



ANNEX N

THE HIGH STREET AND THEATRE PROJECTS

- | | |
|----|-----------------------------|
| N1 | THE HIGH STREET REVIEW |
| N2 | RE-INVIGORATING THE THEATRE |



N1 – THE HIGH STREET REVIEW (Project V1 in the project list)

N1.1 Rationale

There is a general acceptance of the merits of pedestrianisation of the High Street with restricted vehicle access. However, our questionnaires and focus group discussions have identified a number of problems and difficulties which need to be resolved which relate to access, attractiveness, social and economic issues. In order to address these issues in an integrated manner, the project has developed a *High Street Review Project*. A summary of the project is provided in the project ideas list; Project V1 in the main report.

N1.2 Key Issues

The key problems, issues and difficulties are described below, followed by ideas for improvement.

i) Problems of access to the High Street as described in the General Questionnaire, the Transport and Access Questionnaires, the Living Streets survey and other local surveys:

1. Lorries are visiting the pedestrianised area at times other than those that are permitted so putting unsuspecting pedestrians at risk. This is especially so when they enter illegally by reversing down the one-way High Street.
2. Parked cars from 4.30 onwards at times leave little room for pedestrians to walk at the side and so they are forced to use the central area with the elderly in particular left feeling vulnerable.
3. Cars parked too closely to the buildings at certain places on the left side of the High Street make access to shops difficult.
4. Cars left parked in the High Street between 10.00 and 4.30 are perceived as a nuisance especially by the visually impaired.
5. Cars travel at too fast a speed within the pedestrianised area after 4.30 but especially when entering from Church Street and approaching the corner with the High Street.
6. Bicycles are ridden at speed down the High Street i.e. the wrong way down a one-way street.
7. There are no signs to the High Street from the Swan Centre or Day Centre and other essential services are also unsigned.

Suggested improvements for each of the 7 points above from our consultations:

1. To work with the shopkeepers both in the High Street and Swan Centre to agree the times that lorries are allowed to deliver and install a barrier at the top of the High Street
2. To work with all concerned such as the shopkeepers and restaurateurs to define the areas of the High Street which need to be free from parking
3. As above
4. Pedestrianisation should be more rigorously enforced
5. To limit the speed of traffic within the pedestrianised area
6. To suggest alternative routes for cyclists
7. Improve the signage around the town centre

These issues are addressed in Project V1.1 (see main report).

ii) Access for those with reduced mobility

1. Uneven cobbles cause problems especially for those with visual impairment, wheel chair users, parents with push chairs and the elderly.
2. All other walking surfaces need to be made safe and maintained in an attractive manner
3. The drainage channel on the left hand side is a hazard for wheel chair users and the unwary walker.
4. 'A' boards cause problems for the visually impaired and are an obstruction to pedestrians once cars are parked in the High street.
5. Manhole covers e.g. outside Dixon's are a trip hazard
6. The slope outside More's is very steep, and it can present a hazard when slippery in the winter.



7. The cycle racks at the bottom of the High Street can't be used on market days because they are obstructed by the stalls.
8. The same cycle racks obstruct the natural flow of able-bodied and visually impaired pedestrians when walking from Church Street.

Suggested improvements for each of the 8 points above from our consultations:

1. Replace the uneven cobbled area with an even surface
2. Various surfaces are uneven such as at the bottom of Kings Alley, the York stone between Savers and Dixons which is a trip hazard and grass and moss at the entrance to Swan Mews where pedestrians may easily slip. Asphalt infill outside Annie's is ugly.
3. Cover the drainage channel with a grid
4. Work with the shop keepers to locate 'A' boards more carefully
5. Ensure all manhole covers are properly laid and flush with the surrounding surface
6. A handrail on the wall of More's would help
7. The cycle racks could be placed in a more convenient position for all concerned.
8. As 7

These issues are addressed in Project V1.2 (see main report).

iii) The need to improve the attractiveness of the High Street:

Suggested improvements from our consultations:

The Living Streets Survey made the following recommendations to help improve the attractiveness of the High street:

- Seats outside Subway, at the bottom entrance of the Swan Centre and seats with backs by the ramps
- Litter bins to be placed as appropriate
- More attractive cycle racks to be provided.
- Celebrate the centre of the town with greenery and flowers to contrast with the grey slate of the ramps. Consider including more trees or shrubs.
- Add welcome signage and information about the walks and cycle routes that can be started from the town centre, to go with the coming events signboard and link it with the fingerposts to enable strangers to find their way around with confidence.
- Enhance the open space outside the Duke's Head.
- Open up the vista into Church Street
- Work with shopkeepers and with MVDC to establish design guidelines for shop fronts

It is evident that there is a need to develop and implement a coordinated plan to locate seating, litter bins, cycle racks, floral decorations and other street furniture in a convenient and attractive way, which allows for and takes account of the many different functions of the street.

These issues are addressed in Project V1.3 (see main report).

iv) The need to improve the social role of the High Street by creating a central focal point for the town and to make it an attractive interesting place for children and their parents to visit.

Suggested improvements:

- Creating a central focal point for the town
- Making it an attractive and interesting place for children and their parents to visit and for visitors

These will be addressed in Project V1.4.

v) The need for a review of economic considerations.

Suggested improvements are:



- Loading/ unloading at the market
- Improving the footfall in the town shops and the market.

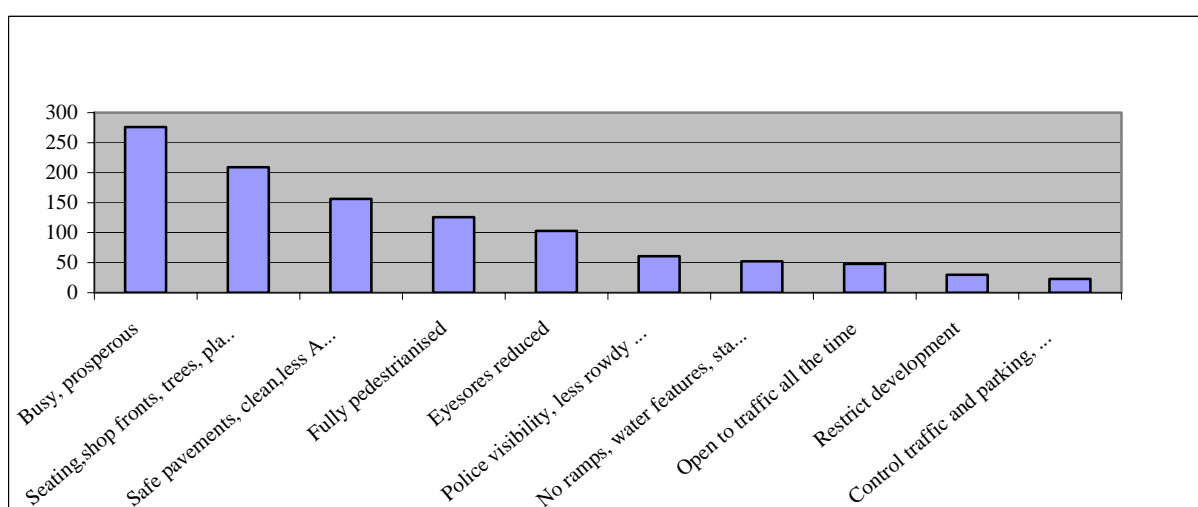
The market traders will be consulted as to their views of parking and delivery times.

These will be addressed in Project V1.5

N1.3 Views on the High Street

The community readily gave their views on the High Street during the Healthcheck consultation process. The general questionnaire included the question: *How would you like Leatherhead High Street to LOOK in two years time?* With 1084 responses to this question, it is evident that the community attaches great importance to this issue. The responses to this question are provided below:

Q11e: How would you like Leatherhead High Street to LOOK in two years time?



Response	No.	% of Total
Busy, prosperous, community feeling	276	25.5
More seating, covered in places, planting, more attractive shop fronts, more trees, outside meeting area	209	19.3
Safe pavements, clean, tidy, better lights, fewer A boards and signage	156	14.4
Fully pedestrianised	126	11.6
Eyesores reduced	103	9.5
Police visibility, less rowdy drinkers	61	5.6
No ramps, water features, statues	52	4.8
Open to traffic all the time	48	4.4
Restrictions on development	30	2.8
Control traffic, keep it one way, control parking	23	2.1
Total	1084	

A variety of improvements were identified. Respondents would like to see the High Street busier, more bustling. They also consider the High Street somewhere where they would like to meet friends and socialise and consider there is a need for more seating and more attractive places to meet.

The project team would like to use this information in a thorough evaluation, in order to best plan for its varied functions and uses.



N2 RE-INVIGORATING THE THEATRE

N2.1 Rationale

There is widespread opinion that the Leatherhead Theatre is one of the jewels in the town and that its programmes should be developed and supported. Although there were no specific questions about the theatre in the surveys and consultations, it was cited frequently as one of the best features of the town, one that needs to be sustained and where possible expanded in the range of events staged. Appreciation of the theatre, along with the leisure centre, restaurants, markets, institute and some of the shops, is an important part of the "Leatherhead experience" for residents and visitors.

N2.2 Evidence

In the general questionnaire (see Annex E4), when asked "*What do you think are the best features of Leatherhead?*" after nominating the riverside as the number one attraction, entertainment came second followed by eateries. What in the early days of the project was still referred to as the newly re-opened theatre was clearly welcomed. In a tabulation of all Social & Community activities analysed for this question, the theatre was the top scorer with 181 out of 807 responses.

When asked "*What are the three main purposes of your visits to Leatherhead?*" shopping and banking headed the list followed by meals and the theatre.

In a later question people were asked to give their levels of satisfaction with local community services and leisure. Entertainment was ranked as good or satisfactory by 55%. Only 13% ranked it as poor.

Looking to the future, when asked "*What could be improved to strengthen the local community?*" more entertainment/improved theatre came joint first with more community events/street entertainment. There is a strong link between the two which can be exploited.

Scattered in the feedback from the public meetings (Annex B1) and the numerous community consultation events (Annex D4) is further evidence of the theatre's standing in the minds of participants. It was recognised that, unlike Dorking Halls, the Leatherhead Theatre receives no grant from the Council or any other public funding source.

N2.3 Suggested Improvements

1. The generally held view is that the theatre needs more effective publicity for its shows, films and other events. The promotional reach needs to be out to the villages to appeal to those who otherwise rarely visit Leatherhead for shopping or other reasons. In town, a dedicated poster display cabinet in the Swan Centre and the High Street would catch attention.

2. Without giving many examples, some respondents see the opportunity for a wider range of activities to take place in its various facilities. Mums with toddlers and young children would like rainy/winter day activities and others young staggers drama experience.

3. Responses to Economy questions revealed demand for more conference and meeting facilities in the area. The theatre has an ideal auditorium, with cinema projection facilities, for up to 500 people. The Green Room can hold up to 100 people. As used at the Leatherhead Tomorrow launch in February 2005, the Mezzanine Floor provides a good display area. The on-site catering is not suitable. However, brought in buffet meals from proven good quality local suppliers could be the answer.

In Transport and Access responses, there was a demand for evening and Sunday bus services to and from the town. These are required for the growing activities at the theatre, pubs, restaurants and the institute. A case should be made to the bus companies, at least to test the demand.

4. The theatre fly tower was nominated as one of the main eyesores in the town. The prominent discoloured concrete tower, topped with telecommunications equipment, can be seen from many points in and around the town. With a little imagination the tower could be cleaned, treated in a neutral, softening colour and if the roof structures allow, the equipment could be screened by planters.



5. In parallel with the Leatherhead Tomorrow investigations, the theatre management initiated a project to explore how to improve the area outside the entrance in Church Street. It is currently an unattractive mixture of retaining walls for trees, old wooden benches, cycle racks, a yellow salt box, a litter bin which obstructs a passage between the benches and an ugly metal road barrier from which the paint is peeling. The idea is to create an open square as a focal point where people can easily move and socialise; where open air eating tables, chairs and awnings can be placed when the weather permits and a variety of entertainment events can be staged. This project is fully supported as it will not only facilitate appropriate better access to the theatre but also bring more people into this neglected area of the town adjacent to the High Street.

A combination of these improvements will contribute significantly to achieving one of the eight objectives for the town which aim to deliver the Vision for the Leatherhead of tomorrow. This objective is ***"To develop Leatherhead as the leisure, recreational, sport and entertainment centre for the northern Mole Valley."***