

BRIDGWATER CHALLENGE
Community Engagement Process

FORUM WORKSHOP 2
20th May 2009
FULL REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

This workshop was the second for the group of key stakeholders known as the 'Forum'; (the first took place on 11th February 2009). It was held at this particular time because the development work on the Bridgwater Challenge Framework had moved towards a first outline of what could be called the 'Preferred Option' and there was a need to check this out with people, get clarification, deal with queries, move in on into more detail etc., before taking it to the wider public at the second open drop-in event in June. (The specific date was also chosen because a 'Design Day' workshop for young people was arranged to take place during the day prior to the Forum event in the evening. Results from that were available for Forum people to see.)

As before, all on the now slightly larger list of 160 or so key stakeholders (mainly organisations rather than individuals) were sent invitations to book in and come along. The initial response was minimal and slow. Further chasing secured a group of around 30 on the evening; (see participants list later).

Those booking in were sent a copy of the Options report that focused on the many choices available at that time but also outlined the direction the Gillespies team was intending to take towards a single, preferred option. People were asked to look at certain sections of this to enable a speedy start at the workshop, not least because there was a large amount to cover – for example, in approaches to 14 different areas.

The wider range of aspects and areas to cover also led to the specific format for the evening. Apart from a very brief presentation to remind people of progress to date and to set the scene for the workshop, there were three main sessions:

1. Focusing on reactions to and ideas for mainly **employment-led** areas of/around the town.
2. Focusing on reactions to and ideas for mainly **residential-led** (or residential-related) areas of/around the town.
3. Focusing on reactions to and ideas for the **town centre and Eastover** (and also general access and movement issues).

Participants were asked, on arrival, to opt for which if the 5 or 6 areas they wished to focus on in sessions 1 and 2. Everybody then worked on the town centre etc. in session 3. In each case the task was broadly similar: to think about and make group notes in answer to the following short brief:

Are you happy with the general idea or approach for the area?

If yes:

- Give specific details to elaborate the general aims in the notes
- Add ideas
- Highlight key opportunities
- Highlight key problems or challenges

If no:

- Why are you not happy?
- What might be another overall approach?

- *Is that one of the other options?*
- *Or some completely new set of ideas?*
- *Tell us what would be better*

The distribution of people to areas worked quite well (none were too large or small) although one largish group for session 2 was subdivided for session 3. Details of who was in which group are not noted in this report.

In all three sessions, groups were supplied with a copy of text from the Options report and a plan of their area(s).

To ensure a main focus on the town centre session, there were no feedback sessions from the first two discussions. To give people a brief opportunity to hear what others had noted, team members offered their own very quick summary feedbacks in the final discussion but these are not included here because they were too short to be properly justified. There was a brief summary session at the end of stage 3 (see later).

One effect of asking people to choose one area only for sessions 1 and 2 was that some small groups contained within them one or even two people with specific, even commercial, interests in that site or area. This is not necessarily bad (or good) but needs to be noted (as did one set of notes below).

As usual, all text in italics – as here – is explanation and commentary. Everything in plain text is as recoded directly on the evening.

SESSION 1: EMPLOYMENT-LED AREAS

Five areas were studied. We have in fact included in here the Wylds Road area notes as well, though this was addressed in session 2. This was because the team itself was uncertain about the proposals for this area; an issue reflected by the group who felt it should be considered as 'employment-led'. Those notes have been moved accordingly (though the appropriate future approach is still unresolved!).

North East Bridgwater

1. Lakes as focus point – Dutch-style construction: wood, bright colours
2. High quality, positive images
 - Exemplar structures, challenging images
 - High colour images
 - Large fountain in lakes
 - Key problems: flower/art on the chimney – deliverability – proof of viability – iconic public art/retain willow man

Colley Lane

1. General approach OK
2. New road will improve access from M5
 - Residential should be limited to north end
 - Riverside development not suitable for residential
 - New pedestrian/cycle footbridge from mid-point to Hamp
 - Danger of new road being "rat run" to Salmon Parade and St John Street – challenge!
 - Query improving access to river

North Bridgwater

- ◇ General approach accepted
- ◇ Remaining residents need protection/possible relocation
- ◇ Gateway must be enhanced
- ◇ Park and ride location?
- ◇ NE quadrant of Dunball roundabout could enhance entrance via green space
- ◇ Landscaping
- ◇ Cycle routes/pedestrian routes
- ◇ Hinkley Point access
- ◇ Barrier to be anticipated – can this be a landmark?
- ◇ Land adjacent to sewage works to be open space? Sports field? Because difficult to develop

Huntworth

1. Yes, for part of the area
 2. No – capacity of junction off motorway service
- ◇ Rail link for Huntworth
 - ◇ Not keen to develop area east of motorway (different views expressed – not everyone agreed – 4 to 1 against)
 - ◇ Traffic issues at M5 roundabouts – especially in holiday season
 - ◇ North Petherton bypass?
 - ◇ New transport system running along railway – from south to north end of Bridgwater – shuttle/tram?
 - ◇ Upgrade Bridgwater Station – more and faster trains stopping – mainline trains

Puriton Energy Park

- ◇ Yes, provided there are components of mixed use – ie: housing and recreation (including social housing)
- ◇ Minority comment: group is proportionately unrepresentative (2 out of 4 are reps of BAE) and not enough information to decide which option is most beneficial
- ◇ Extra minority comment: good to work with the relevant authorities to agree types of industry, housing, etc

Wylds Road

- ◇ Sewage works!
- ◇ Not happy – employment relocation not feasible/too costly/result in employment loss – evolution, not revolution
- ◇ Commercial/retail use enhance with changed planning – evolution, not policy revolution
- ◇ Mixed development exploiting riverside, including high quality commercial/office
- ◇ East side of Bristol Road residential emphasis more – upgrade sewage treatment works a bit (high tech it)– energy?
- ◇ West side of Bristol Road commercial/employment
- ◇ Environment Agency – new 'green' building on prime site

SESSION 2: RESIDENTIAL-LED AREAS

(NB. Nobody signed up to work on Wembdon.)

Sydenham and Bower

- ◇ General initiative agreed
- ◇ Agree with energy centre proposed location
- ◇ Flooding and access to motorway margin cause some concern with proposed MS edge growth
- ◇ Improved rail service required
- ◇ Remove pylons to improve perception of area
- ◇ Best opportunity for linkage to Innovia site
- ◇ Dunwear potential to improve and improve accessibility
- ◇ Is "the knowledge quarter" a valid label for the area?

Newtown and Victoria

- ◇ Overall idea fine
- ◇ Make connections to Wembdon
- ◇ Good community spirit
- ◇ Council housing stock upgrade – around Victoria Park and landscaping, lighting, etc
- ◇ Improving connections – better cycle and pedestrian routes to North Bridgwater and town centre (employment areas/schools, college)
- ◇ Refurbish bascule bridge
- ◇ Piggy Hill – regeneration – nice walk – opposite towpath
- ◇ Links to regenerated docks
- ◇ Develop Gerber for housing = new opportunity – affordable housing and quality housing really important
- ◇ Victoria – excellent – make more of it
- ◇ Youth facilities/activities
- ◇ Revitalised green spaces and linked
- ◇ New road to Hinkley
- ◇ NDR residential road to serve new school and community
- ◇ Tennis courts at Chilton Trinity - overall improved sports facilities and use for local residents – top gym needed
- ◇ Traffic management – does it work? Pilot. Connections to NDR

Hamp

1. No, not enough to improve public realm and community facilities
2. School development very important as springboard for area
Address poor environmental quality on edges of the Meads/Morrisons/Canal
Healthy Living Centre as community focus – allotments/community growing project
Dutch-style home zones – must be high quality

Meads Eco-Park

- ◇ Some residential desirable as shown for natural surveillance – developers contribute to Eco-Park?
- ◇ Area near YMCA for sports - ? Too wet?
- ◇ Fairfield could be improved more – without impeding fair use – attractive, recreational area, football, etc, landscaping, path, cycleways especially across from Hamp to West Street/Durleigh Road – good shortcut

- ◇ Some ponds for wildlife and some for play – eg: radio-controlled boats
- ◇ Farms – link to/near allotments
- ◇ Paths
- ◇ Wheelchair access – important to wildlife areas
- ◇ Ponds
- ◇ Visitor centre, info boards, near allotments/at farm? Café near farm and hides
- ◇ Generally: good idea and relatively inexpensive – good value for money, great asset to town
- ◇ Involve RSPB, Somerset Wildlife, Natural England at an early stage – access to volunteer networks and funding?

SESSION 3: TOWN CENTRE, EASTOVER AND ACCESS/MOVEMENT

Group 1

1. Not radical enough
 Regeneration needs to start with town centre
 Links between “town centres” bits – retail parks
 Need someone to take a change on retail units – kick it off

Eastover

2. The river should be in the heart of the town centre and not on the edge
 Low weir to hold back some water in river through town centre (a ‘marine lake’ concept) – flush out silt every now and again
 Tidy up banks
 Mixed use – but should feel part of town centre
3. Night time economy?
 Hinkley needs nightlife!

Access and Movement

- ◇ Railway line is a “principal route”
- ◇ Bridgwater Station should be a serious railway station
- ◇ Railway station is a strategic gateway
- ◇ Railway line use for local transport as well? Tram
- ◇ All other – agree, but how?
- ◇ Disability/ease of access needs to be a prime consideration
- ◇ Make main roads more pedestrian/cycle friendly
- ◇ Park and ride both motorway junctions – Hinkley will need it!

Group 2

- ◇ Agree broad concept for town, but should include Eastover Street as a part.
 Town bridge should be focus and to include West Quay
- ◇ Street market for Eastover
- ◇ King Square/West Quay/Castle Street to be developed as a cultural centre to balance Penel Orliou
- ◇ Agree the point to develop docks area and canal side

Group 3

- ◇ Agree with overall picture on sheets
- ◇ Town centre needs higher quality shops – eg: M&S and Bath Place, Taunton type retail/galleries/crafts at Kings Square/river frontage
- ◇ Link docks to town centre
- ◇ Celebrating the high quality buildings, street scene
- ◇ Live music and arts – market square? - as part of retail attraction to increase dwell time

Group 4

- ◇ Waterfront develop – cafés, etc – then completely redevelop Eastover – new shops – designer outlets
- ◇ Recreational use of river, links to canal
- ◇ Weir or sluice to control tides – low tide river is unattractive
- ◇ Attractive flagship destinations for families, shopping plus other attractions – eco-park, Splash, play area (Eastover Park?)
- ◇ More residential in Eastover – commute by rail? To Bristol?
- ◇ Attract more companies to site their offices in Bridgwater area – station
- ◇ Designer outlets – similar to Clarks Village – 2nds shops, etc

Group 5

Town Centre		Eastover
Core town centre offer Poor quality shops Need quality stores Increase unit size and niche offer – retail Office Northgate – posh restaurant by docks and high quality housing = yuppies Nightlife Penel Orlieu – cinemas, clubs, Curry Island Quirky, arty end High Street/Fore Street Refurbished Blake Gardens Stronger focus on being safe – more police presence Leisure uses on waterfront Make best use of historic buildings 'Dutch' theme Harvey Nics! High aspirations!! Primark!	Build on uniqueness – quarters – reactivate the ancient/historical areas	Keep hospital façade New flats/apartments – high quality Leisure – bowling, cinema Community area like Victoria New doctors' surgery – Cranleigh Gardens Mostly residential area Offices Celebration mile – welcome to Bridgwater – new gateway Paper shops – café bars Start-up units Keep Barclay Street car park Internet cafés Family leisure quarter – bowling, laser challenge, pizza, carnival info centre Designer outlet Waitrose Station – industrial heritage - carnival

Group 6

- ◇ Policy generally supported
- ◇ Is the garden quarter viable/realistic?
- ◇ Focus on St John Street refurbishment
- ◇ Target better retailers
- ◇ Provide suitable size sites for key retailers
- ◇ Bringing water into the heart of the area – how would this happen?
- ◇ Suggestions to attract retail – free parking – quality environment – public transport
- ◇ Improve Broadway link frontage
- ◇ Pedestrianise Eastover
- ◇ Park and ride required to south – and north?
- ◇ Eastover residential – does this area require significant change?

Summary

There was just enough time left by this point to do a brief summary 'call-out' of key points from each group. People were asked to be ready to call out two key points, from their actual notes but not necessarily so - maybe at the level above this or different to it. Each group called out a different point in turn, going round twice. The key points raised were as follows:

- ◇ Make the river area more attractive – eg: with the sluice
- ◇ Link the docks to the town centre
- ◇ Focus the town centre around the town bridge
- ◇ Develop a night time economy
- ◇ Increase unit size and diversity amongst the shops
- ◇ Celebrate the many historic features
- ◇ It is not radical enough
- ◇ Makes links to the various cultural 'nodes'
- ◇ Regenerate St. John Street and Broadway
- ◇ Create a high quality market area on Eastover*
- ◇ Make it all a flagship destination to attract/retain people

(Interestingly, exactly this sort of brief had been used to give to three of the young people's groups designing buildings for the town during the daytime workshop; they too felt such a scheme would be really positive!)*

NEXT STEPS

Before closing, Jeff Bishop, the workshop manager, made three short comments:

- ⇒ *Thank you to everybody for coming and for the hard and constructive work, (and especially for putting up with all the group juggling!).*
- ⇒ *The next main open, public drop-ins will be in the town on Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th June – more information to be sent to all.*
- ⇒ *The Gillespies project finishes at the end of July with a far fuller final report on the overall approach, framework or masterplan. That too will be notified to people.*

PARTICIPANTS

Attendees

Name		Organisation
Doug	Bamsey	Sedgemoor District Council
Peter	Braine	Bridgwater & District Civic Society - Publicity Officer
Stewart	Brock	Somerset Primary Care Trust
John	Capstick	Tamlyns
Gary	Coleman	Sedgemoor District Council
Richard	Culmer	BAE Systems
Cllr Adrian	Downes	Bridgwater Town Council
Simon	Dunford	EDF
Cllr Anne	Fraser	Sedgemoor District Council
Jan	Gannaway	Sustrans (Volunteer Ranger)
Anthony	Gibson	Bridgwater Challenge Partnership Board Chairman
Chris	Hocking	Bridgwater Guy Fawkes Carnival
Andrew	Humphries	Eastover Traders Association
Alan	Hurford	Bridgwater Town Council - Town Clerk
Connor	Lee	DPDS
Richard	Lloyd	Summerfield Developments SW Ltd
Yvonne	Mackeson	Genesis Centre (Energy Advice)
Alan	Madge	Jobcentre Plus - Dorset & Somerset
Cllr Duncan	McGinty	Sedgemoor District Council
Chris	Moseley	Sedgemoor Tenants' Voice (Chair)
Gary	Orr	Homes in Sedgemoor - Chief Executive
Claire	Pearce	Sedgemoor District Council
Geoff	Revell	RevProp Ltd - Director
Satnam	Singh	Learning and Skills Council
John	Stuckey	Bridgwater & District Civic Society
Cllr John	Swayne	Sedgemoor District Council
Nick	Tyrrell	BAE Systems
Alec R	Western	Rotary Club of Bridgwater

Apologies

Name		Organisation
Carl	Budden	SWRDA
Honor	Chapman	Brewhamfield
Cllr Samuel	Crabb	Somerset County Councillor - Lib Dem - Ilchester

Dave	Crowson	Environment Agency
Charlie	Deardon	Bridgwater Arts Centre
Claire	Faun	Sedgemoor District Council
Nick	Freer	David Lock Associates - Director
Derek	Gibson	Bridgwater Heritage Regeneration Partnership
Teresa	Harvey	Sedgemoor District Council
Andy	Hicklin	Environment Agency
Martin	Hodgson	Bridgwater YMCA
Sally	House	Learning and Skills Council
Robbie	Lowes	Rotary Club of Bridgwater
Cllr Ken	Maddock	Somerset County Councillor - Conservative - Mendip South
Richard	Pitman	Somerset Access & Inclusion Network
Alexia	Pradel	EDF
Cllr Hazel	Prior-Sankey	Somerset County Councillor - Lib Dem - Taunton South
Tim	Simmons	Genesis Centre (Energy Advice)
Phil	Spooner	Connexions
John	Vieth	Association of Bridgwater Industrialists (President)
Julie	Walker	Building Schools for the Future
Joy	Wishlade	Taunton Deane Borough Council
Cllr Christopher	Wolverson	Somerset County Councillor - Conservative - Lydeard

Team

Name		Organisation
Jeff	Bishop	BDOR
Katie	Lea	BDOR
Barry	Williams	Gillespies