

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 29 APRIL
2008 at 11.15 am**

Present:- Councillor A D Walters – Chairman.
Councillors D G Perry, J A Redfern, H S Rolfe, D J Sadler and
P A Wilcock. John Ready and Peter Riding – Saffron Walden
Initiative, Malcolm White – Saffron Walden Town Council,
Sue Locke – Local Area Access Group, Chris Stoneham (Essex
Highways) and Barry Drinkwater (ULODA).

Officers present:- W Cockerell, R Harborough, R Pridham and C Roberts.

SW19 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A C Yarwood.

SW20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors D G Perry and D J Sadler declared an interest insofar as they were members of the Saffron Walden Town Council.

SW21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2007 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

SW22 BUSINESS ARISING

(a) Minute SW14 – No waiting “At any time” signs

Peter Riding informed the meeting that no further progress had been made.

(b) Minute SW15 – Swan Meadow Car Park signs

Peter Riding thanked the Essex County Council representative for the amendment to the signs.

He alerted the meeting to one sign obscured by leaves and said that a sign was required at the junction of the High Street and Castle Street. Chris Stoneham replied that he had arranged for an additional sign to be placed before the Castle Street junction and Peter Riding asked what arrangements were to be made to enable a left hand turn for traffic once it had reached the Swan Meadow access road.

(c) Minute SW18 – (i) Essex Funding of Market Square Project

The Chairman commented that the Minute had been correct at the time of writing.

(d) SW18(ii) and (iii) – Hill Street improvement and Swan Meadow parking advertisement

John Ready was concerned that these two items be moved forward.

SW23

AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The Committee considered the report of the Principal Environmental Health Officer on air quality management areas, updating the draft action plan so far as possible, pending firm proposals from the Essex County Council.

Mr Cockerell asked Members to give views on the proposed measures and approve the release of the action plan in a draft form, for publication and consultation once the proposals from Essex County Council had been incorporated. A draft action plan was annexed to the Principal Environmental Health Officer's report. He explained that most of the actions for the plan were ones for the Essex County Council Highways Department and he hoped that the response of the Highways Department would be received soon so that the draft action plan could be released for consultation if the Working Group recommended this.

The Principal Environmental Health Officer gave details of the up to date air quality measurements observed by diffusion tube at strategic places in the town. It was noted that some of these were above the limits set in statutory objectives. The Principal Environmental Health Officer explained that proposed measures which had been discussed with the Essex County Council included the introduction of school travel plans, as well as assessments of how long the traffic was held back by eg traffic lights, pelican crossings, parked cars restricting the width of the road and, buses causing congestion and, in particular, the times of day when this occurred. Traffic counts and modelling of numbers of vehicles on roads would be used.

It was noted that all schools should have school travel plans by the year 2010 and that business travel plans were also desirable. As a part of the Saffron Walden Health Check maximising use of public transport and of Audley End station had been identified as an issue. Signage to car park facilities was important to avoid unnecessary mileage. It was possible that concessionary car park charges for low or zero emission vehicles could be a gesture to encourage air quality improvement.

It was understood that Mouchel were working on plans to solve the problem of HGVs needing to get to the east side of Saffron Walden from the main traffic arteries on the west side.

Malcolm White reminded the meeting that the Town Council had encouraged the use of the Leisure Centre car park for walking buses. Although Dame Bradbury School had a walking bus from the Common car park, there had been a problem obtaining involvement of the relevant Schools in the Leisure Centre suggestion.

Sue Locke reminded the meeting that there was also an unresolved project to provide a shuttle bus to Audley End station.

Peter Riding suggested that a major cause of congestion was lorries unloading in the town. Councillor D Perry said that although there were restrictions on unloading, these were not policed. Chris Stoneham explained that the wardens were able to enforce loading restrictions between the hours of 10 am and 5 pm as the High Street was covered by an existing 8am to 6 pm loading restriction which operated Monday to Saturday; George Street and Market Square area were covered by an existing 10am to 5 pm loading restriction which operated Monday to Saturday. Councillor Redfern suggested that it would be better if the restrictions began before 10 am to cover the morning traffic peak. Councillor H Rolfe said that there was a need to alter the order and then to have an enforcement campaign regarding unloading. It was agreed that the Group should review the High Street situation regarding the unloading of lorries.

SW24

MARKETPLACE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME AND ECC GRANT

The Chairman reminded the meeting that the grant regarding the previous scheme had lapsed, but that further funding was available from Essex County Council in 2008/09.

Malcolm White explained that the Town Council had consulted on the principle of Market Square pedestrianisation and had received a 2% response on various options of which retention of the existing system was the favourite. The Town Council had therefore decided to not to pursue other options. It supported funding for resurfacing, prevention of cars turning from King Street left in front of the Library, lighting the fountain and electrical installations for the Market. £70,000 funding had been agreed, but all suggestions required to be approved by the Highways Department. He added that John Ready had assisted with the design and materials specification.

The Chairman congratulated Peter Riding and John Ready on the work carried out with respect to the Market Square.

Councillor Perry mentioned that a bollard had been knocked over and signage was faded at the Market Square. He would also like to see disabled parking by the library. The Chairman explained that the plan was for the Town Council to come up with a scheme of finishes etc. They would then recommend these to the District Council.

Peter Riding added that £3,000 was left from a Quality of Place project grant to the Saffron Walden Initiative and the organisers wished to put it towards the Town Council's Market Square 'pot'. He added that he thought remuneration for John Ready's work would be appropriate. The Chairman replied that that sort of arrangement had been discussed.

John Ready distributed a diagram of proposed works to the Market Square and listed the five main constituents. He gave a detailed explanation of the nature and reasons for each aspect and added that the £70,000 for the previous scheme had been carried forward, but would not be enough for the whole scheme. Another £20,000 would be needed if VAT were to be taken into account. The design drawing details would be given to Chris Stoneham for production of a design drawing. The scheme would then be costed using a schedule of rates under the County Council's partnering arrangements with its contractor. John Ready also asked if Section 106 funding might be available. Roger Harborough said he would see whether any such funds were available. Chris Stoneham added that authority would be needed from the Department for Transport for a non standard method of demarcating car parking bays.

Councillor Rolfe questioned the robustness of the brick scheme selected for the car parking area and suggested that disabled car parking bays would be desirable in front of the library. He said that he thought the wish list would become too big and there would be a need to prioritise.

Malcolm White expressed concern that electrical installations above ground would be damaged and John Ready explained there was a large jump in the scale of cost for rising installations as compared with those set underground. In answer to a question, John Ready confirmed that the sets he envisaged were made of reconstituted stone, not of granite.

The Chairman in summary said that after consultation with the Essex County Council the design would be put to the Town Council to approve cost and fund.

SW25

HIGH STREET/CASTLE STREET POLLARDING/PRUNING PROGRAMME AND PAVEMENT RESINSTATEMENT

It was noted that the Essex County Council had made a full report on the trees and had a three year plan for pruning and pollarding.

The Chairman suggested that the programme should be kept under review and Councillor Perry informed the meeting that compliments had been received from residents and from the Women's Institute regarding the improvements to the High Street by pollarding.

SW26

OVERWEIGHT COMMERCIAL VEHICLES AT WINDMILL HILL/BRIDGE STREET

Members of the Working Group expressed particular concern about the Woolworths lorries and felt that the 7½ tonne restriction required to be enforced. The Chairman commented that he would like a vehicle activated warning sign which would be triggered by large commercial vehicles immediately before the roundabout on the B184. The group was advised this was in hand.

SW27

PAINTING AND REMOVAL OF SIGNS AND POSTS

It was noted that all new signs were now to be painted black within the conservation area.

John Ready said that there were mixed responsibilities for the bollards. Some had not been painted for years.

Peter Riding said that there were about 100 redundant signs which needed to be removed. He presented a list with photos.

Ron Pridham reported that the road traffic island at Swan Meadow was in poor condition and the red and white band around it had now become displaced.

SW28

LITTER AND STREET CLEANING

The Chairman of the Committee said that there had been a marked improvement in this.

Ron Pridham said that whilst the Council had to carry out its responsibilities it could review the question whether it was necessary to do all of the litter and street cleaning currently carried out.

Councillor Wilcock suggested that more litter bins were needed. Mr M White informed the meeting that there were a considerable total of bins already provided, and fixed penalty notices could be issued if people dropped litter.

Councillor D Perry suggested that the group should approach the schools and use CCTV by way of taking action to deter litter. The Chairman suggested that the Town Council and Members of the Working Group should liaise with the Saffron Walden Initiative Members on this matter and also that shop keepers should be approached with the message that Uttlesford District Council meant business regarding litter.

SW29 **FLOOD DRAINAGE SCHEME AT WINDMILL HILL**

It was noted that this plan was now moving forward with funding.

SW30 **VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS AT NEWPORT ROAD AND OTHER HIGHWAY MATTERS**

The lack of pavement on one side of Newport Road posed a problem for pedestrians. The speed limit only extended to Rowntree Way. It was confirmed that the speed limit was to be moved further up the road to the south west from Rowntree Way and a speed activated sign would be provided on the approach.

Members supported examination of the speeds before and after the introduction of the traffic scheme.

SW31 **FREQUENCY AND TIMING OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was agreed that future meetings should happen every three months.

SW32 **SAFFRON WALDEN INITIATIVE**

The Chairman congratulated Saffron Walden Initiative on the excellent job they had done and their well produced report.

SW33 **ULODA**

John Drinkwater thanked the Group for favourable comments it had made about the manning of the rank in Market Street and asked about the re-opening of a rank in the High Street. He was unsure of the upshot of the Licensing Committee meeting which had considered this matter and was asking for an additional rank.

SW34 **HILL STREET PEDESTRIAN CROSSING**

John Ready mentioned that the Hill Street pedestrian works had started and he asked whether he should provide sketch proposals for that area to the next meeting. The Chairman said that hopefully new ideas would also be submitted.

The meeting ended at 1.05 pm.