

Town Centre - Objectives and Supporting Evidence

To better integrate the distinct parts of the town centre and make it a place where more people want to come and spend their time and support the local economy

| Summary of Evidence Gathered Evidence Theme | Reference in Supporting Evidence |
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| List of five detailed objectives following consultation with experts, special focus groups, Local Authorities and other governmental officials etc. | |
| Connecting The Thoroughfare and Market Place | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Halesworth Town Council - Urban Improvement Work Group Thoroughfare consultation evaluation 9th July 2018. • People & Places Baseline Report October 2019 Hyperlink People & Places Town Baseline Report Oct 2019.pdf • See Evidence paper for Movement and Transport section 9 of the draft Plan. • Edgar Sewter School Children Consultations 17.7.19 & 17.9.21 |
| Integrating distinct parts of the town Centre, encouraging more people to visit and in doing so, support the local economy and enrich the community. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “We Made That” Masterplan Report 2nd August 2021 Plan • “We Made That” consultative webinars involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - East Suffolk Council & Suffolk County Council 28th February 2021, 22nd April 2021 & 9th July 2021 - Halesworth Town Council briefing meetings - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 23rd April 2021, - 4th August 2021 - 29th September 2021 - 11th October 2021 - Local businesses 26th April 2021 - Public engagement 10th May 2021 - Public engagement 2nd June 2021 - Public “walkabout” 5th June 2021 - Public on-line survey 1st May – 7th June 2021 • See Evidence paper for Movement and Transport section 9 of the draft Plan • Edgar Sewter School Children Consultations 17.7.19 & 17.9.21 |
| Identification of key town development sites | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ref. “We Made That” Report section 2.0 / p.7 |

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| Identification of key town centre Zones and related connectivity issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ref. “We Made That” Report section 2.0 / p.9, 10 |
| Identification of walking & cycling routes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ref. “We Made That” Report section 2.0 / p.8, section 5.0 / p.21 - 25 • Draft Plan Movement and Transport section paras. 9.15 – 9.29 |

Initial ideas following the first round of consultations

| Objectives we wish to achieve. | People/Organisations we need to consult |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a sense of connectivity between The Thoroughfare and Market Place • Analyse the wider aspects of connectivity in and around the town centre, identifying negative elements and seek to address them. • Ensure inclusivity through consultations with a range of stakeholders | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local people (adults & children) • Local businesses and civic organisations • Halesworth Town Council • East Suffolk Council • Suffolk County Council • Developers / landowners |

Evidence Gathered

1. Connecting The Thoroughfare and Market Place



Urban Improvement Work Group
Evaluation of the Halesworth’s Thoroughfare

Introduction

Halesworth is seen by many as an attractive market town both as a place to live and a destination for shopping and social activities. It has a large number of independent and specialist shops plus a large number of cafes, restaurants and pubs. The Thoroughfare is the partially pedestrianised main street in Halesworth where the majority of the independent shops and catering establishments are situated. Shoppers and visitors are the economic life blood of Halesworth and its main artery

is the Thoroughfare. They need a pleasant and safe shopping experience to be attracted to Halesworth. However, if they have to constantly dodge traffic in what appears to be a pedestrian zone there is a risk that they will go elsewhere. It is in the interest of all in Halesworth, especially the shop keepers and businesses in the Thoroughfare, to make a visit as safe, enjoyable and as pleasant an experience as possible.

Exhibition Questionnaire

The three main conclusions for the Thoroughfare from analysis of the questionnaire are that;

- 97% consider that pedestrians should have priority in the centre of Halesworth.
- 94% consider that the Thoroughfare should be a No Parking Zone.
- 81% consider that the Thoroughfare should be fully pedestrianised.

To give pedestrians priority and to fully pedestrianise the Thoroughfare has many consequences for shops, and residents living off the Thoroughfare. These need to be addressed and as a consequence it may mean that it will not be possible to achieve all that is wished for. However, if nothing is done to reduce the excessive number of vehicles using the Thoroughfare, the general annoyance of shoppers, businesses and visitors will continue to increase.

Problem Areas to be Resolved

1. Residents' Access

82% agreed with the idea of making this northern section two-way up to the Ipswich Building Society building. From then on the Thoroughfare will be one-way only in a southerly direction. A significant number of residents live in properties off the northern end of the Thoroughfare and this measure will simplify access to and from their properties.

2. Supplying Businesses

92% considered that lorries should be prohibited from using the Thoroughfare. All lorries should off-load in the Thoroughfare car park in a designated area by the arch, as already happens with deliveries to certain premises. The attitude to vans is confused. Whereas 77% said all deliveries should be made from the Thoroughfare car park, 73% said deliveries by vans should be permitted. This probably reflects an attitude that wishes to reduce the number of vehicles using the Thoroughfare but accepts that this may be difficult for some businesses.

3. Private Cars

82% considered that all vehicles should be prohibited from using the Thoroughfare except emergency and service vehicles. 74% consider that all cars should be prohibited from using the Thoroughfare and 94% would welcome it being made a No Parking Zone.

Apart from the residents at the northern end, there is no reason why private cars should be permitted to use the Thoroughfare. Due to a lack of enforcement, many car drivers misuse the Thoroughfare with impunity, parking for prolonged periods outside premises, blocking access and being a general nuisance. Also, many cars and vans drive at excessive speeds along the Thoroughfare, especially in the evening after collecting their take-away meals.

4. Blue Badge Holders and Volunteer Drivers

Blue Badge Holders and Volunteer Drivers misuse their privileged position by parking for extended periods in the Thoroughfare, blocking access to shops and impeding the flow of pedestrians and disability scooters. The passage of delivery vehicles is often blocked leading to a tail back of traffic.

5. A Boards

87% considered that businesses should be limited to two A boards reflecting their business.

6. Signage

96% agreed with the removal of all road signs directing traffic to the town centre via the Thoroughfare and 91% supported the idea that all delivery vehicles for the Thoroughfare should be directed to a designated unloading area in the Thoroughfare car park.

Due to the frustration caused by Blue Badge holders parking for lengthy periods in inconvenient Places, 91% of replies agreed that Blue Badge holders should use the designated parking bays in the Thoroughfare car park.

All delivery and Blue Badge vehicles will be directed to the Thoroughfare car park

7. Sat Navs

Getting the Thoroughfare listed as a pedestrianised area by the Sat Nav companies would reduce the number of delivery vehicles using the Thoroughfare.

8. Cyclists

The position of cycling in the Thoroughfare is unusual. It is part of a National Cycle Route yet it is a one-way street. Pedestrians are very concerned about the behaviour of some cyclists and 98% consider that cyclists should dismount and walk through the Thoroughfare. This problem needs to be discussed with Sustrans and the cycling groups to see if an alternative solution can be found.

9. Street Furniture

Residents consider the appearance of the Thoroughfare to be important because 81% consider that the street furniture should reflect its historic nature. This will need to be self-regulated if it is to be achieved.

Conclusion

It is indisputable that the volume of vehicles using the Thoroughfare is excessive and causing concern to pedestrians using the Thoroughfare. Measures need to be taken to reduce traffic to the absolute minimum thereby making Halesworth and the Thoroughfare an attractive destination for visitors for shopping and socialising.

Next Steps

1. Discussion with businesses in the Thoroughfare to decide on how best to achieve the objective of minimising traffic without jeopardising the economic viability of those businesses. To find solutions will involve changing the ways things have been done in the past.
2. Discussions with the District Councillor and WDC on the necessary procedures to achieve this traffic reduction,
3. Discussions with Suffolk Highways on the feasibility and achievability of the proposals.
4. Discussions with the Police on their commitment to enforcing the regulations.
5. Present a fully supported set of demands to SCC Highways, WDC and the Police.

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People & Places Report

Please see link to report under “Connecting the Thoroughfare and Market Place”

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2. To Better Integrate the Distinct Parts of the Town

Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group / “We Made That” Consultative Process

Workshop with officers - East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council 28th February 2021

Key themes raised: Establishing issues and opportunities

Workshop with officers - East Suffolk Council and Suffolk County Council 22nd April 2021

ESC Key themes raised:

- Cycle segregation would be preferable to shared space
- Crossing should include provision for cyclists

Workshop with business stakeholders 26th April 2021

Key themes raised :

- Concerns around reduced parking in Market Place and charges at the station
- Suggestions that proposals should go further to make the whole Market Place pedestrianized
- More wayfinding is required
- Suggestions that accessibility could be improved Opportunity
- Further provision for cyclists, particularly at crossings
- Ensure proposals improve accessibility for all
- Ensure wayfinding proposals are robust

Public engagement events:

Public webinar on the 10th May Public online meeting on 2nd June

Walking workshop with local residents on 5th June

37 webinar attendees

15 online meeting attendees

20 walking workshop attendees

Key themes raised:

- Wire fence to the car park by The Cut should be replaced with something to improve the appearance.
- Concern about removing parking from outside The Cut but also support for improving space for pedestrians
- A level surface from the Thoroughfare over to the library should be considered.
- A new footpath from Bridge Street, along the river to the town park would be a positive transformation.
- Concerns around closing an entrance to the marketplace as it will make vehicle movements difficult
- Concerns as to whether changes would allow the market to grow.
- General support for improving pedestrian space at Market Place Opportunity
- Highlight the need for a parking capacity study to inform decisions around parking
- Ensure proposals for market place allow for flexible use and for the market to expand
- Highlight the potential for a pedestrian route along the river from Bridge Street to Town Park as part of any development proposals
- Further consideration of parking at The Cut as designs develop

Online survey 10th May- 7th June

54 responses in total

Key themes raised:

- Signage and wayfinding need improving
- Pedestrianisation of Thoroughfare needs to be better managed
- Swan Lane pathway needs widening
- Traffic calming across the town centre, particularly on Saxons Way
- General support for improving the setting of market place and reducing the impact of parking
- Some opposition to parking reductions with concerns for businesses and where visitors will park
- Some suggestions that proposals should go further to remove all parking from Market Place
- Impact on parking changes would need to be assessed
- There should be more greenery, particularly in and around car parks
- There is potential for local artists and makers commissions for signage and planters

Opportunity

- Explore ways to better manage and enforce pedestrianisation of Thoroughfare
- Highlight the need for a parking capacity study to inform decisions around parking - Explore further locations to introduce greenery into car parks and other spaces
- Suggest opportunity for local artists and makers to be involved in designing and making some interventions
- Suggest 20mph speed limits in the town centre including A roads

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3. Identification of key town development sites

- “WMT” report - As noted above

4. Identification of key town centre Zones and related connectivity issues

- “WMT” report - As noted above

5. Identification of walking & cycling routes

- “WMT” report - As noted above
- Cycling / walking groups (see Movement & Transport Evidence paper for details)