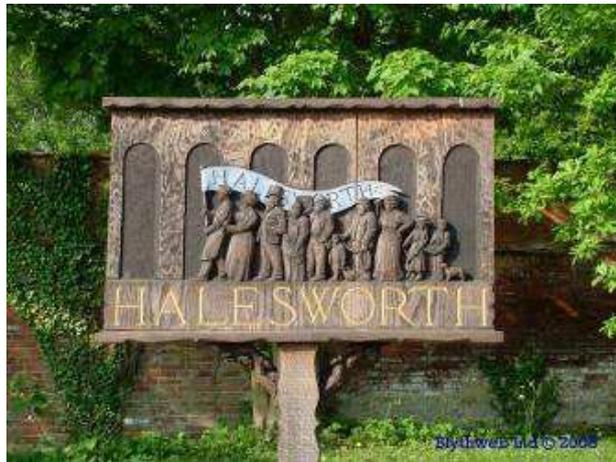


# Halesworth Town Plan



Adopted by Halesworth Town Council  
January 2011  
Updated March 2011  
Updated March 2015

# Halesworth Town Plan

## Amendments January 2015

Approved March 2015

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## 1. Introduction

### 1. Introduction

Halesworth is an attractive historic market town situated on a tributary of the River Blyth just 9 miles inland from the Suffolk Heritage Coast, about midway between Norwich and Ipswich and 20 miles from Lowestoft. Halesworth itself has a population of just under 5000 residents but services are also used by, and depend upon, the surrounding villages giving a catchment of just over 10,000.

There are a range of services including a doctors' surgery; community hospital; library; District

Council local office; Town Council office; a partly pedestrianised shopping centre with a wide range of independent shops; an edge of Town Centre supermarket; three industrial areas with a



range of small factories and retail outlets; a railway station with direct trains to Ipswich and Lowestoft (including connections to London) and an arts centre. The police station is the base for some specialist police services for the whole County. There is a Skills Centre for vocational training for the 14+ age group in North Halesworth and whilst there is a generally poor level of sports provision currently, the Campus Project hopes to provide sports, health and business opportunities next to the Skills Centre. In South

Halesworth, the Rifle Hall is gradually being refurbished and revitalised and it is hoped will provide further community facilities in the future.

## 2. The Town Plan

The aim of the Plan is to examine the various social, economic and environmental issues affecting the Town, to give a voice to local people and involve them in the solutions to any problems. The production of a clear set of local priorities will allow for more pro-active decision



making instead of just having to react to decisions made by others. Furthermore funding bodies are increasingly requiring projects to be part of a community based Town Plan. However in the present financial situation and the wholesale changes being made in the public services this Plan must be kept active. New priorities will arise if key services are affected by funding cuts.

The following vision and key principles for the Plan were established by the Working Group:

***Halesworth will prosper as a historic market town and become increasingly self-sufficient, meeting the needs of the town and surrounding communities whilst retaining its distinctive character in order to provide a high quality of life for present and future generations.***

- a) *Key facilities will be retained, enhanced or provided where deficiencies are identified.*
- b) *Housing supply will ensure that young people are able to afford to stay in the area*
- c) *A range of job opportunities will be provided.*
- d) *Public transport will be effective and efficient to provide a viable alternative to car use. Provision will be made to enable an increase in walking and cycling.*
- e) *Efforts will be made to improve energy efficiency and to implement other initiatives to combat climate change.*
- f) *The historic, wildlife and landscape character of the area will be protected and enhanced where appropriate.*

### **3. Priorities.**

A clear set of priorities have been identified. Halesworth has a social imbalance with a greater proportion of elderly people and less young people than the national average, the Suffolk average and the average of any of the surrounding market towns such as Saxmundham, Bungay and Beccles.

This trend is set to continue because of **the lack of affordable housing**. Despite strong demand, not enough affordable housing is being built whilst the price of houses at the bottom end of the market have substantially risen in price because of the strong demand for second homes in the area.

This trend is also likely to continue because of the loss of **secondary education** from the Town; this has led to the Campus Group initiative to secure the best educational and community use of the former **Middle School site**. It is hoped that it will substantially improve our **sports provision** as Halesworth has insufficient sports pitches; no squash courts; no cricket pitch; and no swimming pool not only in the town but at least ten miles from a public swimming pool facility.

Until the Campus Project comes to fruition, there will continue to be a trend towards a greater social imbalance because of the perceived poor range of facilities and activities for **young people and young families**.

Other priorities identified by the Town Plan process include:

**Transport** issues such as bus and train services; concerns over car parking charges and cycling facilities. The long distance from Halesworth to a district general hospital means that the survival or replacement of the **Patrick Stead community hospital** is seen as absolutely imperative. The current situation is seen as an immediate threat which has caused concern about the future of inpatient services. The presence of a **paramedic** based in the Town is considered an important element in overcoming the dangers of our isolation but not a solution.

The importance of our **Town Centre** is emphasised by the debate about applications for a second supermarket which polarises opinion in the Town between those that think the town centre is dying on its feet and those that think a thriving Town Centre will be brought to its knees by a new edge of centre supermarket.

The lack of a **Community Centre** and the uncertainty of funding for the **Rifle Hall and Campus Centre**.

**Sustainability** issues including adapting to climate change; use of finite energy resources, the increase in sustainable energy resources and biodiversity conservation.

**Local Decision making.** The debate is still at the forefront of our thinking with the challenges and opportunities provided by the continued government issue of how to localise self-determination and Suffolk County Council's policy of "divesting" services.

**Workshops** were held on **wildlife** and **rights of way** and priorities for action were developed. Concern over the historic character of the Town Centre has led to the proposed adoption of the Conservation Area Management Plan.

**Changing Priorities.** The nature of the process used to develop priorities inevitably concentrates on things that are wrong or missing. So where we are well served for example in the areas of policing or the arts these subjects receive no attention in this Plan. However changes in service provision like the disappearance of the Community Support Officers would immediately put policing as a priority issue.

Therefore the following subjects have been discussed but no priority actions have been identified at this time for **policing; business/employment; culture and landscape**.

**Integration.** There are dangers that dealing with subjects separately will mean the interconnectedness of all the activities in the Town will be missed. There can be conflicts and synergies so this issue will need consideration when the implementation of the Plan is discussed.

#### **4. Working Groups and Action Plans**

Where existing groups are already working on the priority subjects and their actions are available they have been included in this document. A number of working groups have been established as part of the Town Plan process and their action plans form part of the Plan. In the majority of cases their work continues and they will play an important role in the delivery of the Plan.

The **Affordable Housing** Working Group is working with WDC; Flagship and Orwell Housing Associations; Community Action Suffolk and local landowners with the aim of building at least a further 20 affordable houses over and above those that will come through the planned house building programme.

The **Education** Working Group has established a set of principles to guide its work in relation to the discussions regarding the education of our young people in the town. A separate group, the **Campus Group**, has been established to develop proposals for future use of the former Middle School grounds and the Education Group are represented on this Group.

**Halesworth Playing Fields Association** is working with the Campus Group and Waveney District Council to solve the problem of poor sports provision in the Town.

Although many issues that are being discussed and progressed such as education, transport and affordable housing, affect young people there has been no direct involvement of **Young People**

within the Plan process. This will need to be addressed.

Local transport groups will be looking carefully at the changes in the **train** services to ensure that the level of service improves rather than deteriorates. Improvements to the station facilities are also a high priority. With so many of the local **bus** services subsidised by the County Council, ensuring that an effective service for the town and surrounding villages survives in the face of the proposed budget cuts, will be vitally important. These groups will pursue the transport issues previously identified by the Town Centre Group.

Halesworth Bicycle Team are looking at a range of issues to improve conditions for cycling and cyclists in and around the town and have established a new entrance to the Town for National Cycle Route 1 (NCR1) and re-visiting the restrictions on two-way cycling in the Thoroughfare.

A group called **Halesworth Health** which includes the Doctors, the League of Friends, the Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund and Community First Responders, is examining the potential to safeguard and expand services on the Patrick Stead/Cutlers Hill site, working in partnership with the Campus Group and the NHS to form the Halesworth Health Village.

The **Town Centre** Working Group had previously established a set of principles to guide its work. A number of issues such as the improvements to bus facilities, exploring opportunities for extending the pedestrianised area and car parking issues will be the responsibility of the Transport Working Group. The development of the Thoroughfare site is now seen as the overriding priority for our Town Centre and flooding risk continues to be a key element of the discussions on this subject.

**Halesworth in Transition (HINT)** is an established group that is part of a growing network of Transition Towns examining the issues and seeking local solutions to the challenges of climate change and finite energy resources. They have produced an action plan for the Halesworth area.

With so many services in the Town being used by people from the **surrounding villages** the absence of any formal structure for a collective voice is to be regretted. An exploratory meeting of the parishes around Halesworth was held at Rumburgh in December 2010. It was agreed that closer cooperation would be useful and themed meetings on issues of mutual concern would promote joint working.

## **5. Affordable Housing in Halesworth**

### **The Big Issue**

The public consultation held by the Town Plan Group in March 2010 showed that 85% of respondents felt that building affordable housing should be given high priority in future plans for the Town. The chief concern was that younger people, who could not afford to buy houses in the Town at market price, were separated from their families and could not take up jobs in the Town, thus increasing the age imbalance in the existing population and, for example, lessening the viability of local schools. The Affordable Housing Group is looking at ways to meet this demand.

### **Definition**

Affordable housing describes dwelling units that are deemed to be within the financial means of those in the lower income ranges in the area. In the context of the Halesworth Town Plan the term means homes that are restricted to local people in perpetuity and cannot be sold or rented on the open market. The term can be applied to both rented units or shared ownerships.

## Present Position

In 2007 there were 41 households in Halesworth registered on Waveney's Housing Needs Register and assessed as in need. However out of a total of 155 houses built in the Town in the previous 5 years only 8 were affordable houses - despite a planning target of 30% affordable housing for new developments. This is because much of the new development has been of very small developments of one or two dwellings often on existing gardens which have been classified as "brownfield" sites. Unfortunately during the same period 25 council houses were sold off. The Housing Profile also thought that Halesworth was susceptible to the "Southwold effect" with permanent housing stock being converted to holiday accommodation and second homes or people from Southwold and Reydon seeking lower priced homes. This has put further pressure on prices at the lower end of the market making it increasingly difficult for young people to buy a house in the town.

Compared with adjacent market towns such as Beccles, Bungay and Saxmundham, Halesworth has a higher proportion of older people and a lower proportion of young people.

### Town Population.

	<b>Total Population</b>	<b>0yrs - 4yrs</b>	<b>5yrs - 15 yrs</b>	<b>over 64</b>	<b>Median age</b>
Halesworth	4637	207 <b>4.5%</b>	542 <b>11.7%</b>	1368 <b>29.5%</b>	46.26
Beccles	9746	494 <b>5.1%</b>	1232 <b>12.6%</b>	2433 <b>25.0%</b>	43.8
Bungay	4895	284 <b>5.8%</b>	673 <b>13.7%</b>	1134 <b>23.2%</b>	42.64
Saxmundham	2712	180 <b>6.6%</b>	373 <b>13.8%</b>	596 <b>22.0%</b>	41.05

The above figures are to be updated

## The Future

There has been some progress with underused garage sites in Waveney District Council ownership being developed for affordable housing. However all of these sites have now been developed. The Local Development Framework (LDF) from Waveney District Council<sup>2</sup> only allocates sites for about 90 houses in Halesworth with a continued heavy reliance on the development of small brown field sites for the rest of the houses to be built in the Town up until 2025. A target of 35% affordable housing has been set which would mean that theoretically 30 of these allocated houses could be affordable. However it seems unlikely that we will achieve the target with the Affordable Housing Viability Study<sup>3</sup> stating "*On sites in excess of 15 units a challenging target of 35% affordable housing should be set as this level should be achievable on some sites and in some areas. In the short term however, it is unlikely that the Council could expect to achieve more than 20% affordable housing without substantial amounts of public subsidy.*"

*Therefore, the Council should be looking to apply that 35% expectation with care while the downturn in the market persists in order not to stifle development. In addition, on sites where viability is a significant issue (lower value areas/downside market conditions and/or abnormal construction costs) early conversations with the Homes and Communities Agency should take place to establish the likely level of grant support that may be necessary. "*

So even taking the most optimistic forecast the LDF will only deliver 20 affordable houses between now and 2025 and since that was written the amount of Government financial support has been further reduced.

However the new government has abolished regional housing targets, introduced incentives for local authorities to build more houses and is looking at ways of local communities having more power to get planning permission for affordable housing. Some planning authorities are looking at giving incentives for landowners to bring forward land for affordable housing by allowing schemes to have a proportion of market value housing. It is likely that the seriousness of the situation countrywide will lead to increasing incentives and flexibility being introduced.

## **Action Plan**

The Working Group (see Appendix 4) has held meetings with Waveney District Council; Foundation East, Community Action Suffolk; Orwell Housing Association; Flagship Housing Association. The Group has investigated the need to establish a Community Land Trust to facilitate the building of more affordable housing but at this stage do not feel that this is necessary.

Due to changes in the administrative relationships at Waveney District Council up to date figures for Halesworth from the Housing Needs Register are not available. However as a measure of need the Register does not give a comprehensive picture and we are advised that to justify any exceptional planning permission or to attract government funding an up to date Local Housing Needs Survey is required and we have established two potential sources for this. Suffolk ACRE who have much experience of rural Housing schemes in Suffolk Coastal have advised that following an agreement with Waveney District Council the Town Council should undertake the following process:

### **Complete Housing Needs Survey**

**Appoint Registered Social Landlord as partner** (In our case this is likely to be Flagship, Hastoe or Orwell Housing Association).

### **Identify potential sites**

### **Obtain Planning Permission**

### **Secure funding**

### **Build homes**

### **Place tenants**

## 6. Education

### The Big Issue.

The closure of Halesworth Middle School in 2012 was as a result of the Schools Reorganisation Review. This saw the change from a three tier system (Primary, Middle, High) to a two tier school system. All the children from Halesworth and surrounding areas will go to a High School from the age of 11 and those children between the ages of 9 -11 who used to go on to a Middle School will stay at their primary schools. Bungay High School is the transport catchment school for Halesworth and free transport is provided to and from school up to the age of 16.

### Present position.

A range of state supported and private **pre-school** provision exists in Halesworth and the surrounding villages. The Edgar Sewter Primary School in Halesworth has nursery provision from the age of 3 as well as play school provision from age 2 and the Dragonflies Children's Centre, which is a stand-alone facility accessed via the Wissett Road providing a range of services supporting adult learning and health services for families with children from birth to five. The following chart shows the **primary** schools in Halesworth and the surrounding villages that provide for the education of children from the ages of 5 - 11

	Total No Children 2014	Capacity
Halesworth, Edgar Sewter	262	315
Bramfield	95	60
Holton	87	105
Ilketshall	100	105
Wenhaston	72	84

[ Insert picture ]

In September 2007 a new state-of-the-art, purpose built facility, was built in Halesworth to help deliver programmes targeted primarily at children age 14 -19. The North Suffolk Skills Academy's core purpose is to offer the highest standards of training across a range of vocational areas in Engineering, Hairdressing, Motor Vehicle, Catering, and the Construction trades. The facility presently serves U16 students from Bungay High School, Alde Valley High School, Archbishop Sandcroft High School, Pakefield High School, Sir John Leman High School and Stradbroke High School. In September 2013 it underwent a name change and the NSSA became a charitable subsidiary company to Bungay High School with its own board of directors. A range of post-16 programmes are also offered in Aeronautical Engineering (BTEC L3 – x2 A level equivalent), Motor Vehicle (IMI L2), Hairdressing (L2), Construction ( L2/Apprenticeships), and Catering (L2).

Young people from Halesworth also travel to further education **colleges** including Lowestoft, Ipswich and Norwich.

## Halesworth Town Plan – January 2015 update

As part of the Town Plan process an Education Working Group has been established. The Group agreed a number of principles which guide their actions and underpin this action plan.

- The Middle School site shall be known as the Halesworth Campus in recognition of its important future role in education for Halesworth and the surrounding area.
- Future use of the middle school site should be primarily educational and some community functions. The sorts of community use which might be acceptable would be those that build on its existing functions – such as sports, adult education, performing arts and the general educational well-being of the community.
- Strong links between the educational activities and the local community should be developed at every opportunity.
- Halesworth could offer specialised secondary education functions. Where this happens, they should be open to pupils from all local high schools (Bungay, Sir John Leman, Thomas Mills, Stradbroke etc). This would mirror the role of the North Suffolk Skills Centre – as a local ‘hub’ - and would avoid Halesworth being seen as ‘Bungay High School’s other site’. This could apply to specialist functions such as a pupil ‘turnaround’ unit, minority GCSE and ‘A’ level courses, minority or new Diploma courses.
- However, specialised functions should not be the only type of secondary educational ‘offer’ in Halesworth. Halesworth should be a *main or principal location* for some mainstream courses – particularly in areas where Halesworth town could provide teaching input and/or student placement or apprenticeship opportunities. This could apply to health and social care, for example, or performing arts.
- The work of the group should take into account the needs of local primary schools, which will grow as a result of SOR, as well as the needs of secondary age pupils. For example, it is more than likely that some local primary schools will have to have additional classrooms and may find they no longer have sufficient playing field space, nor the resources to teach a larger and older pupil body to the required standards.
- In developing its proposals, the group will liaise closely with local Head teachers, Town, District and County Councils. The group will also hold consultations on its proposals with other stakeholders, such as parents, school governors, and Halesworth businesses.

A Task Group has been established by Tony Goldson, our Suffolk County Councillor to establish the future uses for the middle school buildings and playing fields, post 2012, for presentation to and agreement by Suffolk County Council. The Town Council and the Town Plan Working Group are represented on this task group.

Interest has also been shown in the development of a Free School” in the Town and the opportunities provided by this aspect of Government policy will need to be fully explored.

### Action Plan

- 1. Develop a plan for the Halesworth Campus that retains a significant education role and optimises community use within a financially sustainable structure.**
- 2. Ensure that the High School in Bungay develops stronger links with the Halesworth Community. –**  
**Lead – Town Plan Education Working Group and Halesworth Campus Task Group**

**7. Sport** *(this will need further revision to accommodate the publication of the PFA proposals)*

**The Big Issue**

The lack of sports facilities was the issue flagged up more than any other in the “What do you like least about Halesworth?” poll carried out at the Town Plan consultation. The recent loss of the swimming pool, the loss of the squash courts at the George Maltings and the long standing shortage of youth football pitches have all contributed towards the strength of feeling on this issue.

**Present Situation**

**APPENDIX 1 HALESWORTH DATA FROM WDC FACILITIES SURVEY**

The following sports provision is based at Dairy Hill on land owned by Halesworth Playing Fields Association (PFA):

- Halesworth Town Football Club senior team and reserves – one pitch and clubhouse
- Halesworth Angel Bowls Club – clubhouse and outdoor green.
- Halesworth Tennis Club – two hard courts with floodlights.
- Kuk Sool Won (Traditional Korean Martial Arts) - clubhouse
- Outdoor heated swimming pool closed in 2008

Halesworth Town Junior FC

Halesworth Badminton Club meets in the Middle School

Halesworth Golf Club – 18 hole course, driving range and clubhouse

No information has been gathered about funding and organisation of sports provision in Halesworth compared with other Towns in the District.

A questionnaire was undertaken during the Town Plan consultation by Waveney District Council and the PFA. Comments respondents left at the end of the survey revealed some common themes. A considerable number of comments centred around developing the Halesworth middle school site together with the existing pool and playing fields. Numerous remarks were given surrounding the length of time with which Halesworth has had to wait for suitable sports facility provision and hoping that something comes into fruition this time around. The need to cater for young people in the area, was also frequently mentioned; helping to curb anti-social behaviour and to identify sporting talent at a young age. The report on the questionnaire concludes:

*“There is clearly a need for new and improved sporting provision in the Halesworth area. Based on the results of this survey and those indicated by the Needs Assessment in 2006, the community have expressed a need for new and improved, quality facilities with good access and car parking and offering value for money. Facilities in demand include provision for individual pursuits and team sports. Provision of a swimming pool, fitness gym, outdoor football pitches (possibly to include an Astro facility) and tennis courts, plus a well equipped sports hall that could be used for a variety of activities, would satisfy most of the requirements expressed by the respondents.”*

**Actions:**

The questionnaire report recommends:

**It is recommended that a site is identified in Halesworth that will accommodate the activities as prioritised by this survey. The site should be easy to access for the people of Halesworth with adequate car parking provision. The activities to be accommodated should include a swimming pool (size dependent on affordability), a**

**fitness gym and studio, outdoor football pitches (possibly to include an Astro facility) plus a sports hall that could accommodate badminton, 5-a-side football and netball in order to maximise its potential use and flexibility. Lead – Halesworth Playing Fields Association**

## **8. Youth**

### **The Big Issue**

There was a strong perception that youth facilities were poor especially in relation to the lack of sports facilities and a “drop-in centre”.

### **The Present Position**

An audit of the existing provision for young people was carried out in February 2010. It shows a range of activities for young people with a senior and junior youth club at the Apollo Centre; guiding and scouting opportunities for a range of ages; in sport there are specific initiatives for young people in football, bowls, tennis, swimming, badminton and kuk sool won; and New Cut Arts offer a range of opportunities in the arts. The lack of a “drop-in” centre is the most often quoted need.

### **Audit of Provision for Young People (February 2010)**

The Cut - Waveney Amplifier workshop, Youth Performing Arts Academy, Children's and Youth Theatre and Movement clubs [separate], Dance

Apollo Youth Clubs. Junior 9-13 years old - meets Thursdays - run by volunteers Senior 13-19 years old - meets twice a week - run by SCC

**Guides:** Rainbows; 1st and 2nd Halesworth Brownies; Halesworth Guides.

**Scouts:** Beavers, cubs and scouts Boys and girls aged 10.5 years to 14.5 years.

**Halesworth Library** Bookstart Scheme 0-5yrs Tuesdays 10-11; Children's' activities Sundays

**Halesworth Young Farmers** Cover a 15 mile radius of Halesworth for ages 17 - 30,

**Suffolk Youth and Connexions Service** – Suffolk County Council provides advice and support service for all 13 -19 year olds.

### **Sport**

**Halesworth Town Junior Football** 8 to under 15. Including a girls under 12, team, Play and train at either Dairy Hill in Halesworth or the Baisley Playing field along the Bramfield Road.

**Kuk Sool Won** – Dairy Hill

**Tennis** – Dairy Hill

**Badminton** - TBC

**Bowls** - Dairy Hill

**Swimming** - Halesworth Ducklings (NB No facilities in the Town)

**Play areas** - Bramfield Road, Chichester Road, Dairy Hill, Gainsborough Drive, Kennedy Close, Old Station Road, Swan Lane, Town Park including Skatepark and basketball area

## **The Future**

The out sourcing of services by the District and County Councils will affect a range of services and facilities that will require careful monitoring to prevent a further erosion of facilities for young people. There will of course be opportunities for some of these functions to be brought back to more local delivery. The failure to establish a working group to deal with this important area of work is disappointing and needs urgent action.

### **Action Plan**

- 1. Establish a group that will champion the retention and enhancement of youth facilities and activities and ensure that the voice of young people will be effectively heard in the Community. Lead Halesworth Town Council and the Parish Councils**

## 9. Health

### The Big Issue

**The task now and for the next few years will be to safeguard and develop Halesworth's health and community services.**

Rural isolation and poor transport to facilities across the region cause problems for people of all ages. It takes about an hour to reach any of the three District General Hospitals (James Paget, Ipswich, and Norfolk & Norwich) by car and it can take the best part of a day by public transport to attend a hospital out-patient appointment or visit a patient. It is vital that Halesworth continues to provide a wide range of services to its communities – more than half of the 10,250 patients registered with GPs at Cutlers Hill Surgery live in the surrounding villages.

At present almost 3,000 patients registered at the surgery are more than sixty five years old, a figure that will rise considerably over the next decade. Many have multiple needs and require responsive local care. Halesworth provides that care: fewer people are admitted to a District General Hospital than elsewhere in the country, and more people spend their last weeks of life where they want to be – most often at home or in Patrick Stead Hospital.

This considerable achievement is the result of local doctors, nurses and other health and care professionals working closely together. The value of keeping local out-patient and in-patient services at Patrick Stead Hospital, day care at Rayner Green Resource Centre and Community Services on the same site as Cutlers Hill Surgery cannot be overestimated.

Halesworth's position - on the border of Suffolk, with many services provided from Norfolk - inevitably means that with every new management structure it has to work hard to make its voice heard. The challenges increase: over the next two years the coalition Government plans fundamental change to the NHS structure. The Chief Executive of NHS England has called it 'A management of change so big you can see it from space'.

Large GP commissioning groups, which could cover populations of up to 500,000, will replace the existing authorities and decide where and what services are provided. Despite assurances that the NHS budget is 'safe', in real terms funding will be cut.

Although there is no immediate threat to Patrick Stead Hospital the reduction in beds to 12, and the difficulty in adapting a Victorian hospital to new NHS building standards has put the in-patient



service at risk before, and may do so again. To maintain care at or close to home, the Halesworth site needs not only community beds at Patrick Stead but respite and nursing home beds too, as well as services for younger people and children.

Residents in the Halesworth area have contributed greatly to its health and care services, supporting the Patrick Stead Hospital League of Friends and Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund; a remarkable example of how co-operation between nurses, doctors and community improves people's lives. Some people have trained as Community First Responders

and provide a direct and fast response to people in an emergency. Others work as volunteers in organisations that also make life better for people in and around Halesworth. Soon that partnership will be even more necessary.

Cutlers Hill Surgery GPs, the League of Friends and the Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund are now - with the Town Council - linked together informally in the Halesworth Health Group. They are looking at all ideas - from small developments on the Cutlers Hill Surgery site to a new facility attached to the site on the adjacent Playing Fields Association land - to ensure that the care people need and deserve is maintained, developed and provided locally. Wholehearted involvement by local people in imaginative, well reasoned, financially sound plans will be the first step to securing a safe future.

## **Present Position**

### **Cutlers Hill Surgery**

A number of different organisations provide our health and care services but family doctors and nurses in General Practice and community services are the hub of the healthcare system. Primary care delivers 90% of our healthcare and at Cutlers Hill Surgery that means well over 7000 consultations a month. The eight doctors there are partners in a highly respected practice, recognised by its status as a training practice for GP registrars, fully qualified doctors gaining experience in General Practice, and as a teaching practice for medical students.

The Primary Health Care Team – doctors, practice nurses, nurse practitioners, district and community nurses, health visitors, midwives – all work from Cutlers Hill Surgery.

The integrated team works together, coordinating care in a way that is a model for health care delivery. From managing acute illness, monitoring and helping to manage chronic diseases to preventing illness by enabling people to choose a healthy lifestyle, the team offers comprehensive health care. Health screening, baby and toddler clinics, mental health support (through a link worker) and minor surgical procedures are just four of the services at the surgery.



The team includes a clinical case manager, who works across health and social care boundaries, coordinating care for patients with complex long-term conditions. The surgery also funds a special post: a nurse coordinator, who follows up by telephone people who have been in hospital or are undergoing specific treatments – especially patients with cancer and those needing palliative care. Patients and their carers greatly value this support and advice, and the service reflects the commitment the surgery has to patient centred care. In short, everyone aims to provide care 'close to home' where possible and works in partnership with others to provide the very best care for all.

Owing to the difficulties for patients travelling to a district hospital, the team at Cutlers Hill offers 24 hour blood pressure and cardio respiratory monitoring (the equipment was bought with the help of the League of Friends). Overnight oxygen monitoring at home, for sleep apnoea for example, is both more comfortable and convenient for people.

The doctors are responsible, on a daily basis, for the medical care of patients in Patrick Stead Hospital, which is adjacent to the surgery. They care for patients in two residential homes: Beech House (with a specialist elderly mentally infirm unit) and Highfields; Priory Paddocks Nursing Home at Darsham; and four sheltered accommodation units. They also provide medical cover for the minor injuries department and work as part of the Out of Hours service provided by Harmoni, at the Patrick Stead base.

A new independent pharmacy, attached to Cutlers Hill Surgery, offers people choice about where to obtain their prescriptions. People can use the town pharmacy, Boots, and the new pharmacy. 'Rural' patients, who live more than a mile away from a pharmacy, will still be able to obtain their medication from the surgery dispensary.

Rayner Green Resource Centre, providing day care for people with health and social needs, completes the facilities on the Cutlers Hill site.

The cluster of primary care, community hospital, social care and community health services make this an excellent site for development as Halesworth's Health Village, serving communities from Ilketshall St Andrew in the north to Peasenhall in the south; Laxfield in the west to Walberswick in the east.

### **Patrick Stead Hospital**

Donated for the people of Halesworth more than a hundred years ago by a generous benefactor, Patrick Stead Hospital has seen many changes over the past few years. People fondly remember its maternity unit, and a busy 20 bedded unit on the first floor. The 'casualty' department was also housed upstairs.

Now the hospital is allowed just 12 Intermediate Care beds upstairs, reduced in number in the last few years to meet new Health and Safety criteria, not because of reduced need. They are fully occupied.

The beds – the two ensuite single rooms, two ensuite rooms with two beds and two four bedded rooms provide a little flexibility - are used for a variety of uses:

- Acute admissions: if a patient has lost independence through a chest or urine infection or has an infection that needs intravenous antibiotics, but does not need the facilities of a district hospital
- Palliative and terminal care: with the close involvement of the primary health care team. Patients and families appreciate the privacy of the en suite side rooms
- Rehabilitation post operatively or after strokes when people need extra nursing or therapy before going home.
- Assessment: close observation and basic tests can often help GPs to deal with a problem locally, saving the patient from admission to a district general hospital. Blood transfusions and some other treatments usually provided on a day case basis.

Families appreciate that they can meet and talk in a private room, which has a bed-settee if a close family member needs to stay overnight.



Patrick Stead Hospital also houses outpatient clinics and visiting outreach services in many specialities: orthopaedics, dermatology, gynaecology, ear, nose and throat, post natal, continence, dietetics, chronic fatigue, retinal screening, psychology and cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for example.

The GP LUTS service - investigation for men with bladder/prostate problems is at the Patrick Stead Hospital. The site also provides Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Podiatry and Phlebotomy services and a District Nurse leg ulcer clinic.

There are many different practitioners, employed by different NHS organisations, working in sessions throughout the week to provide comprehensive care locally.

A minor injuries unit is open from 0800 to 1800 Monday to Friday. This means quick and convenient treatment for people who do not need the facilities of a district general hospital.

Voluntary groups also find the Patrick Stead building a useful resource. For example, Alcoholics Anonymous, NORCAS - drugs and alcohol counselling, the Parkinson's Disease Society, and Suffolk Hearing Support Services for people with NHS hearing aids all use the excellent facilities.

The services at Patrick Stead Hospital are valued by, and necessary for, local people. The League of Friends of Patrick Stead Hospital has generously supported significant upgrading within the hospital to make a pleasant environment for patients, visitors and staff. The Garden Room is well used and is an excellent meeting room.

However, a Victorian hospital building cannot easily adapt to new building standards for health care delivery. The reduction in beds because of new legislation makes the in-patient services vulnerable. The key challenge now is to agree plans to secure excellent care for the future, developing new facilities to complement Patrick Stead Hospital.

### **Rayner Green Resource Centre**

The Rayner Green Resource Centre, funded by health and social care, provides Day Care facilities from Monday to Friday for 15 people, mainly elderly, with a wide range of health and social care needs. Three days are specifically for people with dementia (as the population ages, the number of people with dementia will increase). Rayner Green users appreciate the Sensory Room, which provides relaxation and stimulation for body and mind.

The League of Friends of Patrick Stead Hospital has contributed significantly to the ideal surroundings and excellent facilities. These, together with appropriate specialist input and with GPs and nursing colleagues close at hand, enable the award winning team to help people who might otherwise be in residential care or hospital, to live at home.

### **Other NHS Services**

A number of other NHS organisations in Norfolk, Suffolk and the East of England provide care for Halesworth people.

### **Norfolk and Suffolk Mental Health Services**

Norfolk and Waveney Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust is about to merge with Suffolk Mental Health Partnership. Mental health services comprise a range of specialist services for the care and recovery of anyone experiencing mental ill health or substance misuse. These include crisis teams, community care, inpatient beds, outpatient facilities, residential, domiciliary and day services. Specialist teams work closely with service users, their carers, their families and other organisations to put together a plan of care which suits each individual person.

Where possible, support and care takes place in the community. A clinical psychologist has a weekly session at Patrick Stead Hospital. Under the umbrella of IAPT (improved access to psychological therapies) mental health service colleagues also have four sessions a week and offer Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. A valued mental health link worker is also part of the primary health care team at Cutlers Hill Surgery. The IAPT service will soon be delivered under

a new name - the Great Yarmouth and Waveney Well-Being Service. The partners include the new mental health trust, Great Yarmouth and Waveney MIND and Meridian East.

### **East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust**

This ambulance service covers six counties. As well as responding emergency calls the ambulance service also provides a hospital transport service for certain patients. Ambulances have a target of eight minutes to reach a patient needing emergency care. As Halesworth is ten miles from the nearest ambulance station, which makes it almost impossible for the ambulance service to achieve the target, the trust provides a paramedic, based on the Cutlers Hill Surgery site, to provide a rapid response to emergency calls.



Community First Responders, local people who volunteer to support the emergency services in the community where they live or work, are also valuable partners in the 'fast response' to emergency calls. The ambulance service gives them comprehensive first aid training, including basic life support, the use of a defibrillator and oxygen.

### **District General Hospitals**

Patients of Cutlers Hill surgery needing specialist care can choose to be referred to any of the three District General Hospitals in the area: **James Paget University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Norfolk & Norwich University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Ipswich Hospital NHS Trust.** Regional centres care for people whose conditions require highly specialised services.

A major pressure on the James Paget Hospital - and a drain on the local health service budget - is the number of emergency admissions. The James Paget Hospital acknowledges that many people could be cared for more satisfactorily in the community: the pressure on the hospital can be relieved by care closer to home.

The partnership between Cutlers Hill Surgery, Patrick Stead, Rayner Green Centre, the Community Services and the Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund achieves an important outcome: fewer people in and around Halesworth are admitted to hospital than from other areas.

There are excellent examples of successful local initiatives: the Admission Prevention Service (a partnership between the NHS and Social Services) provides fast response, intensive care at home for up to 14 days, as an alternative to admission to hospital or residential care. The service is for frail, elderly people and their carers and people with long-term physical disabilities who are experiencing a short term crisis. Another example is the Falls Prevention Service, supporting people who have fallen or are at risk of falling. A further pragmatic step is the involvement of GPs in the James Paget Hospital's Emergency Admission and Discharge Unit.

The cooperation that produces Halesworth's health care is a model for other areas developing care closer to home. The distance from an acute hospital - the twenty five mile drive to the James Paget Hospital, which serves the populations of Great Yarmouth and Waveney, takes fifty minutes - is a key consideration in the development of local healthcare. If Halesworth's network of services was at risk it would greatly disadvantage local communities. It would also lead to even more pressure on the James Paget Hospital - and the healthcare budget - during an unprecedented period of change and uncertainty.

### **Other Services**

#### **Dentists, Opticians and Podiatrists/Chiropodists**

Opticians and some dentists provide NHS services. Locally, there are two dental practices: Hooker House (NHS and private) and Angel Link (private). Jeffery & Associates and Cecil Amey

Opticians provide NHS optical services. NHS podiatry services are provided at Patrick Stead Hospital or at home. In the private sector, Angel Podiatry and S. J. Welby offer a full range of chiropody services and Neat Feet provides non surgical foot care for people at home.

### **Complementary Therapies**

There are many providers of complementary medicine and alternative therapies locally, most are private practitioners. Reflexology and massage for palliative care patients is sometimes funded by Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund. Within the NHS physiotherapists may provide acupuncture as part of their treatment plan.

### **Social Care**

#### **Suffolk County Council**

Local health and care services are often needed by people at the same time and Suffolk County Council works closely with the NHS to provide advice, support and services to local people. The County Council also provides adoption and fostering services, residential services for older people, sheltered housing schemes, help for homeless people and secondary specialist mental health services.

However Suffolk County Council plans to reduce significantly, many of its current services. It proposes to transfer most to other sectors, including voluntary, community and private. It will stop being a provider of residential care to older people.

As with health services, local communities will need to be proactive and inventive to ensure people's care needs are met.

### **Voluntary and Charitable Services**

Throughout this document there are references to the involvement of local branches of national charities in health services locally. Charitable and voluntary organisations dedicated to Halesworth and surrounding villages, which may be of particular interest to people who would like to support their work include:

#### **Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund**

Established in 1989 by local district nurses, this hugely popular and effective local charity, funded by local people, provides nursing care and equipment for patients who need palliative care and who are registered with Cutler's Hill Surgery. It also provides additional support for their families. A nurse member of the Primary Health Care Team assesses patient and family needs and presents a case for funding to Trustees.

#### **Patrick Stead League of Friends**

The League of Friends of Patrick Stead is a charitable organisation which supports the Patrick Stead Hospital and the services it provides. The Friends, through local donations and support, have paid for many improvements to the community hospital and its surroundings. The League of Friends has also assisted the Rayner Green Resource Centre and the GP Surgery. The group organises various fundraising events throughout the year and is now working closely with the Halesworth Health Group to ensure that services are maintained and progressed on the site.

#### **Community First Responders**

The work of Community First Responders, trained volunteers, has been touched upon under the East of England Ambulance Service section. They are especially important in a rural area. Often they are first on the scene in an emergency, providing essential practical support before the arrival of a paramedic or ambulance services.

#### **The Halesworth Volunteer Centre Community Car Service**

The Community Car Service is subsidised 10 pence per mile by Suffolk County Council and

operated by Halesworth Volunteer Centre. Volunteers donate their time, use their own cars and are reimbursed expenses. The service is available to anyone young or old, who has no means of private or public transport

Passengers contribute 35 pence per mile on a mileage basis towards the cost of the journey – for example to the doctor, dentist, optician, public transport services, local shops, the hairdresser, or relatives and friends.

A review of mileage between 2010-11 and 2013-14 by Suffolk County Council determined that hospital appointments are not within the service specification of supported Community Car Services. The majority of these journeys are high mileage, moving services away from local service provision. Therefore from 1st April 2014 the 10 pence mileage subsidy is longer provided for hospital visits by Suffolk County Council increasing the cost of hospital visits for community car scheme users/

### **Befriender Service**

Halesworth Volunteer Centre offers an informal support service providing one to one support, to help people retain independence in their own homes. The services include befriending, shopping, form filling, running errands, ironing and dog walking. The volunteers make a difference to so many in the community and the Volunteer Centre needs more. The Volunteer Centre itself relies on some funding to coordinate volunteers and requests for help.

### **The Halesworth Day Centre**

The Day Centre provides a luncheon club for the elderly, and can arrange transport if necessary. Volunteers cook meals at a very reasonable price on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday.

### **The Future**

The NHS is about to undergo the most significant change since it was established in 1947.

### **Strategic and Management Change**

The coalition Government intends to abolish the NHS strategic and management structures (Strategic Health Authorities and Primary Care Trusts) by 2013, handing over many of their roles and responsibilities - and an £80bn budget nationally - to groups of GP practices, supported by managers. These new, GP led, bodies will commission (organise and buy) the health services for an area.

While the importance of clinical leadership in NHS decisions has long been recognised, many commentators on health, including patient and medical organisations, 'think tanks' and a parliamentary select committee, have raised concerns about the scale and speed of the changes. It is impossible to predict the shape of the NHS in a few years time, but the management will certainly differ across the country. Private health management companies may well be significant in large urban communities. This is less likely in rural areas.

The GP organisation that will decide on and buy the health services for everyone in the Great Yarmouth and Waveney area is HealthEast Community Interest Company, a non-profit making social enterprise company which is owned by and represents the 26 general practices in the area. HealthEast covers a population of 230,000.

The Department of Health has decided that while working towards the handover to GPs, smaller primary care trusts should 'cluster' with large organisations, sharing infrastructure and management staff.

This means that NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney primary care trust will keep its non-executive board members and its budget, but no longer have an independent executive team. Both NHS Suffolk and NHS Norfolk primary care trusts put forward to a proposal for merging their

infrastructure with Great Yarmouth and Waveney. The Strategic Health Authority, with support from HealthEast, concluded that NHS Norfolk should, through its Chief Executive, put a single executive team in place.

HealthEast will prepare for the transfer of roles and responsibilities by working closely with the new team at NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Primary Care Trust. All GP consortia, including HealthEast will need management support and it is possible that HealthEast might employ some of the existing management team at the primary care trust.

### **Community Health Services**

Health visitors, district and community nurses, phlebotomy, podiatry, speech and language therapies, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and dietetics are at present part of NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Community Services. Community Services propose to meet the requirement to be a separate organisation by forming a Social Enterprise Company: a business with social aims that is set up specifically to benefit the community. Employees will be the largest shareholders with HealthEast being another. A Social Enterprise Company is not a charity but is 'not for profit'. Any surplus will be reinvested back in the health services they provide to benefit patients and the community. There are still stages of the social enterprise plan that need to be approved before the final decision is taken.

### **Local Government**

Local authorities will have responsibility for Public Health and a wider scrutiny role in health services. The Health and Care bill sets out plans to create Health and Wellbeing Boards to scrutinise local plans and to establish a new patients' organisation called HealthWatch (to replace Local Involvement Networks (LiNKS)).

**Patient groups** have expressed concern that the new structures and commitment to 'outsource' services will result in less accountability and fewer opportunities for local people to influence decisions.

### **Action**

**In a period of unprecedented upheaval and uncertainty, a number of local people are working informally in the Halesworth Health Group to keep the momentum for Halesworth's health and care services. The group links Cutlers Hill Surgery, Patrick Stead League of Friends, Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund and the Town Council. The Town Council is also working closely with the Halesworth Playing Fields Association and the Halesworth Campus Task Group to ensure that the future health needs of Halesworth are not constrained by land availability.**

**At present the health group is trying to make sense of the possible impact of the changes on local services. To maintain care close to home it is vital to keep and develop the present network of services, either through redeveloping the Patrick Stead/Cutlers Hill Surgery site and/or through a new facility on the adjacent Playing Fields Association land. Respite and nursing home beds are needed, as are services for younger people and children. Another idea is a friendly and welcoming resource centre for palliative care patients.**

**Community participation will be essential when Halesworth Health Group's work reaches the stage when a formal organisation can be established. Cutlers Hill Surgery is considering the opportunities for a patients' group to be involved in developments, but at present local people can most usefully connect by working with the League of Friends or the Halesworth Community Nursing Care Fund.**

## Halesworth Town Plan – January 2015 update

### 10. Transport

#### The Big Issue

The importance of public transport for our Town and the surrounding villages was reflected in the responses to the consultation especially its importance for young people. However most bus services are heavily subsidised by the County Council and as a cost saving measure there is a proposal to increase demand responsive transport (DRT) and to reduce timetabled services.



On the trains the loss of the through trains to London is seen as an unfortunate step backwards.

Route capacity south of Ipswich is constrained by the available paths into/out of London with peak hour passengers expected to rise 49% by 2030

The rail freight traffic from Felixstowe has doubled in the last ten years, 830,000 TEU containers in 2013 compared to about 400,000 in 2003 and further expected growth is likely to impact operation of the East Suffolk Line as traffic through the East Suffolk Junction increases.

The completion of the Beccles Loop has improved service to Ipswich-Lowestoft to hourly Monday – Saturday.

The Department for Transport propose to designate the two routes which comprise the East Suffolk Lines each as a community rail service. The routes are Ipswich to Lowestoft and Ipswich to Felixstowe. This proposal is in line with the Department's Community Rail Development Strategy. Designation is intended to improve the financial performance, value for money and social value of the railways to help make sure of their long term future. Separate designation gives the DfT the freedom and flexibility to try a new approach to achieve these aims. It also provides access to small scale additional funding.

#### Present Position

**Rail.** Halesworth is on the East Suffolk Line which runs from Lowestoft to Ipswich. The train service is operated by Abellio Greater Anglia and the through journey from London takes about 2 hours. In the other direction the train goes to Lowestoft where there are connections on to Norwich which is itself well served by trains from further afield, including trains to and from Liverpool via Manchester.

Trains run at essentially hourly intervals six days per week, two hourly on Sundays. Westerfield and Brampton stops are partial and/or by request. There is minimal non passenger traffic north of Westerfield and the line is very rural in nature between the small market towns of Woodbridge, Saxmundham, Halesworth and Beccles.

**Halesworth Station** is situated approximately 400 metres from the Town Centre at the top of Station Road. Both platforms have: shelters, seats, litter bins, timetables, electronic timetables, cycle lockers. There are no public toilets or refreshment facilities. The line can be crossed at the south eastern end of the platforms where there are slopes with safety rails. The preferred option by Network Rail is for everyone to cross via the bridge on Norwich Road! Town information boards have recently been installed but straightforward signage to the Town Centre is inadequate. A review of signage was carried out by the Town Plan.

### **APPENDIX 3 RICHARD WOOLNOUGH REPORT ON SIGNAGE FROM THE STATION TO TOWN**

There is free car parking for 19 vehicles, including 3 disabled spaces on the south side but with no policing it is possible for spaces to be used by non-rail travellers. The building is used by the Museum, Halesworth Area Community Transport and Mencap. The conversion of the old Station Hotel into offices and charging elsewhere in the town car parks puts on additional parking pressure.

Service improvements have been made with introduction of an hourly service six days a week by the completion of the Beccles Loop and introduction a synchronised connecting bus service to Southwold, the 88A, meeting trains six days a week and offering through-ticketing to Southwold from Abellio Greater Anglia advance purchases.

#### **Actions:**

- 1. Ensure the 3 year plan is delivered on schedule especially the Beccles Loop.**
- 2. Investigate parking improvements at the Station for rail users.**
- 3. Improve cycle and walking links to Town Centre.**

**Bus.** All persons over the age of 60 are eligible for free bus transport. Young people between the age of 5 and 20 are eligible for "Explore" cards which entitle them to 50% reductions in most bus and rail fares in Suffolk.

At least 6 different operators through Halesworth serve the surrounding area as far as Aldeburgh, Harleston, Ipswich, Lowestoft, Norwich and Southwold. The Norwich service is hourly but there is no evening service. There is currently an hourly service to Lowestoft via Southwold. The **Halesworth Hoppa** operated by volunteers from Halesworth Area Community Transport runs a service around the Town and to surrounding villages on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays. **Halesworth Pathfinder** runs a bit like a taxi but with the fare of a bus on Tuesdays to Sundays covering areas in the countryside around Halesworth and the Saints not covered by other services. **Coastlink** is a demand responsive service where pre booked journeys can be made 7 days a week between Darsham station and the coastal area of Minsmere, Dunwich, Walberswick and Southwold.



Buses stopping on Saxons Way (main car park) cause a problem as they hold up the traffic, the bus shelter is not big enough and too near the road. A site on Angel Link had been earmarked for improved facilities for passengers and Work is expected to begin early in 2015.

The present financial constraints are leading to a dramatic review of the way that rural transport is delivered. A move away from

subsidised timetabled routes towards the demand responsive transport systems such as Pathfinder has been enacted.

**Actions: Take an active role in the discussions on future bus services for the Town and surrounding areas.**

**Car.** Saxons Way, the new road that replaced the part-pedestrianised Thoroughfare, is the busiest road with both the north/south (A144) and east/west routes (B1117) having to use this road at the river crossing. Traffic hold-ups are rare, the most usual being caused by buses using the bus stop by the main car park.

Problems with daytime car parking in some residential areas close to the Town Centre by people seeking to avoid parking charges have led to the introduction of Residents' Parking Permits in Station Road, Chediston Street and part of London Road. Chediston Street has been made one way and there is some support for the northern part of London Road to also be made one way. There are public pay and display car parks run by Waveney District Council at the back of the Thoroughfare, either side of the Angel Link and in Station Road. The Angel Link Car Park is rarely full. There is a large free car park (120 spaces) for the Co-op Supermarket. There is a free car park at the south side of the Station for rail users and time limited free parking in the Market Place.

Actions are included in the **Town Centre Action Plan**.

### **Cycling.**

There is about 5000 metres of cycle path in Halesworth in four principal routes and all are separated from the roadway, 93% of the route length is over a footway shared with pedestrians. All the routes feed into the part-pedestrianised Thoroughfare which currently prevents cycling northbound, though this restriction is widely flouted.

National Cycle Route 1 passes through the Town although the routes from both the north and south are far from satisfactory. Work is ongoing to show a friendly face to cyclists whether they be tourists or local children or families to exploit the opportunities that cycling visitors could make to the Town.

The issue most often heard vexing local cyclists is that the Thoroughfare (arguably the commercial heart of the town) is restricted by a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to be one-way from Bridge Street to Angel Link with 'cyclists dismount' signs at the Angel Hotel junction. For a rider heading north from the Angel Hotel, the Norwich Road cycle path starting at Bridge Street is a mere 350 metres away but cyclists are forced to take Angel Link and then ride in heavy and often congested traffic along Saxons Way. Also the Thoroughfare forms part of the NCR1 and the Millennium Green Cycle path is connected to the Thoroughfare by the town centre car park but progress is only allowed southbound. With one-way system in the Thoroughfare forces cyclists (including young children going to school) to use Saxon Way.

This is at odds with the Suffolk Local Transport Plan 2011 to 2031 *'We also aim to provide safe continuous routes for cycling and walking, removing gaps and addressing barriers and disincentives to users'*

The Millennium Green Cycle Path is a significant new development of 1.5 km as a restricted byway through a public park and water meadows which opened up a large area of nature reserve to public access for recreation as well as being part of National Cycle Route 1 and an attractive alternative to the highway to reach the Blyth Road industrial estate from Halesworth station and the other industrial estates in the north of the town.

In the past proposals were put forward to develop quite ambitious town centre facilities for cyclists including cycle hire, enhanced repair facilities, electric bike sales, café facilities and even specific overnight accommodation. When the Cycling Group discussed these facilities they felt that without a major off-road cycle route like the Camel Trail in Cornwall or the Tarka Trail in Devon these proposals were unlikely to be viable.

A circular route around the Town, the Halesworth Wheel, has been established by the Cycling Group. Emergency Cycle First Aid kits are being provided to key facilities in the Town. This network has grown informally without promotion to a dozen sites in vicinity of the Wheel route.

The cycle track along the Norwich Road has priority for cars at a number of business access points and as a result is not universally popular.

The Halesworth Bicycle Team has achieved the publication of two cycling maps in the Halesworth area; one focussed on showing facilities in the town and with the Beccles Cycling Group it has produced a cycle map of the Halesworth Wheel. Incremental improvements such as indicating cycle storage on B&B literature have also been achieved.

A regular cycling group organised by local Sustrans volunteers meets regularly to introduce beginners and socialise with experienced riders.

Public bike stands:

Town Centre Car Park	5 bars, open	TM 38663 77530
Public Library	4 bars, open	TM 38630 77648
Market Place	2 bars, open	TM 38593 77408
Station, Platform 1	5 lockers, 2 bars open	TM 38882 77895
Station, Platform 2	4 lockers, 7 bars covered	TM 38888 77848
Former School/Skills Academy	25 bars, covered	TM 39127 78064
Cutlers Hill 1	3 bars, covered	TM 39003 77978
Cutlers Hill 2	3 bars, open	TM 39035 77970

With the proposed development of a sports campus at the site of the former middle school and a health centre expansion and housing at Dairy Hill, there is likely to be considerable benefit in extending the Norwich Road cycle path all the way along Harrisons Lane to reach Holton and the housing development recently approved at Fairview Road. The footpath is wide and separate from the road up to Fairview Road, increasing the safety of this junction. A cycle path here would also enable access to Loam Pit Lane offering a traffic-free route from Holton to Halesworth as an alternative to the B1123. This cycle path could also be extended along the Norwich Road to connect with Sparrowhawk Road, thus offering a off-road cycle path network as far as the Triple Plea.

**Actions:**

4. **Promote the Halesworth Wheel and other recreational routes for residents and visitors.**
5. **Re-examine the ban on two-way cycling in the Thoroughfare and the one way section of Chediston Street.**
6. **The cycling group have established there is a preference for more cycle stands to lock cycles to be dotted around the town; such as in pairs beside planters in the Thoroughfare rather than providing a central cycle park.**

**Walking.** The part-pedestrianisation of the Thoroughfare has brought massive benefits to the Town Centre. However there is some concern that the Market Place is now cut off from the main shopping area with only narrow pavements linking the Market Place and Thoroughfare. A proposal to extend the style of the thoroughfare's part- pedestrianisation towards the Market Place has gained popular support at the Town Plan Consultation.

Detailed proposals are included in the **Town Centre Action Plan** Public footpaths are dealt with in a separate plan.

**Disabled Access** – There is no Access Group looking at the needs of disabled people in the Town

**Action:**

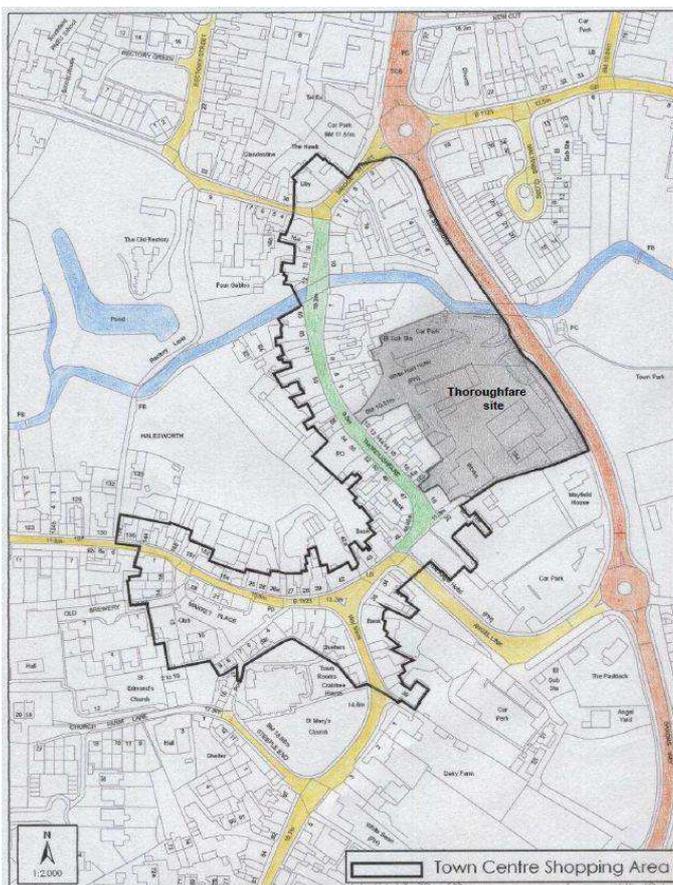
8. **Establish an Access Group to undertake a Needs Audit and then oversee implementation.**

## 11. Halesworth Town Centre

### The Present Position

The main shopping area of Halesworth is centred on the Thoroughfare and continues south into the Market Place. This is the historic core of the Town and contains many fine buildings. It was described in August 2006 in a Retail and Leisure Study carried out on behalf of Waveney District Council by, DTZ Consulting as “... an attractive, charming and vibrant town centre, which accommodates a high proportion of convenience shops and services catering for the local population’s needs. In our view, it is this level of basic shopping facilities that underpins the centre’s relative vitality and viability, which serves local residents and those in the south of the district.”

However an area between the Thoroughfare and Saxon Way consisting of a hotchpotch of car parking and unattractive buildings has remained undeveloped for over 20 years. Permission for a supermarket was granted on Appeal in 2002 but concerns over flooding and lack of an operator were apparently responsible for this permission not being implemented. The site has subsequently been bought by Tesco who in 2009 submitted a planning application for a large supermarket on the Dairy Farm site which is outside the existing Town Centre and immediately adjacent to the existing Co-op supermarket. During the passage of this application Cambridge Property produced a plan for the Thoroughfare site which included as an integral part of the design the Angel Link car park, the Thoroughfare car park and the land occupied by Woodman’s Lodge. The layout included blocks of retail units with residential/offices above, public space, café and outdoor seating area and a Centre for the Community. However the work was funded by Tesco and depended on the success of the supermarket application. In the event the Tesco application was unsuccessful and the Inspector when rejecting the Tesco Appeal was clear that the Thoroughfare site must be developed before any sites outside the centre could be considered to prevent a harmful impact on the existing Town Centre. The Inspector was of the opinion that if



the allocated site was considered in its entirety, rather than just the area owned by Tesco, the flooding constraints could be more easily overcome. The comprehensive refusal for retail development on the Dairy Farm site should now clear the way for a plan to redevelop the Thoroughfare site to come forward.

### **The Future**

The guiding principles developed by the Town Plan Working Group and endorsed at the public consultation for how our Town Centre should develop in future include:

- To keep the Thoroughfare and Market Place as the heart of the shopping area of Halesworth when reviewing and redefining the town centre boundary to accommodate any future growth.
- Any Town centre development should reflect and enhance the role of Halesworth as a market town meeting the needs of residents, businesses and visitors through the provision of a range of appropriately scaled services
- To contribute to an integrated transport system for Halesworth (walk, cycle, bus, train, car)
- To recognise and support the critical role of independent food production and retailing to the economy of Halesworth and surrounding areas in order to maximise sustainability.
- To minimise the town centre's carbon footprint
- To be inclusive, recognising the needs of different ages and groups in our community
- To protect and enhance the architecturally and historically important aspects of the town centre.

### **The Action Plan**

**The Thoroughfare Site.** The priority is to develop this site in a way that enhances Halesworth Town Centre and ensures that it does not remain in its present derelict state. The Retail Needs Assessment carried out on behalf of Waveney District Council asserts the need for a food store and suggests there might be capacity for non-food outlets. Clothing and furniture are perceived by local people to be lacking in the present provision in the Town. The Working Group was particularly keen to enhance the role of local food production and consumption and was concerned about the future of the monthly Produce Market which is based in premises within the allocated area. The markets are seen as a key component of a local food strategy and their needs must be taken into account in any development proposals.

#### **Action:**

- 1. Engage in discussions with Waveney District Council and the site owners to ensure development of the Thoroughfare site is brought forward at the earliest opportunity.**
- 2. Carry out further investigations regarding the needs of local food producers and local consumers and the role of the local markets.**

**Other Town Centre Activities.** A thriving Town Centre needs a range of other activities apart from retail. An audit of office accommodation was carried out early in 2010 which showed many flats and offices situated above retail units in the Thoroughfare and Market Place. There seemed to be very few empty offices, despite the recession, and few larger units available. The NFU are moving from the Angel Link to the newly converted Station Hotel in Station Road. Conversely two units above Flicks Estate agents are being converted from offices to flats.

Both offices and flats are important components for a thriving Town Centre and should be included in any development scheme and the working group were keen to see the

flats making a contribution to the extreme shortage of affordable accommodation. However the further loss of retail units should be resisted.

There have been suggestions that some Town Centre community facilities could be more conveniently situated on this site. This could have severe adverse implications for the existing centre and should be resisted.

**Action:**

- 3. Oppose any further loss of retail units in the Town Centre and give careful consideration to proposals to move any existing Town Centre operations to other sites in the Town.**
- 4. Any Town centre development to contribute to meeting Halesworth's affordable housing needs**

### **Flooding**

Flooding took place in the Thoroughfare in 1993. A more serious event took place in 1968 and before that it was 1939. Since 1993 various studies have been undertaken to examine flood alleviation works but no specific plans were ever finalised. The East Suffolk Catchment Flood Management Plan has now been published (December 2009) and does not include provision for any capital works to alleviate flooding and proposes a continuation of existing maintenance regimes.

The Halesworth Flood Study commissioned by Waveney District Council specifically with regard to development on the Thoroughfare Site is eagerly awaited. We need to examine and understand this study. There are areas outside the allocated development area such as the riverside plot behind Palmers that could possibly be used to improve flood alleviation measures and enhance the river side environment to the overall benefit of the Town Centre.

**Action:**

- 5. Obtain copy of Halesworth Flood Study and then arrange meeting with the Environment Agency to discover potential flood alleviation measures in conjunction with new development and potential for riverside enhancement.**

### **Car Parking**

The number of spaces and charging policies associated with town centre car parking are a key component in the future vitality of the Town Centre. The car parks in Halesworth raise about £75,000 per annum for Waveney District Council and there is some concern that raising finance is a bigger consideration than the health of the Town Centre shops. The Town Centre traders have been negotiating with Waveney District Council for changes to the charging system for the Town Centre car parks that improves the sustainability of their businesses and we await Waveney's response. Concern has also been expressed by some town centre businesses about the amount of parking available for their staff.

**Action:**

- 6. Keep car parking charges in Halesworth under review**

### **Pedestrianisation**

The connection between Thoroughfare and the Market Place consists of a narrow footpath alongside a busy road with two way traffic. This increases the isolation of the Market Place from the Thoroughfare and the idea of extending the part-pedestrianised area to improve this link received strong support at the public consultation.

**Action:**

- 7. In conjunction with Suffolk County Council work up a scheme for extending the pedestrianised area for detailed consultation.**

### Improved facilities for cyclists

Halesworth sits on the National Cycle Route 1 which runs from Dover to the Shetland Isles and the international North Sea Route which runs 6000 km through 8 different countries from Sweden to the north of Scotland. Cycling has the potential to be a valuable tourism resource for Halesworth.

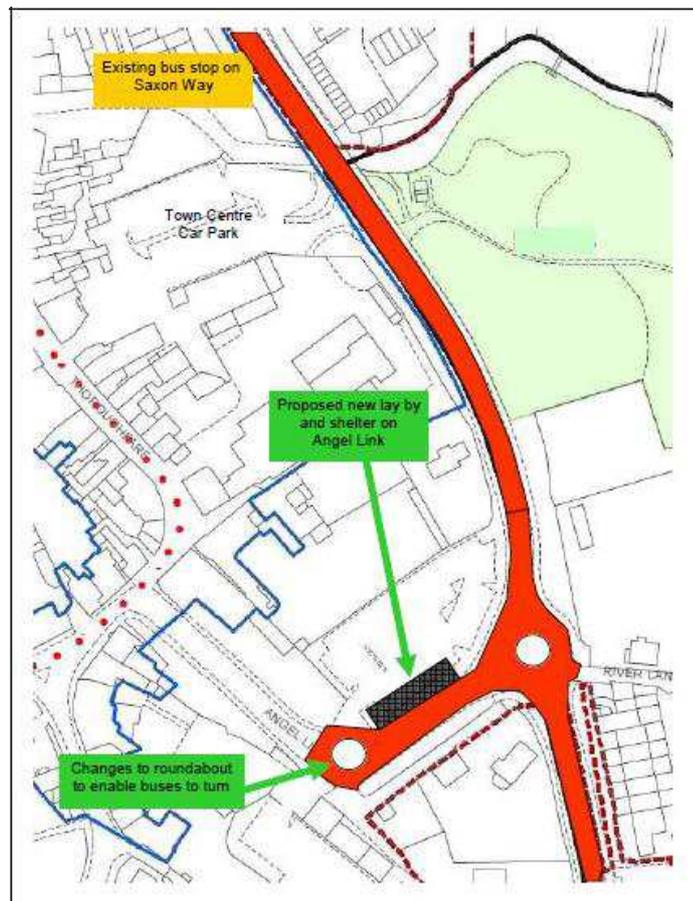
Further details and actions are included in the Transport Action Plan.

### Bus Facilities

At present the main Town Centre bus stops are in Saxon Way, close to the entrance to the main car park. The shelters are situated on a relatively narrow path, close to passing traffic they are unpleasant and inadequate for the number of people using it. Buses, dropping off or picking up cause considerable traffic disruption.

A purpose built lay-by is proposed off the Angel Link adjacent to the Angel Link car park. There would be space for buses and a shelter for passengers. Ideally an arrangement with the Angel Hotel over the use of facilities for drivers would be arranged.

It is accepted that the necessary finance may not be available at present but all necessary preparatory work should be undertaken to ensure there will be no delay once finance is secured.



### Action:

#### 8. Improved bus facilities on the Angel Link.

### Community centre/‘one-stop-shop.’

A purpose built community centre that would bring together a public hall, the Council Offices, facilities for the elderly and young people has been an aspiration for many years. Waveney District Council has allocated a part of the Dairy Farm site for such a facility and this location was the most popular at the public consultation. However in the present period of financial constraint achieving this aspiration seems a long way away.

The Rifle Hall is undergoing renovation and is currently managed by the Trustees of Halesworth Rifle Hall.

**Action:**

- 9. Ensure that the Rifle Hall is brought back into full community use as a matter of urgency.**
- 10. Explore all opportunities to bring forward a Community Centre for Halesworth.**

**Protect the Thoroughfare, Market Place, Rifle Hall (façade at a minimum) from unsympathetic development.**

The Town Centre Group considered the conservation of the historic character of the Town Centre as an important priority. The Conservation Area Management Plan produced by Waveney District Council provides detailed guidance on the management of the Conservation which includes the Town Centre. This is included in its entirety in the Historic Action Plan.

**Action:**

- 11. Ensure that all development proposals in the Town Centre follow the guidelines in the Conservation Area Management Plan**

The following issues were considered important but as yet have not received any detailed attention.

- **Improved links to the rail station.**
- **Any Town centre development contributing to improved facilities for young people in the town**
- **Energy efficiency and renewable energy technology built into developments**
- **Any Town centre development to contribute to meeting Halesworth's affordable housing needs.**

## 12. Sustainability (produced by the Halesworth in Transition Group HINT)

### The Big Issue

Human induced climate change poses world wide threats unless urgent action is taken. It is generally accepted that the consumption of fossil fuels is a major contributory factor and most development world wide depends upon an oil based economy. We need to think global and act local. We need community based solutions to contribute towards a global effort.

**Definition.** *Sustainable development - meeting our own needs without damaging our children's and grandchildren's chances of meeting theirs.*

### Present position

Development in recent times has depended on oil. It is now clear that we have extracted all the easily got-at, inexpensive oil from current oil fields on the globe. Getting oil from alternative sources would either be prohibitively expensive, or have devastating environmental impacts on current wilderness areas, or both. At the same time, global demand for energy is rocketing from developed as well as developing countries and prices are rising dramatically. It makes sense environmentally and economically to develop alternatives to the oil based economy.

What we buy to meet our needs, and where we get it from can play a major role in energy consumption. How we provide for employment, health, transport, the retail network (which in our area particularly revolves around the production and distribution of food) will affect the ability of future generations to provide for theirs.

Increasingly the things we buy are provided by large retailers buying from large providers, including importing from abroad. Smaller providers and retailers reach a tipping point where it becomes no longer worthwhile for wholesalers to use them, and they are lost. That loss removes employment, and independence, from the local economy. It also increases dependence on large inflexible providers, and on transportation.

### The future

**Individual solutions** - Solar panels, photo-voltaic installations, mini-turbines, insulation, minimising water use, recycling materials, shopping locally, choosing food raised locally, choosing products made locally, using public transport: all of these are measures that reduce the consumption of oil and at the same time keep wealth and employment in the local economy. Some of these things can be done by all of us without a huge impact on our lifestyle.

But the threats - arising from continued and increasing oil consumption, and from increasing concentration of retailing into fewer and fewer hands – go far beyond individuals. To start to meet these threats more comprehensively, Halesworth people (those of us who live, work, shop, visit, play in the town and the villages around it) need to work together, and with the people who act collectively in our name.

**Community solutions - Oil consumption / energy sourcing.** Waveney District Council has Sustainable Development policies relating to waste and its management. Some of the targets they have set within those policies (e.g. under Transport, to reduce the proportion of journeys taken by private car by 5%) splice in directly with the question of energy consumption. We should work with them where appropriate, and monitor their progress.

Meanwhile, there are community actions which would directly address energy sourcing and consumption. *WDC Sustainability Policy Summary Statement 2008 - 2010*

## Action Plan on oil / energy

1. **Monitor, with WDC, targets within their own Sustainable Development Policy which directly or indirectly relate to energy sourcing and consumption**
2. **Develop a Halesworth energy reduction plan, which might include**
  - **Oil-buying consortia.** This is a simple action with immediate effect. A number could be developed quickly as flag-ship projects for the Sustainable Development element of the Halesworth Town Plan.
  - **Upcycling initiatives.** Upcycling uses left-over or cast-off materials and remodels them into finished products of better quality (cf. recycling, where the end product might be the same or lesser quality eg. recycled glass, paper, textiles) The "Vision" shop in the market place provides one model of this (a furniture recycling project staffed by people with learning disabilities run by Suffolk Day Service and Mencap. The Halesworth in Transition Upcycling group is another.
  - **Property insulation projects.** There are precedents for this, both for households and businesses, supported by the local authority. It requires an initial audit of properties needing insulation, which also creates an opportunity to promote the Halesworth Town Plan and sustainable development generally
  - community wind farm/s
  - **A biodigester/s around the edge of the town.** These require identification of a site/s and of optimum numbers of households/businesses for each installation; costings and securing funding; working up planning applications
  - **The provision of a household waste disposal facility with a wide range of recycling opportunities.** This would require the active support of SCC as waste disposal authority as well as WDC as planning authority

**Community solutions: The local economy – food.** Waveney District Council appears to have no retailing policies or targets. Nor is there any strategic planning within WDC around food economies or retail generally. Yet the local food economy is central to achieving sustainable development objectives (employment, health, energy use, countryside management, transport). These issues are crucial to Halesworth and its surrounding villages : the Census of 2001 records that within Halesworth 40% of households are pensioner (compared with a Suffolk average of 27%) and 23% have no car.

Not only does the small and local sector support that older, and/or carless, population directly, it is also the source of much creative change and development: a 2006 All-Party Parliamentary Small Shops Group reported that

“the small retail sector is a key driver in entrepreneurship, employment, skills, local economies, innovation, and sophisticated business networks as well as accessibility to vital goods and services, diversity, social inclusion and community activities.”

*“The real choice” – Caroline Cranbrook and the Campaign to Protect Rural England June 2006. <http://www.cpre.org.uk/library/results>*

## Action Plan on local economy (food)

1. **Pursue with WDC the incorporation of a properly researched policy within the development plan which seeks to protect and enhance the local economic networks. Suffolk Coastal has such a policy (which guided the planning authority’s approach when dealing with a supermarket application in Saxmundham).**
2. **Begin that research ourselves by**
  - a. **approaching local producers to see what would bring them into the town to sell**
  - b. **liaising with current town retailers to find ways to minimise threats to their position from (a) above**

**Lead - Halesworth in Transition Group.**

13. **Historic Heritage** - *To follow*
14. **Wildlife** - *To follow*
15. **Rights of Way** - *To follow*

## 16. Delivering the Plan

This plan is not an end in itself. When publishing the Plan the danger is that it ends up on the shelf and the momentum that has been developed is lost. The Town Council instigated the Town Plan process and as the fully democratic body closest to the local community they are the obvious group to take responsibility for delivering the Plan. This is in accordance with a stated aim of a Quality Parish Council, a status to which Halesworth Town Council aspires,

- ***To provide leadership to the community through its work on parish plans.***

**Action: The Town Council will consider the Discussion Draft of the Town Plan and after making any changes considered necessary they will adopt the Plan and take responsibility for its delivery. A further round of community involvement will be needed once the Town Council have agreed their future role in the Plan.**

This section looks at the actions that will be necessary to ensure the effective delivery of the Plan in relation to the other stated aims of a Quality Council.

- ***Committed to work in partnership with principal local authorities and other public service agencies;***

Elected Councillors from the **County** and **District** Councils attend Town Council meetings and contact with officers is frequent in relation to a variety of issues. It is doubtful if the relationships could be described, in overall terms, as “partnerships”. All councils realise the importance of community involvement and both County and District Councils have appointed staff to work with local communities on the development and implementation of Town and Parish Plans. Bearing in mind the changes being proposed as services are divested or cut the importance of these relationships for service delivery in the Town is even more important. The Town Plan, which was a Town Council initiative, provides an excellent opportunity to draw a line under past problems and develop a new partnership approach to District and County Council funded services.

**Action: A meeting to develop a new approach with the relevant staff at the Councils should be treated as a high priority.**

Contact between the **Police** and the local community is well developed with monthly priority setting meetings and regular attendance at Council meetings. However this contact is primarily with officers but it is less clear whether there is any mechanism for the local community to be involved in any of the decisions being made by the Police Authority.

**Action: Check the mechanisms for decision making within the Police Authority and ascertain opportunities for community involvement.**

Contact with the **Health Service** is non-existent, despite the fact that it is one of our largest publicly funded services and probably considered by most members of the community as the most important. The Ambulance Service is going for NHS Foundation Trust status whatever that means. The NHS Great Yarmouth and Waveney Primary Care Trust is going out of existence and some duties will be taken over by Health East a consortium of doctors. Other duties will go to the Local Authorities and the Community Services element is looking at a Social Enterprise structure. We have no idea what the implications are for service delivery in Halesworth.

**Action: The advice of local stakeholders involved with Halesworth Health should be sought to see how a partnership approach to health can be developed.**

**Action: The active engagement of the public service providers with the delivery of the Plan will be sought.**

- ***To work closely with voluntary groups in its community;***

No formal system exists for the Town Council to work with voluntary groups that deliver services in the Town. There are some very important services provided by the voluntary sector such as the Community Care Fund; HACT; the Cut, the Millennium Green etc. It is likely that in the future an increasing number of services will be delivered by the voluntary sector

**Action: Discuss with the voluntary sector mechanisms for closer working**

- ***In proportion to its size and skills, to deliver more local services on behalf of principal local authorities when this represents the best deal for the local community;***

Under the Big Society and the Divestment programme there will be opportunities for more services to be taken on locally and this aim certainly assumes that the Town Council might consider taking on more service delivery. At present the Town Council provides allotments and the weekly market in the Market Place. During the process of the Town Plan there has been little call for the Town Council to take on any particular service delivery.

**Action: The Town Council should consider whether there are any services that they have the appropriate skills to deliver.**

- ***To work with its partners to act as an information point for local services.***

Most people do not understand who supplies which public service. A one stop shop for information and advice was to be an important component of a new community centre. It would also provide a most useful interface with the community. It assumes an accessible location.

**Action: Consider taking a lead role in the provision of a single information point for public services in the area.**

- ***To articulate the needs and wishes of its community;***
- ***To be representative of, and actively engage, all parts of its community, providing vision, identity and a sense of belonging;***

The Plans will provide a clear set of priorities that the Council can pursue with the public service providers or through the stimulation of community action. However the Plan will need to be kept active as local priorities can change in the light of funding cuts by other bodies. So a regular review system will need to be introduced to ensure that the community's priorities are being accurately represented.

**Action: The Town Council should establish a system for reviewing progress of the priorities contained within the Plan.**

It has become clear that the size of the community that use services in Halesworth, and on whom the services depend for their viability, includes the surrounding villages. A start has been made to foster greater cooperation between the Town and the surrounding villages.

**Action: Coordinating a close working relationship with the surrounding Parish Councils on matters of mutual interest and concern should be included as a key part of the work of the Town Council.**

The system of working groups to deal with specific issues has been an important component of the Plan process. They have helped with doing detailed research and planning work and increasing the amount of community involvement. The Town Council has already agreed that if they wish any of the Town Plan Working Groups can come under the umbrella of the Town Council. New working groups might need to be established to deal with revised priorities. The existence of the working groups and opportunities for residents to get involved with their work needs to be widely publicized.

**Action: Publicise the role of the working groups and stimulate new groups as necessary.**

## **Acknowledgements.**

A large number of people have been involved in the Working Groups and the production of this plan and their help is greatly appreciated. Errors and omissions are inevitable and entirely my responsibility. Richard Woolnough, Town Plan Coordinator. December 2010.

## **Contact.**

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