

AMPTHILL TOWN PLAN

SHORT REPORT FOR MEETINGS ON 28TH JUNE 2006



IMPROVING AMPTHILL FOR YOU

This report summarises the Ampthill Town Plan and represents more than 2 years work by many people. It reflects the views of the community, gathered by a questionnaire in 2004. This is of course only the beginning and much remains to be done. For it to be a success we will need the help of everyone who is willing and able.

The Full Report is available on www.ampthill.org.uk. The Full Report can also be read at the Ampthill Town Council offices, and at the Ampthill Library.

This is just the beginning...



BUSINESS & RETAIL DEVELOPMENT

Amphill is a very pleasant and attractive small market town but despite improvements over the years, the town centre has declined with businesses regularly failing. This has left the town looking run down with businesses finding it difficult to keep their premises looking their best. We believe that a few key changes will help Amphill businesses move to expansion and regeneration.

THE ISSUES

- Reverse town centre deterioration
- More shopping choice
- A better supermarket
- Easier and more central parking
- Insufficient jobs in the town
- A new community centre with cinema/theatre facilities

ACTIONS

- Waitrose – ensure successful development
- Investigate development of the derelict area behind Kings Arms Yard
- Seek additional areas for car parking
- Consistent shop standards and a quality look & feel for the centre
- Business friendly development of The Limes (MBDC) buildings
- Further promotion & use of Amphill Park
- A public garden in the town centre
- Encourage business park expansion
- Encourage an appropriate hotel style & location
- Encourage young people oriented businesses
- Promote Amphill, its attractions and facilities

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- A high quality, attractive centre which enhances the conservation area
- A good reputation as a centre for specialist shops - the place to find quality clothes, furniture, antiques, jewellery, accessories, food, delicatessen, toys , restaurants etc
- Prestige officed based businesses attractive to clients and staff
- An expanding business park with incentives for general businesses

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the regeneration of Amphill as a thriving shopping centre in keeping with the character of the conservation area – including provision of the necessary infrastructure.
- The town supports the development of non retail businesses and jobs.

AMPTHILL'S FARMERS' MARKET

Since 1999 Ampthill has had a Farmers' Market - as a way of promoting the local economy. Now the Farmers' Market faces the possible loss of a site near to the centre of Ampthill. The Market was strongly supported in the survey, gives a direct benefit to the local economy and satisfies the demand for local produce.

ACTIONS

- Continue the Farmers' Market on a regular basis.
- Search for a town centre solution for the Farmers' Market.

HOUSING & THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The Survey revealed that there is a need to develop a housing strategy that reduces harmful impacts on the community. One concern was that "Ampthill might lose its identity as a Georgian market town if development spoilt the virtues of living here." Many people also felt that they had no say over what development takes place in the town. Responses to the questionnaire showed that the main type of additional housing required was Starter homes and low cost homes.

ACTIONS

- Publish a Town Design Statement.
- Establish a Green Infrastructure Plan for Ampthill and surrounding areas.
- Develop an affordable housing contingency plan.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- Preserve and expand green areas running in a ribbon around Ampthill accessed from all parts of the town along radial footpaths and bridle ways.
- Ampthill maintains its charm and rural surroundings.
- Increased availability of affordable housing in Ampthill.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the writing of a Town Design Statement for Ampthill.
- The town supports the preparation of a Green Infrastructure Plan for Ampthill and surrounding areas.
- The town supports increasing the availability of affordable housing in Ampthill

EDUCATION, TRAINING & EMPLOYMENT

A wide view of the topic has been taken and has included in the research process, an analysis of early years provision, formal education and a review of leisure facilities which may provide opportunities for the acquisition of valuable life skills such as working in teams, communication, promoting equality of opportunity and valuing diversity.

THE ISSUES

- Contact with young people.
- Early years provision.
- Work-placements.
- Adult and community education.
- School catchments.
- Informal education provision.

ACTIONS

- Initiate a dialogue between members of the Town Council and the young people of the town through school's councils.
- Publicise the provision of early years activities more effectively.
- Explore funding options to support childcare for disadvantaged families.
- The Education, Training and Employment Focus group supports the refurbishment of Parkside Hall to provide suitable and safe premises for group meetings of parents and young children. This is covered in another section of the Town Plan.
- Offer an annual award to local businesses for services to young people.
- Involve local organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Rotary Club and the Lions Club in the publicity of work-placement schemes and determine ways of helping businesses, to cope with the legal requirements.
- Support efforts to obtain Lottery funding to the Workers Education Association (WEA) for their work including the delivery including family learning programmes.
- Encourage group leaders of leisure and sports clubs in Ampthill to recognise the important role they play in the development of young people.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- Effective contact between the Town Council and the children and young people of Ampthill.
- Wide publicity of the excellent provision for early years care and education.
- Availability of childcare for all families in Ampthill, irrespective of income.
- Delivery of meaningful work placements for year 10 and 11 pupils by local employers.
- Availability of free venues for the delivery of training by the WEA.
- Effective enhancement and publicity of the provision of adult learning opportunities in Ampthill.
- Wide provision of informal education by out of school hours leisure and sports clubs in Ampthill.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town acknowledges the work of the MBDC youth initiatives and supports the participation of young people in the planning process through liaison with school councils.
- The town supports publicising the existing education and training opportunities in the town.
- The town supports initiatives to promote work-placement schemes for students attending school.

SPORTS, SOCIAL, LEISURE & ENTERTAINMENT, YOUTH & COMMUNITY FACILITIES

THE ISSUES

- Publicity of activities.
- Community Hall.
- Youth Club.
- Skateboard Park.

ACTIONS

- Expand directory of local organisations on the website.
- Produce a booklet on local organisations, clubs and social groups.
- Investigate provision of refurbishing or replacing the Parkside Hall and Nottingham Rooms.
- Investigate the options available for establishing a Youth Club.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- An active community with modern recreational and sporting facilities.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The town supports the refurbishing or replacement of the Parkside Hall and Nottingham Rooms.

TOURISM

There is a great need for a Tourist Information Centre and a Heritage Centre in Ampthill. Currently government capping has resulted in MBDC withdrawing funding for a tourist information centre. This is disappointing as Ampthill is particularly rich in local history and making better use of our heritage would result in many advantages to the town.

ACTIONS

- Establish outlet for local information offering leaflets, maps, shopping information.
- Explore the possibilities of establishing a Heritage Centre.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- A thriving Heritage Centre offering information on Ampthill's past and present.

POLICY STATEMENT

- The town supports the provision of a Heritage Centre offering information on Ampthill's past and present which would also be used by Ampthill residents.

HIGHWAYS & PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Ampthill is a historic town at the heart of which is an inheritance of narrow streets virtually monopolised by motorised transport that is mainly passing through. This pattern conflicts with the needs of Ampthill's residents living within easy reach of the town centre who might choose to visit by foot or bicycle but are put off by uncomfortably close, fast moving and intimidating traffic. Ampthill's residents deserve a better deal. The question is: how to achieve this in the shorter term?

THE ISSUES

- User-friendly access to the town centre access for all pedestrians and cyclists.
- Extending and reinforcing the 20 mph speed limit.
- Improved bus services.
- Improvements for rail users by building a Flitwick – Ampthill railway station.

ACTIONS

- Establish an Ampthill Traffic and Transport Action Group.
- Identify and encourage alternative routes for Ampthill's through traffic
- Revive the campaign for a north/south bypass for Ampthill.
- Educate residents and businesses on considerate driving in the side roads.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- A pleasant environment for Ampthill, not dominated by motorised traffic.
- Safe and easy travel to, from and around Ampthill for residents and visitors.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the establishment an Ampthill Traffic and Transport User Group.

HEALTH & SOCIAL SERVICES

Ampthill has a good level of health care in the town. The organisations involved make a tremendous contribution to the community. Ampthill, however, is one of the few towns in the County without a Good Neighbour or a Village Care Scheme. These schemes aim to provide easy access to help and support for every resident should they need it.

ACTIONS

- Establish a Good Neighbour Scheme for the town.
- Establish extensions to the Good Neighbour Scheme such as the Link Up scheme that helps elderly and vulnerable residents by fitting door chains, door viewers and other home security devices.
- Provide a room that Health and Social Service voluntary groups could book for the purposes of speaking to clients.
- Resist any reduction of Health and Social services currently provided to residents of Ampthill.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- Active Good Neighbour Scheme across the town.
- A Good Neighbour Committee to manage the Good Neighbour scheme.
- To ensure that Ampthill continues to be a caring community.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the establishment of a Good Neighbour Scheme across the town and seeks to provide any additional Link up services.
- The town supports the work currently done in Ampthill, by the three GP practices, the Pharmacy, the Dentist, Steppingley Hospital, the Social Service department of the Bedfordshire County Council and of the many local Health and Social Service voluntary groups.

POLICE, OTHER EMERGENCY SERVICES & COMMUNITY SAFETY

Ampthill is the only town in the area without a forum dedicated to the types of community safety issues, which could be managed at a local level by businesses and residents. The remit should cover all community safety matters and include support to the implementation of the Community Fire Safety Policy. The residents of Ampthill sought more visible policing and efforts are being made to use the mobile police station more effectively. This also offers the potential to become a multi-agency facility.

ACTIONS

- Establish a Community Safety Group.
- Establish HOMEWATCH Schemes across the town.
- Support the police in use of the mobile police station.
- Educate residents and businesses on considerate parking and address the strategy for tackling illegal parking.
- Road Safety - improve access for emergency services' vehicles.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- A forum to manage community safety issues locally.
- Active HOMEWATCH schemes across the town.
- An identifiable and easily contactable Police presence, engaging with and offering reassurance to the community.
- A safe environment in which the Emergency Services can respond quickly and efficiently to community needs.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the establishment of a Community Safety Group.
- The town supports the established HOMEWATCH Schemes and seeks to prove wider coverage.
- The town supports the work of the Police on COCOON WATCH.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Amphill Park and Coopers Hill (the Firs) are already managed for the Town Council. The green corridor that links both areas should be subject to similar conservation schemes; as well as, remnants of fields and woodland along the by-pass between Woburn Street and Station Road.

ACTIONS

- To implement the list of actions arising from the Town Plan Environmental Group. See full list in the Action Plan (pages 38 – 40).
- Establish a Parish Path Partnership (P3 Scheme) across the town.
- Establish a forum to study creation of a Flit Valley Country Park to the south of Amphill.
- Buffer or increase the size of Coopers Hill.

THE VISION FOR THE FUTURE

- A well maintain environment accessible to the public.
- Enlarged and robust heathland at Coopers Hill.
- An active P3 group of volunteers to maintain and improve public rights of way within the town.
- A Flit Valley Country Park to the south of Amphill.

POLICY STATEMENTS

- The town supports the improvement and accessibility of the green areas within the town.
- The town supports the enlargement of Coopers Hill.
- The town supports the establishment of a P3 Group.
- The town supports the creation of the Flit Valley Country Park to the south of Amphill.

The full report contains a detailed action plan as well as more information and appendices covering the work of the various groups.

IMPLEMENTATION

Making even some of all this happen will be a major task. We will need to work with the many responsible agencies and funding bodies to lobby and encourage progress and to highlight where action falls behind. Change is needed to keep Amphill as the very attractive and vibrant town we all love. Otherwise we will see progressive decline. If you are encouraged by our plan and prepared to take on a particular responsibility and help - please let us know at the public meetings.

Alan Cardwell - Steering Group Chairman