

*Delivering a Vision for
Prosperity in Stowmarket*

***5-Year
Delivery
Plan***

Delivering a Vision for Prosperity



Introduction

Stowmarket is the main town and key driver of growth and prosperity in Mid Suffolk, with a large sphere of influence as the major social and economic hub for the district. We have used the *Delivering a Vision for Prosperity* initiative to seek the views of local people about the future of the town and we have listened to what they have told us. There are many different opinions to consider in mapping out the future of the town and our starting point has been to discuss and understand the views of the local community, so that we can move forward together, on the basis of a consensus about **what matters most**.

Over 90% of respondents from our local consultation wished to see “radical” or “evolutionary” change. This provides a clear steer to explore new possibilities for Stowmarket in respect of the town’s community, environment and economy.

Here is the Action Plan that sets out a series of commitments to make Stowmarket and its surrounding area a better place to live, work and play. We believe that *Delivering a Vision for Prosperity* will appeal to everyone – giving the local community, local partners and potential new investors’ confidence that we are ambitious about the future of Stowmarket and wish to support investment in its success.

“There is a lot to be done – but only by imagining the future can we take steps to create it!”

What we did

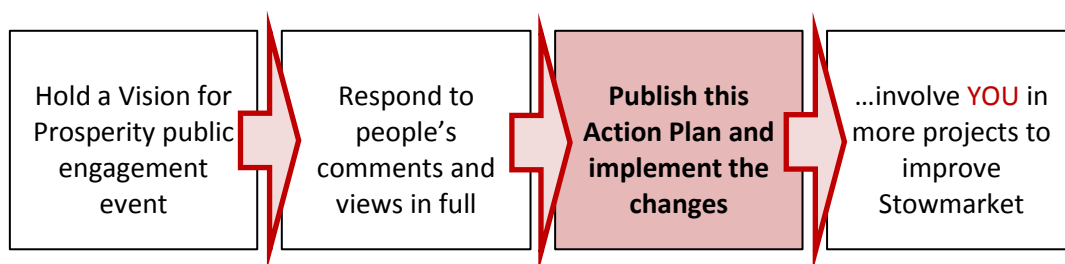
On 4 October 2017, local residents, businesses, visitors and users of Stowmarket were invited to attend a key community information and consultation event in the heart of Stowmarket. Nearly 400 people attended and hundreds of their comments and suggestions were recorded. It was a very successful event and with enthusiastic interest in the many issues affecting the development and prosperity of Stowmarket.

What you told us

The process of engagement has provided us with some valuable insights which can be used to inform our future work. Themes such as the town centre, leisure provision, education and healthcare, have been commented upon by the local community. A full response to all the issues raised during the consultation has been published on the website www.VFPStowmarket.com, but the most important **ACTIONS** are published here.

What are we going to do?

The preparation of this **Action Plan** brings together some of the key areas of work that we will undertake to achieve our goal of a sustainable town that offers a good quality of life to local people.



Success will depend upon the combined efforts of a range of partners and stakeholders that have an interest in the town. This will mean measurable targets and accountability for implementation. The public will be kept involved with regular updates and opportunities to help shape the direction we take.



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Action!

A. Tourism & Place

1. Following the introduction of new town gateway signs in 2017, Stowmarket Town Council will continue to work on town identity and orientation through the delivery of a new scheme of fingerpost signs and information panels in town by early 2019, along with the continuation of its free, town centre Wi-Fi initiative.
2. The Town, District and County Councils will work together to develop improvements to the main gateways and carriageways of the town, commissioning a design project to enhance areas of public space at key locations in the town. This may include art, sculpture, paving, planting and other physical works to make the local area more attractive.
3. The Cedars Hotel will be upgraded by the new owners as part of the Best Western Group to offer improved facilities with the construction of new hotel space for use by local businesses and tourists to the area.

B. Heritage and Culture

4. The Museum of East Anglian Life is seeking £10m+ of investment to deliver a major masterplan for regeneration of the site. This will transform it into a leading cultural attraction – a national museum of food – and make the town into a destination.

The Museum of the Future

We are working towards a re-zoning of the site:

1. Entrance: introduction, tickets, cafe, shop
2. Food and Nature: how we harvest from the natural world
3. Food Production: the raw materials
4. Food Processing: between field and fork
5. Dining: how a historic estate fed itself
6. Food in the Home: how we ate
7. Temporary exhibition gallery
8. Events area: wartime food, summer glamping

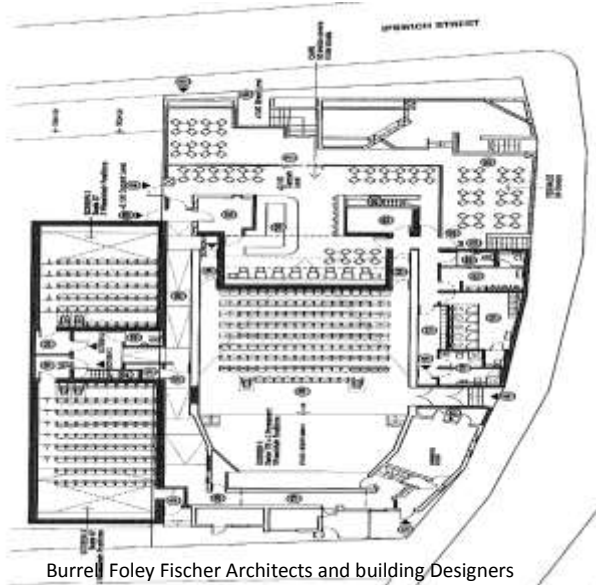


5. Following the recent purchase of the former NatWest Bank by the District Council, innovative uses of this prime location and space will be examined in 2018/19.



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- The District and Town Councils will fund a major upgrade and extension of the Regal Theatre at the south-eastern gateway of the town centre, including the provision of a new frontage and two additional screens. The construction phase is due to commence in 2019.



C. Economic Development and Employment

- A new Costa Coffee drive through has been approved near Cedars Park and construction should commence prior to 2020. Permission has been sought to secure the details for a McDonald's drive through on the adjacent land. A new family restaurant will follow thereafter.
- Other opportunities for jobs growth will be supported, including development of a Technology Hub to support and attract IT & multi media businesses to Stowmarket, and utilisation of the Chilton Leys employment land which has the potential to bring new jobs to the town.
- The District Council will explore ways it can unlock the potential of the Gateway14 (Mill Lane) employment site, including how infrastructure can be provided to allow developers to build new business premises.



Gateway14 Masterplan (image from www.gateway14.com)



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D. Town Centre

10. The District Council will appoint a speciality town centre regeneration consultancy to fully understand the options to deliver a new town centre experience. Options will be presented to the community for their views in 2019. **Watch this space...!**
11. The District Council is launching a £250,000 shop improvement grant scheme in Eye, Needham Market and Stowmarket. Owners and occupiers will shortly be able to obtain financial assistance towards repairs and maintenance, and shop front improvements. An additional £100,000 grant scheme will be made available for works to improve the town centre experience for mobility impaired visitors.

E. Transport and Infrastructure

12. A brand-new, state-of the art building will replace the existing Stowmarket High School facility – with construction scheduled to being in late 2018 and the first occupation in 2020.
13. As part of the Taylor Wimpey *Section 106 agreement* at Chilton Leys, the Education & Skills Funding Agency is seeking to deliver a new primary school with early years setting by September 2020.
14. As part of long-term growth plans, new routes into Stowmarket will be explored making greater use of the northern and southern roads such as Junction 49 off the A14.
15. As part of the Suffolk FA project in Violet Hill Road, additional car parking may be developed to support StowHealth, which will benefit existing users and provide opportunities for the expansion of GP services on site.
16. The Suffolk Chamber of Commerce is leading a partnership campaign to ensure “*No More Delays on the A14*” and keep our excellent road links with Cambridge, Ipswich, Essex and beyond flowing.
17. Under the “*Norwich in 90*” and “*Ipswich in 60*” by 2022 campaigns, we will also promote “*Stowmarket in 75*”, and welcome a fleet of brand new trains.



F. Housing

18. The former Stowmarket Middle School, and the former Needham Market Middle School will be redeveloped for housing, with options to be explored for providing smaller units which are suitable for young or retired people, small families, and homes for others with particular needs that are not usually found on modern estates.



19. A new housing strategy will be adopted in 2018 to ensure that modern house building meets the type, size and tenure needs of our residents.

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G. Sport and Leisure

20. The Suffolk Football Association is working with partners to fulfil its ambition to open a new Head Quarters building in Violet Hill Road in 2020, bringing a high quality artificial pitch to the town.
21. The Mid Suffolk Leisure Centre will gradually be redeveloped with brand new facilities starting after 2020
22. To help families enjoy their experience of Needham Lake, the District Council is seeking to develop a new café facility, and will be undertaking feasibility work later this summer.



H. Environment and wildlife

23. To help improve the local environment, air quality and natural habitat, a new tree policy will be adopted that reflects the District Council's endorsement of the Woodland Trust Charter and the newly introduced '*Trees for Life*' initiative. This ensures that in future a tree will be planted to mark the birth of every new baby born in Mid Suffolk.
24. Stowmarket Town Council will commission a study of tree planting and growth in the town in 2018, working with partners to assess the contribution that trees can make to the townscape and areas for further planting in the future.
25. An electric vehicle recharging point will be installed near Stowmarket in 2018.
26. The Pickerel Project will work with the River Gipping Trust to upgrade the footpath along the River Gipping corridor, together with enhancement of habitat to open up this hidden natural environment to more people.

I. Strategic Support for Delivery

27. In the summer of 2018, Mid Suffolk District Council will develop and adopt the "*Community Infrastructure Levy spending schedule*" and start to invest hundreds of thousands of pounds in infrastructure and community improvements across the District.
28. A branding and marketing strategy will be developed in 2018 to stimulate interest in Stowmarket from developers, businesses, leisure operators, retailers and the public.
29. The Joint Local Plan will be adopted by 2020 to give developers and communities some certainty about how places will grow over the next 20+ years.
30. Mid Suffolk District Council will invest £1million pounds from Business Rate Retention in projects that facilitate growth in 2018/19. The District Council is considering how it could invest the money and will announce its intentions later this year...



...That's not the end though

Delivering a Vision for Prosperity will continue to set out a clear focus for improved quality of life and confident business decisions. There will be more projects, more growth and more improvements that will continue to build on this early action plan. Visit our website or follow us on twitter to keep u to date with how your town is changing.



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