

## APPENDIX 1

### Leighton Buzzard – Town Centre Workshop

Date: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Location: Astral Park Sports and Community Centre, Johnson Drive, Leighton Buzzard, LU7 4AY

Time	Item	Who
5.45pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Light buffet/refreshments</li></ul>	All
6.30pm	Welcome and introductions <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each attendee briefly to give their name and organisation</li></ul>	IntoPlaces
6.45pm	Purpose of the Meeting • Why are we here?	Mark S
6.50pm	National Context <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Exploring the challenges that town centres are facing</li><li>• Latest research on the changing high streets/latest trends</li><li>• Place leadership – role of local authorities</li></ul>	IntoPlaces
7.30pm	Leighton Buzzard Town Centre – Facilitated Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current performance of Leighton-Buzzard</li><li>• Exploring its strengths and weaknesses</li><li>• Your vision and strategic approach</li><li>• Current partnership arrangements</li></ul>	All,
8.15pm	Enhancing Leighton Buzzard Town Centre – Facilitated Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Leighton Buzzard of the future: what could it look like?</li><li>• Opportunities for transformation – frameworks, models and tools of support</li></ul>	All,
9.15 pm	Next steps - Workshop report to be go to Policy & Finance Committee on 15 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	IntoPlaces
9.30pm	Thank you & Close	Mark S

#### Attendees:

##### Town Council/CBC

Cllr Victoria Harvey

Cllr Farzana Kharawala

Cllr Amanda Dodwell

Cllr Anne Gray

Cllr Steve Jones

Cllr Ewan Wallace

Cllr Tony Morris

Cllr Clive Palmer

Cllr Jeremy Silverstone

Cllr Sheona Hemmings

Cllr Daniel Scott

Cllr Kevin Collins

Steve Lakin

Mark Saccocio

Sarah Sandiford

Vivien Cannon

#### Stakeholders

Sue James/John Sharp – Leighton Buzzard Society

Gennaro Borelli – Chair, Leighton Buzzard First/FSB Leighton Buzzard Special Interest Group

Craig Gurr – local Police Inspector

Gina Croxford - Beds Rural Communities Charity

## APPENDIX 2

### Independent Town Tour - Observations

IntoPlaces undertakes a town tour to contextualise potential regeneration proposals and gauge how a town currently operates. A tour of Leighton Buzzard town centre took place on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> November at 3pm and also on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> November (Market day) at 10am. The summary findings and suggested quick wins are outlined below.

#### 1. Leighton Buzzard Approach Routes/Access

Leighton Buzzard has good road access being close to main arterial routes from Milton Keynes and Aylesbury as well as being in close proximity to nearby retail parks/key employment sites. This can, however, cause congestion and air quality issues so will benefit from a new infrastructure scheme which will also need to include digital infrastructure. Parking access and availability is excellent but the charges in the multi-storey car park near to Waterbourne Walk Shopping Centre do not necessarily encourage linked trips or increase dwell time and spend. This is currently not an issue but could be if there is a desire to attract the wider catchment area. The number and infrastructure for electric car charging points will be increasingly important. There is good disabled parking provision in the car parks and main shopping area.

#### 1.2 Bus



The main bus stops on West Street provide small covered seating areas but appear inadequate for the size of town. It provides a connecting link to Milton Keynes mainline rail station as well as to Luton Airport.

The bus stops need to provide a more welcoming gateway through improved landscaping and signage to and from the pedestrian links into the main town centre area.

#### 2. Gateway Links

The entry point/signage from the main multi storey car park and bus stops near to the shopping centre into the town centre and Market Square is not that welcoming although the paving has benefited from an upgrade and the signposts have been styled to be in keeping with the heritage of the town. Cycle routes appear well used although some signage appears contradictory.

<p>Town centre/Market signposting and main entry point from the car park</p> 	 <p>Main entry point into town from the bus stops on West St</p>	 <p>Pedestrian link from shopping centre to High Street with cycle stands</p>	<p>Cycle Route Signage</p> 
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#### 3. Leighton Buzzard Market

The Tuesday Market had regular customers and a variety of well used market stalls. Landscaping improvement works on the day had caused some disruption.



## 4. General Observations

### 4.1 Positive Aspects

- Very attractive heritage and well maintained historic buildings
- Wide High Street
- Well placed historic Market
- Low vacancy rates
- Number of banks/estate agents bucking the national trend
- Sizeable local catchment area/affluent household profile
- Access point for local schools
- More independents than chains
- Number of pubs/café culture
- Growing restaurant offer
- Good community spirit and friendliness
- Passion/enthusiasm for the town

### 4.2 Negative Aspects

- Little leisure or cultural offer
- No family/child orientated arts activities/facilities
- No visible day to evening economy
- Additional landscaping/greening required (ongoing)
- Poor wayfinding/signage
- Disconnected public transport links
- Unwelcoming shopping centre environment in contrast to main town centre
- Market not achieving its full potential and not attracting the whole catchment area

## APPENDIX 3

### Workshop Discussion Summaries

These have been themed and highlighted below.

#### Strengths and USPs:

<b>Environmental:</b>	<b>Town Centre Offer:</b>	<b>Regeneration:</b>	<b>USPs:</b>
Attractive, compact physical layout	Everyday broad range of affordable shops	Improved seating and pedestrianised areas	Unique heritage and historical buildings
Park facilities destination	Large variety of small independents	Maintained train line	Market
Well maintained buildings	Availability small units for start ups	Maintained character	Community spirit
	Community events	West Street bypass taking traffic away	Developing cultural/music offer
	California Ballroom – famous for its music		
	Growing café culture		
	Vibrant night time economy		

#### Challenges:

The perception is that the town is utilised by local residents, particularly older people. A number of contributors suggested that the town centre's offer was not representative of the wider catchment area – proximity to good schools and housing were mentioned.

<b>Environmental:</b>	<b>Town Centre Offer:</b>	<b>Regeneration:</b>	<b>Identity:</b>
Feel unsafe in the evening	Inhibiting development of cultural night time economy	Out of town retail/amenities	Lack of destination experience/atmosphere
Need to improve connectivity and accessibility	Lack of Sunday/family friendly offer	Land south of High Street	No reason to come
	Not meeting new professionals' expectations	Lack of space to do things	Problem of reality/perceptions
	More for youngsters	Cars/cost of parking	Awareness of 'new' residents
	Invest in new communities from day one	Better relationship with decision makers of unitary authority	
	Lack of leisure offer – need more artistic/music venues		

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Reference Documents**

The following documents were researched to inform the delivery of this workshop:

#### **Local/Regional**

1. Central Bedfordshire Local Plan/Leighton Linslade Area Profile and other documentation
2. Leighton Linslade Town Council background information/website
3. People & Places Insights - Leighton Buzzard Town Benchmarking Report August 2019
3. Leighton Buzzard Market information/website
4. Local Stakeholder Groups information
5. Local social media and newspaper websites

#### **National**

1. National High Streets Taskforce Research and Webinar Information - <https://www.highstreetstaskforce.org.uk/>
2. Institute of Place Management Research Papers/Covid 19 Support Webinars - <https://www.placemanagement.org/>
3. Association of Town Centre Management Resources - <https://www.atcm.org/>
4. Centre for Retail Research website – <https://www.retailresearch.org/retail-forecast.html>
5. Office for National Statistics retail information - <https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/retailindustry/bulletins/retailsales/september2021>