



## **Highworth Town Council in partnership with Highworth Community Partnership Group held a Consultation on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2018 on the subject of Tourism in the Town.**

The reason for the consultation is in response to Neighbourhood Plan, Policy 4 objective which states:  
**'Tourism: promote and develop the tourism industry and visitor facilities within Highworth'**

72 people took the trouble to sign in, plus several others who declined. Over 172 comments were recorded on the day.

Highworth Town Council (HTC) and Highworth Community Partnership Group (HCPG) are grateful for your time and for your comments which will be studied and many will be used in formulating our final Tourism Strategy.

The comments have been very broadly grouped under subject areas

### **Strengths**

Nature, history, good value, good quality food stop,

All welcoming

Attractive landscape

Good footpath network

Mixed farming – rural tourism and farmhouse B & B opportunity

Interesting walks/views/buildings/history etc

Interesting architecture

I think Highworth is pretty good already. The very reason that people stay, it's simply a case of people involving themselves in what's already on offer

Focus on Highworth's unique selling points! What makes Highworth special, not razzmatazz

It's one of the loveliest traditional high streets

Tourism would help maintain our High Street

Unique town centre

Strongly support

### **Weaknesses**

I like my town as it is, I don't like changes

If you want to attract tourists, better parking, no room for coaches, no room for cars with caravans/RVs, signposted loos

Highworth to run its own affairs separate from Swindon (become autonomous)

### **Opportunities**

Community art gallery

Ian Fleming tour

Betjeman association

Move the Highworth craft fair into a building, variety of local products made by local small businesses

Themed tea room – 1940s style to link with Mrs Stranks work and the Coleshill link. (this is an enterprise in Stow on the Wold (tea room) very popular) if linked within a museum it allows other cafes in the town to flourish too

Facilities for touring cyclists, coffee shops, toilets, secure parking needed in centre

Betjeman, Ian Fleming connection, Secret Britain – auxiliaries at Coleshill

Consider a community business centre for giving small businesses somewhere to display and sell. This becomes a niche enterprise, each crafter to share in the cost to hire/rent, rates need to be lower

Organised yarn bombing can be a visual improvement and can draw visitors in

Walking group would be good

Cycle path Swindon, Highworth, Lechlade

More outside seating for cafes, pedestrianize town centre on Saturdays?

A shop to sell handmade goods by local artists would be good. Royal Wootton Bassett has this and its well supported

Line streets, paths, walks with blossom trees which will attract visitors at certain times of year – small trees manageable. Stealing the idea from Japan which benefit from tourism for this “Japan of the Cotswolds”

Focus on what visitors are to do whilst here and why they want to come here (Robin)

Circular walk

Highworth B & B website?

Westmill Windmill Walk, local walks

Highlight environmental benefits – solar panels on REC, community composting/windmill, local grower's farmers market, junk swaps etc

Safe cycle routes from Swindon, Lechlade Coleshill to encourage healthy tourism

Going back to Domesday Book. Is there a historic town trail in operation?

Treasure trails ([treasuretrails.co.uk](http://treasuretrails.co.uk))

Cycle routes need to be improved and a map to show the routes

Do we need a campsite/rest stop in walking distance of the town?

For the town centre to survive it needs to evolve more use of outside space at certain times (cafes, podium etc) allow cafes pubs to use podium times 7am-11pm

All our current attractions should be included in the tourism strategy.

Look at Witney

### **Saturday Market**

Food fair

Can we hold other markets i.e.: French, Italian occasionally?

Increase variety of Saturday Market. Try to attract more diversity of goods on offer – more like a French market

One thing I think could be done right away is to extend the scope of the Saturday Market. May Day was a huge success and got a vast amount of positive feedback for having the High Street closed and so many new/different stalls involved. There were also numerous people suggesting that the street closure should be a feature of the Market. And, given that Blunsdon Market has now closed, there is a great opportunity to attract some of the stallholders from there to come to Highworth on a regular basis.

I'm sure the Market Manager, other current stallholders and town centre shops, Hotels and Pubs would welcome this and an influx of new stalls would attract not only Highworth residents but others from towns and villages round about and, with the correct signage around town, passers-by could be persuaded to stop and visit as well.

### **Threats**

New build developments not in keeping with the towns history

### **Neighbourhood Plan**

Quote re consultation – This is good, a brilliant idea

### **Visit Wiltshire**

Should be included in the Visit Wiltshire Guide (5), we are in Wiltshire

The boost to tourism in Highworth is worth the small fee of Visit Wiltshire, yes if fee reasonable, Town Council to pay

Be on Visit Wiltshire

### **Recognised on Map**

The church (2)

Emporium

St Michael's skyline

Karoliinas award winning salon

### **Economic Benefits Yes**

#### **Positives:**

A centre focused on our historical heritage especially Mable Stranks story. Combined with visits to Coleshill bunker

Great idea, power to your elbow, do something about improving the High Street

Highworth is a hub for the whole area

With big town centres in decline small towns could come into their own

Tourism should be encouraged

Bring in tourists to sustain the shops and tea/coffee shops we have

Implementation of steps to rectify weaknesses, particularly promoting facilities that we have

#### **Negatives:**

Highworth has the potential to benefit possibly to a lesser degree

1. How will additional areas identified by SWOT be funded?

2. If no strategy is considered then Highworth could die with the lack of footfall and tourism coming in

3. Affordable accommodation not hotel prices

Ask Swindon council to give new businesses a 6 month reduced rates to allow them to establish themselves

#### **Branding/Strapline**

A need to retain identity as distinct to Swindon

St Michaels Church – symbol for Highworth. Can be seen on all approach roads to our town.

A Hidden Gem gateway to the Cotswold

The Quintessential English Town

Betjeman charming country town

Betjeman Hidden Gem – good brand title more unique

Highworth symbol – Church on a hill,

Betjeman's poem symbol for Highworth

Needs rebranding – people are not visiting Why?

Rebrand yes –Beauty on the Hill, History on the Hill, Music on the Hill, Festivals on the Hill, Life on the Hill

Whichever way you approach Highworth the Church Tower on the hill welcomes you

Perhaps needs a title more appealing to young people too. Betjeman may not be known too many younger folk

“Gateway to the Cotswolds”

Make sure you get some outstanding kid who is an IT expert to make sure the Highworth web page is easy to use, is really eye catching, is constantly monitored and up dated. Good idea

#### **Church**

##### **Positives:**

Church tower open for public on advertised dates at times when coffee shops/pubs open. If on Sundays (like Folly in Faringdon) needs to be on Trip Adviser

Some years ago I put forward this suggestion to the Parish Council, with the support of the Vicar and the Bell ringers but it was rejected on “Health and Safety” grounds – nothing specific, just the old mantra from those without the vision or understanding of how such things are handled elsewhere. I believe now there is more scope than ever for widened support for a proposal as follows.....

The view from the tower of our historic Church is absolutely spectacular, anyone who has ever been up there will agree.

Access is somewhat tricky but with a modicum of enhancements could be made much safer than it is currently.

The proposal I put forward was to emulate the visits that can be made for example to the Church towers (3) of Devizes, the Folly at Faringdon and St Pauls Cathedral, to name a few.

Visits would be escorted, as they used to be, by volunteers and scheduled on perhaps an hourly basis each Saturday. Visitors would be charged maybe £2 each, with those funds going to the Church.

Visitor groups would be asked to assemble in one of the Coffee Shops, Pubs or Cafes in town, either one venue per week or one venue per hourly visit, or in the Market Square or High Street, bringing more visitors and trade to the town.

Geoff, the Vicar, supported the idea because he wanted to see the Church welcome more visitors, more often, to the Church.

The Bell ringers supported the idea because it would give them the opportunity to talk to potential recruits to their team and the Market manager at the time could see the benefit to stallholders of more custom in the town. I expect the current Manager would feel the same and I'm sure a quick poll of Shop, Coffeeshop and Pub owners/managers would to – I've run the idea by Tim at Bloomfields and he was very keen. I believe the point the parish council missed entirely is that visitors can sign a waiver saying they recognise the danger of climbing the Tower and accept it is their responsibility entirely for their safety – precisely how I understand the visits to Devizes and St Paul's are conducted.

The remedial work in the tower involves a cage round the small vertical ladder into the bell room and handrails across the tower and up to the door to the roof – a maximum investment of maybe a few hundred pounds.

### **Tunnels (there are none)**

Open part of a tunnel under the square.

Open the tunnels

Tours of the tunnels

### **Accommodation**

#### **Positives:**

Air BnB (MontoFri.com)

Farmhouse B & B opportunity

Longer purpose-built accommodation should be built locally.

The Freke, caravan camping facilities

New campsite not sure where

### **Museum/Tourist Information**

#### **Positives:**

A town museum would be great

Museum would be good.

Highworth tourist info centre (like Faringdon) use the old Lloyds Bank

A need for somewhere central in the high street to act as a museum – did you know the historic society is hidden down in the community centre, they have a wealth of resources and great knowledge about Highworth and its past.

Museum absolutely

Visitor centre and museum would be ideally situated at the old Lloyds bank, I believe that the building still retains a lot of original fittings

You need somewhere to sell Highworth souvenirs and speak to someone

Designated Visitor Centre and Tourism Office would be good

Local museum and guided tours (residents willing)

Visitor centre in church or library

A dedicated visitor centre would be a necessary focus on the town

A museum would be nice

Tourist Information office would help too.

Agree, better/bigger information point very helpful

### **Swindon Street**

#### **Positives:**

It is heart lifting to see one of the buildings on Swindon Street being restored to its original state

An events board in Swindon Street will advertise more events locally for both visitors and community.

Improve the look of the approaches to the town, define entrances flowers, stone feature/other visual features

Make Swindon Street attractive – nothing to encourage people to town centre

Swindon Street is the gateway through Highworth. This needs to be improved greatly such as bunting/floral displays signage for events that are taking place. This will capture visitors to stop rather than drive through  
Add flower planters and change signage.

**Negatives:**

Most visitors arrive via Swindon Street and it does not show Highworth in a good light.

It's very tired and unattractive

Swindon Street room for improvement

Less social media more signage!

Swindon Street is dreary.

Quintessential English Town - To use this phrase you would have to improve the 'look' of Swindon Street, unobtrusive signs on shops. This is the first impression of Highworth coming from the South. Northern approach much more appealing! True

Move betting shop

Betting shop in most prominent position is off putting

Betting shop minus

**High Street**

**Positives:**

We need to make Highworth more visually attractive.

Some enjoy café/shop activity on one or two occasions per week, would benefit both residents (working families and local teenagers) and tourists

Why not use the basement of the Old Bakery? It's fascinating

Encourage houses and businesses in the town centre to improve the appearance of their premises (possibly make grants)

Signposts to cashpoints would help now that the bank has gone.

Christian bookshop

Houses which are all different in the High Street

**Negatives:**

The High Street, buildings look dilapidated

High Street room for improvement

No more plans allowed for ugly buildings like the ones next to the betting shop

Our High Street is not supported.

There are more estate agents and coffee shops than we need.

Most shop fronts need a refresh, streets and car parks need regular cleaning

Please ensure the rents in Highworth High Street do not force local traders out

Need to refurbish public realm in the town

Not enough niche shops – rates/rents to high!

**Traffic Issues**

Very busy

Too many big trucks at various times of day, Aldi will not help

Often no parking spaces in town centre

No to any parking charges

Traffic flow pedestrianize the High Street

Rationalise parking

Parking in High Street hides the lovely buildings

Parking down the High Street 'hides' the architecture

Enforce parking laws in High Street

Get rid of cars in High Street

People parking all day in the market square

Restrict car parking in Brewery Street car parks to 2-3 hours free then small charge.

To attract more tourism to the area, parking is an issue, if you can get a space.

**Cleanliness**

After rubbish collection days, roads can very dirty, off putting for tourists.

Certain parts of Highworth need a good clean.

A lot of litter around since the street cleaner was stopped. This may put people off visiting  
Hide the awful bins outside T T Linnet  
Highworth looking clean, tidy, attractive, welcoming, community pride in our town.  
Keep the town centre clean and tidy, remove litter, pigeon poo etc.  
Before attracting tourism to the town, the litter problem needs to be addressed. E.g.: Blandford Alley is an eyesore, and the landlord of the King and Queen should be firmly but politely being asked to sweep up the cigarette ends outside his premises on the High Street daily.

### **Attractions**

Parks, Golf courses STF training facility The REC  
Christian bookshop  
Highworth Cinema  
Photography  
Wine Club  
Italian is good, lovely improvements  
Highworth Spooky story tours, to be advertised, reviewed on Trip adviser (Seeleys would be happy to engage in running tours)  
The Scarecrow hunt and the Highworth rocks could be made bigger to draw visitors  
B & Bs  
Roves Farm  
Pubs in the area  
Also look to attract people from nearby business parks for lunch etc  
Saturday market (3)  
Running club events  
May Fair is great, need more such as family picnic day, food festival, beer festival can be run by pubs with BBQ by Andrews  
I think as there are lots of young families, a family fun day/teddy bears picnic would be a good idea  
All the special occasions held here bring visitors from afar and community together  
Local footpaths – circular walks around Highworth.  
Walks along the Thames, very good information boards about how the river was used. Rowing boats.  
Cotswold water parks, sailing fishing SUP, kayaking. Hire a river boat.  
Definitive footpaths  
Map accessible  
Cycle path great idea and would bring people into Highworth  
The point about the golf is whether they both have day tickets?  
Newly refurbished St Michaels Church, centre of community events, historic 13<sup>th</sup> century church, much history, History of Highworth  
Ask for limited access to the Ice House during holidays for tours  
Community centre to hold more events, family fun days, food festival, beer and cider festival etc, green is good (eco-friendly event)  
Promote local walks with written leaflets, local fishing - nearby cycle ways, those near but encourage more  
Petanque/boules pitch at St Michaels Hall, well used -could be further promoted perhaps by café/bars etc  
Golf course, Mable Stranks, historic houses  
NT walks and events (Coleshill)  
REC great pool, customers can pay and play, no membership needed and affordable  
Local History needs to be promoted. Great battle of Highworth, Roman History, Elizabethan counting houses, small museum open during the tourism season, underground tunnels, Coleshill house 2WW, more about the churches, Inglehsam and Coleshill.  
We have an excellent bus link to Swindon.  
15 minutes from Stratton for lunch in a historic market town  
Good network of rural walks

**NOTE:**

Whilst HTC and HCPG welcome all your comments, it should be pointed out that some of your suggestions are outside our spheres of influence and will require negotiation with the responsible bodies. Their success cannot be guaranteed.

Cllr Pauline Webster  
Chair of Neighbourhood Plan Working Party

Keith Smith  
Chair of Highworth Community Partnership Group

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