

APPENDIX

7

BUSINESS FORUM MEETING NOTES

Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan Housing and Commerce Group

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7.1 FIRST BUSINESS FORUM NOTES, THE BULL HOTEL (13TH MARCH 2018)

Present:

Five members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and representatives of 13 village based businesses. (Names withheld).

Comments from the floor (B = Business Representative / N = NPSG Member):

B: Why not compulsorily purchase Hyde-Parker land adjacent to the Old School for car park? (Advised that this should not be necessary).

B: Lives over shop and observes parking patterns: there should be marked parking bays in order to make better use of spaces but not in favour of timed parking slots;

B: Heritage concerns have militated against lines in the past; corners might be OK.

B: Parking as part of residential development proposals – too remote from village centre. Residents fill the spaces, which are nearly full in the evenings. Chemist has useful evidence.

N: Approximately. 400 spaces on-street between Bull Lane and Chapel Green.

B: Builders use LM as Park & Ride base; chemist has 9 staff cars.

N: 2019 BDC takes over responsibility for parking enforcement; the cash income will be welcome to BDC, who may be more interested in extending enforcement.

B: Car park needs to be maintained: surfaced and lit. Better signs needed towards Hall St businesses.

B: Lavenham car park much further from centre but more successful.

N: Make LM car park the car park for long term car parking. Signage is sensitive on heritage grounds.

N: Car park lease due for renewal this year.

B: Coaches annoyingly leave engines running.

B: Can we arrange secure off-street parking that would be convenient for residents' parking; small accessible pockets of parking?

B: Agreed with B. Also, people often occupy space at Melford Court without permission; difficult for staff.

B: In Sudbury and other towns, business people have to accept they cannot always park adjacent to their businesses.

B: Beware the sheer numbers of cars; demand for car park may be insatiable.

N: Henry Ruse offered land for parking. Need many pockets to be effective. We can bid for CIL and s.106, and supplement that with borrowing.

B: Need car parking at southern end of village.

B: At her position in Hall Street there are cars parked partly on the pavement on both sides of the road and often no room for buggies or wheelchairs to pass along the pavement. Wing mirrors regularly damaged.

N: But parked cars have the incidental effect of slowing the traffic.

B: Can something be done re change of use policy from business use to residential. Too easy for shops to switch use to residential, then lost to village as businesses. Possible change of use restriction in NP? This suggestion supported by B who gave example of Chantry Gallery change of use to residential, despite credible offer to buy as an ongoing business.

B: LM is a lively village but under threat, e.g. from internet trading. How to maintain its character and attractions? Need to log the loss of retail over recent years. Many antiques shops gone. Village needs to be unique.

All: LM has definitely lost businesses over last 10 years. Rough estimate c150 down to c80/90 around Hall St. 23 antique shops now down to 3. B will provide a list of lost businesses.

B: Something should be done to encourage smaller shop units, e.g. craft units in a designated area.

B: Large Budgens lorry regularly crosses Chad Brook bridge into Hall St.

B: Passing trade is important particularly pedestrians. Also, weekend visitors important. They stay in village and use shops. Timed parking would not work for them.

N: Towns and villages surviving best or prospering are those with independent shops and village character. LM well served with those, making it a social experience to visit village.

B: More should be done with village website.

B: LM Business Association website is being revamped with funds raised by traders. Will be more orientated to encourage visitors to use local businesses.

N: Wool Towns initiative is helping raise village profile and can fit well with revamped website.

B: Shortage of beds for overnight stays, especially on Saturday nights. N responded that LM now has more rooms than Lavenham but B pointed out there are fewer B & B rooms.

N: Will contact Suffolk CC now re better village signage, especially in village centre.

All: Need entry signs to village extolling the facilities and virtues of the village. Also emphasising Wool Town status. N: Wool Town signs are coming.



7.2 BUSINESS POLICY OPTIONS FOR DISCUSSION AT SECOND BUSINESS FORUM (15TH MAY 2018)

Long Melford Neighbourhood Plan, Business, Policy Options for Business Forum, 15th May 2018

Topic/theme & issues
<p>Lively retail centre</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of shops • Need visitor trade for health of shops • Components of healthy village centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ LM to be distinctive: a destination ○ Independent shops are key ○ Shopping as a social activity ○ Cafes and pubs ○ LM Church and two country houses are key attractions • LM specialisms <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fashion, men and women ○ Convenience stores ○ Antiques ○ Fabrics and furnishings ○ Hair and beauty ○ Cafes ○ Pubs & restaurants ○ Galleries
Policy options
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pop-up shops in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ex-Servicemen’s Club if available; central and visible • Village Hall 2. Spring and autumn fashion shows incl non-LM shops? (or similar for other types of shops e.g. fabrics etc in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village Hall • Marquee on Little Green 3. Café or pub events, concerted e.g. special offers on meals throughout village 4. Introduce policy in LMNP to limit the change of use of shops to non-retail uses 5. Signage to guide people round car parks, shops and attractions.
Evaluation/Comments
<p>Need a record of the change in the number and mix of businesses in the village centre</p> <p>Check BDC policy on this issue; need to minimise risks and downsides.</p>

Topic/theme & issues
<p>Managing car parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand from residents, staff, visitors, P & R very high • Additional car parking in accessible locations unlikely to be enough <p>Regime now very free and open to abuse and misuse</p>
Policy options
<p>Manage different types of parking demand:</p> <p>Hall Street residents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negotiate parking in nearby private spaces • Develop a standard licence to cover the arrangement. <p>Long term parking i.e. coaches and park and ride:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct them with signage and notices to CP adjacent to Old School. <p>Staff of shops and businesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Businesses to encourage or incentivise staff to park off-street e.g. parking adj to Village Hall <p>Management designed to maximise parking opportunities for short term users esp. shoppers and visitors.</p> <p>Achieve better use of on-street spaces by marking spaces and/or posts (wooden or metal).</p> <p>An additional car park to expand off-street parking capacity</p> <p>Potential addition of volunteer uniformed street guides whose primary task would be to guide visitors and generally make their experience in LM good; they could also reinforce the management of parking in the village.</p>
Evaluation/Comments
<p>Need a count of 'willing' private CP spaces</p>

Topic/theme & issues
Follow-up of the above ideas
Policy options
<p>Three initiatives that might help in taking the above ideas forward are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Urban Design or Public Realm study to include buildings and their treatment, the roadway and parking, and signage. • Town centre management, which has been practised for many years in the UK and which focuses on management issues e.g. parking, promotion, guiding (visitors) rather than development and land use. • A Business Improvement District, which is a statutory way of raising additional funds for town centre management. <p>Local authorities are tending to give up responsibility for certain parts of the urban infrastructure e.g. SCC and wooden parking posts. The parish council, for the sake of the quality of our environment, should consider taking responsibility for assets that matter to the LM quality of life; the transfer should generate a payment from e.g. SCC as they are reducing their outgoings. The country park was the subject of just such a transfer.</p>

7.3 SECOND BUSINESS FORUM NOTES, THE BULL HOTEL (15TH MAY 2018)

Present:

Five members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and 22 representatives from village based businesses. (Names withheld).

Discussion on the importance of a vibrant village leading on to further discussion on parking (B = Business Representative / N = NPSG Member):

N: Summarised where various aspects of evidence gathering for the NHP had got to and emphasized the importance of LM remaining a lively retail centre for the benefit of residents and visitors as well as businesses. Important aspects of the village for attracting visitors included the church, Melford and Kentwell Halls, independent shops, specialist shops, cafés/restaurants/pubs. He suggested several things that could make the village more vibrant:

- pop up shops
- fashion shows
- food and drink events
- Appropriate controls for change of use from shops to residential
- better signage
- uniformed guides to assist visitors and carry out other tasks (e.g. controlling parking)
- making Melford a 'business improvement district'
- commissioning a 'public realm/urban design study'

Discussion on the above:

B: 25 years ago, the demand was to turn residential properties into shops, not vice versa as now. Clare and Hadleigh had recently tried to revive/enliven their street markets. Maybe LM should do the same here – e.g. on the Little Green.

B: Good idea. Anything that brings more people into the village is a good thing.

B: Rather than pop-up shops, we need to concentrate on finding ways of drawing in more people to the village

B: Rather than individual events, we need to draw more people in by giving the village a clear identity. LM's identity used to be as an antiques centre and it was famous for featuring in the Lovejoy TV series. What is its identity now?

There was broad agreement that attracting more visitors was very important. Not coach parties who just visited the Church and the Halls and then moved on to other villages. We need visitors from both the local area and further away who patronise local shops and other businesses. Issues raised included:

- LM is a bit unkempt. It needs smartening up and kept smart. Litter, grass cutting, potholes, signage.
- LM is one long village with little signage. That needs improving. E.g signs outside Melford and Kentwell Halls saying 'Village Centre this way'; signs outside the village more like Lavenham's brown signs saying 'Historic Village' underneath the place name; better signing for the car parks. It was thought that the Parish Council should fund new signage.
- Website and social media were both vital in attracting visitors. These we being revamped and relaunched in June. It was suggested that professional help was sought to keep the social media output and website constantly vibrant
- Using the Wool Towns initiative to promote the village (there were mixed reactions to this)
- Businesses should get together more and launch joint initiatives
- There was some interest in N's suggestion for a Village Centre Management arrangement and potentially, an Urban Design Study

Parking discussion:

As at the first Business Forum, lack of parking near the shops and businesses of Hall Street was regarded as a major issue.

N summarized the findings of the parking survey that had recently been conducted by the NHP Traffic and Parking sub-group. Main findings:

- usually at least 10% of spaces free but it may still be difficult to find one as you drive past
- roughly 50% of spaces were taken by cars that stayed there all day
- parking problem exacerbated by people who don't park properly (e.g. taking up two spaces)
- another problem is cars parked over the pavement or sticking out into the road
- Old School car park very underused but needs resurfacing.

Other topics the sub-group is looking at include electric charging points and cycle routes.

Issues to discuss:

- mark parking bays so that it is clear where and how to park
- time limits for parking
- owners and staff of businesses parking in Old School or Village Hall car parks..

Discussion on the above:

- There was general agreement that shops should have signs up saying something like 'This is Long Melford. Please park considerately'. B volunteered to get signs made if this idea was taken up.
- Better signposting of the car parks was needed. Suggestions included increasing the size and number of signs to car parks (including one on Bull Lane), having A-boards directing people, putting

signs on wooden posts, having the signage done by the Parish Council rather than BDC or Suffolk CC.

- Owners and staff of businesses parking in Old School or Village Hall car parks met with mixed reactions. B said he couldn't expect staff to walk all that way when starting at 7am or ending at midnight. Suggestions included having part of Hall Street reserved for visitor parking only; finding a more central place for business cars to park (e.g. rear of Ruse's; Village Hall); having a rule for staff that they should park elsewhere 9am to 5pm; running a park and ride at peak times from the Village Hall car park (like the Bury hospital does from Bury Rugby club); allocating spaces in the car park for businesses.
- Need to clarify ownership of the village hall car park and agree with village hall committee that staff (and visitor?) car parking can be allowed except when a big event is booked (e.g. antique sale). Also, could approach British Legion to possibly arrange for individual businesses to park there (e.g. pharmacy).