

SUBJECT: SOUTHAM TOWN PLAN
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**LEAD MEMBER/
PORTFOLIO HOLDER:** CLLR BEESE

SUMMARY

This report sets out the assessment of the Southam 2006 Town Plan. Southam Town Council adopted the Plan in January 2005.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That the Town Plan is adopted as a local information source to offer advice to the relevant departments of Stratford-on-Avon District Council.**
 - (2) That the Town Plan is adopted as a material consideration in processing planning applications, in accordance with Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review.**
 - (3) That the Town Plan steering committee, Town Council and the residents of Southam be commended for preparing their Town Plan and that they are encouraged to implement and review their Action Plan.**
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1 BACKGROUND/INFORMATION

- 1.1 This Town Plan has been prepared as the equivalent of the more familiar Parish Plan, as a community-led project identifying and surveying the assets, needs, opportunities, problems and solutions of the community residents within the parish area of Southam. Through 'Capacity' and 'Consensus Building', Parish Plans provide communities with a framework to take stock of the present and to plan for the future.
 - 1.2 The momentum for Parish Plans is continually increasing with half of the communities in the District having completed or in the process of undertaking detailed Parish Plan or Appraisals with associated recommendations and Action Plans. Further background information on the process is included in Appendix B.
 - 1.3 **Background to the submitted Southam Town Plan**
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- 1.3.1 Southam Town Council initiated the preparation of the Town Plan, with volunteers sought to run the Steering Group or contribute to the process through posters displayed around the town and at a public launch in September 2003. The project was funded through a grant from the Countryside Agency, support from the Town Council and contributions in kind from many local volunteers.
- 1.3.2 Throughout the process Southam Town Council used its own newsletter and website, posters and the local press to publicise events and progress made. A consultant was appointed to support the Town Council, and to run an extensive series of consultation events and then produce reports on the findings.
- 1.3.3 Preliminary information was gathered through discussion at the public launch where issues were discussed, and 120 preliminary questionnaire completed from a Saturday morning town centre survey. A short list of 7 issues were drawn up. The Town Council and consultant held an Open Public Meeting attended by nearly 200 members of the public where further issues emerged. This information was used to plan Focus Group Meetings to take issues forward, mainly involving volunteers from the public launch. The view of community organisations within Southam such as Brownies and Age Concern were also sought. The age and area of each participant at public events was marked on a map allowing the Steering Group to clearly see where there were gaps in the spread of people involved. Further consultation was then done with "hard to reach" groups: mother and toddler group, primary school children, teenagers and elderly.
- 1.3.4 The Consultant's final report and other consultation evidence was used to draw up a draft Action Plan. This Action Plan was consulted on through a questionnaire distributed and collected in areas of the town by the Town Councillors, and with supplies and collection boxes at local businesses. 1000 questionnaire were distributed with a response rate of 27%. This achieves a 10% sample of the households of Southam. While this is lower than the normally very high percentage achieved by Parish Plans, the situation for a much larger community like Southam makes it unrealistic to expect the whole community to contribute in the same way as for smaller parishes. The public meetings and focus groups provided people with more substantial opportunities to give their views, and the survey was used to indicate validation of the Action Plan.
- 1.3.5 Throughout the process there was a focus on making sure that all areas and communities in the town became involved. Everyone who attended the Open Public Meeting was asked to put a sticker on a map to show their home location and age group. This map provided very clear information about areas of the town and groups of people which had not been reached. The Steering group then attempted to fill the gaps through the consultation with hard-to-reach groups and by delivering the final questionnaire specifically to households in areas where no-one had previously attended.
- 1.3.6 The Parish Plan presents a clear picture of the needs and issues facing the community. Southam Town Council have taken on responsibility for pursuing the actions with regular review dates at full council meetings.
- 1.3.7 Although the Town Plan was completed and approved by the Town Council in January 2005, the printing of the Plan and presentation of it to

Stratford District Council was delayed by staffing issues at the Town Council. Since then much consultation work, using the Town Plan as a valuable foundation, has been undertaken on developing a 2020 Vision for Southam and surrounding parishes which will be considered for adoption by full council in February 2007. The scope of 2020 Vision is wider and more long-term than the Town Plan, but its consultation findings and agreed priorities support and develop the actions within the Town Plan.

1.4 Southam Town Plan findings

1.4.1 The findings of the Town Plan are expressed very briefly in the printed Plan, with the Plan focussing on methodology, objectives and an Action Plan. A consultant's report was also produced which gives detailed information on the opinions expressed at the public events and focus groups.

1.4.2 Detailed information is provided on the final responses to the general survey to confirm the Action Plan. The actions were tested under the headings of:

- Preserving and enhancing the environment of the town we live in.
- Preserving and enhancing the level and quality of shops and services provided.
- Ensuring that there is adequate housing of the right type to meet the needs of future generations.

1.4.3 The Parish Plan has been prepared employing a range of community participation techniques, including questionnaire surveys, public events, focus groups and a transparent process of reporting back to the community on progress. The process has generated a range of statistical data and qualitative material that has informed the Action Plan and which provides a useful information source.

1.4.4 Suggested response: Endorse – that the findings of the Southam Town Plan be endorsed as a true representation of the topics addressed by the Town Plan.

1.5 Southam Town Plan Action Plan

1.5.1 Analysis and responses to the Action Plan are provided in Appendix C, and the following analysis and comments should be read in conjunction with the Town Plan Action Plan.

1.5.2 The policy position of the Local Plan Review is generally supportive of the Action Plan points relating to planning, the environment and land use. The District Council is likely to be involved in taking forward several of the action points through the town-centre redevelopment and through the next phase of Southam's 2020 Vision.

1.5.3 Since its completion in January 2005, the Town Council has made progress on some actions, such as the Safer Routes to School project. As mentioned above, Southam's 2020 Vision has resulted in a framework of long term priorities which support and take further the actions set out in the Town Plan. The next phase of the Vision will be to develop and implement an Action Plan of achievable focussed projects, and this will take account of the projects listed in the Southam Town Plan 2006.

1.5.4 A Housing Needs Survey has already been completed. The District

Council will work with the Town Council and other partners on the meeting of the identified need.

2 OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO THE COMMITTEE

- 2.1 A) Adopt the Town Plan fully: This is a good, well-prepared Town Plan that would be a valuable local information source and material consideration.
- 2.2 B) Adopt parts of the Town Plan: If there are any concerns with certain aspects of the Town Plan, this option would allow the District Council to use selected aspects of the Plan in its decision making and as a local information source. No reasons have been so far identified to make this option necessary.
- 2.3 C) Not adopt the Town Plan: The District Council would miss the opportunity to adopt a useful source of local information, and a material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

3.1 Financial

- 3.1.1 Projects developed through this Town Plan may need funding to take them forward and the recommendations contained in this report should be contained within existing budgets. The District Council operates a Community Grants Scheme aimed at funding these types of projects, and the Community Grants team may be able to help search for appropriate funding sources. It is hoped that the Town Council and local residents will consider and pursue funding in order to develop their identified action points.

3.2 Environmental

- 3.2.1 Several of the actions within this Town Plan aim to provide services within the town which improve environmental sustainability by reducing local people's dependency on the private car. A few actions aims specifically to encourage walking and cycling as sustainable means of transport, and others aims to improve the local environment of the town and its surroundings.

3.3 Corporate Strategy

- 3.3.1 The Town Plan is a useful source of information about local community perception of their locality. The Community Plan and Corporate Strategy for the District support the range of topic areas and policies in the Action Plan. The Town Plan also complements and helps move forward the District Council's Agenda 21.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The actions recommended in this report are to commend those involved in the preparation of the Plan, adopt the Town Plan as a local information source, and adopt it as a material consideration. There are no identified major risks associated with these actions.
- 4.2 Choosing to not adopt the Town Plan would risk losing the chance to adopt a valuable source of local information and a useful material consideration to aid planning decision-making.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The Town Plan Steering Group, the Parish Council and residents of Southam should be commended and congratulated for completing their Town Plan, and are encouraged by Stratford-on Avon District Council to implement and periodically review the Action Plan.
- 5.2 The Southam Town Plan is a good example of how a community can prepare a Plan that is both a good source of local information, and provides a sound basis through the Action Plan to address the needs and aspirations of the community.

HEAD OF PLANNING SERVICES

Background papers:

Southam Town Plan 2006

Stratford District Community Plan; the future to 2015

Stratford-on-Avon Local Plan Review 2006

Stratford-on-Avon District Statement of Community Involvement, April 2006

Southam's 2020 Vision, produced 2006 pending consideration by full council.

ContinYou Consultants' report: Southam Action Plan, July 2004

Appendix A - Guidance for the Assessment of Parish/Town Plans

1.1 In assessing Parish Plans, the following considerations should be taken into account:

Evidence and extent of research work to justify conclusions.

Evidence and extent of analysis related to conclusions.

Public involvement and endorsement at local level.

Level of implementation available to District Council services, (e.g. the District Council Planning Authority, Leisure and Arts etc.).

Conformity with District Council's policies, (e.g. Planning policies etc.).

1.2 The above five criteria will enable the production of recommendations regarding the acceptance of each of the Parish Plan's detailed conclusions and Action Points.

1.3 A response to each of the detailed conclusions and Action Points will be one of the following:

(A) ENDORSE

The specific recommendation will be accepted and taken into account on the decision making of the District Council. (For example, "Small scale development with a 'craft' emphasis should be looked at sympathetically").

(B) ACTION

The specific recommendation will be accepted in principle and, subject to financial, procedural and legal constraints, implemented by or with the support of the District Council. (For example, "A social housing scheme of ten units on land next to the Green should be provided").

(C) INVESTIGATE

Further information to be obtained by the Parish/Town Council or other agency may be required in order that the District Council may establish if the specific recommendation can be supported. (For example, "An existing Conservation Area should be extended").

(D) SUPPORT

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is not the responsibility of the District Council. However, the proposal is supported and will be forwarded to the appropriate authority. (For example, "Traffic calming measures are required and the County Highway Authority should prepare a scheme").

(E) NOT SUPPORTED

The specific recommendation relates to a matter which is in contrary to the policy of the District Council or is beyond the powers of the authority or that insufficient and/or unsatisfactory information has been submitted to substantiate their commendation. (For example, "No development of any kind should take place within the settlement").

Appendix B – Further Background Information

- 2.1. Communities produce Parish Plans for a number of reasons:
 - To increase the awareness of community issues, foster community spirit and encourage a sense of pride;
 - To act as a strong basis for local action (the Action Plan);
 - To collectively represent the views of residents, to positively influence others to the benefit of the community.
- 2.2. In the 1980s the concept and practice of Village Appraisals first emanated nationally from the Rural Development Commission in conjunction with the Countryside Commission.
- 2.3. Nationally, Parish Plans have a role to play within the 'modernising Local Government' agenda, for example, shaping local services, public participation, decision-making and greater democratic legitimacy.
- 2.4. One of the aims within Chapter 12 of the Rural White Paper (Our Countryside: the future – A fair deal for rural England) includes involving people living in rural areas in developing their community, safeguarding its valued features and shaping the decisions that affect them – developing a vision for the future. Parish Plans are a recognised method of achieving this aim.
- 2.5. In line with guidance from the Countryside Agency issued in August 2000 ('Planning tomorrow's countryside', advice to local planning authorities, government and developers on how the planning system should operate and evolve), Parish Plans are a recognised community planning method to help achieve key objectives. In March 2003 the Countryside Agency produced detailed guidance for parish and town councils on the preparation of Parish and Town Plans.
- 2.6. Policy RA3 in the Warwickshire Structure Plan 1996-2011 encourages local planning authorities to use 'Appraisals' when establishing the views of local communities and when identifying local housing and industrial development need.
- 2.7. Stratford-on-Avon District Council is committed to the encouragement of Parish Plans as a means of identifying local issues and will respond to them positively. Much faith has been placed by the Government, the County Council and the District Council on local appraisals and their role in assisting the formulation of strategic policy.
- 2.8. Parish Plans can now play a broader role within the production of the statutory Community Plan for Stratford District.
- 2.9. The recommendations and Action Plans can both inform and help deliver the Rural Strategy for the Stratford-on-Avon District.
- 2.10. Policy COM.1 of the Stratford-on-Avon District Local Plan Review 2006 states:

"The views of the local community as expressed preferably in a Parish Plan (or equivalent) or in its absence an alternative source of reliable evidence, will be fully taken into account in the planning process. In particular they will be used:

 - To help assess the merits of schemes promoted by communities to meet needs which they have identified;

- As a material consideration in the determination of planning applications and to assist in identifying the scope and nature of associated planning obligations which might be sought; and
- To identify opportunities for environmental and other forms of enhancement.

In the case of Main Rural Centres and Local Centre Villages only, as defined in Policy STR1, small scale schemes which meet housing (particularly affordable housing) and employment needs will be encouraged in this way..."

- 2.11. Nationally, Parish Plans are broad, holistic documents addressing local issues at a local level. Whilst in this District 'appraisals' have had a close association with planning, they are no longer 'planning-led'. Parish Plans address both planning and non-planning related matters and this is reflected in their assessment at Committee.
- 2.12. Parish Plans can and do act as a tool to assist in giving many of the services provided by the District Council greater community focus. Vice versa, many of the services provided by the District Council can and do feed into the Parish Plan process creating more informed Action Plans.

Appendix C

Summary of key action points

Abbreviations WCC= Warwickshire County Council

 SDC= Stratford District Council

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
Preserving and enhancing the environment of the town	
Keeping library in town centre – make WCC aware that overwhelming support for this.	Endorse - Policy COM.2 of the Local Plan Review 2006 seeks to retain existing services which serve the needs of local communities, taking into account factors including the value of the facility to the local community in social and economic terms.
Liaise with local police to increase police officers visibility.	Support – the Community Plan aims to improve public confidence and safety.
Investigate relocation of one of the car park cameras to the town centre.	Investigate - the Community Plan aims to improve public confidence and safety. However, relocation of cameras is not cost-effective and would lose Safer Car Park Award. The Parish Council have been advised to contact the CCTV contractor, ADT, to discuss further.
Ensure there is a development brief for any new town centre redevelopment which takes account of Millennium Design Statement.	Action – SDC is currently co-ordinating land-owners to identify viability of re-development options, as a stage leading to establishing a development brief.
Contribute wherever possible to Town Centre redevelopment	Action – the Town Council have been invited to be involved in the one-stop-shop scheme.
Continue to promote safer walking routes to schools. Good progress has already been made.	Support – This action would support many of the Community Plans aims.
Investigate ways to improve cycling safety. Press for cycle routes to be included in any new developments.	Endorse – Policy COM.9 of the Local Plan Review 2006 sets out that development proposals will be expected to incorporate facilities for walking and cycling.
Request WCC to increase number of parking spaces and reduce waiting time limits. Ask SDC to enforce restrictions weekly and at ad hoc times. Ask SDC to carry out study of	Action and Investigate – Parking Services advise that restrictions are already enforced in this way. The Town Council are suggested to contact Mark Humphries, Construction and

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
Wood Street Car Park and see if can increase car spaces.	Properties, 01789 260668, to discuss Wood Street Car Park.
Support schemes that promote tourism including Blue Lias Rings, Holywell project, website. Improve information for locals and tourists.	Support – This action would contribute to the Community Plan’s aim for tourism to support the economy of the District, not just in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon.
Continue to consider pedestrianisation in centre.	Support – this action point can be supported if a scheme is seen to meet the aims of the Community Plan.
Preserving and enhancing the level and quality of shops and services provided	
Campaign for NHS dental care in town	Support and Endorse – this action point would contribute to the Community Plan’s aim to improve ease of access to key services. Policy COM.3 of the Local Plan Review 2006 encourages the provision of new shops and services which meet the needs of local communities.
Investigate inclusion of youth shelter/drop in centre in any future town centre development.	Action and Support – these issues are also being addressed through Vision for Southam and the 2020 Vision. This action point would contribute to the Community Plan’s aims to support the development of community facilities and to involve young people in leisure and recreational activities.
Continue to respond positively to developments that create local jobs	Endorse - the Town Plan and the community views expressed within it will be used as a material consideration when determining planning applications, as laid out in Policy COM.1 of the Local Plan Review 2006.
Draw attention of Vision 4 Southam Business Club to need for broader range of consumer goods in Southam.	Endorse - Policy MRC.1 of the Local Plan Review 2006 encourages new and improved retail or commercial development within the existing commercial core of Main Rural Centres such as Southam.
Press for facilities for families to do their weekly shop in Southam.	Endorse - Policy MRC.1 of the Local Plan Review 2006 encourages new and improved retail or commercial development within the existing commercial core of Main Rural Centres such as Southam. Please note that

Recommended Action	SDC Proposed Response
	planning policy could support an improved supermarket within the town centre but would not support an out-of-town location.
Continue to support Grange Hall and other venues' provision of evening entertainment for all age groups.	<p>Support and Action – this action contributes to the Community Plan's aim to support participation of people in formal and informal leisure activities.</p> <p>The District Council Community Grants team offer help locating funding, and can advise if a project may be eligible for the Council's Community Grants scheme.</p>
Ask WCC to extend Stockton tip opening hours and request increased recycling facilities especially plastic.	<p>Support and Action – The Community Plan seeks to increase the amount of household waste recycled. Plastic recycling facilities are available at Wood Street car park mini-recycling centre. SDC is looking to introduce door-to-door plastic collections in '08.</p>
Support Community Development Worker post at Graham Adams Centre.	<p>Support and Action – this action could contribute to many of the Community Plan's aims.</p> <p>The District Council Community Grants team offer help locating funding, and can advise if a project may be eligible for the Council's Community Grants scheme.</p>
Ensuring there is adequate housing of the right type to meet the needs of future generations	
Proactively meet housing needs to be identified in Housing Needs Survey for Southam.	<p>Action and Endorse – the Housing Needs Survey has now been completed. The policies of the Local Plan Review (COM.1 and CTY.5) allow for the provision of local occupancy housing on a basis of identified need. The District Council will work with the Parish Council and Rural Housing Enabler to investigate ways of meeting the identified need. It is suggested that the local community could have regard also to the findings of the Joint Housing Assessment for South Warwickshire due to be published in 2007.</p>

REPORT INFORMATION SHEET

Please complete and submit to Committee Services with draft report

COMMITTEE/DATE	DASSETT AREA COMMUNITY COMMITTEE – 9 JAN 07	
ITEM No/TITLE OF REPORT	SOUTHAM TOWN PLAN	
CONSULTATIONS UNDERTAKEN		
CONSULTEE	✓	DETAILS / DATE OF CONSULTATION / COMMENTS RECEIVED
WARD MEMBERS	✓	CLLR ALAN AKEISTER/7 TH DEC 06 CLLR JOHN APPLETON/7 TH DEC 06 CLLR LESLIE HEWER/7 TH DEC 06
COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN/ PORTFOLIOHOLDER * <i>*Required</i>	✓	CLLR JOHN APPLETON/7 TH DEC 06 CLLR STUART BEESE/7 TH DEC 06
FINANCIAL SERVICES * <i>*Required</i>	✓	RICHARD BURREL/7 TH DEC 06/ NO FURTHER COMMENTS
LEGAL SERVICES * <i>*Required</i>	✓	SERINTHER ATKAR/7 TH DEC 06
OTHER SERVICES	✓	HOUSING/ 28 TH NOV 06/ POLICY AND PR/ 28 TH NOV/ STEVEN NEWMAN, COMMUNITY SERVICES/ 28 TH NOV 06/ SUPPORTIVE, ADDS VALUE TO THE ONGOING SOUTHAM VISIONING PROJECTS
OTHER ORGANISATIONS	✓	SOUTHAM TOWN COUNCIL/7 TH DEC 06 WARWICKSHIRE RURAL COMMUNITY COUNCIL/ 28 TH NOV 06/ PREPARATION PROCESS SEEMS REASONABLE, LIBRARY AND SUPERMARKET ACTIONS MAY CONFLICT, HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY HAS ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED WITH SUPPORT FROM WRCC. WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL/ 28 TH NOV 06
FINAL DECISION BY THIS COMMITTEE OR RECOMMENDATION TO ANOTHER COMMITTEE/COUNCIL ?		FINAL DECISION RECOMMENDATION TO : EXECUTIVE / COUNCIL COMMITTEE <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
DOES THIS REPORT CONTAIN EXEMPT INFORMATION? IF SO, UNDER WHICH PARAGRAPH(S) ?		No YES, PARAGRAPHS : <i>Delete as appropriate</i>
DOES THIS REPORT RELATE TO A KEY DECISION (REFERRED TO IN THE EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN)		No YES, FORWARD PLAN ITEM – SCHEDULED FOR (date)

		<i>Delete as appropriate</i>
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