

Evesham

Town Plan



A strategy for the future



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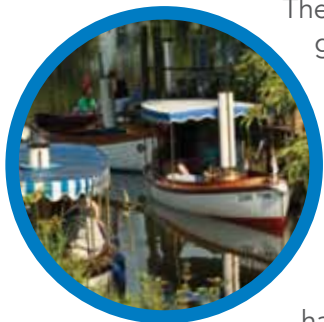
Evesham

Our future



Foreword

Why does Evesham need a town plan? And if it does, how on earth do you produce a plan that makes any kind of sense for a community of over 23,000 people? Where do you start? How far ahead do you look? What kinds of things do you put in? What do you leave out? These and many other questions faced the Evesham Town Plan Steering Group when we first met in November 2012. At the outset, four things mattered to us more than anything else in carrying out our work: we would ensure that everyone in Evesham would have the opportunity to contribute; the plan would include anything inside our town boundaries or affecting the town; it would be forward-looking while protecting and enhancing the things people value; and it would include arrangements for implementation and for reviewing progress every once in a while. We have stuck to these principles throughout the project.



The overall impression we have gained from listening to so many people – about 1,200, or 1 in 20 local residents – is that we have much to be happy about in Evesham. People like living here and they enjoy what the town and the surrounding area have to offer. Also – perhaps

not so visible to people – significant investment continues in and around the town. Currently, over £20m is being spent on industrial, retail and leisure capacity, quite apart from social and private housing, smaller business and other investment.

Our opinion survey coincided with the Abbey Bridge closure and, of course, for several years now we have been beset by the effects of persistent global economic problems. However, this is a strategic project and we have been careful to look behind these temporary set-backs because we were determined to focus on underlying trends and the long-term future of the town. Evesham, like so many other places, has been facing economic and social challenges for some

time and it is likely that these challenges will keep coming in an increasingly inter-connected and fast-changing world. So which towns will be successful and thrive? Those that merely cope, reacting to outside influences? Or those that have a shared sense of purpose and a clear direction? The Town Plan Steering Group nailed its colours to the mast because we know that Evesham has so much that is unique and such great potential for the future. We have used what people have told us about their likes and dislikes, their ideas and, yes, their dreams for the town as inspiration for creating a vision of what a strong and prosperous Evesham should be like in the future. We have also identified the priority areas for action to get there. There's no point in doing something like this if you're not going to be ambitious, and the various vision statements in the report capture this spirit of 'EOF – Evesham Our Future'. After all, our symbol is a humble swineherd whose own vision led to the building of one of the great abbeys of Europe and the founding of our town.

There is a long list of acknowledgements elsewhere, but on behalf of the Steering Group I would like to record here our thanks to Evesham Town Council for agreeing to support this project and for the practical help along the way. Our thanks must go also to Wychavon District Council, whose continuing investment in the town has been supplemented by the generous contribution to our work of so many officers and staff with special knowledge and expertise.

The Evesham Town Plan does four key things: it gathers and brings into focus people's ideas about the town and its future; it provides a framework and rallying point for community action; it strengthens the town's influence with decision-makers; and it provides a vehicle for periodic review. It has been a privilege, and greatly encouraging, to meet so many people with the goodwill, energy and talent needed to make the plan a reality.

Patrick Staines,

Chairman, Evesham Town Plan Steering Group.



Acknowledgments

It is not possible to list here everyone who has helped to produce this plan. We have found people unfailingly generous with their advice, ideas, facilities, budgets and time. People have dipped into their own pockets, in some cases rather regularly, and when we saw a resource problem ahead someone always came up with what we needed. The following list of acknowledgments is inadequate recognition.

All Saints Church, Evesham.

Badsey Parish Council.

The Bengeworth Club.

Blackminster Middle School.

Cartridge World, Evesham.

The Cotswolds and Vale Magazine.

Evesham Arts Centre.

Evesham High School.

The Evesham Hotel.

Evesham Leisure Centre.

Evesham Market Town Partnership.

Evesham Methodist Church.

Evesham Rowing Club.

Evesham Town Council

Fladbury Parish Council.

Guardsafe Security.

Hampton Working Men's Club.

Harvington Parish Council

ImaGine, Transition Evesham Vale.

Key Stakeholder Groups

Arts, Leisure and Sport: Bob Bailey, Evesham Sports Club; Chris Bloomfield, Arts Centre; Neal Cartwright, Arts Centre; John Lomas, Rowing Club; Lynne Powell, Cotswolds and Vale Magazine; Patrick Staines, Rotary; Lynn Stevens, Wychavon DC; Jem Teal, Wychavon DC; John Tomsett, Avon Navigation Trust; Colin Townsend; Evesham Angling Club.

Community Support: David Cooper, U3A; John Darby, Rotary/Street Pastors; Sharon Dyer, Age UK; Helen Gray, Volunteer Centre; Fred Kaler, Councillor/Older People's Forum; Gerry O' Donnell, Councillor; Jo Sandalls, Councillor; Nick Sellick, Community Contact Centre/Wychavon DC; Sgt. Phil Stayte, Police; Heather Yapp, Yates Court.

Economy: David Snowdon, Historical Society; Gerry O' Donnell, Councillor; Vicky Lawson, Steering Group/VECTA; Shawn Riley, Evesham Market Town Manager; James Fleck, Subway; Richard Jones, Councillor/Cartridge World; Chris Brookes, Wychavon DC.

Environment: Betty Ballard, Vale of Evesham Landscape Trust; Sue Campbell, Simon de Montfort Society; Andy Davis, Vale of Evesham Landscape Trust; Tony Haugh, Rotary; Steve Martin, Transition Evesham Vale/ Vale of Evesham Landscape Trust; John Porter, Transition Evesham Vale; Lynn Stevens, Wychavon DC; Deidre Sutton; Colin Tether, Vale of Evesham Civic Society; Robin Walker, Transition Evesham Vale.

Health and Wellbeing: Dr. David Farmer; Emma Gardner, Wychavon DC; Karen Green, Children's Centres; Fred Kaler, Councillor/Older People's Forum; David Manning, Wychavon DC; Frances Smith, Councillor/Friends of Evesham Community Hospital; Patrick Staines, Rotary; Dr. Neil Townshend.

Housing: Amanda Cook, Wychavon DC; Ian Hughes, Rooftop Housing; Jeremy Knight, Reeds Rains; Angie Matthews, Wychavon DC; Kirstie May-Jones, Wychavon DC; Rebecca Pitt, Rooftop Housing; Jo Sandalls, Councillor; Patrick Staines, Rotary; Richard Thomson, Civic Society; Paul Hardiman, The University of Birmingham Centre for Urban and Regional Studies.

Tourism: Gerry O'Donnell, Councillor; Angela Tidmarsh, Wychavon DC; Sue Jenkinson, Evesham Hotel; David Field, Evesham Hotel; Diana Raphael, Councillor/Rapheal's; Shawn Riley, Evesham Market Town Manager.

Transport: Clive Bostle, Ramblers; Steve Bullen, Evesham Wheelers; Michael Elliman, Councillor; Roy Fullee, Worcs. CC; Robert Hale, Evesham Vale Running Club; Jill Haycock, Cotswold Line Promotion Group; Fred Kaler, Older People's Forum; Jim Powell; David Snowden, Historical Society; Colin Tether, Civic Society.

Young People: Val Butler, Prince Henry's Academy; James Cox, Evesham High School; Karen Green, Orchard Vale Children's Centre; Richard Jones, Councillor/Cartridge World; Helen Lloyd, WCC; Robin Mace, Wychavon DC; Perry Perrott, S.Worcs. College.

Migration and Integration in Rural Areas – Tomasz Piotrowski.

The Northwick Hotel.

Orchard and Spring Vale Children's Centre.

Overbury Parish Council.

Planning for Real – Margaret Wilkinson.

Prince Henry's High School.

Riverside Shopping Centre.

Rooftop Housing Group.

Simon de Montfort Middle School.

St. Egwin's Middle School.

St. Peter's Church, Bengeworth.

Tesco, Evesham.

The Town Plan Steering Group: Helen Gray, Volunteer Centre; Richard Jones, Councillor/Cartridge World; Vicky Lawson, VECTA/Safeguard Security; Gerry O'Donnell, Councillor/Market Town Partnership; Lynne Powell, The Cotswolds and Vale Magazine; Shawn Riley, Market Town Manager; Jo Sandalls, Councillor; David Snowden, Historical Society; Patrick Staines, Market Town Partnership/Rotary; Colin Tether, Civic Society; Robin Walker, Transition Evesham Vale; Eleanor Bird and Ben Cook, The University of Birmingham Centre for Urban and Regional Studies.

John Wilson, Evesham Schools Millennium Project.

Worcestershire County Council.

Wychavon District Council.

Patrick Staines,

Chairman, Evesham Town Plan Steering Group.





1. Evesham's Origins and Development

1.1 Evesham is a market town and civil parish in the local authority district of Wychavon in the county of Worcestershire. With a population of 23,428 (2011 census) it lies within the Vale of Evesham, an area comprising the flood plain of the River Avon and long renowned for market gardening. The town centre is situated within a meander of the river and is subject to frequent flooding.

1.2 The name 'Evesham' is derived from the Old English "ham" or "homme" – a settlement – and "Eof," the name of a swineherd in the service of Ecgwin, third bishop of Worcester, later canonized as St. Ecgwin. While tending his herd of swine, Eof saw a vision of the Virgin Mary. He led Ecgwin to the spot, where the vision appeared to both men. At Ecgwin's instigation, work started on the abbey in around 701 AD and it was redeveloped and extended after the Norman Conquest, employing many trades and contributing significantly to the growth of Evesham. It eventually grew to become one of the largest in England. Abbey income came from pilgrims attracted by the miracle of the vision of Mary, and also from visitors to the tomb of Simon de Montfort. In 1540 AD, during Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries, Evesham Abbey was dismantled and sold as building stone.

1.3 Evesham Abbey remains are a Scheduled Ancient Monument and parts of the original complex, Abbot Reginald's Wall and the ruins of Abbot Chryton's Wall, are English Heritage listed buildings. The abbey's coat of arms is used as the crest of the local Prince Henry's High School.

1.4 The medieval town developed within the meander of the River Avon, while Bengeworth developed to the east on the opposite bank of the river. In 1055, a Charter Market was granted to the Saxon town by King Edward the Confessor. In the eleventh century, Leofric, Earl of Mercia, had a hunting lodge at Bengeworth. Leofric founded Holy Trinity Church with his wife Godifu (Lady Godiva). It is thought that Lady Godifu, who died in about 1067, might be buried on the abbey site. Evesham was later a borough and market town in the hundred of Blackenhurst in the county of Worcestershire.

1.5 In 1265 AD the town witnessed the second and decisive battle of the Second Barons' War, a bloody encounter between the forces of Simon de Montfort and those of the victorious Prince Edward, son of King Henry III and later King Edward I.

1.6 Today, Evesham is a town and civil parish administered at the lowest tier of local government by Evesham Town Council as part of the Wychavon district of the county of Worcestershire. Residents in the six town council electoral wards are represented by

24 members. The wards, based on streets, are represented by councillors: Avon (3), Bengeworth (5), Great Hampton (3), Little Hampton (5), Evesham South (5), Twyford (3). The town council is chaired by a mayor, and has a town clerk who acts as chief officer.

- 1.7** The town's retail, service and food outlets are situated in the traditional High Street, the Riverside Shopping Centre, and the Four Pools Retail Park. Evesham Country Park, located out of town, has a garden centre, shops, a miniature railway and a wildlife centre. The expansion of edge-of-town retail development in the last two decades has adversely affected businesses in the town centre.
- 1.8** On the edge of town, light manufacturing, distribution and other businesses have been attracted to the expanding Vale Business Park and other sites.

Transport

- 1.9** In 1728, the London to Worcester road through Evesham was improved as a turnpike, as was the Evesham to Alcester road in 1778, thereby greatly easing travel to and within the area. Evesham is at the junction of the A46 and A44 roads. The 4-mile (£7 million) A46 single carriageway bypass to the east and south of the town was opened in July 1987.
- 1.10** The River Avon is a navigable waterway linking the River Severn at Tewkesbury to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. The river is now managed by the Avon Navigation Trust.
- 1.11** In 1845, an Act of Parliament was passed for the building of the Oxford, Worcester and Wolverhampton Railway. Evesham station was built to service the line between Honeybourne and Pershore. The station is now on the Cotswold Line from Paddington and Oxford to Worcester, Great Malvern and Hereford. There are trains every 60 to 70 minutes approximately and trains to London take about two hours.
- 1.12** The nearest major airport is Birmingham International, about 45 minutes away by car.





Culture

- 1.13** Evesham had a distinctive dialect known as “Asum Grammar”. Although still occasionally in evidence, a decline in its use began towards the end of the C19th, attributed at that time to the standardisation of English in schools and more recently to the influence of mass media.
- 1.14** Evesham Arts Centre was built in 1979 and is staffed and operated by volunteers. It provides a venue for professional and amateur performance. Events hosted include drama, stand-up comedy, brass bands, orchestras, panto and ballet. It has a raked 300 seat auditorium, full technical facilities and film projection, and a 60-seat studio space for smaller productions. The foyer is used as an exhibition space for local artists. The centre is managed by the Evesham Arts Association, a registered charity.
- 1.15** The Regal Cinema reopened in December 2012. Its Grade II listed building was designed in 1932 by architect Hurley Robinson, who was responsible for several public buildings in classical and art deco style including 55 other cinemas. The Regal is the most important surviving example.
- 1.16** Still today, the legend of Eof and St. Ecgwin and the miraculous vision of the Virgin Mary forms the basis of the town’s history and traditions, as well as its medieval heritage. Eof is commemorated in the Market Place in the form of a statue showing the moment of his vision – the moment when the future town of Evesham was conceived.

2. Aims of the plan

- 2.1** While any town plan is community-led, the leadership and support of elected representatives can contribute significantly to the credibility and impact of a plan by demonstrating the local council’s commitment to championing the interests and the vision of the community.
- 2.2** The Town Plan is an evolving document that will change and adapt over time to reflect the changing needs of our community and the socio-economic developments that will influence those needs.
- 2.3** The aims of the plan are to:
- Provide a framework within which the town’s priorities can be addressed under the guidance and coordination of a body involving the Town Council.
 - Identify those projects and actions that will make the biggest impact on the town’s future prosperity and well-being.
 - Gain the understanding and support of businesses, service providers and residents in working towards all the plan goals.
 - Provide a vehicle for periodic public consultation.

- 2.4** The headline desired outcomes distilled from the consultations and the actions outlined in the plan are as follows:

Headline desired outcomes

- a) A town to be proud of with a strong identity.
- b) A prosperous town that offers the things that people want.
- c) A town that promotes healthy communities and supports people's needs.
- d) A town that strives to improve its environmental impact, sustainability and appearance.
- e) A town that facilitates ease of access for all.
- f) A cohesive community that engages with people of all ages in the operation of the town.

- 2.5** The Town Plan is not:

- **Legally enforceable** – it will be a highly influential document that informs decisions and will rely on dialogue, persuasion and cooperation.
- **Fixed and unchangeable** – it will need to evolve as circumstances and priorities change.
- **"Someone else's job"** – It is everybody's plan, and it will rely on the broad and committed support of the community.
- **All going to happen quickly** – some aims might be achievable quickly, some within months or a year or two. Others will

take several years and will need to be approached in stages.

- 2.6** The Steering Group has determined to make its report and associated proposals concise, coherent and easy to read. We have decided, therefore, that it is not desirable – even if it were possible – to try to weave together all the thousands of ideas contained in the public survey responses and Key Stakeholder Group (KSG) proposals.

- 2.7** They are all captured in the project database and in the attached appendices. Also at: **www.eveshamourfuture.info**.

- 2.8** They have provided a rich source of ideas and inspiration for the Steering Group and will continue to do so for any future work on behalf of the town.

- 2.9** An important aspect in achieving these aims is attracting new companies to the town. There has already been much success in attracting investment to Evesham and the District. The value of current construction within Wychavon is an impressive £271.8 million, with over £20million invested in Vale Park, Evesham Country Park and the town centre Waitrose development. There is, however, considerable potential remaining within the town centre for improved retail and leisure mix.





- 2.10** Finally, the Town Plan, while not legally enforceable, will be an influence on planning and other decisions made on behalf of the town, as well as providing a basis for mobilising the community.

“The key requirement for success is regular and continuing dialogue, both with decision-makers and within the community.”

3. Summary conclusions

- 3.1** The volume of responses to our consultations and the resultant priorities identified in the plan are too numerous to be covered in one simple action plan. The Steering Group has therefore identified those priority areas that it considers could form the beginning of a practical action plan. This does not mean that all other priority areas ought to be sidelined, but simply that those identified below should have the greatest impact in taking the town forward.
- 3.2** There is a lot to be proud of in Evesham, and much has already been achieved in the areas of inward investment, tourism, and leisure activities. There are many thriving small businesses in the area, some of which are showcased in the excellent ‘Grow in Wychavon’ book. Businesses continue to thrive and grow and, in the last twelve months, over £20m has been invested in Evesham and surrounding area by new or expanding businesses with the consequential increase in employment.
- 3.3** This plan seeks to build on these successes and map a way forward for Evesham, taking account of the ideas and proposals from the residents of the town. Alongside the successes, some areas have been identified as “key priorities” for launching Evesham into the decades ahead and growing the town’s prosperity. Some areas covered by these priorities are already being addressed, but we hope this plan will encourage further emphasis and innovation.

3.4 The key areas are:

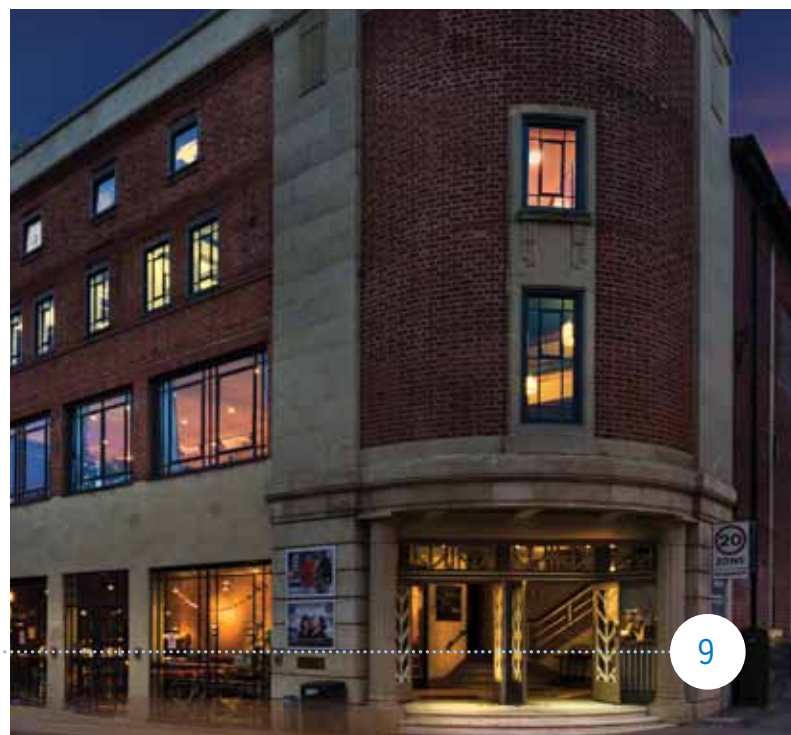
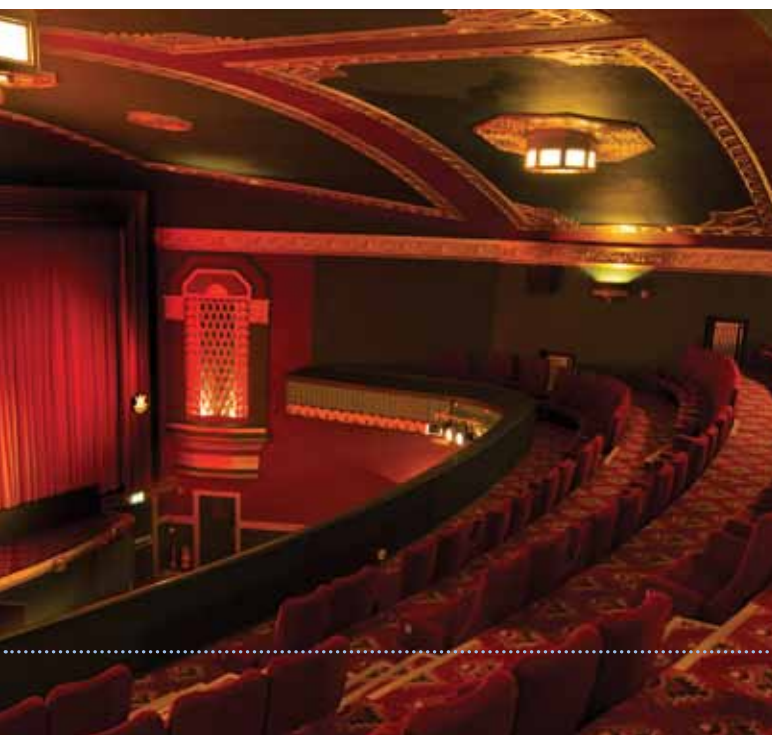
- The town centre and shopping experience – 32.6% of total responses.
- Transport and traffic flow (including parking) – 19.4% of total responses.
- Leisure amenities – 13.5% of total responses.

3.5 The top priority actions that can successfully set in motion positive change are:

- Develop a clear housing strategy for the town within the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), which will provide the basis for influencing more integrated sustainable and community-sensitive development.
- Re-invigorate the Market Place and establish pleasant town centre locations for spending time and eating indoors and out.
- Develop a central information hub to provide easy access to information about services, events and activities, including voluntary and charity sectors.
- Integrate social and healthcare services and increase local delivery
- Enhance local clinical facilities to increase the diversity of treatment that can be provided within the community and safeguard the Community Hospital.
- Develop an anti-litter strategy for the town.

- Develop a Green Plan for the town.
- Promote Evesham's investment potential to Regional, National, and International markets.
- Target tourism promotion to the biggest spending markets.
- Establish a network of cycle routes in and around Evesham.
- Commission an independent town centre traffic study.
- Attract a wide range of employers to offer more diverse apprenticeship, training and career opportunities.

- 3.6 A theme repeated throughout this plan is the need for better communication at all levels, not only between statutory and voluntary service providers, but more importantly between public representatives and the residents of Evesham. This can be a difficult issue to resolve, but it is clear that everyone needs to explore ways of improving public understanding through more effective and timely communication.





4. Responses by category



**Arts, leisure
and sports**

1046



**Local
economy**

694



**Community
support**

477



Tourism

526



Environment

965



Town centre

1964



**Health and
well-being**

292



Transport

1104



Housing

362



**Young
people**

302

5. Arts, leisure and sports



17.2%
of all
responses

The vision

A town offering a wide variety of cultural, sports, leisure and social opportunities for its residents and visitors.

Introduction

- 5.1** It is clear that arts, leisure and sports facilities in the town are well regarded, with five positive comments for every critical one.
- 5.2** The riverside and parks, the Regal Cinema, the leisure centre, the arts centre, the Almonry Museum, the library and the variety of sports clubs received strong approval.
- 5.3** Investment is key to this area, and in the short to medium term local government budget constraints will limit spending to maintenance rather than new investment.
- 5.4** Some key points on this topic arising from the survey and Key Stakeholder Group discussions:
 - Current economic constraints should not inhibit good ideas for the town in the future.

- There are many suggestions that would support the social and economic development of the town.
- Many of the responses indicate a desire for more activities/socialising places in the town for families and young people.
- Information about activities and amenities in the town is fragmented and difficult to find.

5.5 The areas attracting the most responses were:

1. Community facilities (45%)
2. Events (18%)
3. Eating out (14%)

Community facilities (45% of responses)

- 5.6** There is a long list (209) of things that people would like in the town, many of which take little account of cost and viability, but many also have potential to enhance the quality and prosperity of the town centre.

"This topic is of importance to social and economic wellbeing."



Community facilities

Priority areas for action

1. Survey all existing community facilities to optimise their use.
2. Create a comprehensive and easily accessible source of information for all amenities, events, clubs and activities in the town.
3. Re-open the Public Hall as part of the regeneration of the Market Place/town centre and investigate the possibility of relocating Evesham Arts Centre there.
4. Establish a multi-purpose community arts centre located in the middle of town and open all-day and evening.

Events (18% of responses)

- 5.7** The town's summer programme received many positive comments and there is a long list of suggested new or reintroduced popular events. These included the Mop Fair, the Town Carnival, the Evesham Show, various music, food and arts festivals, and sports events. These types of events depend entirely on public interest and initiative and should be reviewed with that in mind.
- 5.8** The priorities below are selected for one or all of the following reasons:
- They have significant potential to benefit the town.
 - They exploit the town's history and other unique features.
 - They are likely to attract funding.

Events

Priority areas for action

1. Evening events all year round to attract people into the town.
2. A high-quality visitor experience centre on the abbey site as a base for events.
3. Investigate the potential for new events to supplement existing ones.

Eating out (14% of responses)

- 5.9** Some favourable comments about businesses in the town were made, but most responses were to do with a need for more quality restaurants, cafes and wine bars in a pleasant town centre setting or with views of the river. The words "bistro", "café culture" and "brasserie" are significant. A town-centre hotel to accommodate more visitors and tourists and offering dining options was also mentioned.
- 5.10** Other suggestions were for good-quality, less expensive family restaurants and specific popular chains such as Nando's and KFC. There were many suggestions for eating and drinking outside while enjoying river views.

Eating out

Priority areas for action

1. More good quality bars, cafes and restaurants in the town and overlooking the river, for eating indoors and out.
2. More reasonably priced family restaurants in the town.
3. Promote local produce in local outlets.

Other priorities

- 5.11** These include a number of miscellaneous topics. All received some positive comments and mostly individual suggestions.
- 5.12** Those worthy of separate mention include: 'Cinema' – refers to the Regal Cinema, which gets favourable comments, with suggestions for particular programmes/films (for example, "Art" films, Polish nights, etc.); Evesham Arts Centre gets favourable comments and suggestions about a face-lift and better publicity, but many responses suggest a town-centre facility; The Almonry Museum gets positive responses and suggestions to upgrade/improve.

"We need pleasant town centre locations for eating indoors and out."



6. Community Support



7.8%
of all
responses

see also
'Health and
well-being'

The vision

To have a formal and informal network of services that can identify, care for and support the physical, emotional and psychological needs of the community, and contribute to the creation of strong community cohesion.

Arts, Leisure and sport. Action plans under these themes will, therefore, also contribute to the Community Support vision.

"Concern remains about the issues of isolation and loneliness"

Introduction

- 6.1** Whilst it was felt that many of the services currently provided under the auspices of "Community Support" are good, there were several areas where, with a little investment, significant improvements could be made. The voluntary sector forms part of the important informal network and will become more involved in the provision of support services going forward. As local authorities continue to be financially squeezed, this sector will need to step into the gap.
- 6.2** Funding will remain a huge issue, and the voluntary sector provision may need to be on a repayment basis for some services. This theme also permeates other themes in this plan, such as Health and well-being, Young people and

Services (33% of responses)

- 6.3** Consultation results demonstrated that accessing information and services was thought to be poorly organised or lacking in the present systems. Informal support services need to be better coordinated, (charities, voluntary, statutory) and the community better informed about what is available.
- 6.4** A physical location (a central information point in the town centre) and a website were the favoured methods for accessing information. It is also recognised that people of different ages would use differing methods and this should be catered for.

6.5 The need for improved transport links will be crucial, especially to the villages. Services that assist financially will also be in great demand as pensions decrease in value and the cost of living inevitably increases.

6.6 The problem of homelessness is likely to remain, and therefore more temporary accommodation together with a drop-in centre would assist with alleviating this issue. Nevertheless, having affordable housing together with privately owned and rented accommodation requires careful and sensitive planning.

6.7 Councils and planners need to be aware of this, and work more closely with the Town Council and community groups.

Services

Priority areas for action

1. Develop a central hub to provide ready access to information about what services are available. (statutory, charitable, and voluntary sectors).
2. Improved broadband access.
3. Improved rural transport links.
4. Increased temporary and hostel accommodation to cater for future homelessness needs.



Hospital services (17% of responses)

6.8 Concern was expressed about the loss of, or changes to emergency service provision and the importance of securing the future of Evesham Community Hospital. There was also strong support for the creation of an A&E department at the Community Hospital, and an expansion programme that would allow patients to be discharged from Primary Care to the local facility or to their homes.

6.9 To facilitate care at home, it was recognised that more efficient partnership working would be necessary.



Hospital services

Priority areas for action

1. Develop care in the community facilities.
2. Continue to secure Community Hospital future and expand services.
3. Introduce 'Help Your Neighbour' schemes.
4. Integrate social and health care services and improve out of hours GP service.

Communications (13% of responses)

- 6.10** There is a strong desire for more community cohesion within the town. "If only people would speak to each other," was a common refrain. The Town Plan consultation exercise gave people a common cause in which to engage and communicate, which was welcomed and enjoyed by all participants. However, there is an opportunity to explore more and better ways for townspeople to engage with each other and also work for the good of Evesham.
- 6.11** The general appearance of the town and its public amenities were thought to have an influence on community cohesion, via a feel-good factor, and the development of civic pride. A number of actions were thought viable, as outlined below.

- 6.12** For the town to grow and create communities that prosper and have a sense of community cohesion it will be vital to attract jobs across the employment sector. Such growth would do much to provide support for the community through the circulation of increased disposable income. Key outcomes are the importance of infrastructure, the utilisation of brownfield sites first, and the right developers.

"It is recognised that communities will have a growing role to play in developing their own identity and support structures"

Communications

Priority areas for action

1. Improve communication channels between public representatives and voters.
2. Use social media in a positive way and to instill local pride.
3. Develop closer partnerships with schools and parents, the public sector and senior citizen groups.
4. Encourage promotional events, and ensure they are well marketed.
5. Use social media in a positive way and to instill local pride.





Amenities (13% of responses)

- 6.13** The expansion of Evesham's population will place pressures on infrastructure and community facilities. Planners and developers will need to ensure that appropriate community facilities are designed into developments, including open spaces, play areas, and community centres.
- 6.14** The references above to the general appearance of the town and its environs will require greater community effort, as well as effective enforcement of existing by-laws and other legislation. Small additional resources could make a significant difference if targeted appropriately..

Amenities

Priority areas for action

1. Ensure new community centres are incorporated into new developments.
2. Establish support groups for parents.
3. Recruit volunteer teams to help tackle local "grot spots".
4. Develop a town anti-litter policy and strategy.

"There should be a central information hub to ensure access for all."



7. Environment



15.8%
of all
responses

The vision

A greener, more energy-efficient and self-sufficient Evesham by 2031.

Introduction

7.1 “Environment” means many different things to people, and the survey responses show a wide range of perceptions and priorities. Whilst there are concerns about the immediate local environment, this plan also addresses the “Green Agenda” in respect of Evesham’s environmental future. This topic is, therefore, divided into two main categories. These are **The Local Environment (Place)** and **The Green Environment (Sustainability)**

7.2 The main areas and percentages attracting responses are as follows:

Local environment

Appearance (11%)

7.3 There were some positive comments about the town’s appearance, but many respondents saw opportunities for improvements. The main concerns were:

- General scruffiness – litter, paving, shop fronts.
- Old and neglected buildings and areas – e.g. Telephone exchange, Park View Hotel, Castle Street, Port Street.
- Litter, chewing gum, dog mess.

7.4 The main priority actions emerging from the survey are as follows:

“The survey showed a wide range of perceptions about the environment.”



Appearance

Priority areas for action

1. Develop an anti-litter strategy, and site more bins (especially in residential areas, alleys and paths)
2. Review regulations that define visual standards for shops and businesses
3. Encourage creative solutions to neglected sites

Public spaces (15.5%)

- 7.5** Most of the responses (30%) about the river and riverside were positive. There were many suggestions for improving them as leisure and visitor attractions, and they can all be summarised as:
- Using the river more and enhancing the river's attractions.
- 7.6** Many suggestions were about improved facilities in the parks, extending and linking the parks better with the town and generally protecting and extending green spaces. Making the town greener, with pleasant, quieter places to sit and spend time also featured.
- 7.7** The main priority action areas emerging from the survey are as follows:

Public spaces/locations

Priority areas for action

1. Create new connections between the parks and the town centre.
2. Reflect the quality of the parks within the town centre.
3. Nurture the green spaces – large and small – in and around the town.
4. Create quiet spaces for sitting in the town.
5. Prescribe better landscaping and communal areas in new development permissions.



Heritage (6%)

- 7.8** Heritage is an important aspect of the town's character, appeal, and potential. Responses reflected three main concerns:
- Protecting and enhancing the town's built heritage.
 - Revealing and promoting the town's history and historical heritage.
 - Protecting the area's horticultural history and heritage.

Heritage Priority areas for action

1. Reveal and present Evesham Abbey – for example, with an archaeological dig, or a visitor centre etc.
2. Bell Tower – provide access to top for view/income.
3. Create a local listing of important buildings.
4. Ensure preservation of old orchards and fruit species.
5. Celebrate growing history and traditions in and around the town.

The green environment

Sustainability (7%)

- 7.9** The responses revealed short-term and long-term concerns. But, environmental issues and concerns were raised throughout several other areas (see below).
- 7.10** Our vision for a sustainable Evesham reflects our shared responsibility to balance stewardship of our natural environment and building a just and vibrant community.
- 7.11** Suggestions concerned five main areas:
- Energy generation.
 - Energy use.
 - Buildings.
 - Pollution.
 - Recycling.

Sustainability (4%)

Priority areas for action

Produce a Green Plan for the town, building on Wychavon's 'Intelligently Green' policy, which:

1. Exploits the potential for local energy generation.
2. Reduces traffic and other pollution.
3. Reduces energy consumption in buildings and public services.
4. Insists on high environmental standards for housing.
5. Retro-fits existing houses for low energy consumption.
6. Promotes local growing and eating.
7. Locates green recycling centres around the town.
8. Creates recognition and reward schemes for local green businesses.

"Management of the environment has long been a key factor in the economy."

Growth (6%)

- 7.12** This subject is covered extensively in the Housing Key Stakeholder Groups Appendix, but here links growth to aspects of other town development, both economic and physical. Six percent of responses on Environment were concerned with growth, the main topics being:
- Growth versus no more growth.
 - Use of brownfield sites.
 - Protection of historic and conservation areas.
 - Protect orchards, flood plains and open spaces.



8. Health and well-being



4.85%
of all
responses

The vision

The provision of high-quality, easily accessible medical and health services and an environment in which people are informed and encouraged to keep healthy and fit.

Introduction

8.1 The responses can be organised into three broad categories:

1. Health and emergency services.
2. General public health.
3. Public behaviour and safety.

Health and emergency services (20% of responses)

8.2 Responses concerned the retention of the Community Hospital and local emergency services (echoed also in Community Support). Many suggestions were made for enhancing the role of the hospital. It seems that current NHS policy is moving in this direction, but

frequent policy changes in the past have left a persistent fear of losing this valued local service. GP access was also cited as a concern, as was the need for more support in the home as the population ages.

Health and emergency services Priority areas for action

1. Retain and develop the Community Hospital.
2. Enhance Community Hospital facilities to increase the range of local treatments.
3. Integrate health and social care to ease bed blocking and provide a holistic approach to care.
4. Improve access to out of hours GP services.
5. Develop support services for people in their homes.

"The general perception is that public health is fast deteriorating."

General public health (20% of responses)

- 8.3** The general perception among respondents regarding public health was that it is fast deteriorating – obesity, poor diet, lack of exercise, drug and alcohol abuse and sexually transmitted diseases all featured in responses.

General public health Priority areas for action

1. Better publicity and promotion of local exercise and activity groups.
2. Promotion of outdoor events like walking and cycling.
3. Explore the potential for delivering integrated rehabilitation services locally.



The success of Street Pastors suggests that, with other measures listed in the panel below, a system of town wardens could be effective in supporting policing efforts and monitoring problem areas.

Public behaviour and safety (20% of responses)

- 8.4** Although Evesham is seen as a safe town, some 20% of responses were on this topic. A level of concern exists about scruffiness, rowdiness, anti-social behaviour and personal safety generally. Several specific areas of the town were cited as having problems with bad behaviour, drunkenness, fighting and drugs.

Public behaviour and safety Priority areas for action

1. Better lighting of paths and public areas.
2. Closer monitoring of pub management control and licences.
3. Restrictions on drinking in the parks and streets.
4. Establish improved liaison between community and police.
5. Encourage families to visit town in evenings.



9. Housing



6%
of all
responses

The vision

A town that provides for people at every stage of their lives a range of appropriately designed, attractive, environmentally sound housing set in quality spaces with easy access to the town centre.

South Worcestershire Development Plan

9.1 At the time of writing, the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP), which covers the period 2006–2030, has been under review by the Planning Inspector, and the proposed amendments are now out to public consultation.

9.2 The national pressure for an acceleration of house building after decades of under-investment is reflected in the Inspector's requirement for a significant increase in the number of new homes proposed.

9.3 The SWDP number of new homes in Evesham suggests an increase of 26% above the number in the 2011 census (10,442), which results in a new total of 13,125 – an increase of 2,683. This number, however, is to include units already built since 2006, currently under construction, and approved but not started. The total number of units falling into these categories is 1,127, leaving 1,456 units to be built over the next 26 years.

9.4 Several factors will tend to increase future housing demand and planning numbers for Evesham. These include the underlying national population and demand trends, the fact that these trends will tend to increase rather than decrease, and the fact that within the SWDP, Evesham is seen as a suitable location for a larger share of new homes than the average across Wychavon.

9.5 The Office of National Statistics forecast for population growth in Wychavon up to 2021 (based on the 2011 census) is 5.9%. In Evesham, this would represent an increase in population

from 23,428 to 26,085. In light of recent and proposed development in and around the town, it seems likely that this population forecast will be met much earlier than 2021.

9.6 Evesham will, therefore, grow into a significantly bigger town, and it is not difficult to foresee a population in excess of 30,000 well before the end of the Town Plan period in 2031. Infrastructure and services must be prepared for such an increase over the next decade.

“It is clear that significant new housing development will take place in Wychavon over the next two decades.”

9.7 The number of responses does not necessarily reflect the strength of feeling on this subject. Not all responses were against further development, but reflected concerns about its impact. In summary, responses included:

- “No more housing” and fears about “the loss of the small market town community”.
- Concerns about location, infrastructure, facilities, flooding and the environment.
- The mismatch of speculative development and the real housing needs of the community.
- The blandness and poor environmental quality of new housing developments.

Growth (63% of responses)

including shops and services

9.8 While some people wanted no more growth, or were concerned about the loss of orchards and green spaces, or wanted to protect specific locations (Abbey Road, town centre), others suggested using only brownfield sites, converting empty shops, and ensuring that facilities and services kept pace with population growth.



Growth

Priority areas for action

1. Develop a clear strategy for the town within the SWDP to provide a basis for influencing more integrated, sustainable and community-sensitive development.
2. Protect the character of the town and the surrounding countryside.
3. Services and infrastructure should be developed in parallel with population growth.
4. Empty premises in the town and brownfield sites should be used for new homes.

Design and sustainability (12% of responses)

- 9.9** Recent developments were seen to be bland “off-the-shelf” designs with little regard to the locality or distinctiveness. There is a desire for housing that is attractive, environmentally-sound and cheaper to build, but it is difficult to see how the near-monopoly of traditional developers/builders might be broken. This is an area in which influencing policy makers is vital if these goals are to be achieved.

Design

Priority areas for action

1. New developments should be well designed for community living and access to the town.

2. Planning approval should seek to require new homes to meet best practicable environmental standards.
3. Explore ways to attract socially and environmentally sensitive developers.

“House building has fallen behind population growth.”

Affordable housing (12% of responses)

- 9.10** The paucity of affordable housing is a local and national problem. House building has fallen behind population growth and open market affordable/entry-level housing has suffered most in terms of both availability and price. Social housing provision in the town and surrounding area is considered good but more is needed.

Affordable housing Priority areas for action

1. Better matching of new homes to community needs – affordable starter homes, young singles and homes for the elderly.
2. More social housing.
3. More affordable rental property.

“There is a desire for housing that is attractive, environmentally-sound and more affordable.”



10. Local economy



11.5%
of all
responses

see also
"Town
centre"

The vision

To create the conditions for a thriving local economy through increased inward investment, job creation, improved accessibility and growth.

- 10.1** It is clear from the data that the retail mix and quality was causing the greatest concern, together with business rates, rent levels, future employment prospects and the quality of the market. These issues inevitably crop up under several other themes in this plan, but actions outlined in this chapter attempt to deal directly with the local economic issues identified by respondents.

Introduction

- 10.2** All other themes in this Plan contribute to the local economy to a greater or lesser extent. But in broad terms, Evesham's economy is underpinned by:

- **Money in:** investment and spend
- **Money circulating:** improved shopping and tourist offer.
- **Growth:** job creation and housing.

Money in

Investment

- 10.3** It was felt that many of the successful actions in respect of investment would come from recognised and credible sources in the public and private sectors. The contribution that could be made by community groups or the private individual was perceived as being limited in that they could do little to lever in significant investment to the town, though there will be some opportunities for small personal investments in the form of individual business start-ups.

- 10.4** Wychavon District Council should continue to work with potential investors to facilitate the establishment of new ventures within and close to the town. For example, councils can continue to make direct investments as well as unlocking land deals and facilitating private investment.

Investment

Priority areas for action

1. Explore the feasibility of providing greater incentives for new and existing local small businesses.
2. Continue to expand the local industrial capacity in partnership with Wychavon District Council.
3. Lobby for a fairer system of business rates.
4. Retain and improve the Charter Market.

Spend

- 10.5** It was felt that this was an area where a partnership with community groups, the district and town councils could make a difference, and around which an action plan should be developed.

There is huge potential here with the priority actions detailed in the 'Tourism' chapter.

Spend

Priority areas for action

1. Develop the 'Tourism' proposals to make Evesham a destination of choice.
2. Improve the shopping experience through investment and better use of town centre space (See the 'Town Centre' chapter).

Money circulating

- 10.6** Clearly, as a successful tourist destination, we would hope for some job creation. With an improved retail offer and a better consumer experience (through investment) we would expect more local people to shop within the town and use the facilities. Actions here include a continuing marketing exercise to shop locally with incentives as and when required. To retain consumer loyalty, as well as attract new spend, Evesham's offer must be appropriate and attractive. It is felt that **tourism** should be at the heart of this offer.



10.7 It is vital that the businesses and traders engage with this process and work together for the greater benefit of the town. Bodies such as The Vale of Evesham Commerce and Tourism Association (VECTA) and other retailer groups will be crucial to the success of retaining spend within the town and facilitating commercial cohesion.

10.8 Success here will also depend on accessibility and the removal of stress when visiting the town either as a tourist or shopper. This takes us into the realm of transport, signage and parking, which is addressed under 'Transport'.

Money circulating

Priority areas for action

1. Improve access to town, and internal transport system (Transport Key Stakeholder Groups).
2. Improve the shopping experience and develop design criteria (with Wychavon District Council) for town centre frontages.
3. Encourage a "buy local" culture.

Growth

10.9 To grow the economy, Evesham needs local jobs, disposable income, new housing and an expanding population.

10.10 The expectations and aspirations of Evesham residents must be drawn upon, and met if possible. The use of town centre space as "social space" is critical, as we cannot depend solely on retail in these changing times.

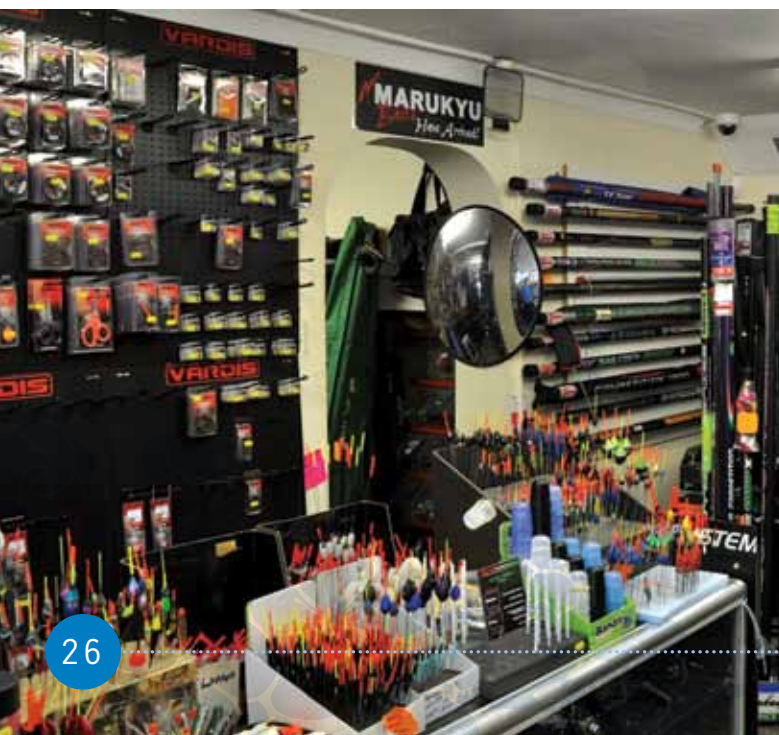
"We must ensure that an expanding population will bring economic growth with it."

10.11 Evesham must realise its potential for attracting investment and becoming a destination of choice in the Vale – as a place to visit as well as a place to live and do business.

Growth:

Priority areas for action

1. Explore additional ways to help with the promotion of small local businesses.
2. Provide opportunities for "seed" businesses
3. Involve landlords in sharing the vision.
4. Encourage innovation and new enterprise with competition and reward.
5. Promote Evesham's investment potential to regional, national, and international markets.



11. Tourism



8%
of all
responses

The vision

Evesham as a tourist destination of choice for all visitors to the Cotswolds and the Vale.

Introduction

11.1 Tourism is perceived as a primary economic opportunity by respondents. Tourism also has some commonality with other Town Plan themes in this document, particularly with Arts, Leisure and Sport, Local Economy and Town Centre... where tourism activities contribute to Evesham's economic viability. Evesham has always had a tourism industry, attracting mainly visitors from the Midlands and south Wales. But it is evident that if Evesham is to grow and prosper, tourism must assume a higher profile. The full potential for Evesham to become a destination of choice has yet to be explored.

Priorities

- 11.2** The priorities identified are based upon the responses to all the surveys and public participation events, together with the four meetings of the Tourism Key Stakeholders Group.
- 11.3** Reference is made to two documents: 'What is Tourism Worth?' produced by Visit England, which shows that tourists spent £539m in Worcestershire in 2008.
- 11.4** Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership, which shows that Evesham is the third most popular destination in Worcestershire with 13,000 visits per annum (Worcester, 38,000, The Malverns, 16,000).



The top four priorities are:

Marketing (38.4%)

- 11.5** Evesham as a brand ought to be strong, as the name (mainly linked with the Vale) has high recognition across the UK. However, visitors know little about its history, its extensive events programme and the attractions and amenities located in and around the town. Evesham's offer needs to be communicated more effectively, especially to high spending visitors that are likely to stay for longer than a single day.

Marketing: Priority areas for action

1. Make better use of signage and banners to identify attractions and promote events.
2. Target tourism promotion activity to high spending visitors.
3. Promote a central online database of all local accommodation.
4. Ensure that events and festivals are promoted locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.
5. Develop the network of existing cycle routes and promote Evesham as a centre for cycle tourism.
6. Promote Evesham's attractions to boaters.

"Evesham is the third most popular destination in Worcestershire... let's make it number one."

Heritage (22.7%)

- 11.6** The aim is to capitalise on Evesham's heritage assets as tourism attractions. They already act to attract visitors but more can be done in terms of presentation, communication and marketing.

Heritage Priority areas for action

1. Link all historic sites of interest with a single trail booklet.
2. Adopt a Conservation Management Plan for the Evesham Abbey site and promote.
3. Create a Battle of Evesham visitor attraction.
4. Expand provision of guided tours of historic attractions.
5. Improve and raise the profile of the Almonry Museum.



Events (20.5%)

- 11.7** Evesham's events programme has grown significantly in recent years. It covers a wide range of interests and each event attracts visitors to the town centre or the wider Vale. It is important to keep Evesham's event offer fresh and exciting in order to attract more visitors. Organisers need to feel that Evesham is an attractive and appropriate location for their event.
- 11.8** This means being open to new ideas with a flexible approach to accommodate the differing needs of specialist events.

Events Priority areas for action

1. Develop Evesham's offering as a centre for events.
2. Explore and develop "agritourism".
3. Explore the potential for religious and "supernatural tourism".
4. Re-establish the Evesham Carnival.

"The Market Place should be the prime location in Evesham for events, cafes and restaurants."

Amenities (7.4%)

The issues relating to Parking, Design, and Shops, although all relevant to the tourists' experience, are dealt with elsewhere in this Plan.

- 11.9** There would be considerable merit in establishing a project group to commission a "Branding Exercise". The aim would be to capture all of Evesham's unique selling points (USPs) under a single brand. This would provide a marketing identity for the town.

- 11.10** Good amenities underpin a successful tourism offer. A link between attractions encourages visitors to stay for longer and the availability of a variety of accommodation types enables visitors to stay overnight, no matter what their budget. Anti-social behaviour will deter visitors who, rather than complain, will simply not return, and dissuade others from visiting too. This is particularly relevant to the boating community.
- 11.11** The Market Place should be the prime location in Evesham for events, cafes and restaurants. This is a key site, and investment is required to uplift the quality of this public space and create a game changer for Evesham.

"Establish visitor centres to bring Evesham's growing, battle and abbey heritage to life."

Amenities Priority areas for action

1. Create better physical links between Evesham Country Park and Evesham's town centre.
2. More catered and self-catered accommodation.
3. Address anti-social behaviour in riverside and town centre locations.
4. Improve the look of historic buildings in our conservation areas.
5. Improve the quality of the public realm, for example, Market Place.



12. Town centre



32.6%
of all
responses

The vision

A prosperous and attractive town centre that is a destination of choice.

Introduction

- 12.1** Evesham town grew around the abbey, and after the dissolution of the monasteries the town prospered as a trading centre. During the last century, Evesham's market significance began to dwindle, with infrastructure favouring out of town shopping. The rise of car ownership sent most people to large towns and supermarkets for their shopping experience.
- 12.2** In latter years the steep rise in online shopping together with a deep recession has hit many market towns hard, including Evesham (online sales as a proportion of total retail spend more than tripled from 2007 to 2014).
- 12.3** Consequently, Evesham town centre has undergone a dramatic change over the last decade. Few would dispute the combined impact of long-term shifts in policy, demographics and transport and that of online retail on the town centre. But to come up with hard evidence and effective responses that will help understand those changes more fully is not easy.

Priorities

- 12.4** The key aim arising from our consultations is to make the town centre a better destination for residents and visitors.
- 12.5** Many suggestions on how this might be achieved are contained in the appendices, but this plan sets out the priority areas to be addressed.





12.6 The responses in regard to Evesham town centre constituted 32.6% of all comments made. Within that percentage, the top priorities appeared as follows:

1. Shops and shopping (54.7%).
2. Parking (9.9%).
3. Business costs (9.3%).

12.7 The economic shockwave sparked by the 2007 global financial crisis exposed our town centres and high streets to a perfect storm of short, medium and long-term impacts that were never going to leave Evesham town centre unscathed. The crash in consumer confidence in early 2008 was followed by an immediate and abrupt increase in vacancies.

12.8 Vacancy measured as either a percentage of floor space in a centre or in terms of the percentage of empty property units (voids) more than doubled nationally over the five years from 2008. In the case of voids, rising from 7% in 2008 to a peak of 16.3% in 2012, before trending downwards as the economy began to recover, falling to 11.9% by mid-2014.

12.9 Essentially, the economic shockwave exposed in the starkest manner the underlying forces of change that had been reconfiguring town centres and high streets for much of the previous decade. That is to say:

- a. The significant effects of the progressive rise of online sales.
- b. The impact of competition from out-of-centre retail development.
- c. A wider shift to what has been termed "convenience culture".

"It will be necessary to reassess what determines town centre attractiveness... as places of social, community and cultural economies, and not merely as shopping destinations."

Findings

12.10 Despite the challenges of out-of-town and online retailing, our evidence suggests that the majority of town centre users still continue to favour the high street and town centres as main shopping destinations for health, beauty and personal care products, clothing and footwear, and for top-up grocery shopping.

12.11 New relationships are being established in town centres and high streets, creating new opportunities and contributing to their resilience. The biggest challenge for us in Evesham is to understand that successful high streets are those which promote these new relationships.



12.12 At the heart of that evolution will be a continuation in many town centres and high streets of the long-term structural shift away from solely retail provision to services of all types, but especially leisure (e.g., bars and cafes), health and beauty and medical-related services.

12.13 Shoppers value range and diversity of offer but, additionally, value convenience.

12.14 Evidence suggests that the leisure aspect of shopping trips is a significant driver of footfall and increases not only dwell time, but also the average spent during trips to town centres and high streets. Local businesses are increasingly seeing the benefits to their individual trading of the leisure offer on their high streets.

12.15 Moreover, as our population ages, Evesham will need to adapt in order to cater for the growth of an ageing population. Appropriately sited, well connected and accessible healthcare facilities and services, as well as social and community facilities are likely to become increasingly important.

“People more and more see the value of leisure spaces.”

12.16 The evidence and actions arising from this Town Plan hope to address these issues on the road to the economic regeneration of Evesham. Many of the necessary strategies and outcomes are dealt with in the other chapters of this Plan, and together will respond to the challenges outlined above.

12.17 It is clear from our consultations and other data regarding retail mix that central to any regeneration or recovery in the town centre is the market place. This space could be a major catalyst in the regeneration process if investment were made to create a piazza style attraction and a design space. The start of such a process would require a complete resurfacing of the area with quality paving, and the redevelopment of the Riverside Centre (referred to as riverside shopping centre site just below – please check which to use), whose high vacancy rate is having a negative impact on the town centre.

12.18 Town centre facilities should also encourage families with the provision, for example, of a good quality play area. There are a number of challenges facing any regeneration or redevelopment projects, not least the physical layout of the town centre. The reduction of traffic congestion and increasing the green environment would create a more attractive space.

Town centre Priority areas for action

1. Encourage the redevelopment of the riverside shopping centre site.
2. Develop Market Place as a leisure destination* (see above). I've missed what this asterix refers to.
3. Introduce a parking system that encourages town centre use and dwell time.
4. Encourage targeted investment to develop an appropriate retail mix.
5. Provide better signage within and around the town centre.
6. Develop a more user-friendly traffic system

13. Transport



19%
of all
responses

The vision

To create a more accessible town for all through improved traffic systems, integrated transport services and a safer environment for pedestrians and cyclists.

Introduction

- 13.1** Transport covers a large area of interest within the Town Plan. Altogether, around 19% of comments made by respondents were transport related. Transport also has some common issues with most of the other themes in this Plan.
- 13.2** Although Evesham is well located within the national transport network, with easy access to motorway and direct train services to London, the evidence suggests that both visitors and residents would benefit from the development and enhancement of systems and existing local networks, which would make access to and around the town easier and safer. Concern was also expressed about the levels of carbon emissions, and the need to reduce car usage.

- 13.3** In the longer-term, if the current by-pass were to be extended to create a ring road around Evesham, it would not only open up opportunities for development, but also facilitate improvements to accessibility and alleviate traffic congestion in town.

Priorities

- 13.4** The following top four priorities are supported by the consultation data and proposed actions in the appropriate appendices.

Parking (23.6% of responses)

- 13.5** Parking was an issue that attracted most comment (**this also appears under Town Centre responses**). There was clear dissatisfaction with the parking arrangements in the town, particularly the layout of the diagonal parking in High Street and Vine Street and the provision of disabled parking places. Many people felt the parking prices at public car parks were too high and different arrangements should be made for payment.





- 13.6** Much of the comment was predicated on the assumption that low car parking prices would attract footfall and bring success to the town centre. There is no evidence to support this in all the studies undertaken. The most recent study reiterates this view, whilst acknowledging that finding a conclusive link between parking and town centre prosperity "is extremely difficult".

Parking Priority action

- 1.** Undertake a policy review of car parking strategy and charges and consider changes to the layout of on-street parking.

Traffic flow (19.4% of responses)

- 13.7** There were many comments about traffic congestion, and the existing one-way traffic system in Evesham was considered very unsatisfactory. It must be remembered that Abbey Bridge was closed for most of the period of consultation and, therefore, some people may have found their view of the traffic system influenced by this.
- 13.8** The responses demonstrated that there would be great merit in commissioning an independent study to consider the traffic flow arrangements both in and around the town, especially as the town is growing and additional levels of traffic are being generated.
- 13.9** There are numerous ideas as to solutions, some may be practical, others may not. But an independent study would, we believe, test ideas, serve as a benchmark for action and inform statutory decision makers.
- 13.10** The extension of the ring road around Evesham was considered important, especially around the southwest side of the town joining the A46 to the B4084 beyond Hampton. Dualling of the A46 was also seen as highly desirable.



Traffic

Priority areas for action

1. Reduce the speed limit through the town to 20mph
2. Commission an independent traffic study.
3. Make provision for and safeguard an extension of the Evesham ring road around the south west side of the town to connect the A46 and the B4084.

“There was clear dissatisfaction with the parking arrangements in the town.”

Cycling (19.6% of responses)

- 13.11 There was strong evidence that cyclists (and pedestrians, which constituted 9% of responses) felt poorly served by the existing infrastructure, and there was similar evidence that residents wished to see improved facilities. There is a desire for an overall plan for making Evesham more accessible and safer for cyclists, pedestrians and disabled mobility scooter users.
- 13.12 It was generally felt that throughout Evesham getting around on cycle or foot can be difficult, with little provision made to encourage cycle use and therefore reduce car usage. With little effort and investment, significant improvements could be made in this area. Some of the infrastructure already exists.
- 13.13 The River Avon and the A46 ring road to the east of Evesham present barriers to cyclists and walkers and investment needs to be made to provide bridges to cross these barriers, which will allow links to the surrounding villages.

Cycling

Priority areas for action

1. New footbridge and cycle crossing points over the river.
2. A network of well signed cycle routes and footpaths.

3. Provide a safer environment for pedestrians, particularly by-pass crossings.
4. Revive the Vale of Evesham Cycling Forum.

Public transport (16.9% of responses)

- 13.14 Concern was evident in regard to the public transport service provision in the rural areas, and the lack of integration. It is recognised that funding pressures will have a significant effect on solutions, but the contribution that might be made by the voluntary sector in this area ought to be explored further. In the longer-term, better links to Birmingham are thought to be an important factor if the town is to grow and prosper.
- 13.15 Improvements will be realised with the development of the Worcestershire Parkway interchange at Norton.
- 13.16 There would also appear to be a lack of readily accessible timetable information, particularly at bus stops. The issue of information access extends also to clearly informing the travelling public about bus routes.
- 13.17 The potential of Evesham station as a rail hub could be improved by the provision of further car parking spaces and better integration with bus services.

Public transport

Priority Areas for Action

1. Facilitate reduced car usage.
2. Develop an integrated transport hub with integrated ticketing arrangements.
3. Establish a bus users group.
4. Timetable information to be more accessible to passengers.

“Throughout Evesham getting around on a bike can be difficult.”



14. Young people



5%
of all
responses

The vision

A town that provides for the needs and aspirations of its young people.

Introduction

- 14.1** The most frequent comments concerned a perceived need to engage young people more in the town in various ways, to address their health and well-being needs in a more coordinated way and to provide better employment guidance and opportunities.
- 14.2** As regards young people and families with particularly acute problems, it was noted that local authority services, under budgetary pressure, are currently being streamlined to improve the coordination of family intervention and support services.
- 14.3** Information about available services and access to advice and guidance could be improved in the town to support and strengthen this development.
- 14.4** The following priorities are supported by the consultation data and proposed actions in the relevant appendices.

Priorities

Activities (60%)

- 14.5** The responses on these subjects suggested a wide variety of facilities for young people and families. While many of the ideas look like expensive "nice to have" items – a bowling alley, an ice rink – they reflect a wide-spread desire for more leisure and social interaction for young people and families in the town, as well as in smaller, local community spaces.
- 14.6** A range of funding methods is available for such community facilities – the Regal Cinema is a good example of what can be achieved with enthusiasm, volunteers and a mix of private and public funding.

Activities

Priority areas for action

- 1.** Town centre development to include social spaces and facilities to attract families and young people.

2. Encourage and support more youth groups/ clubs in the town.
3. Develop community projects with young people to provide local leisure facilities.

Education (17%)

- 14.7 There were many positive comments about local education and children's provision. The main areas for suggestions were the health and well-being of young people, provision of advice and support, training and careers advice and employment opportunities.

Education Priority areas for action

1. Develop liaison between schools and relevant services in providing advice and support for young people and families at a suitable location in the town.
2. Encourage school links with local employers to inform young people about training and career options.
3. Attract a wider range of employers to the town to offer more and better employment options.

Consult Young People (4%)

- 14.8 Several ideas were put forward for involving young people more in the life of the town.

These included projects in the town supervised by schools, youth groups and the Town Council – but these are covered elsewhere in this document. They could also be subjects for discussion within any future consultation arrangements. The general feeling is that action is needed to engage and involve young people and develop a wider positive sense of ownership and responsibility.

- 14.9 A number of other concerns and suggestions were put forward. For example, the effects of poor transport and access to and from the town for families and young people.

“Action is needed to engage and involve young people.”

Consult young people Priority areas for action

1. Link school and college student councils and local Worcestershire County Council Youth Reps to the Town Council.
2. Observer status and/or occasional representation on the Town Council.
3. Consult young people about the future development of the town.
4. Involve young people in projects in the town.
5. Civic awards for young people.



15. Next steps



15.1 The extensive consultations, which provided the evidence for this plan, clearly identify the following three major priority areas if Evesham is to grow and prosper both economically and socially.

- Town centre.
- Transport (traffic, parking and accessibility).
- Leisure facilities.

15.2 This plan contains many proposals that address these priorities along with all the other aspects of the town. It is a strategic document and, as such, does not contain all the answers or action details. Some of the proposals will be achievable in the short-term, some will take longer and others will perhaps never be realised as circumstances and priorities change.

15.3 Tackling these challenges can only be done through a collaborative partnership of local authorities, community groups and local champions. Central to this approach will be the commitment and practical support of Evesham Town Council.

15.4 Whilst the Steering Group's work may be finished in that a strategic plan has been produced, the real work of delivery starts now. The next essential step is the setting-up of a dedicated delivery body comprising the appropriate partners and led by the Town Council. Such a body should be responsible for:

- Drawing up a Master Action Plan based on the Town Plan priorities and proposals.
- Reviewing the progress and delivery of the Action Plan on a regular basis (we suggest once a year).
- Securing funding from the most appropriate sources (we would look to the Town Council as a significant funding partner and facilitator).
- Arranging periodic public consultation on the Town Plan priorities and progress.

15.5 We are confident that our Town Plan proposals capture the community's ideas and aspirations for Evesham's future growth and prosperity. We submit this plan in the hope that it will provide a launch pad for realising these aspirations.



