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Midhurst Town Centre Vision 2008 - 2011



Produced by Economic Development Service
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What	How	When
Manage the Vision process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • establish a Midhurst Vision Steering Group • establish sub groups to deliver the projects • produce and monitor the Midhurst Vision • develop community contacts to further feed into the Midhurst Vision • work closely with local partnerships 	Complete Complete 2008 2010 2009
Develop necessary policies and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop a planning framework that supports improvements to the town while respecting its heritage • develop a traffic strategy • develop a strategy that covers both on and off street parking • work in partnership with Midhurst Tourism Partnership to develop tourism strategy • look into best practice / comparative studies with other rural towns 	2009 2010 2010 2009 2009
Improve the management of the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • investigate the possibility of employing a Rural Towns Co-ordinator • work with landlords and agents to improve the retail mix • improve the co-operation between County, District & Town Councils and other partnerships and groups within the town 	2008 2009 2009 and ongoing





Midhurst Town Centre Vision 2008-2011

Background

Like many other rural market towns throughout the UK, Midhurst is affected by social and economic change. Significantly it is the change in retail behaviour, new forms of retail and different consumer expectations, which reflect most on a town's character and prosperity. In addition, society is more mobile than it was fifty years ago, so today a small rural town like Midhurst will be in competition with neighbouring towns instead of being able to co-exist happily as it may have done in the past. This is certainly the case with Midhurst, given its proximity to Chichester, Petersfield, Haslemere and Guildford. A Midhurst Town Centre Improvement Study ("the Midhurst Study") was commissioned in October 2007 which provided the means to allow

Midhurst to address these issues, by engaging the wider community and to articulate their views and ideas.

Following the publication of the Midhurst Study, public meetings were held with residents,

the business community and pupils of Midhurst Grammar School. A Steering Group was established, consisting of 22 representatives from the community including Midhurst Town Council, Chichester District Council, West Sussex County Council, Midhurst Chamber of Commerce, Midhurst Community Partnership, Midhurst Society and Midhurst Economic Partnership. It has been the job of this Steering Group to take the ideas and formulate them into this Vision Document.

Midhurst Town Centre Vision

This document outlines a vision for Midhurst Town Centre and details the three year action plan to regenerate and improve the area. Having consulted widely on this document, we believe it truly represents the aspirations of the local community. The Steering Group will continue to review and monitor the work within the Vision. The projects have been broken down into 4 categories which are:

- Creating a Sense of Place
- Supporting a Vibrant Retail Economy
- Supporting all Businesses
- Co-ordinated Management

The Steering Group has established four sub groups to develop and deliver the projects for each category and though representatives from the Steering Group sit on these, the membership is from the wider community.



Co-ordinated Management

The administration of any town like Midhurst is complex with a Town, District and County Council each with their own roles and responsibilities. There are also several partnerships such as Midhurst Community Partnership, Midhurst Tourism Partnership and Midhurst Economic Partnership plus other organisations including the Midhurst Town Trust, the Midhurst Society and Midhurst Chamber of Commerce. All want Midhurst to be a safe, prosperous

town and a good place to live and work. But in any complex structure, good communication and open co-operation is essential. One of the most pressing outcomes of this Vision will be to establish clear and effective lines of communication and an agreed action plan. Beyond that, it will then be down to establishing a series of tactical and strategic measures to move the town forward.



Creating a Sense of Place

Every town has a unique character. Midhurst has been shaped by its trading activities over the centuries. Originally a Saxon manor with a market that served the surrounding agricultural settlements, it developed in medieval times into a prosperous trading centre. The lure of low-rental burgage plots on which to build houses and promises of citizenship encouraged country folk to move into the town. They could hire stalls in the market until, with increasing prosperity, they turned these into more permanent shops. At first, cottages clustered around the market and then spread along the lane to the west and up the hill past the church, but the Old Town preserved its identity.

Midhurst became a place of pilgrimage when the Knights Hospitaller built a chapel to the recently martyred St Thomas A'Beckett; trade was further increased by the town's straddle of the routes to the shrines of St Richard of Chichester and St Swithun at

Winchester. In the 1200s, the lords of the manor moved from Ford, near Arundel, to a new house on the Easebourne bank of the River Rother. This was rebuilt as the Tudor nobleman's mansion of Cowdray and acted as a magnet drawing trade into what is now North Street. Midhurst became, as it is today, a two-centre shopping town. It enjoyed prosperity in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the 21st attracts visitors to its timber-framed Tudor houses, its Georgian architecture and the decayed splendours of Cowdray.

A great opportunity exists for Midhurst to use this rich heritage and its wonderful buildings to encourage visitors to enjoy the old town with a new experience. The hard part is respecting the old and yet still encourage an attractive, modern interpretation. Getting this right will go a long way to giving Midhurst a successful future.

What	How	When
Implement business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide business support through Business Link Clinics promote business support opportunities to the wider commercial community in Midhurst establish a Midhurst Industrial Estate Forum 	2008 2009 2009
Promote Midhurst Town's industrial/commercial offering to the wider community and visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve signage on Midhurst's industrial estates develop stronger links between the commercial and retail sector in Midhurst via the Midhurst Chamber of Commerce explore the potential for a 'Business 2 Business' trade magazine 	2009-10 2009 2009
Increase scope of industrial units/office space to attract new businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with agents and landlords to improve the scope of commercial premises in Midhurst improve general appearance of industrial and office premises in Midhurst review planning policies 	2009 2009-10 2009
Develop a niche for Midhurst's commercial sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify Midhurst's employment needs identify and promote/maximise sector development opportunities develop an appropriate inward investment programme 	2009 2009 2010
Build stronger links with local schools and colleges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the Education Business Partnership to develop a work experience programme with local schools and colleges encourage the participation of local businesses in the Young Enterprise programme develop awareness of local businesses with tours of industrial estates support teachers with industry links 	2009 2009-10 2009 2009



What	How	When
Create an identity for the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop existing audit of cultural/heritage assets and organisations investigate the use of banners on lampposts develop gateways - at key entry points: North, South and West developing a café culture develop identity of Old Town as historic shopping centre 	2009 2008-9 2009 2010 2009-11
Improve the landscape of the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make improvements to the carriageway and footway surfaces improved street furniture, especially seating, bins and bike racks softening North Street and Old Town with planting improve the maintenance of common areas by regular weeding and litter picking such as outside the shops clean up South Pond and keep tidy 	2011 2011 2009-11 2009 2009
Improve the town's way finding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the town's signage for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians develop new/existing heritage trail and interpretation develop walking and cycling routes explore alternatives to A-boards in the town 	2010 2009 2010 2009

Supporting all Businesses

When trying to improve a town, it is easy to focus on the centre only and forget that all its businesses have a part to play in improving an area. The more prosperous its businesses become, the more

employees and residents can spend in the shops. The better its business parks are, the greater opportunity for inward investment and the creation of new jobs.





Supporting a Vibrant Retail Economy

Like many market towns Midhurst has seen its retail economy struggle against larger settlements such as Chichester and Guildford. With the growth of car usage, these are easy journeys to be made. A report carried out by CACI in 2007 showed that 75% of the town's trade came from local residents and that this is predominately for 'top up' shopping. Because most people are unable to purchase some of the goods or quality they want, 95.4% also have to shop elsewhere, 34% going to Guilford, 15% to Chichester and 13% to Petersfield. In fact, 1.1% go as far as Southampton.

With the growth of environmental concerns, the opportunity to provide goods and services at a local level has never been better. The increase in vacant premises and decline in the quality of a few shop

fronts have had a negative impact on Midhurst, though generally the majority of traders, including the nationals present in the town, have respected the style of premises they occupy and opted for appropriate shop fronts.

Though Midhurst has seen its market decline, other towns such as Ludlow have used markets and local food to great effect, attracting residents from the hinterland, locals and visitors.

The challenge is to lift Midhurst to become a market town that more effectively services its hinterland by improving the quality of its retail offer and thereby also increases its retail spend.

What	How	When
Improve Shop Appearances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a programme to support the renovation of shopfronts with possible match funding or other financial incentives establish quality / standards manual renovate and redecorate to minimum standards develop a Business and Community Hub at Rosemary's Parlour, North Street 	2009 2009 2009 2009
Develop local retail events programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> farmers market continental market other themed markets carnivals/festivals linked with Cowdray (explore idea of 'Youth Festival') open air theatre 	2009 2009 2010 2010 2011
Address issue of vacant premises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to work with landlords and agents to develop an inward investment package utilise the inward investment database review planning policies consider the use of compulsory purchase orders where appropriate 	2008-9 2009 2009 2009
Implement business support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide business support through Business Link Clinics implement direct retail skills training develop programme of workshops for retailers e.g. customer service skills/merchandising 	2008 2009 2009
Promote Midhurst as a retail destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce a retail directory map identifying shops extend the Cowdray Ruins voucher scheme develop closer links with Cowdray Ruins investigate a loyalty card scheme mail retail promotions to residents and commercial units develop a radio advertising campaign 	2009 2009 2009 2009 2009 2010 2010