

**SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN CENTRE WORKING GROUP held at
COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD SAFFRON WALDEN on 23
JANUARY 2009 at 10.00 am**

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

Also present at the invitation of the Chairman:- Councillor J E Menell

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

SW12 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors H S Rolfe and A C Yarwood.

SW13 MINUTES

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

SW14 BUSINESS ARISING

Minute SW3 – Castle Street/Bridge Street junction bank works

John Ready reported that there had been no progress with providing steps at this location.

SW15 AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT, TOWN CENTRE

The Group received a detailed report from the Principal Environmental Health Officer covering the history of monitoring air quality in the District which had been begun to establish whether an action plan was required and continued in the context of consultation on the action plan.

Responses to the consultation commented about proposed alterations to road junctions, safety of cycling to school and inadequacy of public transport particularly the service to Audley End station, and there were adverse comments about congestion schemes, which responders felt were unlikely to be effective or likely only to move congestion elsewhere. These comments had been passed on to the Highways Authority. Similar comments had been

received regarding the Bridge Street proposed works and congestion in Castle Street and High Street all of which confirmed the need for air quality monitoring in the existing places and further afield.

Responders had requested improved signage to the Swan Meadow car park and incentives of lower parking charges for those driving low emission cars.

Diffusion tube results were slow but it was clear that some of the results would be conspicuously over the 40 critical limit.

Members agreed that it was essential to limit entry to the Town and that much could be done via the schools.

It was noted that the Friends School provided its own bus transport. Councillor Redfern suggested that the Essex County Council should subsidise a bus for the Dame Bradbury's School and the Chairman agreed.

Malcolm White informed the meeting that the Dame Bradbury's School had an organised walking bus operating from the Common car park and he suggested that walking buses could go to the Saffron Walden County High School from the Swan Meadow car park and to the Katherine Semar and Thomas More schools from the Leisure Centre car park. Councillor Redfern said this had the disadvantage of requiring volunteers.

Councillor Wilcock said he thought public transport should be provided but paid for by the parents.

SW16 YELLOW SCHOOL BUS SCHEME

Councillor J E Menell gave an informal presentation on the Yellow Bus Scheme as described by the organiser from South Yorks three years previously. It had worked excellently but all such schemes required funding and without the support of the County Council it simply would not happen.

RESOLVED that a request be sent to Chris Stoneham for a pilot scheme to be begun in Uttlesford.

SW17 ECC CONGESTION BUSTING SCHEMES

It was noted that some Highway schemes had been abandoned because their benefits had been outweighed by disadvantages., particularly the one at the High Street/George Street junction and Members wished to stress that consultation should be undertaken well in advance of such schemes.

They felt, however, that the appropriate action had been taken swiftly regarding the less useful schemes and they praised the Thaxted Road scheme, whilst appreciating that it would have involved a high cost for sorting service cabling.

RESOLVED that a request be sent to the Highways Authority to express the Group's view that the Thaxted Road Scheme should go ahead at some point in the future.

SW18 FLOOD DRAINAGE SCHEMES

Chris Stoneham updated the meeting on progress being made with the Windmill Hill and High Street schemes. The former would shortly be finished but no dates were yet available for the re-lining of the pipe in the High Street scheme.

SW19 OVERWEIGHT HGVS

A discussion took place on methods of combating this problem which were to include a length activated vehicle sign to be incorporated at the Little Chesterford roundabout.

Chris Stoneham agreed to investigate possible provision of a further 40 mph speed restriction at Windmill Hill and to provide the Chairman and the Group with details of possible traffic slowing options.

SW20 MARKET SQUARE REFURBISHMENT

John Ready updated the meeting on the details of this scheme.

Councillor Perry reiterated concern about illegally parked vehicles trapping the cars parked in the centre of the Square.

The Chairman asked for an exhibition to be prepared to display the details of the Scheme in the Tourist Information Centre.

Chris Stoneham and Roger Harborough informed the meeting about arrangements for traffic and relocation of the market which were awaiting formal consents and would require provision of safe pedestrian access ways. Chris Stoneham added that the commencement date was 1 March 2009 and the works were expected to last for 10 weeks.

SW21 TRAFFIC DIVERSION PROPOSALS – STUMPS CROSS

The Chairman explained that methods were being explored for dealing with the influx of traffic into the town due to incidents on the M11 motorway. A report would be brought to the next meeting.

Chris Stoneham added that options for signage had now been obtained.

SW22 LITTER/STREET CLEANING AND ENFORCEMENT

Members felt that the situation had improved recently, with less overflowing dustbins.

SW23 REMOVAL OF REDUNDANT SIGNPOSTS

Peter Riding thanked Chris Stoneham for the work done and updated him on signs missed.

Will Cockerill asked to be kept informed about the signs removed so that replacement of diffusion tubes could be carried out.

SW24 REPAINTING OF SIGNPOSTS IN TOWN CENTRE

Chris Stoneham informed the meeting about new areas for this work and John Ready commented that the bollards in Park Lane had been added to the painting list.

SW25 BATTLE DITCHES RESTORATION

The meeting was informed that the Partnership Board was taking an interest in this matter and had appointed Liz Lake to conduct a study. The land was owned by the District Council which was hoping for a local effort to restore it.

SW26 CHURCH STREET – PEDESTRIAN WAYS

Chris Stoneham informed the meeting that a design was being prepared based on the proposals for pedestrian routes the residents in Church Street had made.

SW27 TREE PRUNING PROGRAMME – 2009

It was felt that the pruning programme had improved the appearance of the High Street and that the rolling phases of the programme should be stuck to.

SW28 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Extension of fencing at Newport Road and around the Close Gardens

It was noted that a sign needed to be removed at The Kilns. Partnership tree planting would take place at Little Walden Road and all entrances to the Town but was not possible in Thaxted Road due to crowding of services. A

proposed new taxi rank in the High Street was to be advertised and might attract objections.

The meeting ended at 11.35 am.