

Warminster and Villages Community Plan

2005-2015



Covering the town of Warminster and the surrounding villages of Bapton, Bishopstrow, Boyton, Brixton Deverill, Chapmanslade, Chitterne, Codford, Corsley, Corton, Crockerton, Heytesbury, Horningsham, Hill Deverill, Kingston Deverill, Knook, Longbridge Deverill, Monkton Deverill, Norton Bavant, Sherrington, Stockton, Sutton Veny, Tytherington, Upton Lovell and Upton Scudamore



Welcome - to the first ever Warminster and Villages Community Plan !

This plan for the next ten years provides an assessment of the key local issues that affect the daily lives of people who live, work and play in the locality and identifies some of the key actions needed to improve the quality of life in the Warminster community area. It is a report back on three years of information gathering and consultation with local people and provides a summary of the main issues and ideas for the future. A fuller, detailed version of the plan is available on request and subsequently a “Strategic Action Plan” covering the key projects will be published.

This is the first time that a community-wide exercise of this kind has been carried out in this area and we hope that it will be the catalyst for further civic participation and community-based planning and action over the coming years. It has been undertaken by the Warminster and Villages Community Partnership (WVCP), which is one of 20 partnerships across Wiltshire conducting community consultation and development. The geographical coverage of the plan is the ‘Warminster Community Area’ which includes the town and its rural catchment area of 24 villages, covering most of the BA12 postal district.

The WVCP is non-political and has received support from all sections of the community, including voluntary and community-based organisations, local councils and agencies responsible for the delivery of key public services.

In particular the WVCP has sought to work closely with locally elected community representatives adding value to the role of local councils by engaging with a wider range of stakeholders than is possible for local authorities.

The Plan gives expression to many aspirations for the future, some of which are already under development, with others very high on the priority list. To achieve everything the Plan envisages will require a huge amount of effort and resources. The question for us all is – ‘What can I do to help deliver the future?’ By working together in the true spirit of partnership we can look forward to 2015 with confidence.



**Len Turner,
WVCP Chairman**

The Warminster Community Area

A PROFILE

Warminster is an important service centre for the 24,000 people in 10,000 households who live in the town itself and its large rural catchment of villages in the Deverill Valley to the south, the Wylve Valley to the south east, the Longleat estate to the west and the fringes of Salisbury Plain to the north and east. Of the 24 villages in the area some suffer a degree of social deprivation, in common with areas of the town itself. In contrast Longleat, with its estate and safari park and the nearby Center Parcs are major contributors to the local economy.

The town is strategically situated at the junction of the A36 and A350 with direct links to the A303 and M4. It is serviced by a mainline railway and is 45 minutes from Bristol Airport. The A36 Warminster bypass absorbs much heavy traffic.

Some major businesses, such as Dents Gloves and Lyons Seafood are still located in the centre of town. In recent years there has been a significant investment at the Crusader and Warminster business parks and at smaller employment sites in another ten locations across the area.

Warminster is home to a major military garrison which uses Salisbury Plain as a training area. There is an increasing awareness by the military authorities of how important it is to be involved in the life of the town generally.

Warminster was once a major cloth manufacturing centre and this former prosperity is evident in some of its impressive built environment, an aesthetically pleasing mix of Jacobean, Georgian and tasteful Victorian architecture. Most of the buildings in the central area are listed.

Like many small market towns, the shopping centre is suffering from shop closures. A major feature of the shopping environment is a concentration of antiques and collectibles shops in the Silver Street area, which has the potential of being a major attraction to local shoppers and

Warminster has a wealth of open spaces including the attractive and well-maintained Town Park, which contains facilities for a number of leisure pursuits, including tennis courts, a club house, boating lake and skate park.



visitors alike. Warminster is still able to boast a weekly open-air market and regular Farmers' Market.

In comparison with county averages the Warminster area has a larger and slightly older population; around one third more shops per head of population; a slightly higher proportion of long term unemployed; a lower rate of residents with post-16 qualifications; the second lowest proportion of qualified working males; the second lowest incidence of car ownership; and a slightly lower proportion of residents employed in traditional rural industries than in the County as a whole.

The Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty forms the southern part of the area and the Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area of Conservation borders the north. There are also 9 sites of special scientific interest and over 120 wildlife sites. The use of Salisbury Plain as a military training area has preserved it as the largest single expanse of unaltered chalk downland in Europe with evidence of human occupation for circa 5000 years. It forms the largest area of "dark sky" in Europe and also has more iron age hill-forts than anywhere else in Europe, with Cley Hill, Arn Hill, Copheap, Battlesbury Hill and Scratchbury Hill ringing the town.



Consultation at public meetings and with our gazebo in town and villages.

Public Consultation and Engagement

In Summer 2002 the Partnership was granted £25,000 by the South West Regional Development Agency for a programme of consultation, information gathering and community engagement leading to the preparation of a plan for the future of the Warminster area. This grant has been supplemented with cash and officer support from West Wiltshire District Council, Wiltshire County Council and Community First and with support from Warminster Town Council.

Over the past 2-3 years, consultations, exhibitions and public forums have been held around the area, including events at Warminster School, the Assembly Rooms, the annual Mayor's Day and at village fetes. Themed consultations have been held around key issues such as local health care provision, local transport plan improvements and rural issues. These events and the progress of the Management Committee's work have been widely publicised in the local media.

Activities have included :

- a questionnaire sent out to all the households in the BA12 area which produced hundreds of responses;
- specialised consultants employed to facilitate a series of focus group meetings and to assist in identifying individual projects;
- a gazebo purchased and displays created to publicise the work of the Partnership in the town and villages;
- flyers produced and distributed throughout the area;

Altogether the Partnership has elicited the views of thousands of local people in the town and in the villages throughout the area.

A "Healthcheck Snapshot" and full socio-economic profile have been compiled to provide key facts and figures on the area. They can be viewed at www.communigate.co.uk/wilts/wvcv

Administration

The Partnership's administration has been carried out by a Committee assisted by a professional consultant acting as a community agent.

Warminster Public Library has kindly allowed the Partnership to use its address for the receipt of mail

Space has been rented at the Athenaeum Centre in the centre of the town for use as an office and for consultation events and meetings.

WHAT YOU TOLD US...

From all surveys on what residents of the town and villages like or dislike about the area there is one aspect on which views are unanimous: people love and value the surrounding countryside and appreciate the open spaces with which the town is blessed. From the centre of town there are views of hills and green fields in most directions.

Some of the things you said you want to cherish and protect include:

- The mix of town and country
- Local businesses and independent shops
- Our architectural heritage in town and village
- The Athenaeum
- Our sporting and recreational facilities
- The facilities provided by the Beckford and Lakeside centres
- The Lake Pleasure grounds; Smallbrook Meadows
- The local branch of the University of the Third Age
- The local branch of Wiltshire College
- The Farmers' Market; local food and drink producers
- Road and rail links
- The friendliness of the town and the area generally

The main issues of concern in the town include : traffic in the town centre, dangerous roads, the poor range of shops, litter and untidyness, parking fees, vandalism and yobbishness.

Priorities for change include : improved policing, better shopping, more pedestrian areas, better facilities for young people, free parking.

In the villages people value : the community spirit, the beautiful, peaceful and remote environment; some good facilities.

In the villages they dislike : the speed of through traffic; the lack of local shops and post offices.



A view of Elm Hill from Portway.

The Planning Context

The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities (a) powers to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the communities they serve; and (b) a statutory duty to work in local strategic partnerships to prepare community strategies and to demonstrate that their services are addressing local community needs.

Local Strategic Partnerships

The Community Plan for Warminster and the Villages will feed into the strategies being published by the Local Strategic Partnerships both for West Wiltshire and for the county of Wiltshire. Key themes for the

District over the next 10 years are :

- market town regeneration
- workforce skills
- affordable housing
- health inequalities

while County priorities include :

- the street scene
- adult basic skills
- health
- waste efficiency.



The Obelisk

Market and Coastal Towns initiative

This work is part of a wider regional activity headed up by the South West Market and Coastal Towns initiative (now established as a formal Association, of which the WVCP is a member). The MCTi encourages community based planning and regeneration efforts. Both national and regional agencies support this programme and have pledged resources to help implement those local plans and priorities that are the result of consultation and for which there is evidence of need.

The Wiltshire Market Towns Partnership is helping to deliver the MCTi and to spread information, good practice advice and training to communities. Local programmes such as the 5 Towns Initiative are providing sources of funding from the West Wiltshire District Council and Warminster Town Council to carry out improvement works.

The 8 Themes

The work of the WVCP has been structured around 8 key themes that have been adopted by partnerships across Wiltshire in order to standardise approaches and to allow direct comparison and assessment. These are set out in the following pages :

- **Economy, including tourism and employment**
- **Housing and the built environment**
- **Culture, including leisure, recreation, heritage and the arts**
- **Environment, including countryside and land-based issues**
- **Transport, access and traffic**
- **Education and life-long learning**
- **Health and social care**
- **Crime and community safety**

Economy and Tourism Vision

To achieve a thriving and sustainable economy with: new investment in the town centre to improve its vitality and retail quality; a skilled workforce; more and better-paid employment; realisation of the tourism potential of the area; increased visitor spending on local goods and services.

Issues Raised

District-wide issues : slow economic growth; decline in manufacturing industry; ageing population; low skills base.

Local issues : high dependence on the military for local employment; restricted labour pool partially mitigated by the use of migrant labour; a busy bypass that should be used to generate local trade and tourism; elongated geographical nature of town centre; the number of empty shops; diminishing range of goods and services available locally; difficulties in crossing town centre streets; lack of land designated for future growth; withdrawal of funding for tourist information service; loss of National Express coach services; tourism potential of the town and countryside not realised; loss of village shops and services



Many antiques and collectibles shops at the west end of town.

Future Initiatives

- Develop a commitment to lifelong learning
- Better management and marketing of the town centre
- Identify land and premises for continued business investment
- Improve signage for traffic entering town
- Provide access from town centre car park to George Street
- Encourage outlets for locally produced goods
- Encourage and foster employment retention in the villages
- Provide incentives to visit the town
- Increase participation by the Army in the local economy
- Secure the future of information services
- Provide a wider choice of hotels and a conference centre
- Consider new attractions such as a field studies centre to capitalise on the area's natural and historical heritage
- Introduce a mobile shop to service rural areas

What's Happening

- A detailed Action Plan for the future is being developed
- The Learning4Warminster initiative is engaging with local businesses to inform them about funding and other support available for work-related training
- With the help of the Tourist Information Centre a shops survey has been conducted to ascertain the views and concerns of local people.
- Contact is being maintained with agents/owners and plans for improved marketing of the town are in train.
- Discussions are being held with all interested parties on ways of ensuring the continuing existence of the Tourist Information Centre



Left: The Tourist Information Centre provides an invaluable service, as do the Citizens Advice Bureau and Shopmobility service, all housed in this building. Right: Crusader Park Business Park has now almost reached capacity.

Housing and the Built Environment

Vision

To maintain and develop an area that is well cared for, reflecting the pride people feel in its architectural heritage. To ensure the sympathetic provision of housing able to sustain all sectors of the community.

Issues raised

- Some existing buildings and areas are shabby and dilapidated
- Concern over increasing vacant retail properties in the town centre
- A need to develop a greater pride of place
- More low-cost housing is needed in town and village
- The special character of villages should be protected

Future Initiatives

- Develop a shop front guide and encourage the owners of buildings in the town centre to maintain their facades appropriately
- Extend the Civic Trust 'Blue Plaque Trail' of buildings of special architectural or historic interest
- Clear more frequently weeds, excessive vegetation and litter
- Provide more litter bins
- Erect notices where areas have been cleared by volunteers.
- Develop a 'best-kept award' for areas within the town
- Develop a young person's project around environmental awareness
- Provide affordable housing, possibly with shared equity schemes
- Adapt empty premises above shops for residential use
- Support the development of brownfield sites



Warminster has a wealth of fine old buildings such as the former Literary Institute and the old Town Hall.

What's Happening

West Wiltshire District Council has been invited to work up a detailed bid for a Private Finance Initiative scheme for affordable homes (social housing), aiming at between 55 and 75 housing units in town and a share of 85-115 units across rural West Wiltshire.

A Rural Housing Enabler is available to help parishes carry out housing needs surveys.

WWDC is developing affordable housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (aim to provide 140 homes per annum across the District as a whole, both low cost ownership and rental).

Warminster Town Council, in association with WVCP, the Chamber of Commerce and Warminster Civic Trust has initiated a “Smarter Warminster” campaign, which will be directed towards improving the image of the town centre. Details are emerging as this Plan goes to press.



The Minster Church and the Chapel of St Lawrence. The offices of the Town Council are now located in the former school Dewey House, located in picturesque North Row, where the new properties blend in attractively.



Housing development at the east end of town.

Culture and Leisure

Vision

To develop an area where opportunities for cultural expression and appreciation and leisure pursuits meet local demand. To realise the artistic potential and talent of the area.

Issues raised

- Poor co-ordination of activities
- The Athenaeum could be more fully exploited as ‘a centre for the community’
- Cultural activities should be increased
- Sports facilities can be improved
- There is a need for more and improved facilities for young people in both the town and the villages, such as play and recreational areas, skate parks, organised youth groups

Future Initiatives

- Develop a Field Studies Centre, with associated accommodation, to capitalise on the area’s natural and historical features of national and international significance.
- Facilitate the provision of opportunities to help realise the potential and talent of the area
- Support the Athenaeum restoration and redevelopment and look at broadening its community use
- Develop a Visual Arts Centre at an appropriate venue
- Invest in the Park, including a regular calendar of events; a landscape plan; picnic and barbeque areas; and skate park improvements
- Support the continuation and development of the Warminster Festival and Wylve Valley Arts Trail, and consider new initiatives
- Support the Warminster Community Radio creative arts development project in scriptwriting, performing and production for radio

- Create an arts co-ordinating body based in the Library, to bring together arts initiatives in the town and villages and publicise them as well as initiating new projects. Create an arts notice board
- Develop Folly Lane Sports Pavillion
- Support the Woolstore Theatre at Codford
- Investigate the possibility of a mobile cinema for villages
- Support improved play and leisure facilities and activities in the villages, including Longbridge Deverill, Heytesbury, Chapmanslade, Sutton Veny, Codford, etc.
- Support parishes in the development of their village hall/meeting place projects, eg Upton Scudamore, Sutton Veny, Heytesbury
- Encourage walking and cycling activities

What's Happening

- The restoration of the Athenaeum Centre is proceeding
- The Youth Service and Town Council are considering improvements to the skate park in the Town Park
- A group is looking for an appropriate venue for an arts centre
- Heytesbury and Sutton Veny parishes are seeking funding for play area/recreation schemes
- Upton Scudamore is seeking funding for a meeting room attached to a church
- Sutton Veny is raising funding for improvements to its village hall
- Codford recently installed equipment at the recreation ground for young people and is improving a toddlers' play area
- The Woolstore Theatre at Codford is recently restored
- Chapmanslade worked with Youth Action Wiltshire to establish a young peoples' group in the village hall



Extensive restoration work is being carried out on the Athenaeum, now a community centre containing a delightful 240-seater auditorium.

Environment (inc. countryside/ land-based issues)

Vision

An integrated approach to the environmental, economic and community aspects of the area based on a wide ranging awareness and understanding of the local countryside, in particular the preservation and enhancement of its tranquility, landscape character, habitats and wildlife and its importance to the local economy through farming, tourism etc.

Issues raised

- Provide more affordable housing in the villages
- Give wider recognition to the importance of the farming industry
- Control traffic speed and size on country roads
- Campaign for the responsible use of the countryside
- Provide local employment opportunities
- Better management of natural areas and open spaces
- Improve awareness of countryside issues - wildlife and farming etc.
- Provide an appropriate economic diversity
- Improve the rights-of-way network

Future Initiatives

- Support Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB management plan and potential projects
- Use information centres and services to maximum
- Disseminate information on issues related to the countryside,
- Promote opportunities to responsibly enjoy and become more active in caring for the countryside.
- Encourage local action to help maintain and use rights of way
- Take action to reduce fly-tipping
- Promote and develop initiatives that enable rural diversification and sustainable rural industries & employment
- Encourage the purchase of local goods
- Promote Wiltshire Wildlife Trust projects such as waste minimisation; the energy day audit; the active management of some open spaces; and wildlife issues generally.

Transport Access and Traffic

Vision

An integrated transport network with linked road, rail, bus and cycle facilities providing residents of the town and the villages with quality services and access to employment, education, shopping and other essential local services.

Issues Raised

- Perceived problem of through-traffic using town centre
- Traffic congestion at peak times during school run and deliveries to premises in High Street and Market Place
- Access issues in town centre for shoppers and people with disabilities or with pushchairs
- Difficulties for pedestrians crossing High Street and Market Place
- Lack of consensus over potential improvements to the shopping environment and traffic calming in the town centre
- Poor public transport services between the town and the villages
- Improvements needed to the A36 at Codford-Heytesbury
- Speeding cars through some villages
- Lack of cycle paths and facilities

Future Initiatives

- Provide a forum for the discussion of traffic and associated issues in consultation with local government
- Continue to work with WCC consultants Mouchel Parkman in its traffic management study on ways to improve facilities and conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and improve the commercial viability of the town centre
- Improve facilities for pedestrians crossing High Street and Market Place, perhaps by moving crossings to more suitable positions
- Introduce speed reduction measures in the town centre
- Improve delivery arrangements for shops in the town centre and deter commercial vehicle parking at the top of Weymouth Street
- Deter unnecessary through traffic, particularly HGVs



Trains from Warminster Station serve Bristol, Bath, Salisbury and London (Waterloo).

- Sustain existing transport services, such as the through rail link to Waterloo, Salisbury to Bristol rail service and the RUH Hopper
- Improve bus services generally and make them more accessible for the elderly, frail and those with babies and young children
- Improve cycling infrastructure and facilities
- Improve road safety through changing yellow lines in Codford
- Improve signage, including for local attractions.

What's Happening

- Active WVCP Traffic and Transport Working Group
- Local Transport Plan proposals for traffic calming investment in town centre, including traffic surveys and opinion polls
- Consultation over the Local Transport Plan Round 2
- Volunteer effort supporting community transport services

Traffic congestion is not a major problem in Warminster, except in the morning rush-hour when delivery vehicles park close to, and even across, the traffic lights as in the picture on the right. ▼



Warminster library is an invaluable asset to the community and has been very supportive in the Partnership's work. ▲

Education and Lifelong Learning

Vision

Quality learning facilities available to all and a culture of lifelong learning ingrained among young and old alike.

Issues Raised

- Skills issues and gaps amongst the workforce
- Poor take up vocational training programmes for workforce development by local businesses
- Inadequate transport services to education and leisure facilities, particularly between the town and the villages and in the evenings

Future Initiatives

- A new Learning4Warminster section is to be opened in Warminster Library this summer. It will be an all new multi-media section covering many aspects of the learning process
- Provide community e-learning facilities at Library
- Invest in the skills of the area's workforce in liaison with the newly opened college in Warminster
- Focus on what further educational facilities are needed for young people in the villages; use outreach youth worker
- Coaching young people in skills e.g. motor biking
- Contact Positive Futures Organisation

What's Happening

- Learning4Warminster coordinates activity under this theme
- Free2Learn and Skills4Business training initiatives
- Youth centre and support services for young people
- Youth Council/ Wiltshire Assembly of Youth
- University of the Third Age



The new premises for Warminster College (L) and the Avenue Early Excellence Centre (R).

Involving the Community

In producing this Plan we have tried to involve all sections of the community and to reflect the work of relevant organisations and statutory bodies. It will serve as an initial framework for the Warminster community area. The publication of the Plan does not mean the end of the consultation process, however, and we would welcome continuous engagement by local people, businesses and organisations on its further evolution. This can be achieved by :

- contributing to our web-site, www.communigate.co.uk/wilts/wvcp
- by dropping suggestions into the Partnership post box in Warminster Library
- by writing to the WVCP c.o. Warminster Library, Three Horseshoes Walk, Warminster BA12 9BT.

Partners

This Community Plan has been produced with the close cooperation of many organisations, agencies and residents of Warminster and its surrounding villages, many of whom have attended its management committee and offered their views and opinions. Those organisations represented on the Committee include : Wiltshire County Council; West Wiltshire District Council; Warminster Town Council; Warminster Chamber of Commerce; Warminster Civic Trust; Warminster Preservation Trust; Community First; Warminster Independent Trade Association; West Wiltshire Primary Care Trust.

The Committee of the Partnership expresses its thanks to the County and District Councils and to Community First, whose representatives have provided a tremendous amount of administrative support and assistance. Funding has been received from the South West Regional Development Agency through the Market and Coastal Towns initiative and contributions have also been received from Town, District and County Councils.

