provide for convenience goods with a good supply of retail services including restaurants, takeaways, and public houses. Somerfield is well positioned with a large adjacent car park, allowing for linked trips to the High Street. (see Appendix 11)

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- There is also a shopping precinct, Hopkins Precinct on the Kinwarton Road, comprising a butchers, one-stop shop, pharmacy, freezer centre and takeaway shop.
- There is no out of town shopping facilities.

EC2 C2 What type of shops and services are there in the town centre?

Answer

- The retail consultants carried out a comparison of the 1988 study with the 1997 reconnaissance and this indicated a reduction in convenience stores of 12 with comparison and retail services remaining constant. The vacancy level is slightly higher in 1997.
- Somerfield plays a very important role in Alcester and meets a significant proportion of convenience goods needs. In 1998 there were a total of 89 shops.
- There would appear to be scope to make more of the attractive historic market place to the south by encouraging more tourist/visitor potential. Some antique shops and teashops are already located within the town.

EC2 C3 Has retail floor space in the town centre been lost in the last five years?

Answer

- The balance of shopping provision tends to provide for convenience goods with a good supply of retail services. A comparison of 1988 with 1997 reconnaissance indicates a reduction in convenience stores of 12 with comparison and retail services remaining constant.
- The vacancy level is slightly higher in 1997 at 7 than in 1988 and from a recent retail survey in 2002 by A.A remains at a similar level.
- There are no out-of-town developments.

EC2 C4 Is there a provision market, livestock market, farm shops or farmers' market?

Answer

- None other than occasional themed markets. There are a number of farm shops that act an outlet for local produce, especially in the Salford Priors area and Hillers at Dunnington

EC2 C5 Is there a general market?

Answer

- None exists in Alcester

EC2 C6 How many shops are vacant in the town centre and how many have been vacant for more than two years?

Answer

- Alcester: Retail Provision Summary 1988:

Convenience 24 (27%)
Comparison 37 (42%)
Retail Services 23 (26%)
Vacant 5 (6%)

The vacancy levels are not significant compared with national vacancy rates and have decreased in recent years.

EC2 C8 Are rents for retail premises stable or increasing?

Answer

- Alcester has limited availability of commercial property. The High Street and Bulls Head Yard provide the main source of property retail, with no out of town facilities. The High Street is only suitable for certain businesses and provides an important location for those businesses requiring a shop window. Retail rents have remained fairly stable over recent years.

EC2 C9 Are local retailers confident about future trading?

Answer

- Generally there is confidence amongst local retailers and businesses, although there is more confidence in the future of their individual businesses than in the future of the town

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generally. 87.5% of responders said they were confident about the future trading of their businesses, while only 56.25% were confident about the future of Alcester as a trading centre. 43.75% of businesses responding were planning to expand within the next 3 years. Of those, just under one third expected their existing premises to be sufficient for their expansion plans, 35% anticipated finding additional or alternative premises within Alcester, and 28% were looking for either new or additional premises out of Alcester. Of the businesses not planning to expand, 17% said this was due to impending retirement. The constraints on future business identified by the responders were as follows: High rates or rent (or both) (9 replies) Parking/traffic problems (9) Insufficient market/population (5) Lack of variety of shops (4) Shoppers being drawn to larger towns (3) Lack of housing expansion/development (3) Shops catering for elderly/not catering for youth (2) Lack of promotion (1) Apathy (1) There is an almost unanimous view (97%) that Alcester is not being promoted as a shopping destination, and an equally high view that it should be better promoted. The replies indicating the advantages of the town that could be promoted now were: The character/historic nature (8 replies) Tourist destination (6) Free Parking (5) Service provided by independent traders (4) There were also 4 replies indicating that the town should not be promoted until there was a greater diversity of shops. The suggestions for improvements that would assist in promoting the town as a shopping destination were: More specialist shops/better range of shops (1 2) More parking facilities (1 1) Promotion of history/tourist connections (7) Traffic management (6) Housing expansion/development (5) Fewer charity shops (5) Local authority support/promotion (3) Lower rates/rent (3) improved public transport (1)

EC2 S1 Is the town centre promoted as a shopping destination in any brochures or other publicity material?

Answer

- There is no evidence that the town is being actively promoted as a shopping destination, as opposed to individual businesses promoting themselves by means of business directories or individual advertisement.

EC2 S2 Is there commercial demand for additional retail floor space?

Answer

- The retail study carried out on behalf of the District Council conducted an analysis for the need for further convenience goods shopping in 1997, concluding that the scope for adding to Alcester's convenience goods shopping over current levels (1997) was as follows:
Year 2001: 37sq.m (400sq ft net)
62sq.m (1200 sq ft net)
Year 2011: 111 sq. m (1 200sq ft net)
186sq.m(2000 sq ft net)

It was concluded that no specific planning provision needs to be made for additional retail floor space and if demand materialised it could be accommodated within the town centre.

EC2 S3 Is the local provision and/or livestock market vulnerable to closure?

Answer

- Not applicable as none exists.

References for the above

Local Knowledge
Retail Survey -Coffiers Erdman Lewis 1997
LocalAgnt
A.A conducted a survey amongst retailers and other businesses based in High Street, Church Street, Henley Street, Swan Street, Market Place, Bulls Head Yard, Evesham Street and Priory Road. There was a 32% response rate.
AA Information
A.A Retail Survey

Section: Economy

Worksheet: Tourism & Visitor Services

EC5 C1 What are the main tourist or visitor attractions including festivals and events in the town or nearby?

Answer

- Visitor Attractions
 1. Ragley Hall
 2. Coughton Court

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3. River Arrow Nature Reserve
 - Visitor Events
1. Special Events at Ragley Hall
2. The flower displays of Alcester in Bloom are one of the major attractions. The town has won the regional competition many times and the national one on occasion.

EC5 C2 How important is tourism related employment to the local economy?

Answer

- The main beneficiaries of visitor spending are hotels, B&B's, guest houses, shops, cafes/restaurants, pubs, attractions/entertainment and garages/transport providers. The retail sector alone received around £39million in business turnover from visitor spending, catering around £36million and accommodation 36million (for the District).
- Overall, tourism supports in the region of 7,476 jobs across the district - 17% of the District's employed labour force. The great majority of jobs (89%) are in businesses that benefit directly from visitor spending. However additional jobs are supported as a result of these businesses purchasing goods across the District and as a result of spending in the local area by people in tourism supported jobs. Of the 7,476 jobs, around half are full-time positions. Most of the employment is, however centred in and around Stratford upon Avon.
- Tourism supports jobs in 5 key business sectors. Of the 7,476 supported jobs, 10% are in the retail sector, 35% in catering, 37% in accommodation, 17% in entertainment and 1 % in transport services. Undoubtedly, the key economic benefits of tourism are concentrated around Stratford town and this is particularly noticeable by the level and range of retail, catering and entertainment facilities it supports, given its size as a comparatively small market town.

EC5 C3 What is the range of tourist accommodation available in the area e.g. number of hotel beds by grade, bed and breakfast, youth hostels, caravan and, camping site pitches?

Answer

- Hotels:
 1. Billesley Manor: AA 4 star - 61 rooms (rural hinterland)
 2. Salford Hall Hotel: ETC3 star - 33 rooms (as above)
 3. The Globe Hotel: ETC registered - 9 rooms (Alcester)
 4. Travel Lodge - 66 rooms
 5. Kings Coughton - 42 rooms
- Pubs/ Bed & Breakfast
 1. Blue Boar Inn, Temple Grafton: ETC registered - 15 rooms (rural hinterland)
 2. Stag Hotel - 5 rooms
 3. The Swan - 9 rooms
 4. Herons View, Oversley
 5. Glebe farm Cottage
 6. Orchard Lawns
 7. The Granary
- Caravan & Camping
 1. Island Meadow Caravan Park: ETC 3 star - 48 caravan. campervan pitches, 10 tent pitches
- Hostels
 1. Nearest youth hostel/backpackers - Stratford upon Avon
- The majority of tourist accommodation is concentrated around Stratford upon Avon with some high quality hotels in the rural hinterland.
- There appears to be a shortage of bed and breakfast/ self-catering accommodation in and around Alcester but this has not been supported by any research.

EC5 C4 How many visitors come to the town or area and how long do they stay?

Answer

- Over 1997, 3.8 million visitors came to the Stratford on Avon District, however as would be expected, the concentration of visitors and the income and pressure they generate is not evenly distributed across the District with 79% of visits concentrated on the town of Stratford upon Avon. The area of Alcester generated 6% of staying visits (228,000) and this includes visitors staying at Bidford on Avon, Welford on Avon, Abbots Salford, Ragley Hall, Great AJne, Kings Coughton, Arden's Grafton.
- The type and breakdown of visitors varies according to location, although in the District as a whole, around 53% were day visitors, 29% were touring and 18% were staying overnight in the area.

References for the above section

Shakespeare Country Visitor Attractions 2001/2002
Ragley Hall Events List

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A Sustainable District-Wide Tourism Strategy for Stratford on Avon, South *Warwickshire Tourism*
(1997)
Official *Accommodation Guide* - South Warwickshire Tourism 2002
AA - local information
1996/97 Economic Impact Assessment, *HETB*

Section: Economy Worksheet: Tourism & Visitor Services

EC5 C5 How seasonal is the visitor activity?

Answer

- The area generally benefits from visitors all year round as it has a wide range of attractions and particularly appeals to the short-break visitor.
- The visitor peaks are in spring and autumn.
- Recently the level of tourist activity has been dictated more by the adverse weather conditions. The flooding during 1998 caused most boat operators on river trips to close down for safety reasons. In addition, the foot & mouth restrictions also reduced the number of visitors to the rural areas and waterways.
- More recently, the world terrorist attacks have reduced the numbers of international visitors and the impact of this is being felt across the area with reduced bookings for hotels, B&Bs and visitor attractions.

EC5 C6 Is there a Tourist Information Centre in the town and how well used is it?

Answer

- Currently there is no designated facility. Tourism literature and public information is available from the Public Library. There is no information available on how well it is used as it occupies part of the Library. A Heritage Centre that will act as Tourist Information Point (unstaffed) is to be created in Globe House very soon.

EC5 S1 How much do visitors spend?

Answer

- As part of developing a District-wide Tourism Strategy, a Tourism Impact Assessment was undertaken for the District over 1996-1997 focussing on the overall volume of visitors to the area, expenditure in the local economy and the number of jobs that are dependant on tourism.
- The study assessed that a total of £135m was spent by visitors to the District over 1996-1997 injecting into the region of £11 million per month into the local economy. Levels of visitor spend vary according to type and purpose of trip and length of stay with day visitors spending in the region of £17 per day and visitors staying overnight averaging a daily spend of £50 for UK visitors and £48 for overseas visitors. In terms of a breakdown of visitor spend in the District, 27% is spent on accommodation, 27% on food and drink, 29% on shopping, 3% on transport and 14% on entertainment. Unfortunately, it is not possible to break-down this information to a local level and the focus of interest is in Stratford upon Avon which conceals figures for the rest of the District.

EC5 S2 Identify how important tourism spending is to the local economy?

- Ragley Hall - 1996 - 81,645 visitors
- Coughton Court - 1996 - 52,700 visitors
- These are popular destinations for domestic and international visitors and represent the only attractions where visitor numbers are available.

EC5 S3 Identify the pattern of visitors?

Answer

- The domestic market provided almost 4 out of 5 visitors to the District. About one out every two visitors to the area originated from 10 areas, 8 of which were domestic Warks, West Mids., Worcs., London/Middlesex, Oxfordshire, Lancs., Leics. and Glos., and two were overseas - USA and Australia. Around three-quarters of day visitor parties come from within a 35-40 miles radius of the area.
- The most popular length of stay for those in the area on a day visit was 4-5 hours. For those staying overnight, the area is seen very much as a short break destination, the most popular length of stay being 2 nights (31.4%) although one night stays were also popular (29.3%).

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This information is quoted from a 1997 visitor survey carried out across the District by Heart of England Research Team.

- Half the overseas visitors stayed in B&Bs/guest house accommodation, and 27% used hotel accommodation, whilst 5% stayed with friends. UK overnight visitors were more evenly divided by use of hotel and 13131 guest houses whilst 12.5% stayed with friends. 13% of overnight visitors stayed on board boats, which recognises the importance of the canal waterways system.
- Nearly 80% of visitors used the car as the principal form of transport, especially for the domestic market, whilst the overseas touring sector had the highest use of tour bus usage (16%) and train (12%) but only marginally over the domestic visitor (11.9%).
- Four out of five visitors cited pleasure as opposed to business as the purpose for the visit and this was consistent across all sectors, being lowest with UK visitors (79.7%) and highest with overseas overnight visitors (90.5%).

EC5 S4 Does the range of visitor facilities match expectations and needs?

Answer

- A visitor survey was carried out in 1997 that encompassed the whole of the District using interviews at a number of locations. Of those surveyed, 72% were day visitors and 28% were overnight visitors staying one or more nights in the area.
- The area rated extremely well in the eyes of its visitors in terms of facilities and services provided. It is worthy of note that floral displays and litter clearance which ranked in first and second place respectively in the 1993 Visitor Survey, again maintained these positions but with even better assessments. However restaurants, bar food had lower rankings in both surveys although still achieved around 7.9 out of 10.
- Visitors were asked what they liked about the area and almost 9 out of 10 responded to this question. What they particularly liked was the countryside, scenery, and its rural nature, plus its history and heritage.
- In terms of visitor dislikes to the area or suggested improvements, of prime concern to those who expressed an opinion and this was quite low, are issues regarding traffic management - parking (5.9%), signposting (3.2%) and traffic (2.5%). The two issues are related in that better signposting can lead to improvements in traffic congestion by easier parking.

EC5 S5

Answer

- As part of an ongoing strategy to develop tourism in the area, a workshop was organised by SDC within Alcester during 1997 run by an independent researcher. The Alcester group was enthusiastic about developing tourism in the area as long as it was carefully managed. Alcester areas future tourist development was thought to be best based upon:
 1. The Roman's legacy
 2. The town's historic building stock
 3. It's church
 4. The pubs of the town and its district, with special emphasis on coaching inns
 5. Events including the Flower Festival (famous throughout region), Alcester Street Market, Court Leet ceremonies, pancake races etc
 6. Footpath network throughout the area
 7. Areas nature reserves
 8. Two stately homes - Ragley Hall and Coughton Court
 9. Dovecote at Kinwarton
 10. Civil War links
 11. Strong community involvement
- Alcester already has a self-guided town trail and would like to pioneer an audio town trail. Further recognition, celebration and conservation of its historic buildings was felt to be important by the discussion group. Better promotional material, development of a heritage centre which could function as a Tourist Information Centre and packaging of offers to include walkers weekend and event packages using public transport to decant people out of Stratford upon Avon.
- Heart of England Tourist Board has produced a brochure called 'Out and About in South Warks to link rural lawns and attractions. It includes Alcester and some of the villages within the rural hinterland.
- Alcester Civic Society produces a Town Trail Guide, and Alcester History Society produces a Beacon Guide. The lawn is also featured in a leaflet produced by South Warwickshire Tourism. Whilst these leaflets were available in the town, particularly in the Library, they are not widely available anywhere outside the town, if at all. Material promoting Ragley Hall and Coughton Court was more widely available outside the lawn.
- There would seem to be considerable scope for improving the profile of the lawn in such publicity material, and there does seem to be willingness for venues throughout the district to

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make such material available. A heritage trail of Alcester is also in preparation is a joint initiative by SDC, Civic Society and South Warwickshire Tourism.

EC5 S6 Does the town enter "Britain In Bloom" competition or the surrounding villages "Best Kept Village"?

Answer

- Alcester has been extremely successful in "Britain in Bloom" competitions, winning the competition in 7 out of 10 years. The lawn has also won the Midlands Trophy twice, and in 1996 were National winners. The community involvement in this success has been a feature of the town's character in the past decade.

EC5 S7 Identify any attempts that have been made to improve the profile of the town through nation-wide competitions?

Answer.

- The considerable success of the Alcester in Bloom committee has provided the lawn with a high profile, and has been used to attract visitors to the town.
- The Heart of England Town Criers Competition has been organised by Alcester's own Town Crier for many years, and has brought competitors and visitors from all over the country.
- In addition, a number of angling competitions are also held in and around Alcester.

EC5 S8 Are there any specialist tourism enterprises, such as language schools, conference centres?

Answer.

- Kings Court Hotel, Near Alcester - 42 beds, seats 120 , no leisure facilities, parking for 120 cars
- Coughton Court, Alcester - 0 beds, seats 100, outdoor activities as required, parking for 200+cars
- Ragley Hall, Alcester - 0 beds, seats 200, clay pigeon shooting, archery, pistols, rifles, quad bikes and falconry, parking for 2000 cars.
- There is an international language schools in Stratford upon Avon but none in the catchment area. Conference facilities are limited to
- the above facilities.

EC5 S9 Identify any additional draws to the town from facilities not usually associated with tourists?

Answer

- Arts events, including: Redditch Folk Festival (held in Alcester), Forest of Arden Arts Festival, Victoria Silver Band, Alcester Male Voice Choir
- Alcester Court Leet events, including Street Market (in June) Alcester Mop Fair (in October) Town Criers Competition (April) Stirrup Cup for the Hunt (New Years' Day)
- Stately Home Events, such as concerts at both Ragley Hall and Coughton Court, Game Fairs, and various other rallies and events
- British Legion Festival of Remembrance
- Leisure pursuits, especially ramblers groups and fishing clubs
- Architecture, especially the Malt Mill Lane complex and Town Hall

EC5 S10 Is there adequate signing to visitor attractions and the town centres?

Answer

From the national road network signage to town Centre is adequate but signage to local attractions is haphazard. Naming of roundabouts on A46 A422 and A435 would make giving directions much easier and spread awareness of the Town's existence. There are good deer signs to Ragley Hall but only one to Historic Market Town and one to Town Centre. There is no signage from Ragley Hall or Coughton Court to Alcester. No other attractions are mentioned en route from the A46 until the Globe Roundabout is reached. Here signs point to attractions a few feet away. From other directions signage is poor and uncoordinated. For example the sign on the A422 roundabout says Town Centre and the one on the Roebuck roundabout says Alcester. There are several brown signs at key points around the Town but most point to commercial enterprises leaving Town facilities unsigned. Town Centre car park

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is signed but the signs are too few and not easily seen or read by visitors driving round an unfamiliar Town. Town centre car park has inadequate signing for pedestrians towards the High Street, and other key town locations. In the surrounding country there are Leisure Drive signs with no indication of where this drive starts or finishes, what its theme is or whom it is for. Couldn't it have a name? Alcester could benefit from an improved, better-integrated and co-ordinated signage scheme, which could help bring visitors and aid commercial traffic to find its destinations

References for the above section

- A.A Local Signage Survey
- A Sustainable District-Wide Tourism Strategy for Stratford upon Avon, Heart of England Tourist Board (1998)*
- Economic Development & Tourism Officer (SDC)*
South Warwickshire Tourism
- A.A - Local Knowledge Reference:
Economic Development & Tourism Officer (SDC)
Alcester in Bloom chairman

Section: Economy

Worksheet: Training & Education

EC3 C1 Do the vocational training courses on offer reflect the needs of local residents and employers?

Answer

- Warwickshire College - vocational courses at Morton Morrell and Warwick/Leamington Spa
- Stratford upon Avon College - is the only college to provide vocational training.
- South Warwickshire Training - work-based training opportunities
- Stratford Enterprise Centre - NVQ training for individuals and tailor-made training for companies.
- A PIE REDI is open to businesses and individuals funded through PIE (Promoting, Inclusion and Enterprise) Partnership and led by Warwickshire College. The scheme addresses today's demands for lifelong training, particularly for rural businesses in changing economic circumstances. It offers wide-ranging training programmes within the key subject areas: including Diversification, Rural Retailing, Tourism, IT, Organic Farming, Countryside Management and Business Management.
- LSC have carried out research into this area and a household survey is underway to examine the quality of training in the area.
- Through the ICT@Work project (including research work carried out by Warwick University) it was identified that there is a requirement for ICT training for SME's. 'Just In Time' training, appropriate to the needs of the businesses, is one of the main training requirements which is required and not presently being met locally. Through the CAW Skills project the Minerva Mill Innovation Centre will be piloting online EC.DL for SME employees in Alcester and South Warwickshire.
- Business management 1 business development training for small businesses is not widely available locally, although Stratford
- Enterprise Centre does provide some work based tailor-made training. Also private companies such as Training 4Trainers (Stratford) provide business management training.

EC3 C2 Are school leavers well qualified?

Answer

- Using Alcester High School as an example, during 2001, 60% of pupils gained 5 or more GCSE passes at A-C compared with 50% which is the average for Warwickshire LEA and England as a whole.

EC3 C3 Is there access to good quality schools in the area?

Answer.

- Infant and Primary Schools:

Alcester Infant School Moorfield Road Alcester Warwickshire B49 5DA

Dunnington C of E Primary School Dunnington Alcester Warwickshire B49 5NT

Great Aine primary School School Road Great Alne Alcester Warwickshire B49 6HQ

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Our Lady's RC primary School St. Faiths Road Alcester Warwickshire B49 6AG

Salford Priors CofE primary School, School Road Salford Priors Evesham WR11 6X1D

St Faiths C of E Junior School St Faiths Road Alcester Warks B49 6 AG

EC3 C4 Are there sufficient pre-school places in nurseries and playgroups?

Answer

- Pre- schools/Nurseries:

Salford Priors Kindergarten
School Avenue
Salford Priors
Evesham
WR11 8X13
Tell 0 1789 773229
Registered for 16 places 2 years 9months - 5 years

Alcester Nursery School
Town Hall
Butler Street
Alcester
B49 5AL
Registered for 45 places 3-5 years

Sallywags
Alcester Baptist Church
Alcester
B49 5AJ
Registered for 34 places 3 - 5 years

Teddy Bear Corner
Seggs Lane
Alcester
B49 5HJ
Registered for 41 places 3 - 5 years

Alcester Nursery Studio
Greig Hall
Alcester
Registered for 45 places 3 - 5 years

Alcester is fairly well served for both pre-school education and for out of school care. Warwickshire County Council is currently examining those schools which do not have after school club on site or who are not currently served by a provider. There may be New Opportunities Funding for a local school or other provider to set up school holiday provision. Further research in this area is required

EC3 S1 How many Internet learning and access points are there within the town or villages (no of Internet points per head of Population) Information should be available from the library). Identify whether these are sufficient to meet local needs?

Answer

- Alcester Library - 2 Internet access points. No other information was available at time of research.
- Minerva Mill Innovation centre is proposing to have 'workstations' available to SMEs which will have broadband internet access available to rent on daily, week or monthly basis, suitable for pre start-up businesses 1 home based businesses or employees who are not office- based but requiring appropriate facilities/ access locally.

EC3 S2 Is there adequate provision of non-vocational courses locally?

Answer

- There are colleges offering further education and part-time courses at Warwickshire College and Stratford on Avon College. These offer a range of courses and at Warwickshire College

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there is also a learning support centre, additional learning support and a college nursery. The campus is in at Leamington Spa and Moreton Morrell.

- Stratford College is the primary source of non-vocational courses in this area with a small selection of ad-hoc courses being provided at the Greig Centre, Alcester (Community 1 adult education), and one of the local schools. Workers Education Association (WEA) has also run non-vocational courses in the town.

EC3 S3 Are there a high number of school exclusions?

Answer

- Figures are only available for Alcester High School of Technology College on unauthorised absence which stands at 0.6% and is relatively low.

References for the above section

DFES Schools Performance Web-site

Warwickshire County Council

Stratford upon on Avon College

Warwickshire College

Warwickshire County Council

Minerva Mill

www.dfes.gov.uk/performance/tables

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Warwickshire County Council Education Team

Section: Social & Community Worksheet: Culture & Heritage

SC6 C1 Does the town have an adequate range of cultural facilities e.g. theatre, cinema, art gallery, museum or library?

Answer.

- There is no cinema, art gallery or museum yet) with the nearest cinema/theatre located in Stratford upon Avon. There is a full range of theatre facilities available in Stratford plus the Alexandra in Redditch. A heritage centre is to be opened 2003 situated at Globe House.
- The Sports Hall at the Greig Centre is the largest venue in the Town and is used for the annual British Legion Festival of Remembrance and Alcester Male Voice Choir Concerts. Local drama groups and operatic groups are hosted at the Greig Centre. Some School Halls are also available with stage.
- Some art is displayed at Library, which provides a good service along with a local mobile library service that reaches the main villages within the rural hinterland.

SC6 C2 Are there regular events which have the potential to draw the whole community together?

Answer.

- The Forest of Arden Arts Festival (FAAF)
- Street Market
- Mop Fair
- Alcester & Arden Folk Festival, at Greig Centre.
- The Court Leet organises:
- Civic Service at St.Nicholas in January each year. Ad] uniformed organisations are invited to participate, with over 350 people attending
- this years ecumenical service.
- February. Annual Pancake Races involve children, adults of both sexes and local public houses in a High Street event that attracts large crowds.
- Easter. Heart of England Town Criers Competition. Over 20 Town Criers compete attracting entries from all aver the country.
- Additionally, Alcester Churches together instigated in 2001 to be continued this year, an Easter Monday celebration open to all the community consisting of street parades led by Alcester Victoria Silver Band and a series of events for children and adults during the day.

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SC6 C3 Does the local communities have a mechanism to report and comment on local events and issues?

Answer

- Local papers: (Alcester Chronicle, Standard, Stratford Herald, Bear Flag.
- Radio: Bear Radio, BBC Coventry & Warwickshire Sound
- There is a need for a town notice board and town newsletter, whilst the establishment of the Advantage Alcester web-site should help inform the community of what is going on in the area.
- The Local Council has a policy of listening to residents and personally I have always found our local councillors willing to take up causes on our behalf.
- Whilst the local freebies do have an Alcester page, local news is of a premium. ,

SC6 C4 Do town and rural communities have adequate community venues?

Answer

- Alcester - Greig Centre, Trades & labour Club, Town Hall, Church House and newly opened Globe House.
- Arrow - Village Hall
- Gt. Alne - Village Hall
- Salford Priors - Village Hall
- The Town Hall also has accessibility issues, with no access to upper floor for those with mobility problems. Alcester Opportunities are currently pursuing the funding to renovate the Conway Pavilion as a local community centre which would be an asset for residents in this part of the town.

SC6 C5 Does the area have any strong cultural associations such as famous people, events or literary links or any famous products?

Answer.

- Alcester is a Roman Town. It has a good selection of architectural styles, attractive appearance for tourists.
- The Court Leet dates back to the 13th Century. Ragley Hall as the baronial seat of the Marquis of Hertford.
- Coughton Court and the Throckmorton family have strong links with the Gunpowder plot and the continuation of Roman Catholic worship in Warwickshire during the persecution.

SC6 C6 Are there strong historic associations with the area?

- **Answer:**Alcester is a town that has had continuous occupation since Roman times, or before. It has a number of archaeological sites.
- Within the rural hinterland there are two stately homes which are now popular tourist attractions which are Ragley Hall and Coughton Court.

SC6 S1 What proportion of the local population is involved in an arts-based community group?

Answer:

- It is estimated that only about 5% are involved in art-based groups. There are very few Art groups; no Society of Artists, no adult drama group.
- There is a Junior drama group, Operatic society, Silver Band and many local choirs.
- U3A have small groups for music, poetry and art. This is limited however to members of U3A.

SC6 S2 Do facilities for arts and cultural activities meet the demand of the local arts groups?

Answer

- The Greig Centre is too fully used and there are no studio facilities. Schools do not allow use of facilities by public. The only other places are private houses, which cannot accommodate large numbers.
- Drama/operatic use Greig Centre which is very well equipped for drama and musical productions and events. The Silver band use Trades & labour club. The remainder uses mainly church halls except for Alcester Singers who use the Grammar School.

References for the above section

A.A - local knowledge
A.A comments

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FAAF archives

Alcester Opportunities Group - A Report into Community Needs in Alcester 2001 A.A - local *opinion*

Section: Social & Community Worksheet: Health & Public Safety

SC3 C1 Do the ambulance, police and fire services meet their own response time targets?

Answer

- Police - According to the Warwickshire Constabulary Charter, the target times are 10 mins for urban areas and 20 mins for rural areas to instances requiring immediate attendance. During 2000/2001, target times were achieved approximately 98% of the time in urban areas (Alcester and surrounding parishes) and 96% in rural areas (Salford Priors and Bidford on Avon area). This denotes excellent response times for emergency services. 24hour cover serves Alcester and surrounding parishes and community beat services.

SC3 C2 Does the number of doctors and dentists meet the appropriate standards?

Answer:

- There are two doctors' surgeries within Alcester that cater for the town and rural hinterland. There are also surgeries in Stratford upon Avon and Bidford on Avon which serve some of the outlying rural areas. The provision is satisfactory for the area it serves. There is however a shortage of NHS dentists within the Stratford on Avon District and it is difficult to find a dentist who will take on new NHS patients. (see Appendix 10)
- The PCG is currently undergoing changes to the structure at a national level but the impact of these changes is unknown at present.

SC3 C3 Are local mortality rates for heart disease, stroke, cancer, suicide and accidents high?

Answer

- Generally, the area does not have above average mortality rates and already meets the national targets. Clinical and Health Indicators 2001 has just been published to examine trends for the four main Our Healthier Nation targets. The local authority areas have been compared with England and the results in summary are given below:
 1. Mortality rates from all circulatory diseases in SDC is generally below the national average and on the decline;
 2. Mortality rates from all malignant neoplasms in SDC is below the national average and declining;
 3. Mortality rates from accidents has been very erratic and is above the national average and increasing;
 4. Mortality rates from suicide and undetermined injuries are very similar to the above trend, and increased to a peak in 2000, above the national average.

SC3 C4 How easy is it for residents to get access to non-emergency hospital services as a user or visitor?

Answer.

- *People* do rely mainly on own transport to get them to non-emergency hospital treatment. Voluntary transport is available through the CVS for the elderly and those with mobility problems. Most people would have to use Warwick or Redditch Hospitals and in most cases, there is only a basic bus service that would not provide door to door service. The local community hospital in Alcester is used for paediatric outpatients as well as for older people and other services such as chiropody, physiotherapy etc. There are no direct buses to Warwick Hospital from Alcester.

SC3 C5 Are there adequate specialist clinics and out patient clinics available locally e.g. family planning, drugs and drink advice?

Answer

- GPs offer family planning but non-GP family planning is only available at Stratford upon Avon and Southam Clinics. There is an alcohol and drug support unit provided at the Priory Medical Centre in Alcester.

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SC3 C6 Is there adequate social and health care services available in the home (e.g. community nurses, health visitors, home helps etc.)?

Answer

- Generally there is adequate provision of community nursing services in the Alcester area. There is a need for a specialist nurse to work with the well elderly.

SC3 C7 Is there a high incidence of crime?

Answer

- During the year 2000/2001, 341 crimes were recorded across the Alcester Beat. This compares to a total of 321 during 1999/2000 and 453 during 1998/99.
- In terms of volume, the most significant crime types in Alcester are criminal damage (66) and vehicle crime (63), each accounting for one in five crimes in the beat.
- In Alcester, the most significant disorder issues are nuisance youths, domestic incidences and public disturbances.
- There is a small number of crime and disorder 'hotspots' across the Alcester Beat, notably in and around High Street. Other locations include Kinwarton Road and Crooks Lane.
- The overall three-year trend has been a decrease in recorded crime, with an average thirty crimes per month.
- Local neighbourhood watch publications carry local statistics. High incidence of dumped cars and petty shop theft recorded recently.

SC3 C8 Are there any crime prevention measures in place?

Answer

- CCTV is now provided in a number of locations within the town centre (see question no SC3S3)

SC3 C9 Do background levels of noise, air quality and water quality meet or exceed national standards?

Answer

- Noise - there are no current national standards for background noise levels. The Government is proposing to develop a National Noise Strategy to address 'ambient' noise. This will relate to noise from traffic (road, rail and air) and industry and will evolve over the next few years. It does not cover Neighbourhood noise.
- The only standards applicable in the Alcester area might relate to existing planning permissions for individual sites (such as those on the industrial estates). I am not aware of any contravention at present. There are, and always will be, ongoing issues involving noise. Most of these are investigated with regard to our enforcing powers under statutory nuisance provisions and/or under conditions of public entertainment licences - such as those for pubs and clubs. There are impacts on the Town and its hinterland from road traffic noise but there are no specific standards and certainly no controls over this.
- Air Quality - the National Air Quality Strategy sets objectives for certain pollutants. This Council's review and assessment, completed in 2000, concluded that no areas within the district are likely to fail these objectives. Therefore, it can be stated that Alcester and its hinterland satisfy the current standards.
- Water Quality - the only water quality the Council has responsibility for is monitoring of private water supplies. There are a few in the area of your enquiry and these are satisfactory. Watercourses are dealt with by the Environment Agency, Tewkesbury Office, 01684850951.

SC3 S1 Do the local health clinics, doctors and dentists operate mobile service units?

Answer

- There are no mobile health clinics other than the mobile breast screening service that comes once a year.

SC3 S2 Identify areas covered by mobile units?

Answer

- None aware of.

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SC3 S3 Is the fear of crime significantly worse than actual crime rates?

Answer

- Fear of Crime is always, everywhere, higher than actual incidents thanks to our sensationalist media.
- CCTV has already been installed in 6 locations within the town centre. Additional CCTV for Alcester is being considered an extra camera would be at ATC's request, located on Globe Island primarily to monitor the roads that converge at this point.

SC3 S4 Is there visible evidence of vandalism, unlit streets, litter or graffiti?

Answer

- The highest profile problem area is the Hopkins Precinct and in particular the area of land behind it which is used by local teenagers. A number of young people responding to our survey identified a drug abuse problem in this area.

References for the above section

Warwickshire Constabulary performance figures

PCG - Community Health Officer

Reference:

Economic Development & Tourism Officer - SDC

Clinical & Health Indicators 2001. Warwickshire Health Authority

Advantage Alcester questionnaires.

Recent correspondence in *Alcester Chronicle*

Crime & Disorder Audit South Warwickshire (November 2001) Neighbourhood Watch anecdotal information

Section: Social & Community Worksheet: Housing

SC2 C1 What types of houses/flats are currently available?

Answer

- Canvass of local Estate Agents gave unanimous answer that demand exceeds availability of 314 bedroom houses, in both town and surrounding area: chiefly incoming purchasers as opposed to existing residents. Lower end of market is dominated by purchase to let, but signs are that this market is falling off in other areas due to saturation and lack of confidence in rental returns.

SC2 C2 How much and what types of new housing is being planned in your area?

Answer.

- 85 units are proposed from the allocated sites in Local Plan Review -ALC.B, AIC.C & ALC.D - with a 30% quota for affordable housing. Will be sought by the District Planning Authority from these sites when planning applications area submitted so this would realise in the region of 25 affordable units for rent and shared ownership over the period 2002-20.11 (see Appendix 2). Alcester is identified as a Main Rural Centre to play key role in supporting housing and employment needs.
- One of the major housing allocations set out in the adopted Local Plan (Mc 1) has been deleted, and is now proposed to be an area of special restriction.
- Local Centre Villages
- Salford Priors is the only village identified in the District Local Plan as a local centre village which is identified as meeting specific criteria identified as being a shop, school and bus service. As a consequence, small-scale housing schemes, which meet housing (particularly affordable housing) and employment needs identified by a local community, will be encouraged.
- In all other settlements in the District, and in open countryside, constraints will be applied on residential and industrial development.
- The Local plan has 3 sites designated for housing , two on current commercial sites and third being the Greig Hall site. Concern has been expressed by the community that there is no provision for relocation of the commercial sites. It is considered that the Greig Hall site has a more important function in providing cultural and leisure facilities.

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SC2 C3 Is existing local housing in good condition?

Answer.

- The District Council stock condition survey was last undertaken in 1977. The only other information available is from South Warwickshire Housing Association who now manage most of the social rented stock and are committed to a planned programme of improvements following Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of former Council housing stock in 1994. They carried out a stock condition survey in 1996 and are in the process of updating this survey but the results will not be available until next year. The Council recognises the need to update this information and joint stock condition survey is planned with other Authorities in 2003/2004.
- The stock of private housing in the area appears to be generally good. There are no areas of any significant disrepair. Within the town, flooding continues to be an anxiety in School road, lower High street and Stratford road, in spite of recent attention from Severn Trent.
- Further flood relief measures are planned.

SC2 C4 Is local housing affordable?

Answer

- The District Housing Needs Survey revealed that a total of 62% of District households had annual incomes of less than £25,000 per annum, whilst the median income was £19,500 which compared with house prices shows that in the District, they are 25-30% higher than in other surveys undertaken. The average house price of a 2 bed property was £58,000 or rent of £77 per week (1999 prices). In total they identified 70.8% of households in unsuitable housing unable to afford the cost of market housing to rent or buy.
- Anecdotal information: First-time buyers and single parents continue to be unable to afford housing in their home town, and are forced to look in Redditch or Evesham. Similarly native Alcesterians living elsewhere are unable to return to their town or village of origin.
- In the 5 years since I came to Alcester the value of my property has nearly doubled. The recently declined application for 400 houses off Eclipse Road, identified a need for 80 social housing units. I have personal knowledge of 2 families forced to move to Redditch as a result of price increases.

SC2 C5 Is homelessness a problem in the area?

Answer.

- In 1999, SDC found 62% of homeless applicants eligible, unintentionally homeless and in priority need. This compares with 43% in England as a whole. The most common household type to be accepted in priority need in the District contained dependant children, however young single homelessness is an increasing problem. Loss of rented accommodation was the overwhelming reason why households had become homeless. SDC relied more heavily on bed and breakfast accommodation than average.
- According to the District Council's annual returns on housing, there were a total of 88 cases of homelessness accepted in the District in 2000/2001.
- I know personally 1 individual who sleeps rough and seems to be unable to get assistance from SDC Housing Division.

SC2 C6 Do local people have priority in accessing affordable housing?

Answer

- The District Council has a shared housing register with a qualifying list of social registered landlords and persons are awarded priority points according to their personal circumstances. Anyone can register themselves on the list irrespective of their origin and local connection does not necessarily give priority against a person with higher priority points denoting housing need
- Those houses which have been granted planning permission as part of a planning gain arrangement with the District Council or under the rural exceptions planning policy are subject to planning legal agreements. These effectively give priority to those households which have a local connection by living or working in the parish or adjacent parish or having been forced to move away from there because of the lack of affordable housing. Other considerations to ensure they are qualifying persons on the housing needs register will be taken into account.

SC2 C7 Is sufficient specialist housing being made available for the elderly?

Answer

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- The recent closure of Meadow View created a shortage of places for Alcester elderly. Alcester has over 700 residents aged 70 and over, with the existing sheltered housing and nursing homes at full capacity. Meadow View is a County Council owned facility and is likely to be redeveloped as a PFI initiative that will deal with social services referrals plus the development of 2 bungalows for the disabled.
- Current demographic trends suggest a rising demand for which no planned provision is apparent. The District Housing Needs Survey examined the requirements of special needs households (includes frail elderly, mobility problems etc) and from its research identified that 9.7% of all households had special needs members. The survey showed that 15% of all special needs households are in unsuitable housing.
- The Council's Housing Improvement Agency is helping to provide adaptations to properties to help people remain in their homes but this is insufficient to assist people who need to live in accommodation which is sheltered according to their specialist requirements.

SC2 S1 Is there a significant level of second home or holiday home ownership locally or in particular areas?

Answer

- Information unavailable

SC2 S2 Is there a high level of vacancy or empty houses (Compare vacancy level with the total number of properties). Information on vacancy levels should be obtainable from the District Council Housing Investment Programme or Housing Needs Surveys). Identify if there are opportunities to bring existing housing back into use?

Answer

- According to the Council's annual returns on housing statistics in April 2001, there was a total of 2093 vacant dwellings out of a total of 42,662 or 4.9%, but no records on how long they were empty for. Only 5% of the total was owned by a housing association.
- SDC is committed towards developing a District-wide Empty Property Strategy to make best use of existing housing stock by bringing empty buildings into use to contribute towards meeting local housing needs. It has a target of bringing 25 empty properties back into use by 2003 but does not give details on how this will be achieved.
- There may be limited opportunities for bringing some accommodation within the town centre using the Living Over the Shop idea but this would need further research to see if it is feasible (see SC2 S3).
- The Home Improvement Agency - HIA has been set up by SDC providing advice and financial assistance for those residents who want to improve or repair their home, but targeting the elderly, disabled and other vulnerable or disadvantaged groups in the District. In many cases they can provide adaptations to help people stay in their own homes.

SC2 S3 Are there opportunities to bring housing into the town centre, e.g. flats over shops, back into use?

Answer.

- Town centre flats fully occupied for residential commercial use, with rapid filling of any vacancies. (See also answer to question SC2.C1)

SC2 S4 Will the planned provision of affordable housing meet local demand?

Answer.

- The District Council target for new affordable housing provision is 93 dwellings until the year 2003 across the District. This follows a review of the target of affordable housing in the Local Plan, which has been raised to 40% element of affordable social housing on new private development sites. However there are few opportunities for seeking this quota as sites are very limited within the lifetime of them Local Plan Review and there is more onus on developing brown field sites which are most costly to develop. At present, there are only three modest brown field sites identified in Alcester in the Local Plan Review and very little is likely to come forward in any of the surrounding villages unless promoted through the housing exception policy.
- In addition, the Council's Empty Property Strategy has not been advanced significantly so this will have little impact in the short term.
- Some housing associations are looking to seek land for development or purchasing existing housing stock but this is very expensive as they are competing on the open market.

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- The above measures will do little to alleviate the 438 persons on the waiting list for the catchment area. However it should not be assumed that this is an accurate reflection of housing need which is better reflected in the District Housing Needs Survey carried out in 1999 and reviewed in 2001 which identified around 215 persons in housing need or 8.3% of need in the area, which is above the District average of 5.5%

SC2 S5 Where there is poor quality housing, is this being addressed by improvement/investment programmes?

Answer.

- The District Council is looking to develop an Affordable Warmth Strategy by working in partnership with internal and external agencies to help reduce the numbers of fuel poor in the District and also to continue the work of the HECA Strategy (Home Energy Conservation Act) for a 15-year period.

References for the above section

Housing Strategy Statement 2002-2006 (SDC)
A.A information
Stratford on Avon District Local Plan Review 1996-2011
Urban Capacity Study, January 2002
Civic Society committee
SDC *Housing Strategy Statement 2003-2007*
Comments from District *Council Housing Division*
A Madge
District *Housing Needs Survey 1999 - Richard Fordham, Associates*
D Insult
Local Homelessness statistics England 2000120001 (HIPs)
Single Homelessness Strategy 2001 - Centre Point
SDC Council Tax Records
Housing Strategy Statement 2002-2006 (SDC)
A.A Information

Section: Social & Community

Worksheet: Local Government & Community Organisations

SC4 C1 Do local residents have direct access to the District or County Council in the town?

Answer.

- Direct access to District and County Council services does (or will shortly) exist at Globe House. District and County Councillors hold local surgeries. Information is also available via the District Council and County Council web-sites.

SC4 C2 Are a large number of local people involved in community activities?

Answer

- Local community organisations with approx membership:
- Local History Society (120)
- Civic Society (100)
- Gardening Club (100+)
- LNR Steering grp & volunteers (8)
- WRVS Meals on Wheels Service and Luncheon Clubs
- Renewal Christian Centre (40 residents)
- Enquire of Alcester Churches Together for figures on other congregations.
- Oversley Green Residents Association (8 Committee members + 70 residents)
- WWF local group (25)
- 2 Rotary Clubs (50)
- Round table
- Men's Probus Club (50)
- Ladies Probus
- U3A (50)
- RBL (100)
- Oversley Residents
- Alcester Opportunities Group

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- Although there is a wide variety of local organisations and this list is not comprehensive, this represents only around 0.2% of the population who are involved in organised groups. There appears to be a hard-cord group of individuals who are committed to involvement in activities which benefit the community.

SC4 C3 Do local people have an interest in national and local politics?

Answer.

- The level of voter turnout at the District Council Election in May 2002 (across the wards) was approximately an average of 54.5% compared with 42.4% at a district level. During the last general parliamentary elections, the voter turnout for the district was around 66% compared with a national average of around 60%. The predominate party within the area is the Liberal Democrat and support for this party appears to have been consistent for some time.

SC4 C4 Is there somebody who can help develop community involvement?

Answer

- The District Council had two officers who were responsible for initiating parish appraisals and village design statements but this is no longer the case. In future it is likely that parish plans will be prepared in partnership with the local community and Rural Community Council utilising funding from the Countryside Agency and this will hopefully feed into the Local Plan Review consultation process.
- A Partnership Officer for the Stratford on Avon District area is based at the main District Council Office who is involved in working up a Community Plan and Strategy for the area, linking with other key workers: Community Education (WCC), Policy Officer (SDC) and the CVS.

SC4 C5 Have community groups been influential in developing policies or strategies?

Answer

- The Heritage Trust is a local initiative, which represents persistence and hard work by many volunteers over many years.
- Alcester Opportunities. This is a recent example of community effort in producing a well presented plan for social amenities and community development
- Civic Society. Has been involved in many propositions over the years. Most recent were:
 - a. Town centres traffic management plan
 - b. Discussions over long distance cycle track
 - c. Footpath maintenance in conjunction with SDC and WCC and PPI until finished
 - d. Previous schemes for High Street improvement. Latterly with the SDC Conservation architect based on an original Uham School of
- Architecture plan. Available on disc from ACS.
- The District Council, in partnership with the Countryside Agency promoted the role of Parish Appraisals and Village Design Statements to help address local issues and adopt local planning **policy** guidance. The community in Alcester, Kinwarton and Salford Priors has taken up these initiatives.
 1. Alcester Civic Society
 2. Alcester Parish Appraisal, *Kinwarton Parish Appraisal*
 3. Community Plan for SDC
 4. Alcester Parish Appraisal
 5. Kinwarton Parish Appraisal
 6. *Who needs Money Report*

SC4 S1 Is the local community well represented on committees?

Answer

- Local Committees include:
 1. Heritage Trust
 2. Local Nature Reserve
 3. Community Health Council
 4. Town Hall Management
 5. Advantage Alcester's active participants reflect the 'usual suspects'. The large population of organisations and charitable trusts and committees are populated by a cross section of the same 300 or so people.

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6. They are made up of those organisations which is then divided in representation by the 'Arrow divide'.
7. The major dearth of representation is that of people new to the area.

SC4 S2 Are there any active neighbourhood forums, residents or tenants associations?

Answer

- Oversley Residents Assoc.
- Eclipse Residents Assoc.
- Alcester Opportunities
- Well attended meetings for Town Appraisal Workshop
- Hospital and medical services development plans
- Active residents associations at Oversley Green and Oversley Mill Residential Park.
- Alcester Opportunities Group

SC4 S3 Had local people had the experience of being actively involved in community development?

Answer

- Alcester Youth Club. Mostly started and run by Alcester residents, with small amounts of money from Community Education (WCC). Alcester Youth Project, run by local residents, funded by private charity. This is now funded inadequately by Community Education (WCC).
- Alcester Opportunities Group established by WCC as a community forum which has recently carried out a survey into community needs in Alcester. This had assistance from key workers from Warwickshire Community Education Service

References for the above section

Minutes of Youth Club

Minutes of Alcester youth project

Alcester Opportunities Group - A Report into *Community Needs in Alcester* (Sept 2001)

Alcester Opportunities Survey

Electoral Services Department - District Council

Warwickshire Review 2001 - WCC

A.A Information

Community Plan for SDC Reference:

Section: Social & Community Worksheet: Population

SCI C1 What proportion of the total population live in the town as compared to the hinterland?

Answer

- According to DTLR mid 1998 Census data estimates, approximately 5,616 persons live within the Alcester Parish area and 5,900 live within the other whole parishes of Aston Cantlow, Kinwarton and Salford Priors. From this data, 51.64% of the population live in Alcester environs. The largest parish outside Alcester is Kinwarton with a population of 2,500 followed by Salford Priors at 1,500. This presents a best fit approach to the rural hinterland relating to ward level data available from ONS figures.

SC1 C2 What proportion of the population is of retirement age i.e. over 65/60?

Answer

- The resident population of the area (town and rural hinterland) comprises some 22.13% of persons over the age of 60 years using estimated census data. This compares very closely with neighbouring market towns such as Pershore and Evesham but is higher than the regional or national average, the latter that has an average of 18.19%. This presents a best-fit approach to the rural hinterland relating to ward-level data available from ONS figures.

SC1 C3 What proportion of the population is under 16?

Answer

- The resident population of the area represents some 18.03% of persons under 16 years, whilst the West Midlands average is 20.85 and the national average stands at 20.32%. The low proportion of young persons could have an impact on the social balance of the community. Again it presents a similar picture with other market towns such as Evesham and Pershore.

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SCI C4 What proportion of the population have professional and managerial jobs?

Answer

- Around 36.5% of the economically active population in the area are in professional or managerial occupations, compared with an average of 27 % for the region and 30.8% for the UK. This trend may reflect the excellent communications within Alcester, allowing people to commute to large business centres within the West Midlands and the rest of the UK.

SC1 C5 What proportion of the population have semi-skilled manual and unskilled jobs?

Answer

- Taking the figures from skilled manual workers and partly skilled workers, some 17.4% of the population occupies this grouping, compared with 15.9% for the UK

SCI C6 What proportion of total households are single parent households?

Answer

- Around 2.37% of the resident population in the area are single parent households which compares similarly with neighbouring market towns of Evesham and Pershore but is lower than the regional average (3.95%) and the national average (3.69%).

SCI C7 What proportion of total households are elderly people living alone?

Answer

- There are 12.98% of households that are occupied by pensioners within the whole area. This compares with a regional average of 9.5% and 10.0% for England so figures are comparable, but slightly higher.

SC1 C8 Has the population of the town and hinterland grown or declined in the last ten years?

Answer

- 1981 Census:
 1. Alcester 5,091
 2. Aston Cantlow 1,723
 3. Kinwarton 1,717
 4. Salford Priors 1,322**Total: 9,853** (no boundary changes have been registered)
- 1991 Census - 10,934 mid-1998 Census estimate - 12,200
- The area is continuing steady growth in the population, despite the trends in households diminishing in size. It probably reflects the housing growth in Alcester and key villages such as Salford Priors which have committed new housing projects, some of which will be reflected in the 2001 Census information which should be available shortly (see Appendix 8).

References for the above section

Warwickshire County Council - Mid Census Reference:

Warwickshire County Council - Census 1991(10% sample) Population Estimates (1998)

Section: Social & Community

Worksheet: Sport Leisure & Open Space

SC5 C1 Are local sports and leisure facilities in good condition and in demand?

Answer.

- Alcester Athletic FC utilises Oversley Playing fields (2 available pitches) Demand is greater than availability. Changing rooms are converted containers that are in a poor state of repair. The re-development of Conway Pavilion through Alcester opportunities project would provide new changing facilities for Conway playing fields.
- Alcester tennis Club is currently seeking to obtain site for 2 new training courts via the Moorfields Trust site adjacent to existing courts.

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- The Greig Centre provides valuable leisure facilities including sports hall, outdoor multi-use courts and gym which are well used and in many cases to full capacity. The facility is now requiring urgent maintenance and improvement. In addition, there are outbuildings and youth facilities that are in a very poor state of repair and require urgent remedial works to bring them up to a reasonable standard and cater for the changing needs of the community. The main hall at the Greig Centre caters for meetings theatrical productions, art classes and dancing plus nursery facilities on a regular basis. This building also requires remedial work.

SC5 C2 Is there any unmet demand for specific sports or leisure facilities?

Answer.

- Alcester Athletic FC utilises Oversley Playing fields (2 available pitches) Demand is greater than availability. There is under-provision for activities such as aerobics, karate and 5-a-side football at peak times. The changing rooms are converted containers that are in a poor state of repair. Development of Conway Pavilion through Alcester opportunities project would provide new changing facilities for Conway playing fields.
- Alcester tennis Club is currently seeking to obtain site for 2 new training courts via the Moorfields Trust site adjacent to existing courts.
- Local Plan contains outline for new leisure space alongside River Alne.

SC5 C3 Are local open spaces of a high quality?

Answer

- The Town Council manages most of the open space and play areas in Alcester. There is general support that these areas are well managed and there is reasonable satisfaction by those who use these facilities.
- In the Alcester Town Appraisal, it is significant that a high level of concern from parents with young children was expressed regarding the standards of equipment and misuse of the playgrounds by older children. Only 11 % of population surveyed viewed provision of outdoors recreational facilities and playground as poor. However, use of open spaces has been affected by undesirable youth activity. Gas House Lane recreation ground.
- The Conway Playing fields are frequented during late evenings by gangs of youths restricting usage by others. Further, vandalism of the Skate Park continues to spoil the environment and younger skaters are intimidated.
- The location of Alcester however, does provide easy access to open countryside through the network of footpaths.

SC5 C4 Are there any known threats of loss of open space or closure of facilities due to either development proposals or reduction in budgets?

Answer

- There is an underlying shortage of public open space in Alcester and during negotiations on proposals for new housing, there is sometimes potential to secure additional areas of land to compensate for this shortfall.
- Land off Stratford Road was offered by the Ragley Estate as public open space during negotiations on the allocated housing site Alc1.but this site has now been withdrawn from consideration during the Local Plan Review.
- There maybe potential for adding land to the Alcester Nature Reserve to include earthworks (archaeological remains of Abbey) which could build upon the tourism potential for Alcester in term of its archaeological interest.
- Most parks and areas of open space are owned and managed by the Town Council and do not appear to be under any direct threat.
- SDC offers grants for improving recreational areas and an inspection service is offered to check condition of equipment and this has been taken up by some of the parish council in the rural areas.
- A.A have identified a threat to the community centre, Greig Centre, by SDC who have recently refused a funding bid to help expand and repair it. However they do provide costs to help maintain the buildings. The site is now allocated in the Local Plan Deposit Draft as a mixed use site for affordable housing and recreation use with the intention of redevelopment of the site to help fund new leisure facilities.

SC5 C5 Are there adequate opportunities to pursue outdoor sporting activities?

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Answer

- Rambling is a popular local activity with access to both the Arden and Heart of England Way as well as extensive footpaths on the Ragley Estate.
- The national Cycle Route also passes through the Area via Great Alne, Kinwarton, Coughton and Sambourne.

SC5 C6 Do many people have to travel outside the town to take part in certain sports?

Answer.

- Alcester has no public swimming pool so people have to travel to Stratford upon Avon or Studley for these facilities. There is one private pool that is available to the general public. There are a number of sports groups based at the Greig Centre, whilst there are football and cricket teams based at the Oversley Green Fields and Conway Fields. However there is no Adult football club based in the town.
- There is a golf range and practise 9 hole par 3, but nearest golf courses are Henley in Arden, Stratford on Avon and the Lenches. Most other popular sports are provided for in the town, however there is no provision for indoor tennis, indoor cricket or bowls.

SC5 S1 What proportion of the eligible local population belongs to a sports or leisure club?

Answer

- The Town Appraisal reveals around 3% of population involved in sports clubs, with 25% of respondents utilising local leisure facilities.
- There is some research carried out by the Greig Centre on usage of its facilities, however no comprehensive study has been carried out.
- Those groups, which hold regular sessions at the Greig Centre, are set out below.
 1. Alcester 200 FC
 2. Great Alne Badminton Club
 3. Jujitsu School of Shotokan Karate
 4. Alcester Badminton Club
 5. Alcester 5v5 Club
 6. Alcester Squash Club
 7. Sambourne Volleyball
 8. Alcester Ladies Badminton Club
 9. Alcester Men of Sports Club
 10. Rudleigh School of Dancing
 11. Alcester Operatic Society
 12. Alcester Ladies Choir
 13. Alcester Scouts
 14. Alcester Am Dram Soc.
 15. Alcester Male Voice Choir
 16. Arrow WI
- There is a diverse range of users at the Greig Centre and the facilities appear to be very heavily used during the week.

SC5 S2 Are there any residential areas which are over 400m from an area of open space?

Answer.

- There is an identified shortfall of public open space within Alcester when compared with the national standards for provision.
- The District Council proposes to allocate an additional area of public open space to counteract this shortfall on land comprising approximately 5.3ha west of Fairwater Crescent.
- A survey carried out by A.A on open space provision (see Appendix) clearly shows four main areas within Alcester which are more than 400m from an area of public open space.

SC5 S3 Does the provision of open space meet the National Playing Fields Association Standard of 2.4ha per 1000 population?

Answer

- Research on this issue has been carried out by the Policy team at SDC in connection with the Local Plan Review but is not available for distribution presently. In Alcester, standards of open space to a minimum standard of 2.8ha per 1000 population will be sought on all new housing developments. It has been identified that there is a deficiency in the level of existing

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provision for Alcester and a site off Fairwater Crescent has been allocated as public open space comprising some 5.3 hectares (identified as A1c.C in Appendix 2).

SC5 S4 Which villages have village greens and/or recreation grounds?

Answer

- Salford Priors has a communal area and playground at rear of primary school. Great Alne has 'The Park'. Haselor has public open space in Haselor church hill grounds. Kinwarton Ward includes Oversley Green playing fields.
- Of the other hinterland villages, although none has dedicated areas, all have direct access to open countryside, including common and woodland through established rights of way.

References for the above section

District Local Plan Review Deposit Draft - January 2002 (ALC D)
Manager of Greig Centre - Andy Mason

AA

Areas of Public Open Space in Built up Area of Alcester - A.A (curtesy of A. Mann)

The Greig Centre Activity Profiles by Groups

Alcester Town Appraisal 2000

Technical & Amenities - SDC

Local Plan Review (First Deposit Draft) January 2002 - SDC

Local Press

Section: Transport & Accessibility

Worksheet: Ease of Access to Services

TA2 C1 Is there good public transport coverage connecting rural settlements to the town?

Answer

- Arrow - J1 (Thursdays, one per day) 1461176 (Mondays to Saturdays, hourly, Sundays, two hourly) 351 (Saturdays, one per day)
- Aston Cantlow - 25, 26 (Mondays to Saturdays, 2 hourly) 512 Flexibus (Mondays, one per day)
- Coughton - 1461176 (Mondays to Saturdays, hourly, Sundays, 2 hourly) 25, 26 (Mondays to Saturdays, 2 hourly)
- Exhall - 213 (Fridays, one per day)
- Haselor - 213 (Fridays, one per day)
- Kinwarton - none
- Weethley - none
- Great Alne - Flexibus 512 (Mondays, one per day) 25, 26 (Mondays to Saturdays, 2 hourly), 29 (Mon to Sat not Fri, one per day)
- Salford Priors - 28, 29 (Mondays to Saturdays, hourly), 166 (Sundays, 3 hourly), 520 (Wednesdays, one per day)
- Temple Grafton - 212 (Mondays to Saturdays, twice daily), 213 (Fridays, one per day (See Appendix 13))

TA2 C2 Are bus and train times from outlying villages to the town convenient for travelling to work and children going to school?

Answer

- In most village, there is a basic service twice a day providing transport during school, office hours (i.e. between 07.45-8.30 and 15.15 18.30). However some villages such as Exhall and Kinwarton have no service at all and in some cases, such as from Salford Priors, (a growing village), there is one school service with no return later than 1555 (see Appendix 13).

TA2 C3 Are there any planned changes to rural public transport services?

Answer

- There are no proposed improvements to frequencies in the pipeline. However, there is residential development either proposed or taking place between Priory Road and the by pass, so resultant funding may well produce an extra service. A Bus Focal Point for Alcester is planned by 2005 however no progress on this to date.

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TA2 C4 Is public transport accessible to the mobility impaired?

Answer

- Flexibus 512 is the only accessible public transport provision. This only operates on Mondays. However, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 it will be a requirement that all commercial operators are accessible by 2015.

TA2 C5 Are there special bus/taxi services in places where there are number conventional public transport service catering for people who are mobility impaired?

Answer.. Only the Flexibus operating, unaware whether there are any special taxis voluntary service etc.

TA2 C6 Is information on public transport easy to obtain?

Answer

- All parishes within the hinterland are notified *via* the Parish Clerks and if there are any changes the parish clerks are notified. No distribution centres in either of the villages in the hinterland, however this could be something that could be looked into. Is this information easily obtainable by others in the community. There is a national Traveline, which can give information on all forms of public transport connections.
- There is a need to consult with local people to find out whether the information is easily obtainable. There is a Project by the Rural Transport Partnership to improve information provision. Looking at developing village specific user friendly timetables. Could use RTP funding towards the information improvements if necessary.

TA2 S1 How many public services are available on-line and where can they be accessed?

Answer

- www.warwickshire.gov.uk - has an online search. However, this only displays the main transport routes. In addition, National Coaches are on-line and there is a Traveline hot line (telephone) which gives advice on public transport connections.

TA2 S2 Do buses travel into the town centre?

Answer.

- Bus stops do not need to be relocated as the buses currently stop relatively close to the town centre. However, improved signing could be a possible area to look into improving. Signposting is currently very poor and not consistent. Also Bus Focal Points could be another area to look into.

TA2 S3 How easy is it to get to health, education, cultural and retail services by public transport?

Answer.

- The County Council (Safe Routes to School Officer) has carried out a travel survey with schools and results will be forwarded when they are available for Alcester.
- There are particular problems with travel within the town from the Conway Estate to the town centre and also to reach hospital services in Warwick, as there is no direct bus link from Alcester. Although there is a regular day service to Stratford, evening services are very limited for access to education, leisure and cultural facilities, both from Alcester and the surrounding villages.
- Further research on this is being carried out on this by the Rural Transport Partnership and Alcester Opportunities Group

References for the above section

Rural Transport Partnership
Transport Operations, IMCC
IMCC - Local Transport Plan
Transport Operations, WCC and Bus Timetables
A.A Transport sub group

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Section: Transport & Accessibility

Worksheet: Ease of Movement around the Town

TA3 C1 Are there any seriously congested junctions or parts of the local road network?

Answer

- School Road very congested at times. Need traffic count data from WCC.
- OPTIONS:
 1. Car Sharing
 2. Walking Bus (part of Safer Routes to School initiative)
 3. A gradual change in speed limit from 60mph to 40 to 30 on all approach roads not just the Birmingham Road might also be a good idea in the pursuit of continuity. The sub-group also questioned the efficiency of the sleeping policemen method of traffic calming as they just seem to represent a challenge to motorists.
 4. Would an electronic 'too fast' or "your speed is..." sign be better or perhaps a speed camera on Captains Hill?

TA3 C2 Have there been many road traffic accidents involving pedestrian and cyclists at key locations in the town?

Answer

- Accident data for school road from WCC. Pedestrian crossing needed in the High Street.
- OPTIONS:
 1. Possible for improving infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists to avoid accidents.
 2. Potential for pedestrian crossing
 3. Potential to work with Safer Routes to School, WCC to develop Walking Bus (see Appendix 14)

TA3 C3 Are there any particular locations, e.g. shopping streets, where there is conflict between pedestrians and cars, buses or heavy vehicles?

Answer

- Conflict often in the High Street where there is double parking and parking on double yellow lines. No zebra crossing either to the health centre/police station.
- OPTIONS:
 1. Introduction of traffic calming measures?
 2. Pedestrianisation of the High Street
 3. Rising Bollards restricting access to certain vehicles only?
 4. Zebra crossing pedestrian infrastructure improvements.

TA3 C4 Where are the short and long-term car parking, coach parking and disabled parking and how well used is it?

Answer.

- Moorfields: 10 spaces, 0 disabled
- Bulls Head Yard: 130 spaces, 4 disabled
- Bleachfield Street: 62 spaces, 1 disabled
- Somerfield: 4 disabled

TA3 C5 How well used are the on and off-street car and coach parks?

Answer.

- No information on this. No survey undertaken.

TA3 C6 How many public buildings and shops have disabled access?

Answer

- Buildings with disabled access:
 1. Barclays Bank, Globe Centre, Greig Centre, Somerfield.
 2. Most of the remaining shops are small and tend not to have disabled access. Town Hall has no disabled access denying disabled people attendance at many key Town events, particularly on the first floor.

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TA3 C7 Are the majority of disabled parking places within 250 metres of the main focal points of the town centre e.g. the main shopping area?

Answer

- They are all within 250m of the main focal points of the town centre.

TA3 C8 Can buses move freely throughout the town centre?

Answer

- Double parking in the High Street has caused difficulties for buses getting through the main High Street.
- POSSIBLE OPTIONS:
 1. Introduce no parking in the High Street except for disabled access
 2. Park and Ride for the workers of the town
 3. Walking Bus for school children. Minerva Works as location for parents to drop children
 4. Bus Pd" Measures for town centre
 5. Pedestrianisation

TA3 C9 Are there any traffic management measures in place?

Answer.

- This information has not been available at the time of carrying out the healthcheck.

TA3 C10 Are the main shopping streets in the town centre pedestrianised or with pedestrian priority measures?

Answer.

- Main shopping streets in the town centre are not pedestrianised. No pedestrian priority measures planned either. There is priority for pedestrians in Somerfield Car Park, and 2 crossings are needed in the High Street.

TA3 C11 Where are the main foot and cycle paths within the town?

Answer

- No cycle paths in the town centre. One recreational riverside cycle/footpath exists along the Arrow from Gunning's Bridge to the Westbury and Roebuck Park Estates area. Pedestrian paths are in the town, two pavements in the lawn centre, one either side of the High Street with numerous alleyways connecting the various parts of the town. However, again as mentioned previously the signposting is very poor and lacking in consistency. Night time lighting could also be improved.

TA3 C12 Is it easy to find your way around town?

Answer

- As mentioned in last question, the sign posting is very poor and lacking in consistency. Also the library is not open on a Tuesday or at the weekend (Saturday afternoon or Sunday), so where do people get their information from on these days?
- OPTIONS:
 1. New globe house could have information on places to visit in and around Alcester and also public transport information.
 2. Bus Focal Points and improved signposting for pedestrians
 3. Other venues for public transport information?
 4. Other suggestions included naming the roundabouts.
 5. Could develop a large map for Alcester showing visitors where the bus stops are, where the main shopping points are etc.

TA3 S1 Are pavements in good condition and are there dropped kerbs at crossing points?

Answer

- Pavements and rainwater gullies in the High Street are not in good condition and in need of repair.
- Drainage channels in pavements have metal covers which frequently become dislodged and form dangerous trip hazards.

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- There are 2 dropped kerbs, one by Post Office and one by Turks, with 2 on both sides of the High Street. There are no crossing points at Whiteheads or The Bakers.

TA3 S2 Is there a shop mobility scheme?

Answer.

- No shop mobility scheme exists.

TA3 S3 Do the majority of pedestrian crossings have tactile markings and audible warnings i.e. pelican crossings?

Answer

- Yes most of the existing facilities have these features.

TA3 S4 Is there secure cycle parking at convenient locations around the town e.g. railways, main shopping areas and bus station?

Answer

- Town Council has proposed cycle racks at the end of Bulls Head Yard in the town. This is unsuitable and not secure. It would be better to put cycle racks at Somerfield car park which is nearer the town and more secure and in the area near the Post Office.
-

References for the above section

A.A Transport *Sub* Group
Transport Operations WCC
SDC - Leisure and Amenities
Traffic Management, WCC

Section: Transport & Accessibility

Worksheet: Ease of Movement around the Town

TA3 S5 Are the majority of short-term parking places within 400m of the main shopping area?

Answer

- Yes, car parking is generally provided within level access of the main shopping area to the rear of High Street and there is currently on street parking in High Street and outside the Post Office.

TA3 S6 Do buses experience delays or unreliability as a result of traffic conditions and/or traffic management measures in the town?

Answer

- This information has not been available at the time of carrying out the healthcheck.

TA3 S7 Are there dedicate desegregated cycle routes linking residential areas to the town centre and local schools?

Answer

- The Safe Routes to School Officer (WCC) has carried out research with primary schools within Alcester. To date, they have worked with the infants school, Moorfield Road and have widened the footway and improved signage. They have also done improvements to the C of E and adjoining Catholic Schools where they have widened the footway, provided coloured tarmac to create a school safety zone to create driver awareness that it is a school zone and drive carefully.
- WCC have contacted all the secondary and primary schools and to date only the above schools have expressed an interest. WCC is keen to develop a cycle scheme where support is given.
- In addition, Sustrans expressed an interest in making cycling improvements from Great Alne to Alcester as a school link and this is potentially a scheme that could be developed with their support

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TA3 SS How easy is it to walk to/from school?

Answer.

- WCC (Safe Routes to School Officer) has carried out a travel questionnaire with schools and this will be forwarded when it is available.

Section: Transport & Accessibility

Worksheet: Ease of Travel Outside the Local Area

TAI C1 What is the distance to a national network of dual carriageway roads from the town and the least and most accessible Villages?

Answer

- Alcester Town centre is 0.75 miles from the A435 and 1 mile from the A46 Lincoln to Bath trunk route. Both these roads are dual carriageway in parts but not continuously. Alcester is 10 miles (13 minutes by car) from the nearest Motorway (M42) and 14 miles (20 min) from the M40 at Warwick and 18 miles (28 min) from the M5. Most and least accessible village additional distances (times) vary by +1 to +4 miles (+3 to +10 min) depending upon travel direction considered.

TAI C2 What is the distance and average travel time by car to nearest large town, from the town itself and from the most and least accessible village within the surrounding countryside?

Answer

- Nearest large town = Stratford upon Avon
- Town/Village Name - Distance (Average Travel Time)
- Alcester - 8 Miles (15 Minutes)
- Weethley (least accessible) - 11 Miles (20 Minutes)
- Aston Cantlow (most accessible) - 4.5 Miles (10 Minutes) (see Appendix 13)

TAI C3 What improvements are planned for the local/regional highway network in your area?

Answer

- A435 this connects M5/M50, Evesham, Alcester, Studley, Redditch and the West Midlands Conurbation. Bypass has already been provided for Alcester.
- Studley By Pass: Highways Agency recognised problems and Studley Bypass scheme was designed and the necessary orders made in 1993, following a public inquiry in 1991/1992. However, at a late stage, the scheme was withdrawn from the Agency programme and the orders are due to be revoked. Proposed detrunking of the road. A study has been commissioned to develop a strategy for the route with a steering group comprising representatives from Warwickshire and Worcestershire County Council, Redditch and Stratford District Councils, GOWM, Highways Agency, CPRE and Studley Bypass Action Group. There is no current update on Studley By Pass as there is some discrepancy over whose project it is i.e. District Council, Government Office, County Council etc. Public consultation due to take place in the summer 2002.

TA1 C4 How far is the train station from the town centre?

Answer.

- No train station. The nearest station is at Henley in Arden or Stratford upon Avon.

TAI C5 Is the main bus station or main concentration of bus termini in the town centre?

Answer

- Main stops:
Evesham Street
Captains Hill
Police Station
Conway Estate
Kinwarton Road
Alcester High Street
Alcester Post Office

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- The main stop is Priory Road/Library/Police Station, however this is only 5 minutes walk from the town centre. The point however was raised over signposting to the town centre. This is currently very poor and not consistent.

TAI C6 Is it convenient to change between train and coach services, i.e. is it easy to walk can or is there a good connecting bus service?

Answer.

- No, because there is no station in the town, the nearest being Henley in Arden or Stratford upon Avon.

TAI C7 What is the frequency of rail services?

Answer

- The nearest station is in Stratford upon Avon or Henley in Arden.

TAI C8 What is the travel time to the nearest large town by bus/coach/train, from the town and from villages with good, adequate and poor public transport links?

Answer

- Nearest large town from Alcester is Stratford.
- Nearest large town from hinterland parishes may be Stratford, Evesham or Redditch.
- There are no coach and train services, thus NIA.
- Bus Services are as follows.
Alcester to Stratford has the following bus services (34Minutes), 26 (14 Minutes), 29 (27 Minutes), J 1 (45 Minutes).
Weethley has no public transport provision, thus least accessible to either Stratford, Evesham or Redditch
Adequate public transport to Redditch = Kings Coughton. Flexibus 512 to Redditch (Mondays only). Journey Time = 40 Minutes.
Adequate public transport to Stratford = Coughton (25- 44 Minutes), Wixford 212 (30 Minutes), Exhall 212(28 Minutes), Temple Grafton 212 (18 Minutes), Haselor 213 (Fridays only 213 (21 Minutes).
Good public transport to Stratford = Great Alne (25- 19 Minutes), Little Alne (25- 14 Minutes), Aston Cantlow (25- 11 Minutes), Salford Priors (28 - 35 Minutes), Wixford 212 (30 Minutes)
Good public transport to Evesham = Salford Priors 28 (22 Minutes), 29 (22 minutes) or 166 (22 minutes) and Wixford 146 (35 minutes). See Appendix 13.

TAI C9 What is the number of national coach services per day?

Answer

- None, the nearest National Coach terminal is at Bidford up Avon or Stratford upon Avon.

TAI C10 What improvements are planned for the public transport infrastructure and public transport services in your area?

Answer

- Bus Focal Points in Alcester by 2005
- Provision of a Bus Quality Corridor between Alcester and Studley
- Minimum service level for bus services is also being reviewed. Currently done on population, are reviewing it to look at car ownership, index of multiple deprivation etc. Alcester and hinterland parishes.

TAI S1 Is it as quick and easy to travel to the nearest large town by public transport as it is by car?

Answer:

- There is very little difference in travel time between the express bus service from Alcester to Stratford upon Avon and by car (around 14 mins) but the problem with using the bus is that

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it cannot guaranteed to be running on time and may be delayed by traffic congestion etc prior to reaching Alcester. The slower buses, which are not direct, take as long as 34 mins travel time. It is worth considering that travel by bus is normally a direct service and time does not have to be allowed for finding car parking space which is often difficult at peak times in Stratford upon Avon.

- Some of the villages such as Weethley have no bus service, whilst others only have a very infrequent service so it is likely that most people will be reliant on the car.

TA1 S2 Identify the differences in travel times between travelling by car and public transport?

Answer

This question has already been answered in TA1 S1 and TA1 C8.

TA1 S3 Are there any proposed improvements in rail, bus services or improvements in the road network that will improve there Journeys?

Answer

- The Easy LINK flexi bus is to be introduced in the Autumn which is a responsive public transport service along the Evesham to Stratford upon-Avon corridor and is currently planned to serve villages in the Vale of Evesham for access to the town centre and on request to hospital and the local college. It is currently a joint initiative between the Joint Worcestershire Transport Health Partnership, Evesham Market Town Board and the Wychavon Rural Transport Partnership. It is proposed to operate two hourly during the day, evenings and a limited service on a Sunday. An extension to this service could be made to serve Alcester and its surrounding villages, using new technology to link the rural community directly with training and medical services and overcome the lack of cross county links.