

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 29 JULY
2008 at 10.00 am**

Present:- Councillor A D Walters – Chairman.
Councillors D G Perry, and P A Wilcock.
John Ready and Peter Riding – Saffron Walden Initiative
Chris Stoneham – Essex Highways

Officers present:- R Harborough and C Roberts.

SW1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D J Sadler and A C Yarwood, Sue Locke (Local Area Access Group), Malcolm White (Saffron Walden Town Council) and Barry Drinkwater (ULODA).

SW2 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2008 were agreed and signed as a correct record.

SW3 REDUNDANT SIGNS – REMOVAL PROGRAMME

Chris Stoneham informed the meeting that the removal of signs was ongoing.

John Ready drew attention to the need for action at the corner of Castle Street and Bridge Street where people had been clambering up the bank by the brick retaining wall. Chris Stoneham agreed to investigate this and to check whether there was any scope for further lowering the height of signs in Bridge Street.

SW4 LITTER STREET CLEANING AND ENFORCEMENT

The meeting noted that litter control had improved in the Swan Meadow car park and was still a problem on the Common where more enforcement was needed.

Mention was made of the need to improve litter control at Catons Lane and it was considered that officers should visit homes in question and advise occupiers of their obligations.

Peter Riding thanked the Council for providing a larger dust bin in Castle Street.

SW5

FLOOD DRAINAGE SCHEMES – HIGH STREET WINDMILL HILL

Chris Stoneham informed the meeting that funding had been obtained for these schemes in the current year. The Windmill Hill scheme would be carried out first at the end of September or beginning of October. As regards the High Street, the scheme was still being finalised and he would report to the next meeting on any date fixed for carrying out the scheme.

John Ready asked that neither scheme coincide with the works to be carried out in Market Square.

SW6

VEHICLE ACTIVATED SIGNS AT NEWPORT ROAD AND LITTLE CHESTERFORD ROUNDABOUT

Chris Stoneham informed the meeting that the vehicle activated signs which had been ordered for the Newport Road in Saffron Walden, were to have been placed in position the previous week. Their intended use was to calm traffic driving down the Newport Road towards Saffron Walden which at times presented a hazard to the traffic emerging from Beeches Close.

SW7

OVERWEIGHT HGVs – WINDMILL HILL/BRIDGE STREET

The Chairman of the Committee said that this initiative was receiving the full co-operation of the Business Forum within Saffron Walden and it was necessary for lorries to steer clear of the weight limit on Windmill Hill. The problems from overweight HGVs within the Town would be solved with police enforcement, trading standards agency action and a vehicle activated sign to be placed at the Chesterford roundabout. The sign would measure length of lorries and provide a final warning for them to reroute. A request for funding had been made to the Communities Infrastructure Fund for the current year. Chris Stoneham informed the meeting that if this request was not successful no other funds would be available in the current year, but there might be funds available for the next year.

John Ready reported that he had prepared, from photographs, an accurate list of number plates of the relevant vehicles. There were very few articulated lorries, the main problems were from over sized lorries making deliveries.

The Chairman confirmed that there were now not many HGVs in the Swan Meadow car park, the companies in question having co-operated when approached.

He also mentioned a complaint from Mr Bower of the Bridge Street residents' association about traffic being redirected from the motorway. He had not received a helpful response from the Police.

Councillor Perry explained that a conflict was probably caused by the fact that the Stumps Cross roundabout was patrolled by the Cambridge Police, not the Essex ones and the redirected traffic came directly into Essex from there.

Councillor Walters said he had asked Councillor Chambers, the Chairman of the Police Authority, to investigate this situation and he hoped that the incidence of it would therefore now reduce. It was noted that the progress with installing the vehicle activated sign should be monitored at the next meeting.

SW8 BATTLE DITCHES RESTORATION

The Chairman of the Committee explained the location of the battle ditches in Saffron Walden. He said that they provided pleasant quick walks and he wondered whether they might be a visitor feature for the town.

Peter Riding suggested that if a part time project officer were obtained, this would be a good project for them to fund raise and progress.

SW9 REPAINTING OF SIGN POSTS IN TOWN CENTRE

The Chairman of the Committee reminded the meeting that the Town Centre signs should be painted black for those within the conservation area. He understood that under the street lighting programme the relevant posts would be painted black during the current year.

John Ready mentioned that there were also bollards in Swan Meadow in a neglected condition. Chris Stoneham explained that if these were situated on the highway they were the responsibility of Essex County Council, but otherwise they were not.

It was noted that the Swan Meadow car park bollards must be the District Council's responsibility.

It was agreed that Councillor D Perry would investigate which areas of the Town were most in need of sign repainting.

SW10 MARKET SQUARE IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – PRESENTATION BY JOHN READY

Councillor Perry said that he foresaw a problem of narrowing the Market area; he felt that illegal parking at night would block cars in, due to the projected build out at Eaden Lilley. He was also concerned that fire engines and emergency vehicles would be unable to get through due to the illegal parking.

The Chairman asked John Ready to check these matters.

John Ready said that the power outlet boxes would require another plate so that they could withstand heavy lorries. The Chairman asked him to talk to the manufacturers about this.

John Ready described the proposed surfacing for the Improvement Scheme and in answer to questions, said that he was not aware of drainage problems in the area. He added that the draft Scheme had been formally accepted by

the Saffron Walden Town Council and that he would be handing over design details to Ian Hurwood of Essex County Council. Sue Locke, on behalf of the Local Area Access Group, was content with the two disability bays to be included outside the library.

The Chairman of the Committee asked John Ready to check from the Town Council what their power requirements would be.

It was noted that some negotiations were still to take place with the Department of Transport.

The Chairman of the Committee asked Chris Stoneham to monitor this situation and keep the Working Group informed.

Peter Riding said that the Saffron Walden Initiative would buy three seats to be placed outside Eaden Lilley to match the existing ones in the Square.

John Ready reminded the meeting that there were bollards in the Council's store which would be available to replace the existing ones.

The Chairman of the Committee thanked John Ready for his presentation.

SW11

OTHER BUSINESS

(i) CIF grants

The Chairman informed the meeting that Essex County Council had provided money for four regions of Essex in the form of CIF grants for which the District Council could apply. The Town Council had forms to apply and would be meeting to do this as soon as the Town Clerk was back from holiday.

(ii) Church Street – Pedestrian ways

Peter Riding said that the residents in Church Street had made proposals for pedestrian routes. John Ready said that it had been previously suggested that a table crossing should be introduced with wider pavements reducing the car ways to what was necessary rather than what traffic engineers wanted.

It was agreed that Chris Stoneham, with the Saffron Walden Town Council, would look at the residents' proposals and if they seemed appropriate would put these on the CIF list for application for funding.

(iii) Area Highways Panels

The Chairman of the Committee referred to the ECC policy of localism and their intention to form Area Highway Panels which would give the District Council the opportunity to seek what was necessary and important in this area and to affect future development. John Ready referred to a feasibility study which had been carried out four years previously in this context.

The Chairman said that he believed he was appointed Uttlesford representative to attend the first meeting in connection with the Area Highway

Panels and it was agreed that an item for Area Highways Panels should appear on the next agenda of the Working Group.

(iv) Unnecessary lighting columns

The Chairman of the Working Group expressed concern that whilst Saffron Walden had been commended for its reduction in lighting and economy with energy use, a great many lighting columns had recently been introduced apparently unnecessarily on the Thaxted Road. He had met the relevant lighting engineer from the Essex County Council with Liz Chapman from Essex County Council Highways Authority and had been informed that EN and BS regulations had necessitated these lighting columns, although it did appear to be a case of overkill.

The Chairman had heard of similar cases in other parts of the country where the lighting columns had simply been taken down within a very few days. He had written two letters to Mouchel and Essex County Council and intended to follow this up. Peter Riding asked that the sign 'The Kilns' on the Thaxted Road be investigated also for necessity or otherwise.

John Ready suggested that a substantial tree planting scheme should be provided at Thaxted Road to conceal development. He suggested that there was insufficient enforcement of landscaping.

(v) Lighting near Tesco

The Chairman alluded to a similar lighting column problem in the Radwinter Road towards Tesco where some of the lights were not yet powered up.

The meeting ended at 11.30 am.