



Themed Workshop – Healthy Town

Thursday 8th July 2021

Zoom

Attendee List

No	Name	Organisation
1	Adele Nightingale	Oswestry BID
2	Joe Bubb	Shropshire Council
3	Hayley Owen	Shropshire Council
4	Tim Morris	Oswestry BID / Bookabooks
5	Stuart Phillips	BID and Celt Rowlands
6	Lee Lucks	Oswestry Borderland Tourism
7	Les Bell	Bus Users Shropshire
8	Mark Davies	Visualpollution.org.uk
9	Maggie Rowlands	3 Parishes Big Local
10	Matt Clark	Shropshire Council
11	Peter Lloyd	TARA Trinity Area Residents Association
12	Bonnie Huval	Havenshire
13	James Wallace	CII WRPC
14	Dave Ward	Oswestry and District Civic Society

Feedback and comments captured on the online whiteboard

Key Points

- Major obesity problem in the country; McDonalds at forefront of this. McDonalds - moving into Oswestry. Government - help to young people but they will gravitate towards these places. Health problem that is growing and will be a bind on the NHS in the future. How do we stop this happening?
- Issues that should discuss:
local plan needs to concentrate on things the local authority can do. Is it possible for Local Authority to influence McDonalds?
Local authority can pick up government policies - Change Gear - all about cycling and health. The more we move transport to cycling/walking the better. SC looking at spending share of £2b - properly spent around the area we live in. Terrain can be level in area. Develop a cycle network - safely. In Oswestry it is not safe; cycling provision is inadequate. A network to make use of the level terrain and join, West Felton, Kinnerley, Llanymynech, focussed on Oswestry - joining major employers. Is enormous scope in the area and lack of anything to encourage cycling. Network should be designed and put forward - disused railway tracks - or alongside the railways.
- Good points made re cycling networks. Active Travel - cycling into policy at SC. Feeding into town shaping to go forwards. Cycling - nationally, a refocus on. Focus on public transport also.

Key to all this movement is the linkages between the different streams. Cycling, walking and public transport networks - making sure they have the right links to cross over is what is needed. Take leads from SBTP - has buy in from the relevant players - influencers and decision makers. All goes hand in hand - leads to potential of reduction of goods vehicles, vehicles in town centres, a less focused street scene would encourage cycling. Advantage with all this is improvements in air quality and noise pollution.

- Re cycle ways and railway lines - conversions of a railway line in Liverpool into a bridle path, cycling path, walking path, picnic areas - is well utilised. Are we able to use the Gobowen railway line for this or wait, for a further prolonged time for the railway link to come forward? AN update - Cambrian Rail has applied for reversal Beeching Fund Gobowen to Oswestry. Supported by local authority, Owen Paterson MP - will know whether we are through to next round for funding for feasibility study.
Oswestry to Gobowen - main link would connect railway line in other direction is Heritage Railway run by Cambrian Rail also. Cambrian Rail is potentially looking at this in the future for freight.
- A point that was picked up in the Allies and Morrison workshop - a feature of Oswestry is that it draws a lot of people in from the countryside and they need to come in by cars as distance and terrain doesn't allow them to travel by cycle.
- Western Rhyn - looking at cycling project - need to consider places like Western Rhyn also in the cycling/movement projects. Re Train link to Gobowen - progress is welcome. Gobowen is not Oswestry - Oswestry needs a rail link! so that we can get people in from the surrounding areas - and visitors from London to OSWESTRY - Gobowen is not seen as a place to visit.
- USA experience: Training centre (Colorado) has made people in the area very active! has impacted on how they eat out. Spend their free time actively! Tennessee - Chattanooga population 80 - 100k - had poor air quality - businesses left, economy died. Radically, electric buses were provided in the down town section of town - FREE to ride anywhere in the centre. People don't drive as don't want to pay parking; people take the bus. Taking an ordinary bus from the outer area - electric and free in centre. Reduced maintenance in streets, reduced noise pollution. Considered that we should look at other places that have solved traffic congestion in towns - looking at how all connects (not all self-supporting) - a whole package making financial sense. Public and private sector worked together.
- Before the pandemic - Gobowen station car park always full. Brings people in from mid wales to go on the mainline - car park full. People travel elsewhere to board a train as they know they can park at the station.
Western Rhyn - are considering linking cycle network with the canal. Green Shoots Western Rhyn, considered purchasing an electric cargo bike - some kind of infrastructure to support people in hilly terrain is needed - not always needs to be considered that cycling is on flat terrain.
- We have to be more coherent about our attitude to vehicles. Active Travel Scheme - mini Holland scheme - Oswestry probably unable to apply for one as it demands segregated walk/cycle walkways and number of people affected is too small but Oswestry needs to prepare for this infrastructure for more funding later. Vehicles - do we want them in the town centre - a rural town. Women - valuable to have input into town centres (Woman's Hour programme) e.g. for shopping at the moment - being busy, working, don't want to spend an hour on public transport - by car is convenient. Normal strategy for consultants is to de-traffic but Oswestry is very dependent on vehicles - what do we want needs to be worked out. Slow traffic so cycling and walking is possible? vehicles? need to consider a conversation about what our relationship is with cars/vehicles in the town. If we come up with a plan need to know to what extent, we are or are not a car town and what to sacrifice.

- Totally agree on the point that need to work out what percentage of the lifeblood of the town depends on traffic. Example of Holywell that pedestrianisation/ restricted vehicles killed the town - vehicles allowed back in - business occupiers are getting better business when cars were re-introduced. Every town in the country has its own ability to cope with different levels of traffic - a critical mass - have to be careful as to what you do to a town - essential to get the balance right. Retailers - Church Street - they liked the fact that people could stop outside and shop. Types of uses for the future needs to be considered - not just coming into town for coffee- essential some retailers kept in the town. Need to work out what Oswestry needs - even if don't get voluntary feedback from retailers in the town need to engage them in this - they need to be able to have their say at this stage rather than object at a later stage. How viable are the businesses and what enables them to work needs to be drawn out. Church Street is potentially the area to be focussed on.
HO TM agreed that this is fundamental moving forward.
- Contributor is able to come in by car, park and use a very small amount of road space as a pedestrian. Cars have greater amount of space allocated to them and provides the wrong environment for a town centre. No reason for people to put their cars in Church Street when pedestrians have a limited amount of space. Amount of space needs a radical rebalancing accordingly. Conditions for pedestrians are v poor. Parking outside a shop door is a wrong use of space.
- Fear about pedestrianisation? Chester - bus hubs - in Bridgnorth also now. Could Oswestry develop something like this - cars outside the town, electric (?) vehicle taking you into town.
- How unhealthy do we think Oswestry is now in comparison to other places. Haven't we already got a good start that we can build on rather than change? Great place to be already - is some of what we are trying to do changing it completely?
Masterplan vision - baseline position? key locations - development of projects
Could we develop more of the open spaces that we have - Wilfred Owen green?, access to the Hill Fort? Are we making the best of the spaces we have got rather than just thinking about the traffic in and out of town.
- Open space and access - Festival square - first class.
Traffic and parking in Church Street - one way and Covid measures introduced were much better.
- Location of the bus station - some discussion in proposed masterplan. If improving access by public transport to town centre is a 10 min walk, not encouraging people to use the bus - need to site the bus station closer to the town centre where the shops are.
- Bus Station - could get any closer to the town - nowhere else to put it?
- Bus station at the moment is a calm place. The plan in the masterplan is the consultant's idea of closing the bus station and moving it onto the street. Is complete safety IN a bus station; on the street two-way traffic, get off bus, likely to have to cross the street - 2-way traffic running through diabolical. No road safety audit done - Contributor will continue to make this point until his point is answered.
Other effect of proposals is that it will concentrate traffic that is at the moment spread out, it will bring all traffic together on Oswald Road - which will concentrate the pollution, noise and also means that there is not a lot of space with no ability to cater for cyclists. The proposal is unsafe from a cyclists and pedestrians point of view, pollution and noise.
HO - the "two-way piece" is a suggestion, an idea - can't answer it until we have done the detailed work that hasn't been done - what comes through this is an opportunity to explore.

Until we have done the detailed elements and testing can't have the answers. Follow up offline.

- Red Square - wonderful experiment. Mental health is a huge aspect of health in general. Problems in Oswestry related to mental health seen in the pandemic. For many people in neighbourhood - the town centre for social encounters, accessing services is an important element of supporting mental health. If number of vehicles were slowed to a trickle and more spaces available would allow for random meetings in a town centre which are important to the community, particularly the elderly, reducing the traffic, making it safe, making the environment clean and free of pollution and noise pollution - contributor would like to support all the proposals wholeheartedly.
- When considering a healthier place to live - regarding young people - what activity venues are being looked at for the young people of Oswestry as omitted from the process/masterplan. JB - online workshops with school, through displays - a champion in the school all will be shared with the school.
- Very welcome - the changes to Church Street - potentially one way. AN - positives come from Covid for the changes to Oswestry - Festival Square, Church Street
- Festival Square – great. A similar buzz and vibe elsewhere - Church Street, Cross Street. AN - plans for buildings on Cross Street and through the HAZ fund looking at buildings to come forward as possible flagship projects and if not, the owners may be required to bring the properties up to standard. Public realm - pedestrian friendly - Cross St is not being forgotten and is in the process.
- Cross Street - Oswestry has a lot of "thinking skilled " people - Town council , FOG, SC might launch a competition "to make Cross Street a better place to be" - for local designers to bring Cross Street as a more pleasant place to be and consult the residents/town on the results. Use the untapped resource for this - we have people in Oswestry that can do this.
- As we make the plans and changes need to remember those that are not able bodied - unable to get around as able-bodied people can. Not all are able or want to walk or bicycle. Need to make sure they can get into the buildings, shops. The bus/electric type vehicles, if had them, needed to be adequate for those that can't step up and in.
- Could we convert a shop into a brand-new public toilet? If are attracting the visitors need this. HO acknowledged how important this is and facilities is an important element to visitors/those in town. Will take this through to Arren Roberts on the town council. Bad facilities can stop people coming in to town. Needs to be a real state of the art toilet.
- Noted by contributor: One of the biggest enquiries when lock down easing was "were the public toilets open?"
- Toilet facilities in Home Bargains - are part of the leased arrangement to the shops rather than being open to the public.
- Ideal bus station position could contain a public toilet and close to other connections - also a coffee bar.

Potential Key Goals

- Explore sustainable travel opportunities
- Improve connectivity and movement in and around the town and improve active travel opportunities
- Ensure there is a vibrancy mix across key areas of the town
- Make better use of open space (public realm and green space)
- Health and Well Being - supporting access to services and social interactions (healthy economies)
- Considered provision for public conveniences/facilities
- Environment considerations - air pollution / climate change

Others

- Paid from public realm to improve x4 alley ways in the town centre. The HAZ scheme - funding from the Heritage Action Zone Historic England - looking at improvements on alleyways in town. They have challenges, need improvement.
- Is the HSHAZ funding of £250k for 4 alley ways?
- Feasibility study underway - consultants looked at the historic alleyways but HSHAZ also looking at wider public realm improvements, castle mound conversations
- £210k shop front repairs, is this being paid direct to landlords?
- Offer of around £12k grants are to business applicants including landlords and tenants. Set criteria for the use of the funding set by Historic England.
- Pick up offline and circulate information about HSHAZ and Heritage England funding.

Feedback and comments made in the Microsoft Teams Chat function (please note typos have been corrected)

- Shropshire Council is developing a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) that will focus on providing an inter-connected cycling and walking network in the key urban areas of Shrewsbury, Bridgnorth, Ludlow, Market Drayton, Oswestry and Whitchurch. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) will also look at potential cycling routes between these towns and smaller settlements within a 10km boundary area of each town. 10km is the commonly accepted distance that people on average are prepared to cycle if commuting by bike to work. The development of the LCWIP is expected to begin in late August 2021 with the first round of community workshops expected to be held later in the year to consult and engage with local communities and stakeholders and see feedback on the key cycle and pedestrian routes produced by the analysis undertaken. The second round of workshops, expected to be held in early 2022, will seek views on the proposed measures to be put in place to enable cycling/walking.
- One point for consideration on movement is to consider the town roads streets as a blank canvas without the current road movement/direction of travel to consider how best things could work starting from scratch. Equally looking at desire lines for people using the town and if better design lines can be created.
- Whether we consider everything as a blank canvas or not, what appals me is that we have been able to identify how the environment of the central streets could be improved for at least the last three years. The money is available in the Town Council's bank. That money is not

working. The main streets are a disgrace. We should stop talking and get at least some improvement carried out.

- When considering roads and streets could consideration be given to creating safe space for all modes. Potential to have lower speed limits for a perception of safety for active transport users.
- Shropshire Council are looking at the Govt's National Bus Strategy to develop a local bus service improvement plan. We are also looking to plan a town bus service review - further details will be shared when available.
- Living in Stafford there are many electric scooters which are being used allowing people to move across town and these are having good uptake and reducing car movements. They can be rented as you go. Similar considerations to electric bike provision.
- Some really useful points coming out regarding size and scale of the area in question. A potential requirement to help move forward a masterplan could be gathering footfall counts, traffic counts etc across the network to see what the baseline is.
- Ref sustainable approach to transport. We made the same case in the Civic Society's Oswestry 2050 - to do this sort of thing you need to concentrate development, not disperse it. Unfortunately, SC's local plan review disperses development to a degree. When our objection to the local plan is successful (!) the council will have to review this approach to adopt low carbon sustainable development planning.
- There is a footfall counting system in Oswestry so we can now monitor this.
- But maybe we need a traffic count as well? I would pedestrianise Red Square to the Cross.
- I should add, Chattanooga did not ban cars or try to pedestrianise. It simply made public transport so easy, inexpensive and appealing that people who could use it, chose to. That caused a large voluntary drop off in traffic density & parking needs downtown.
- At the moment, the bus station is a good walk from the town centre - especially if you are carrying shopping.
- Very good points raised regarding a need for motorised road vehicles given the location and rural nature. My view on this point is to look at ensuring motor vehicles have a dedicated way into the town but that it works with other modes. A masterplan needs to focus on how it can handle all modes in combination to deliver the desired outcomes for the town.
- Innovative solutions to potential real and perceived concerns may be required. For example, if a reduction in cars in a particular area makes it difficult for shoppers to transport goods back to their vehicles could options be introduced? For example Deliv2 in Shrewsbury is a business looking to provide a service to shoppers to take their shopping back to their cars via bike.
- I'd like to know how much footfall and how many purchases are generated by drivers stopping outside a shop, and how many by having a safe, clean, quiet, sociable environment for shoppers.
- Agreed. I suggest solutions which work for Shrewsbury aren't really applicable given the much smaller population.
- A good point made on the space provision for cars etc. Some innovative routing through the town for motorised vehicles and pavement widening for pedestrians and green space to help with cooling the environment, cleaning of air, breaking up noise and helping to provide dwell space to encourage visitors to spend longer in the town which can encourage additional economic activity.
- Where would you put the green space?
- If there is more space provided, I am sure there could be many possibilities throughout the town.
- Bus Station - Central car park or Sainsbury's car park
- Some points made regarding the bus station. If the bus station cannot be relocated for good reason, which the discussion has eluded to, can a provision to ferry people who require the

service into and around the town from the bus station? An electric hop on hop off bus service? electric bike/scooter provision at the bus station to facilitate movement of people...

- Some interesting information on urban greening available at: <https://greenblue.com/gb/> for reference.
- Why should visitors have to wander round Oswestry looking for bus stops?
- Noise and air pollution from buses can be a concern. I suppose any proposal to bring more buses into the town centre may need to be considered alongside where motorised traffic and buses can travel and the level of movement by motorised vehicles on the whole as a desire for the town centre. Equally if the right buses are used (electric/hybrid, air pollution and noise can be removed from the debate).
- Ref mental health concerns. Townscapes can have a big impact on mental health. The quieter a street the easier it is to dwell and meet people and talk. High levels of background noise elevate our responses to the environment taking us out of our "here and now" thoughts and ability to relax and enjoy our connections with people in any town environment.
- I feel that young people can be brought forward firstly by providing access e.g. public transport, active transport links for those who cannot drive can be key in empowering young people to be mobile and utilise offers put on by our town.
- Agree, village young people are dependent on public transport to access anything, by coming into towns, leisure, events, and just hanging around seem to mainly take place in Oswestry rather than in the villages.
- Reducing speed please can I make the point that speed bumps can be counterproductive. They can help reduce speed but increase air pollution and noise impacts, particularly at night which can impact on residents living in our towns.
- The cafes in Red Square are a great thing, but they pull the town centre away from the empty shops in Cross St & Beatrice St etc. That is where the help is needed now.
- Is there a need to create more clear, more desirable lines to link up particular areas of the town?
- I think there is a strong correlation to the success of Square One and Red Square with how their business are branded, this strong branding and quality signage should be extended to other areas, some shops aren't following legislation and we aren't enforcing it.
- I'm a great fan of the indoor markets!
- Oswestry is a great sprawly place with several clusters of interesting buildings and shops, so is there any mileage to define separate areas, e.g. Red Square for hanging out, 'Railway Quarter' for transport links and railway heritage and allow separate interest shops to develop into loosely defined areas, food area, techy stuff, quaint special interest shops. ??
- Interesting point - masterplan has suggested areas - culture etc, but are there any others?
- There's a lovely loo in Cae Glas.
- Toilets in Cae Glas park too.
- And the market on the Bailey Head
- As well as a toilet could this be built on? Is there potential to adding showers as a facility for people who may use active transport over some distance but may not have facilities in a work place to freshen up?
- Areas, Youth, with laser quest type activities?