**Summary of Neighbourhood Plan Public Meeting**

**Neighbourhood Plan Open Meeting - 4th November 2017, at Saxmundham Free School.**

**Introduction:**

**Jeremy Smith**, Chair of Saxmundham Neighbourhood Planning initiative, opened the meeting with an overview of the long-term objectives and milestones to be adopted within the Neighbourhood planning process.

He underlined that that a Neighbourhood Plan is not a local Council initiative; it is, and needs to be, a community initiative, not a top-down exercise. However the it does require the local parish Council to set it in motion and to timetable events. We would like as many residents as possible to participate, including in the formation of (a) an overall Steering Group, and (b) specific Working Groups.

**Phillip Dunnett**, Chairman of Saxmundham Town Council, reinforced Jeremy’s overview, and emphasized how important it is to make positive gestures about infrastructure, building the long-term future of Saxmundham. We must take care not to be negative; long-term it has to work. The Neighbourhood Plan needs to develop in parallel with the SCDC Local Plan; we need to work together to achieve a successful town and community.

**Gillian Benjamin,** from Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC), explained the obligations of SCDC to support parishes embarking on Neighbourhood Planning exercises; and that the process is eligible for grant funding.

The Neighbourhood Plan should not duplicate the SCDC Local Plan, but must reflect the wishes of the local community; it will culminate in a referendum with the Plan coming into effect if Saxmundham residents vote 51% in favour.

**Therese Coffey,** Suffolk Coastal MP, briefly explained that a successful Neighbourhood Plan increases the Community Infrastructure Levy, from new developments, from 15% to 25%. This to be used to fund community projects.

Following the presentations Jeremy Smith invited participants to work together in smaller groups to cover the following questions:

* What are the main issues and challenges facing Saxmundham, present and future?
* What needs to be done to create the necessary changes?

**Key points from group discussions, by theme:**

Each group reported on the main points arising from its members’ discussions, and these have been grouped into specific themes, to help in analyzing and progressing them. Participants in each group had also been invited – if wished - to note points on large yellow sheets of paper, and at the end of this note, we have transcribed these notes (as best we can!) for information.

General points on Plan

* A Neighbourhood Plan can only be a good thing.
* SCDC Local Plan will take precedence until Saxmundham NP is complete.
* The developed Plan needs to be Long-term not Short fix.
* Look at a holistic infrastructure, education, roads, activities.

Improving communication

* Contact from the centre lacking (Saxmundham Town Council and SCDC).
* Saxmundham needs more joined-up communications and coordination.
* Too much misinformation, the town needs to be better informed from the centre.

Key points for Saxmundham’s future

* Turn Saxmundham into a destination town.
* Saxmundham needs new business and employment.
* Young people - the next generation need to be provided for.
* There isn’t enough employment - decide dormitory town or working community.
* Is Saxmundham a dormitory town, a local community with employment opportunities or a heritage town which is attractive to visitors?
* Think about the impact of Sizewell C.
* The railway station is a blot on the landscape and a very poor introduction to Saxmundham [point made before station building burnt!]

Town Centre issues

* The Town Centre needs to change.
* No through traffic in High street will be beneficial and make a difference.
* Parking is a massive issue in Saxmundham.
* Shops need to be open longer - tax incentives to do so.
* The White Hart opening is key to a vibrant high street.
* The developed Plan needs to be Long-term not Short fix.
* Pedestrianisation of the high street.
* Derelict buildings needs to be addressed - particularly the White Hart.
* Introduction of sustainable businesses - not so at present.
* How to go about town centre regeneration.

Housing & infrastructure

* More affordable housing for local people needs to be provided.
* Use developers as leverage to build community structures.
* The infrastructure doesn’t and won’t support increased housing.
* Why doesn’t Saxmundham attract more CIL than it does currently given the additional houses already built.
* Traffic congestion, too much housing, no services.

Public and community services, leisure & recreation

* Doctors and Dentists at maximum capacity.
* Primary education is at maximum capacity.
* Youth Facilities still inadequate.
* Saxmundham needs a central Community Centre.
* Sports Club is run by a Trust not the community and this needs to change.
* Saxmundham needs a sports hall to encourage good health for the whole community
* Carlton Sports club is run by a trust and the town does not have much input to what is offered
* Develop a Memorial field long-term plan.
* There are no social facilities or open spaces.
* To spend 2 million pounds on the Market Hall isn’t worth it, there are greater priorities for Saxmundham.
* Saxmundham needs a sports hall to encourage good health for the whole community

Environment

* The town requires Cycleways.
* Saxmundham suffers from Wildlife decline - more green space needed.

Transport & mobility (often overlaps with Town Centre)

* Public Transport, particularly buses requires coordination.
* Bus services are inadequate.
* Parking is a massive issue in Saxmundham.
* More cycle ways and walkways needed.
* Traffic lights are inadequate, as is parking.
* Traffic management is severely lacking as is parking.
* New roads - by pass required.
* Parking.
* Highways always say no to increasing road infrastructure.
* The three junctions onto the A12 are cheap and shoddy solutions

Public safety

* Traffic speed in town is unacceptable.
* Has anyone addressed emergency evacuation in the event of accidental release of radioactive waste?

**Notes from individual tables (as per yellow sheets):**

**Sheet A**

*Issues Solutions*

Traffic management Pedestrianisation, by-pass road

Housing development: new medical Section 106 monies

Centre

Leisure centre / youth facility

High Street (White Hart / community pub) Pedestrianisation /improve Fromus Sq

New school linked to lanning gain

Local business economy

Big picture: heritage town & gateway

Transport connection

Library To Town Hall? Fairfield Primary =

 lost opportunity. Other solution?

Education – 6th form; tertiary level Outreach from Univ of Suffolk?

**Sheet B**

Key challenges:

High Street – width of pavement

Parking, lack of it,

Economic regeneration

Make the town a place to live AND work

Stop piecemeal development

Communication with outside world

Not spending in the High St

Through traffic in town: tractors / lorries! Where can the traffic go?

Access to A12 and wider community

Expand railway capacity

Water supply – sustainability via boreholes?

Sewage – all into Benhall – inadequate & emptied twice a week

Stretched medical facilities – serves a bigger area than just Saxmundham

Making the town sustainable for employment, not just housing

Local residents don’t use the High St

Limited land left in Saxmundham parish boundary

Vulnerable to developers

Make Saxmundham a destination town

Lacking in facilities for youth & young families

Lack of sports facilities

Lack of sympathy to tourism

Threat to environment (environmental damage)

Commuter parking in side streets

Different organisations with own agenda e.g. Carlton Park

What do you want to see in/for Saxmundham?

Parking – free period – 2 hrs

See a ‘Living’ High St

Pedestrianise High St

Road round back of Hopkins development

East / west relief road

Quality offerings in High St

More involvement from supermarkets

Better train service - faster!

Improved Market Hall

More youth activities

Cinema

Sports facilities / sports hall

Better advertising

New shops

Encourage more commerce

Maintain the countryside

Cycle tracks – Benhall / Kelsale

Need more open space / open areas

Larger (all-in) medical facilities, GP, dentist, physio, treatment

What are the priorities

Infrastructure: traffic, housing, water, sewage… not to be denied by local government agencies e.g. highways

High Street – make it *live* (look at Halesworth)

Pedestrianisation of High St or shared space

Sports Hall for Saxmundham – encourage healthier living and welfare

Cinema

Increase local employment opportunities

Better communication (via website) and local town co-ordinator

Mis-information – people need to be better informed

**Sheet C**

Traffic system – congested if new people come (holidaymakers!)

Healthcare – doctors’ appointments

Empty shop syndrome – Sax High St dying – supermarkets bring people in but never go to High St; incentives to bring shops in – e.g. low taxes (business rates etc.)

Some new businesses (not provided by Waitrose); effect of on-line; derelict buildings up for sale, can’t compete with supermarkets

Any new development should have proportion of affordable social housing, plus really affordable property to buy

Attract small industry – business units – create jobs – logistics companies

More school places

Shops open Saturday afternoon! Or even Sundays

Parking an issue

Pedestrianised High St? More café culture

White Hart – a Prezzo or Café Rouge? Family pub

Cinema, leisure complex?

Youth facilities

Young people

Children – stable future

Suitable affordable housing – for younger people

Civic pride – a town people are proud of

Recreation – leisure – culture - arts centre

*High quality* development – infrastructure

Infrastructure – healthcare, sports hall, roads

People of all ages – active and engaged

Pedestrianisation of High St

Green space – park Memorial Field

**Sheet D**

Town centre / High St regeneration / empty shops – social facilities, precinct, shared space, need to see other Plans..

Rebalancing housing development geographically - ? eastern side of town behind vet/library

Sizewell impact?

Playing fields and open spaces

Railway station / greeting of town

Bring derelict buildings back into order and ideally into use

Key challenges

10 – 20 years’ time

Priority issues: Housing, jobs, town centre, environmental, communications

**Sheet E**

Future of education for all families moving here

Why don’t we have a *policeman*?

Parking – improvement / expansion can’t happen without it

Why has White Hart and Railway pub stayed empty – derelict? – turn into shops, café,

What will happen to the bank? Look at turning into library

Health Centre – needs more capacity, overstretched now

Old Primary School – what is happening to it?

Local venue for local groups like Riverside in Stratford St Andrew, with parking, needed

More employment opportunities locally – reduce commuting, form a community

Need to protect character of market towns

Better local transport – buses and trains

Traffic – Leiston road,. Change lights to roundabout to keep traffic flowing

Market Hall – spending £2mill OTT. Spend more money on other building? E.g. Railway Station

Why can’t Sax raise money / fund raise for the community for some things we need

Shops – chain store to encourage footfall

Builders levy – we need it now not after houses are built

Access to A12 dangerous- too many accidents

Make town centre bigger – include train station and pedestrianize sections

**Sheet F**

Doctors’ Surgery (12 years on) enlarged

Youth facilities (more required)

Community Centre (?Fairfield Primary School)

Traffic congestion

No through traffic in High Street (access only)

Parking enforcement

Public transport

(Town by-pass to the east; bus layby outside Tesco & yellow boxes)

Parking facilities (Street Farm Road development for housing and parking)

Not planning for short term which could inhibit long-term plans

(Opportunity for small local stores to service outer developments inside)

Walkways and cycleways with lighting

**Sheet G**

Issues:

Lack of communication on what’s going on in the area – e.g. Free School put in for funding for sports zone

Neighbourhood Plan is good thing as it will join all the individual projects together

Local Plan will continue to operate until NP is complete – time issue!

Saxmundham has few facilities compared to neighbouring towns of a similar size

Carlton Park run by a trust rather than by the local community

Buildings in town run down

Development (Waitrose / Tesco)

Doctor’s sugery is at capacity

Dentist’s surgery ditto

Primary school at capacity

**Sheet H**

Employment

Infrastructure

Traffic lights

Parking

Dormitory town

No more buildings

Traffic speed

Planning – developers avoiding paying into the community / infrastructure

Dilapidated buildings in High St – what plans?

Concerned about wildlife decline

Sports Centre

Lack of bus services

Cycleways?