

SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION EVENT WITH TOWN CENTRE LANDOWNERS



JUNE 2019

1. OVERVIEW

In March 2019 a series of consultation events were held which sought to ratify the areas of focus for the Neighbourhood Plan, seek feedback on these and to welcome ideas and suggestions for inclusion in the Plan.

One area of focus for the Plan – ‘Revitalise the Town Centre’ – was strongly supported, with a range of ideas and suggestions made, relating both to land-use and non land-use matters. It was also suggested during consultation that the pattern of land ownership plays a major role in the shape and mix of uses in the centre.

Following the March 2019 events a number of potential ideas for the Town Centre were developed. Given the comments above regarding land ownership, and the need to test the reality or otherwise of emerging ideas, a meeting was held with landowners in the Town Centre.

All landowners (see Figure 1) were invited to a meeting in June 2019, held at the Town Council offices. The meeting included a presentation that:

- Provided an introduction to Neighbourhood Planning.
- Provided an overview of work undertaken so far on the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan and the key messages from earlier consultation events.
- Provided an overview of ‘challenges’ faced by the town centre, including the changing nature of High Streets, the policy framework and built form. A set of provocative images of the town centre and questions were shown to help inform discussion.
- Provided an overview of emerging ideas, including the role of the centre, potential non land-use initiatives, relating to place branding for example, possible public realm interventions, plus a range of possible development interventions.

The presentation slides are included within Appendix A of this summary paper.

A roundtable discussion was held during which the following questions were posed as prompts for discussion:

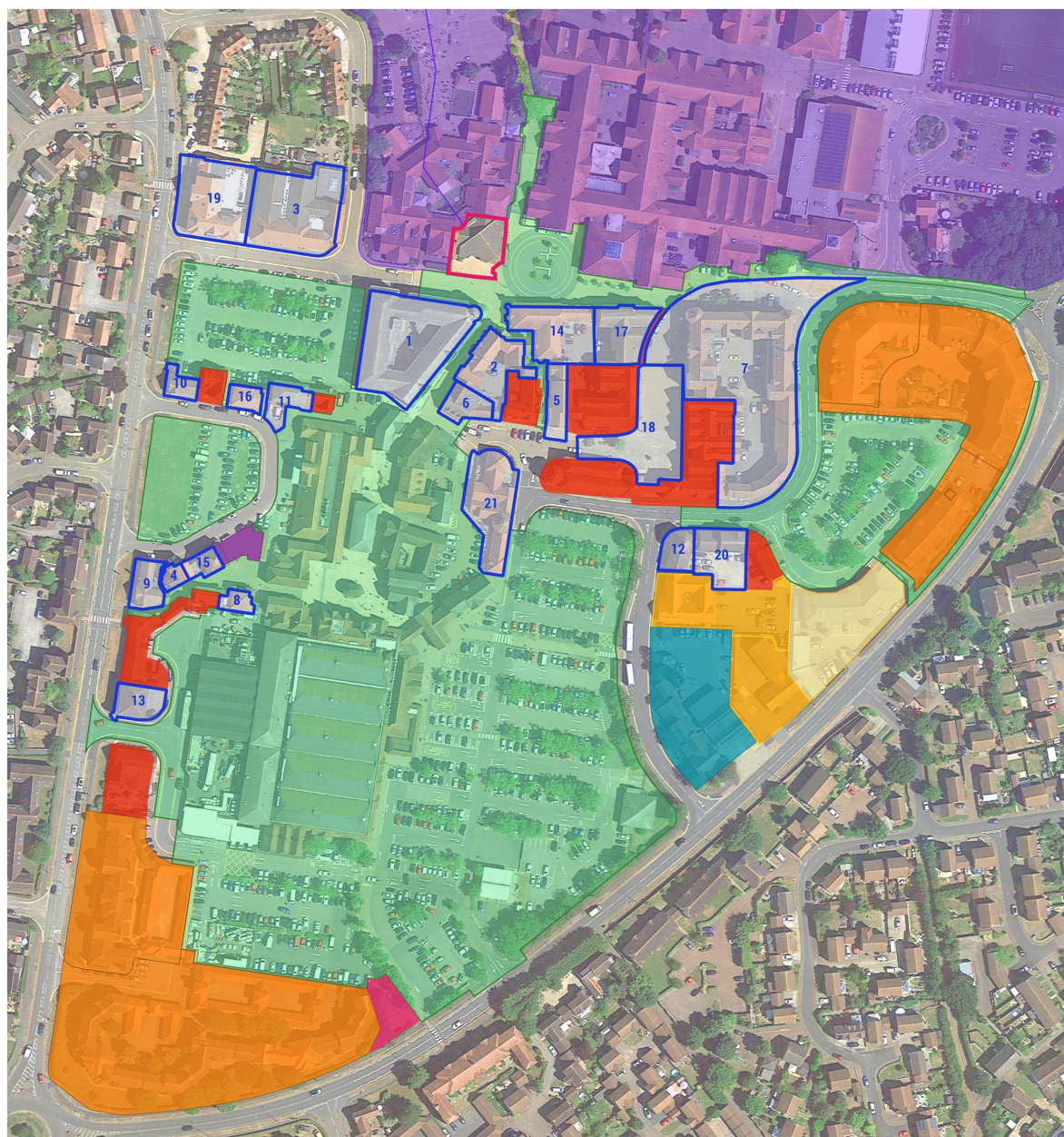
- What works well in the town centre?
- What are the threats and opportunities?
- What could work better?
- How might we do that?
 - Should we look at the movement network, how people get to the centre and move around when there?
 - Should we look at improvements to the quality of the environment and public space?
 - Do we need to think about encouraging new uses and activities in the town centre? If so, what?
 - Do we need to think again about the structure and layout of development and parking?
 - What other initiatives should we explore?

A feedback form was also provided for attendees to record their comments.

The event was attended by ten representatives from a range of town centre landowners, including the major land owner (Asda) and local, South Woodham Ferrers based businesses.

Feedback is presented in this report and summarised under three main headings:

1. Key features and assets of the Town Centre.
2. The main challenges for the Town Centre.
3. Actions and opportunities for the Town Centre.



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Town Centre Land Ownership

ASDA	Town Council
SW Investments	Fire and Rescue
Richard Barber	Holy Trinity Shared Church
Residential	Police Authority
Schools	Primary Care Trust
	Other (labelled 1-21)

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Tiles © Google

Label INSPIRE Land Owner

1	48222643	Addington Capital LLP
2	52085472	B.J.'s of Woodham Limited
3	48877896	Club Woodham Limited
4	48202298	Crawford Enterprises Limited
5	52085586	Crestwise Limited
6	48297027	Dino Mubarez Khan, Anna Maria Khan, Linda Chalangary and Hamid Reza Chalangary
7	48633548	Glenbridge Property Company Limited
8	48200454	Maria Teresa Del Carmen Howard
9	52087087	Muhammad Delabor Ali
10	48211173	Paul Sidney Sutton, Stephen David Sutton and Sidney Henry Sutton & Barnett Waddingham Trustees Ltd
11		Penny Holdings Limited
12	52897420	Ramesh Somabhai Patel, Jyotika Ramesh Patel, Probir Ramesh Patel And Niraj Ramesh Patel
13	52087014	Roger Carr and Lisa Frances Wakefield-Carr
14	48542573	Searchgrade Limited
15	48202430	Sharon Francis Harman and Karl Harman
16	52066575	SLA Property Company Limited
17	48545267	SSS Estates
18	52085904	The Oakland Hotel (SWF) Limited
19	48224306	Timbergrain Limited
20	48216716	Trendassist Company Limited
21	52066889	Uri Ellinson and Rebecca Ellinson

Figure 1: Town Centre land ownership details. Information sourced via Land Registry search (correct as of May 2019)

2. MESSAGES FROM THE EVENT

This section of the report summarises feedback and points made during discussion.

Key features and assets of the Town Centre

1. Affluent town with significant purchasing power
2. Within walking distance of most residents
3. Open spaces in town centre
4. Surrounding green spaces
5. Bandstand in Queen Elizabeth II
6. Proactive and committed business community

The main challenges for the Town Centre

Town centre physical layout:

Attendees were largely in agreement that the physical layout of the centre is a significant hindrance. The main square (Queen Elizabeth II) is hidden from view, with visitors greeted by large car parks upon arrival. Unappealing, narrow and winding alley ways make it difficult to navigate through the centre, with one business representative (also a local resident) claiming they prefer walking 'the long way round' than using the shorter routes due to safety concerns.

Parking:

Despite dominating the town centre land use, car parking is considered to be in short supply. Several attendees voiced their frustration at how difficult it can be to find a space. Current users include commuters from outside the town, staff from the school and office employees, prompting questions around how they can ensure the spaces are used for town centre visitors.

Retail choice:

There is limited choice when it comes to retail, without which it is difficult to attract visitors outside of those doing their weekly shop. Several attendees suggested that Asda, in their role as main landowner, stifle inward investment and brands from locating in the centre who would compete with their offer.

Uninviting public realm and vandalism:

A lack of greenery, inactive frontages and deteriorating infrastructure makes for an uninviting space that people are unlikely to want to spend time in. One attendee explained that her children don't like bringing their friends into the town centre. Low footfall has meant that the centre has become a popular place for 'youths' to

congregate, and, because there is little for younger members of society to do in the town centre, it was suggested that some visitors feel unsafe once the shops close.

Dwindling footfall:

With healthcare services moving out of the town centre, there is increasing concern that footfall will continue to decline.

Actions and opportunities for the Town Centre

Physical improvements (unlikely to receive support from ASDA):

The following were discussed:

1. **Move ASDA entrance on to the main square** – this would mean that shoppers will have to enter into the main square and thus help generate footfall beyond Asda, thus supporting other businesses.
2. **Improve connections** – support was expressed for improving visual connections between the main arrival points in the town centre and the central square, improving connections and visual sightlines, encouraging movement between the two. This would though require investment from Asda (unless other funding sources were available) and might thus be a longer term opportunity.
3. **Turn the centre inside out** – Refocusing the centre around the main car park, creating new streets, frontages and spaces on this was discussed, but considered to be a major challenge, and that efforts might instead be best on making the existing centre and square work much better.

More than just a retail centre:

With retail services increasingly moving away from the high street, there is an opportunity to transition SWF's town centre into a social hub, attracting members of the community and encouraging them to spend more time in the centre. Emphasis was placed on using the public squares to host regular events i.e. farmers market, outdoor cinema or festivals. Activities would also give young adults something to do in town.

Public realm improvements:

Strong support was given to making the town centre a vibrant and attractive environment by adding greenery. Temporary solutions such as parklets, pocket parks and planters can be used to test ideas and offer short-term activities. Wayfinding

tools might help people navigate the centre with confidence and better street lighting would increase feelings of safety when walking around in the evening.

Reducing reliance on cars and rationalising parking spaces:

It was suggested that alternatives to driving to the centre should be encouraged, including better public transport and cycling provision, as well as exploring new mobility solutions in new development (such as shared mobility), and that, if other uses were to be located in the centre (including residential), then land needs freeing up for this – existing parking provision is land hungry and might be reduced through decking.

Residential development:

Increasing the number of people living in the town centre will help increase the footfall, bringing with it greater activity and vibrancy. But, it was suggested that currently planning policies with regard to parking provision is a barrier to delivery, and, given the town centre location, the requirement should be reduced.

Business Improvement District:

The opportunity for business owners to come together to help lift the town centre and act as catalyst for future change was discussed, developing and leading on non land-use matters. Extra funds could be used for public realm improvements and events discussed above.

APPENDIX A: PRESENTATION MATERIAL



Welcome and Agenda



WELCOME AGENDA



10:00 – 10:35

- Introductions
- Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning
- The story so far
- Town centre challenges
- Town centre opportunities



10:35 – 11:30

- Roundtable discussion
- Next steps

Intro to Neighbourhood Planning



WHY DO A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN? A POWERFUL TOOL FOR PLACEMAKING



- Neighbourhood Development Plans: a way of giving 'power' to local people
- Must be land use related: but can include a wider manifesto to influence change – can be about more than new development
- No set format: can be very simple or very complex
- Must be in conformity with national and local planning policy
- Can effect very real change
- Can bring about positive planning and community cohesion
- Can draw out the benefits of change
- Expressing the community's aspirations for change

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING IN ENGLAND A GROWING MOVEMENT: GREAT PROGRESS



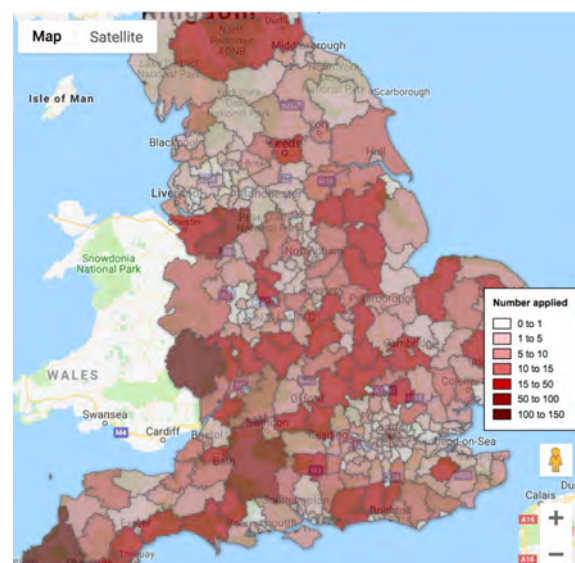
As of December 2018:

- 2,596 Applications
- 2,479 Areas designated
- 1,033 have reached 'pre-submission stage'
- 633 have been 'made'

By contrast:

- Only half of LPAs have an adopted Plan
- 22% have yet to submit a Local Plan for examination

There are more 'made' neighbourhood plans than adopted Local Plans



The story so far



EARLIER CONSULTATION EXERCISES SUMMARY THEMES AND MESSAGES



- | | | |
|-----------|---|--|
| 1. | Revitalise the town centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wider range of retailers and facilities• Future of healthcare & emergency services?• Potential for start-up business space? |
| 2. | Address transport issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better walking and cycling, & public transport• Slow down speeding traffic• Insufficient parking in residential areas |
| 3. | Influence the growth area | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Connect with the existing community• Provide a range of housing types – including housing for young families and self-build opportunity• Plan for infrastructure provision across the town (education, healthcare etc) |
| 4. | Integrate the town with surrounding green space | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Green space gives the town character and identity• Better sports facilities and leisure opps for all ages• Deliver flood mitigation measures |

A VISION FOR SWF: THE 'COMPLETE COMMUNITY'

*safe, friendly, green,
welcoming.....*

*a wide range of housing,
leisure and employment
choices...*

*easy to move around by foot
and by bike...*

*a strong and vibrant centre at
the heart of the town...*

We see South Woodham Ferrers becoming the 'Complete Community'.

You previously told us that there is a strong sense of community in South Woodham Ferrers and that the town has a strong identity. Our vision seeks to maintain and strengthen this, providing a safe, friendly, green, accessible and welcoming place for all, with a range of housing choices, leisure and employment opportunities, all in easy walk and cycle of the home, and with a strong and vibrant town centre at the heart of the town.



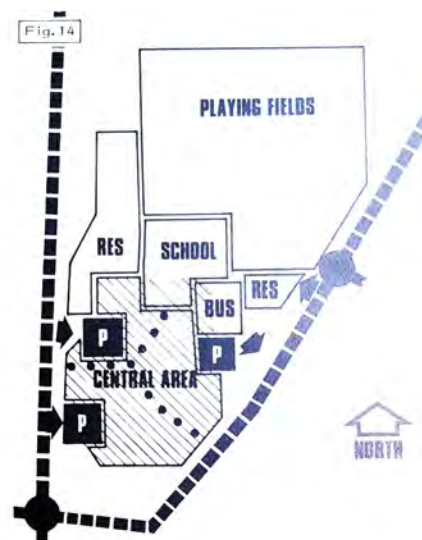
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Town centre challenges



TOWN CENTRE ORIGINAL VISION AND OBJECTIVES

- To promote the highest standard of design and layout
- All the advantages of a small country town
- Mix land uses as much as possible
- Pedestrian spaces and squares will be carefully treated
- Planting will be introduced
- The smaller shopping units could be combined to suit the requirements of individual traders
- The centre itself is contained by the major road framework

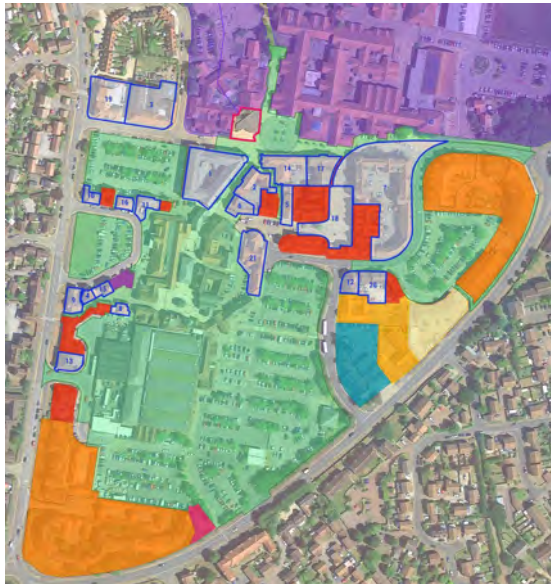


TOWN CENTRE CONSULTATION COMMENTS

- Limited retail offer
- Dominated by Asda
- Encouragement should be given to attract other stores to the town centre, providing choice and competition
- Suggestion that land ownership arrangements 'stifle' change in the centre



TOWN CENTRE LAND OWNERSHIP



- Single main land owner (Asda) with other smaller ownerships
- Scope for change should factor in ownership arrangements and potential for intervention

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Town Centre Land Ownership

ASDA	Town Council
SW Investments	Fire and Rescue
Richard Slater	Holy Trinity Shared Church
Residential	Police Authority
Schools	Primary Care Trust
	Other (labelled 1-21)

Label: RESPARE Land Owner

1	ASDA
2	ASDA
3	ASDA
4	ASDA
5	ASDA
6	ASDA
7	ASDA
8	ASDA
9	ASDA
10	ASDA
11	ASDA
12	ASDA
13	ASDA
14	ASDA
15	ASDA
16	ASDA
17	ASDA
18	ASDA
19	ASDA
20	ASDA
21	ASDA

Data obtained from Ordnance Survey and other sources. The map is not to scale. The map is for information only and should not be used for any other purpose.

TOWN CENTRE CURRENT POLICY FRAMEWORK



- A focus on retail frontage
- Do we need to reconsider the role and future of the 'High Street'?
- Does the role of the High Street need to change so it can survive?
- A mix of policy and project ideas required



URBAN MORPHOLOGY TYPICAL TOWN CENTRES



- At the confluence of main routes
- A gathering and trading place
- A place of rest on longer journeys
- A clear hierarchy of streets and spaces
- Strong building frontages and activity on the main street
- Public and private spaces clearly defined
- Civic buildings act as landmarks
- Strong sense of arrival

(image: Walker map of Chelmsford, 1591)

SPACE SYNTAX 'CHOICE' MAIN ROUTES 'BYPASS' THE TOWN CENTRE



- Red routes indicate most connected and direct routes
- Illustrates that the Town Centre is poorly connected
- The main routes 'bypass' the Town Centre

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- Is the town centre a place for people or for cars?
- Does this create a sense of arrival?
- Is it a welcoming experience?

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- Where is the 'front door' to the town centre?
- How clear is it that there is a wider town centre offer beyond the arrival point / Asda car park?

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- What happens in this space?
- Does it lead anywhere?

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- Am I meant to follow this route?

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- Are these private or public spaces?
- Is this the front or back of a building?
- Should I be here?

TOWN CENTRE CHALLENGES



- What happens in these spaces?
- What would make people stop and enjoy being in these places?
- Can the environment be softened?

Town centre opportunities



TOWN CENTRE IDEAS VISION FOR THE FUTURE

The town centre is not just a retail centre

It should be the **'centre for everything'**

*retail + civic and community + employment +
entertainment and activities + housing + green
space + places to play + places to learn + a
cultural centre + a market place + a meeting place
+ great streets and spaces*

The main square should be:

the town's 'living room'



What if...?

Non land-use ideas



PLACE BRANDING STRENGTHEN IDENTITY, ECONOMY, SENSE OF PLACE



- Identify what defines the town
- Use this to raise profile, drive investment and capture retail spend
- Maximise relationship with landscape
- Maximise legacy as the 'modern birthplace' of residential 'place-making'
- Reflect this in growth area: an 'expo' for the 21st Century 'new garden town'
- A centre of excellence for design and green infrastructure



COMMUNITY EVENTS THE 'SW-FESTIVAL'

- Return of and expansion of festival?
- Series of events, linked to place and identity, e.g.:
 - Housing and town design
 - River-based events
 - Local food and drink produce (eg.: Crouch Ridge and Clayhill Vineyards)
 - Maximise use of the Bandstand
 - Open clocktower as a viewing platform
- Located in the town centre and around town
- Make use of empty properties to activate town centre space (pop-ups and meanwhile uses)



COMMUNITY CURRENCY THE 'SWF' POUND



- A Town Currency
- Exchange rate of 1:1
- Spend in and support local businesses
- Retains retail spend in SWF
- Fosters community pride and identity
- Implemented in Bristol, Brixton, Cardiff, Cornwall, Exeter, Kingston, Lewes, Stroud, Totnes etc



What if...? Greening the centre



INTEGRATING WITH GREENERY GREENING THE CENTRE: EXISTING



INTEGRATING WITH GREENERY GREENING THE CENTRE: FLOODRISK

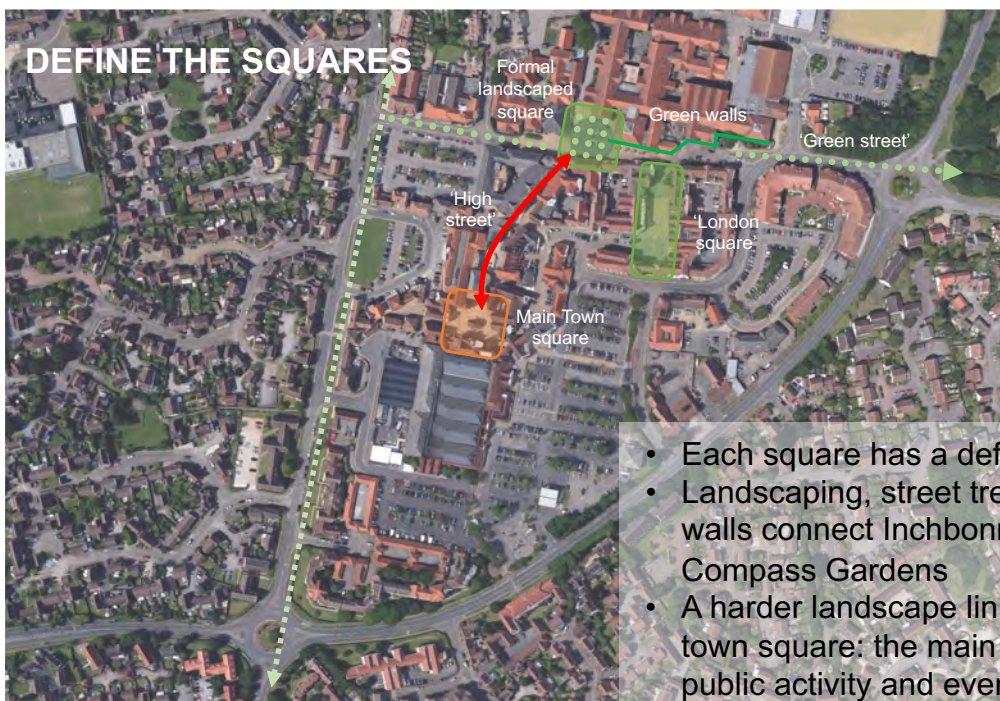


Majority of town centre
in areas of flood risk

Areas of hard surfacing
exacerbate flood risk,
including that from
surface water run-off

Introducing permeable
surfaces can help
manage the risk, and
green the town centre

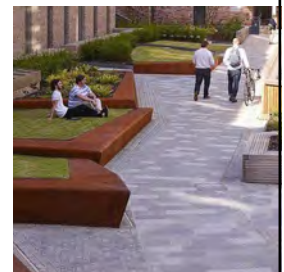
DEFINE THE SQUARES



- Each square has a defined function
- Landscaping, street trees and green walls connect Inchbonnie Road with Compass Gardens
- A harder landscape links to the main town square: the main location for public activity and events

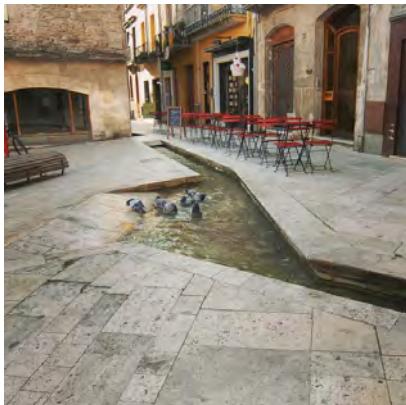
INTEGRATING WITH GREENERY GREENING THE CENTRE: EXAMPLES

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INTEGRATING WITH GREENERY GREENING THE CENTRE: INTRODUCING WATER

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Urban rills and raingardens
reinforcing the sense of the
'riverside country town'



INTEGRATING WITH GREENERY GREENING THE CENTRE: TEMPORARY / TRIAL PROJECTS



Parklets



Seating



Outdoor events



Using colour to enliven space

What if...? Town Centre concept ideas



FOCUS ON THE 'HIGH STREET'



- Focus retail activities on central spine
- Public realm and shop front improvements
- Encourage 'Pop-up' / 'meanwhile' uses in vacant units
- Allow contraction of retail activity elsewhere
- Encourage change of use to other supporting town centre uses
- Allow change of use and redevelopment for residential

OPEN UP THE CENTRE



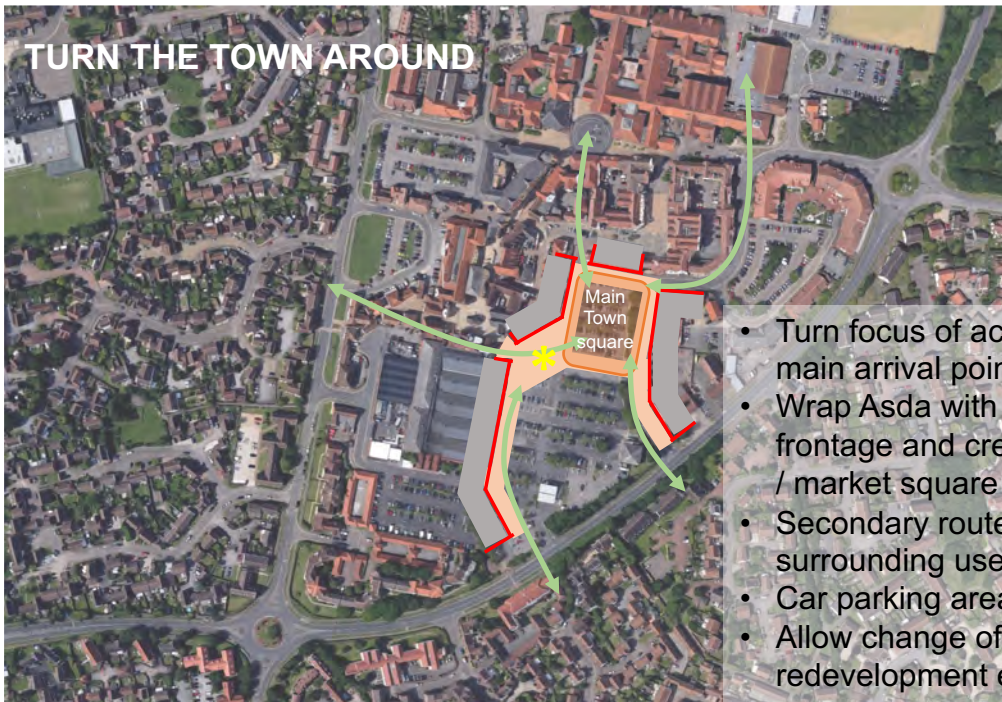
- Provide views and clear links through to the central square and 'High Street'
- Removal of archway by Asda
- Redevelop link via former Natwest
- Redevelop units to west of square as well as land to rear of George: screens the service area, creates a new street front and opens up a clear route

OPEN UP THE CENTRE



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TURN THE TOWN AROUND



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- Turn focus of activity onto main arrival point
- Wrap Asda with active frontage and create new town / market square
- Secondary routes link to surrounding uses
- Car parking area rationalised
- Allow change of use and redevelopment elsewhere

'TURN THE TOWN AROUND'



- New retail development in Sevenoaks - new frontage and extended retail loop
- Integrates new and existing
- Sensitive scale development
- Potential to use space for market stalls and other activities

Roundtable discussion



TOWN CENTRE ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION



- What works well in the town centre?
- What are the threats and opportunities?
- What could work better?
- How might we do that?
 - Should we look at the movement network, how people get to the centre and move around when there?
 - Should we look at improvements to the quality of the environment and public space?
 - Do we need to think about encouraging new uses and activities in the town centre? If so, what?
 - Do we need to think again about the structure and layout of development and parking?
 - What other initiatives should we explore?

Next steps



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN NEXT STEPS



- Consultation on ideas in Summer
- Prepare draft Plan
- Formal six-week consultation in Autumn
- Submit to City Council in Winter
- City Council organises an independent review of the Plan, including a further round of consultation
- A referendum follows examination
- Document then becomes planning policy
- Plenty of opportunity for ongoing input and engagement!

Thank you!



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PORTLAND





South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan
Summary of Consultation Event with Town Centre Landowners, June 2019