

Mature Stratford Strawman

Objective

To represent the views of mature Stratford residents, in general those over 50, in relation to:

- Environment: What surroundings do we want to live in
- Leisure facilities: How should we be able to enjoy and educate ourselves in the locality
- Ageing facilities: What facilities should be available to us as we become less able
- Our resource: What can we do for Stratford

Priorities

Each member of the working party named their three highest priorities and these are covered by the following:

Town Centre: Improvement in the environment through

- Protection of towns unique character
- Control of the type of retail outlets, restaurants, bars etc.
- Financial encouragement for new retail outlets
- Discipline through active policing across 24 hours
- Installing large planters in Bancroft gardens.

Transport: Reducing significantly the problems of congestion, car parking, and availability of public and elderly support transport through:

- Expanded Park and Ride facilities;
- Priority parking for residents
- Integrated transportation systems to cover community needs, including the elderly, which should embrace both the public and voluntary sectors, over expanded hours each day

Elderly activities: Improved facilities for the elderly through

- Lower cost leisure and exercise facilities
- More support activities for the aged
- Expansion of VASA role to encourage more volunteers

Arts: Diversification of Arts availability in the town through

- Changing the role of the Courtyard Theatre to cater for performance art in general such as ballet, opera, orchestral, London Shows and Pop Concerts
- The institution of an Art gallery

Hospital: Raising it's status to that of a "cottage" hospital including

- A 24 hour A&E department
- Recovery wards

Housing: Appropriate and affordable housing across all age ranges with facilities for the elderly to include:

- Senior citizen villages with hairdressers, shop, etc. on site
- More bungalows

Mature Stratford Lifestyle SWOT Analysis

<p>STRENGTHS Shakespeare theatres and history including Holy Trinity Church.* River Avon and open spaces around theatre.* Separate geographically from major conurbations, which assists in it being a “family town” and having a pleasant environment and walks in nearby countryside.* Town centre buildings Range of restaurants and hotels Shopping requirements largely met by local retail facilities Availability of societies for leisure activities* Traditional markets, mops and appropriate busking</p>	<p>OPPORTUNITIES Use of Courtyard Theatre post 2012.* Appropriate development of Bell Court Production of Neighbourhood Plan to ensure development in line with wishes of inhabitants Development of nature areas and walks around Stratford* Use of the Civic Hall * Building of old people facilities to allow as much independence as possible* Redevelopment of the town centre together with pedestrianisation.* Reintroduction of the Cottage Hospital system with more local facilities* Encouragement for more local business and retail opportunities</p>
<p>WEAKNESSES Transport congestion Lack of police presence * Facilities for young Control of drunken behavior, litter and noise.* Number of empty shops in the town centre as independent retailers close down.* Lack of local co-ordinated approach and democratic control over development of Stratford. Insufficient marketing of and information locally about Stratford, particularly non-Shakespeare attractions. Over dependence on Shakespeare for mass cultural entertainment* Cost of parking in the town centre* Lack of public transport* Lack of transport to hospitals and health related appointments* No hospital facilities with 24 hr cover*</p>	<p>THREATS Over development of housing in the town, particularly without suitable infrastructure Development to encourage day trippers rather than cultural tourists* Discouragement of tourists because of, and locals from town centre for fear of, aggressive behaviour* Outside centre large retailers killing off independent shops and the vitality of the town centre.* Growth in volume of the older community, without their requirements being met. * Lack of opportunity for even young Stratfordians to remain in the town in terms of jobs and affordable housing Lack of finance to meet required developments for young and old.*</p>

* Proposed as relevant to Mature Stratford Life Style

Environment

Shopping

Analysis.

Stratford has traditionally been a good centre for shopping, catering for both tourists and locals. It has a good mix of national chains and independent retailers with a large variety of coffee shops and restaurants available. However, the development of the Maybird Centre, with three hours free parking, which has attracted the movement of many national chains from the town centre or at least additional outlets, together with relatively high parking costs, high overheads for retailers and the growth of internet selling, has led to many outlets being empty in the Town Centre and a decay in the attraction of this area for visitors. While the current credit squeeze may account for some of the problem, the overall trend in shopping habits will ensure that this problem does not go away.

Requirements

Actions should be taken to make it more financially attractive for retailers to operate in the town centre, and to encourage visitors to shop in the town centre in terms of cost, facility and environment. (please also see separate sections on car parking, and general environment)

Solution.

To stimulate *town centre shopping*,

- further out-of-town retail developments will not be allowed.
- shops will largely consist of a mix of small independent retailers, which attract high spending visitors, together with national chains.
- independent retailers will be encouraged by financial incentives including receipt of service charge concessions, reduced business rates, and the Town Trust introducing an escalating scale for new independent retailers over their first three years before the rent reaches it's full rate.
- conversion of some retail outlets into residential properties should be encouraged because of the trend in retail towards supermarkets and purchase on the web. This would also improve security and lead to a safer environment in the town centre

Pedestrianisation of the core town centre area will proceed, featuring

- delivery vehicle access at early/late off peak times only.
- reinstated traditional shop fronts
- communal areas having a variety of interesting architectural features plus floral displays and natural greenery.

- decluttering of the various signs and instructions that litter every lamppost. Restricted street furniture only to provide essential public information such as street and facility directions
- special parking arrangements must be made to ensure that the disabled and elderly can access the pedestrian area with minimal travel distance.

Benefits

Shops of the right character will be attracted to Stratford to operate in a relatively traffic free uncluttered environment which is safe and pleasing for shoppers and visitors to enjoy the environs of the town centre. This will increase trade and revenue to the retailers, councils and Town Trust.

Financial effect: The cost of such measures can be calculated but the quantification of benefits will be tenuous.

Car Parking

Analysis.

The cost of parking in the town centre inhibits both locals and visitors from shopping there, particularly when the Maybird Centre has free parking for three hours. In addition, insufficient Park and Ride sites and adequate marketing for the current facility force visitors to use car parks in the town contributing to the serious congestion on the Birmingham Road and traffic approaching the river from a southerly direction.

Requirements.

Sufficient parking has to be developed on the edges of Stratford so that visitors do not need to bring their vehicles into the Town centre while local inhabitants have the ability to shop for a reasonable amount of time at a cost which does not make the Maybird Centre so attractive from this viewpoint.

Solution

Park and Ride

A very reasonably priced Park and Ride minibus collection service will operate from points around the edge of Stratford on all main roads into the town.

A shoppers shuttle running on a circular route around the perimeter of the core centre area will largely feed people to and from the rail/ bus station and the Park and Ride collection points.

The major Park and Ride facilities should remain open later at night to cater for theatre going visitors.

Residents Parking Priority. Other parking areas around the town centre, including the Maybird Centre, will be available free for two hours to all people living within approximately 5 miles radius around the centre of Stratford, who obtain a specific identity badge.

After two hours a significant charge will apply before 6 00 p.m. on all days.

Visitors from outside this area will incur significant charges in the town centre car parks before 6.00 p.m. whatever the duration of parking

Benefits.

This will allow locals to shop in the town centre free for a reasonable amount of time, removing the car parking advantage of the Maybird Centre. Together with improved Park and Ride facilities for visitors this will encourage more business into the town centre and relieve traffic congestion centrally. Visitors who wish to pay for the privilege of parking in the town centre will help to defray the loss of revenue from parking charges. Given a frequent enough Park and Ride service, then this may reduce on street parking by people working in Stratford

Financial Effect: The core costs or savings could be calculated on certain assumptions but the improvement in trade is tenuous.

General Atmosphere

Analysis.

Stratford is a traditional market town which has had a tranquil, cultural but holiday atmosphere in which tourists and local inhabitants can mingle around the River Avon and it's surroundings, Shakespeare and the Town Centre. It has many outdoor traditional activities such as the Mop, outdoor fairs, Morris dancing, Christmas lights and busking which make the centre a more lively and interesting place to visit. In recent years, however, there has been an increase in unacceptable public behaviour and general increase in noise, including buskers, particularly given the basic absence of police presence on the beat in Stratford which is considered a safe low crime area. This has been assisted by developments which have encouraged day trippers rather than cultural tourists and by the greater availability of alcohol. This has been a discouragement to tourists and some locals even avoid the town centre for fear of aggressive behaviour at night.

Requirements.

Actions being taken to return as nearly to the atmosphere which prevailed as possible, together with ensuring future developments are attractive to tourists and locals and deter visitors who are liable to behave in an unacceptable fashion.

Solution.

Zero tolerance of public drinking, aggressive begging, excessive noise, improper parking, cycling on pavements, skateboarding in inappropriate areas and all forms of antisocial behaviour will be administered by a hands on police presence. Local bobbies will again be responsible and apply the law for all forms of criminal and anti-social behaviour and there will be a text number facility to notify police of urgent requirement. Unacceptably loud busking will be terminated.

The local council will be permitted too have a budget to fund **extra police** to “walk the beat” in Stratford, these officers being under the control of the police authority but not transferable either outside the Inner Zone or to other types of police work.

All public areas will be subjected to the **highest possible standards** of safety, cleanliness and good order. Unofficial sign posting will lead to prosecution.

All possible stages in the **minimisation of litter** will be applied:

- Minimum packaging in retail outlets
- Sufficient waste bins in public places emptied at required frequency, including daily as necessary
- The establishments selling fast foods to be solely responsible for cleaning the areas effected by litter generated by their outlet.
- Weekly emptying of all category of domestic and commercial bins
- Community Service offenders priority to pick up litter
- A local refuse tip to facilitate inhabitants disposing of their rubbish without recourse to fly tipping

Noise will be minimised through

- One day each week being designated when lawn mowers, hedge cutters, drills, etc. should not be used
- Existing law being applied to individual vehicle noise

Drink related problems will be minimised through

- Expanded alcohol free zones
- Returning to old drinking hour laws

Initiatives at the fringe of pornography, i.e. lap dancing, will not be approved.

Nightlife should be monitored more closely by the Police at all times.

Limits will be set on the **number of charity shops, fast food outlets, and wine bars.**

No more development of **cheap hotel accommodation** at the expense of existing traditional long standing hotels in the town centre

Benefits.

A return to the atmosphere for which Stratford is traditionally famous, when young and old can go into the town centre without fear. The town centre will be much more attractive for locals and tourists to visit.

This would increase high spending visitor numbers to the town significantly and deter those who are likely to despoil the centre of town..

There are costs involved in areas such as extra policing and waste collection and savings in clean up and “riot” police, but the benefits will again be extremely difficult to quantify.

Public Transport Analysis.

There is insufficient public transport in terms of bus and rail in Stratford (particularly for the aged: See Elderly and Disabled). Despite this bus capacity is very low due to the size of buses, the routes and frequency of movement, and the lack of facilities in the town centre for people waiting for buses.

The service from the central railway in Stratford is inadequate to most major destinations in terms of frequency and hours coverage, with people often not being able to return to Stratford late at night from Birmingham and London.

The Community Transport Group is addressing these issues and needs the support of local inhabitants

Requirements.

Improved services with minimal increases in costs and maximum convenience.

Solution

Bus. Full size local buses should be restricted to routes where passenger volumes require. Buses operating to/ and from park and ride facilities and the town centre should have interim stops for passengers

Fleets of minibuses, part public part private, part fixed route part route on request, part employed drivers part voluntary, should be introduced to give adequate services, particularly for the young and old age groups.

Prices for bus services should be reassessed to maximise income without restricting passenger numbers. There is a significant funding requirement for public transport in this area to subsidise services, particularly for the elderly.

Train. Train services should be improved to include travel to nearby major centres like Coventry and Solihull, faster and later trains to Birmingham, and faster ,more frequent and later trains to and from London.

Direct rail access to Stratford-upon-Avon from Oxford/Thames Valley, Cheltenham and the south-west should be achieved by reopening the line southwards without affecting the current use of the Greenway. Independent of the Stratford Parkway station situation, the existing station must remain in the middle of Stratford.

Waiting facilities for passengers of both bus and rail should be covered and offer basic requirements such as seats, toilets and refreshments.

Bus and rail timing should be *co-ordinated* as much as possible, with the ideal of a joint bus/rail station.

Benefits

The cost of the improved bus service can be costed and so can the increase in rail service. The benefits will again be difficult to quantify in terms of increased spend, etc. in Stratford.

Ageing Stratford

Health Related Issues

Analysis

There are currently 4 Medical Centres and a variety of Dentists, Opticians, Foot Clinics and other private health care clinics in Stratford. Although they appear to be reasonably adequate at the present time, the growing older population will soon bear pressure on existing resources. This will also apply to Stratford Hospital and Shakespeare Hospice. An assortment of self-help support groups i.e. Parkinson Disease, Alzheimers, Warwickshire Association for the Blind, Stroke Group etc., and Voluntary Organisations in fields of mental health, Springfield and Learning disabilities, Mencap, Age UK. Health related facilities are mainly situated North of the River.

There are opportunities for people to have their say and bring up issues of their choice, (i.e. SCAN and Public health forums) but such organisations need more authority.

There is a major concern over the provision of home care. This is the largest element of the Warwickshire County Council budget and is currently being reduced which results in limited time spent on the provision of home care and targeting of the most critical cases only. The tendency is towards full cost recovery with services being contracted out. The efficiency of this process needs to be examined.

There is room for organisations such as “Home Instead”, which provide tailored services to individuals on a commercial basis.

There is concern that Stratford Hospital may be under threat as a result of a funding crisis, Coventry and Warwick hospitals were developed under PFI contracts which have imposed strain on their finances. We should strongly object to the sale of Stratford Hospital land in order to enable their finances to be restored.

Requirements

All stages of ageing from 50 plus must be taken into consideration when looking at health requirements. Policies must be directed towards allowing people to live as independently

as possible and make facilities available as locally as possible when health related issues arise.

Solution

The following provisions need to be implemented:

- **Medical Centre** and clinics on the South side of Stratford.
- **Stratford Hospital** to be upgraded to “cottage hospital” status and have a more inclusive remit for local needs. It will operate an A & E department on 24 hour coverage and a Day Centre plus a full time ward for people to convalesce from operations, especially older people who live alone. It will act as the co-ordination point for all patients in the Stratford area in relation to both outpatients and movement onwards as necessary to other hospitals. The local populace will see it as their hospital.
- It will be necessary to “engage” Clinical Commissioning Groups, Public Health (Health and Wellbeing Board), South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust, in the awareness of developing Stratford Hospital to meet growing needs of the older people and Stratford Community generally for having more upgraded clinics such as Eye, Hearing and Dermatology, locally. This will alleviate the the need to travel for people who have no access to cars and difficulty in attending appointments.

An Assessment Clinic should be provided to assist in looking to diagnose health issues sufficiently early, in order to pre-empt the need for hospitalisation.

- **Planning Issues:** All proposed developments of Sheltered Housing and Nursing Homes must be monitored in order to avoid attracting elderly people from out of the Stratford area. This may be considered controversial. However this sector of the population require a higher degree of caring and health delivery which cannot be adequately funded by the National Health Service. Priority should be given to the provision of these types of facility for the residents of Stratford upon Avon.
- **Funding Issues:** It is currently unclear under the Government’s new health organization, who will fund the PCT element of the grants to VASA for the provision of transport services for the elderly, to enable them to attend hospital. Clarification must be sought that funding will be provided under the banner of the WCC who have already taken Health and Wellbeing services under their wing.
- Adequate **Home Care** choice to suit the needs of individuals at affordable cost.
- More **Healthy Eating** choices for older people who attend lunch clubs or meals on wheels. Indeed, more facilities like Luncheon Clubs are required, to enable people to have a regular diet and socialise. “Cook and eat” sessions and “veg boxes” should be introduced as carried out currently in other areas of the county

- More *Healthy Living* opportunities including outside led exercise use of Gyms and Leisure Centres in off peak hours at affordable cost, and free swim sessions for over 60's. In addition, there should be an increase in SDC health walks and Age UK Active Ageing sessions in the town, more people trained in 'Extend' chair based exercise delivery and access to 'green gyms' in strategic parts of the town, together with GPs being encouraged to increase referrals to exercise activities.
- Encouragement for more *Landshare gardening schemes* and shared allotments
- More essential *Support and Social Groups* to continue to meet the needs for leisure, advice, information and companionship.
- *Hospice* facilities for overnight care.
- A greater focus on *Dementia care*.
- Facilitating access to medical services in *rural areas*

In order to facilitate these objectives, local bodies should.

- Lobby and make sure the NHS Cluster Commissioning Groups are aware of the essential needs of our Town to ensure the health facilities we require are available.
- Look at alternative funding like a Stratford Lottery campaign or similar fund raising activities
- Ideally encourage senior citizens to organise and assist in ensuring that the older live as fulfilling and worry free existence as possible. However there is a caveat that people may not be available, since the working age has increased and also grandparents often have a greater role to play.

Benefits

Gives more options to older people if facilities are available to meet their health requirements and a better quality of life.

Finance is obviously involved in hospital and other facilities required, but there will be considerable savings in keeping a maximum number of citizens out of nursing homes and as much work as possible will be carried out by volunteers.

Transport

Analysis

We are fortunate to have Community Transport in town with

- Community Links, a door to door fully accessible service for people stuck for transport to go shopping and to social activities.
- A Volunteer Transport Scheme to help people with a genuine need to attend essential appointments at Hospitals, Doctors clinics and visit close family in Hospitals.

- Group Transport, Back & Forth and Age UK which transports older groups on outings and to lunch clubs.

However, both funding for the above type schemes and general bus services are being reduced.

Stratford District Council have set up the Community Transport Group which is a forum involving all parties with transports interests. The objective is:

- To assess future funding for Community Links. There is a potential for linking up with Redditch “Dial a Ride” since Community Links is more heavily used in the west side of the District.
- To investigate District transport in the wider context. Warwickshire County Council will be involved in the analysis.

The LSP have decided to prioritise transport and will report by Sept 2012.

Consideration needs to be given to Volunteer schemes. An example is “Back and Forth” who provide mainly group transport within Community Links. This is a charged service, with volunteer drivers. Age UK also provide a volunteer transport service. One recognised limitation with employing volunteers, is that they may not be prepared to commit to regular timed services on an ongoing basis. The potential use of volunteers is therefore limited.

Existing transport facilities cater for wheelchairs although there are insurance issues with VASA operations. However these are overcome by using drivers to assist passengers into and out of cars. Wheelchairs are provided at either end of the journey.

Requirements

More accessible transport for all older citizens, especially for people in wheelchairs and disabled and adequate volunteers to maintain the current Community Transport Schemes as a cost effective caring service

Solution

- Integrate the fleet of minibus operation between general public and elderly as much as possible (See Transport section in Environment)
- Ensure vehicles specifically for old people are no larger than up to 16 people carrying capacity for cost effectiveness.

- Transport must be made available to the elderly who cannot use other means of transport to access medical, shopping and leisure activities so that they can live as independent a life as possible
- Introduce partnership working and co-operation of Community Transport Schemes under the supervision of the Mutual Support group, to ensure maximum utilization of such vehicles (possibly working with younger people groups).
- Provision must be made in the town centre for all disabled blue badge holders to enable maximum ability to access the pedestrianised centre of the town.

Benefits

- Alleviate the concerns of mature people on how to get to essential appointments, ie Hospitals etc., and their shopping.
- Give independence of not having to rely on family and friends and a better quality of life
- Enable older citizens to join social groups or lunch clubs of their choice.

Finance is obviously involved in relation to transport and drivers. The actual cost will depend on how much of the driving is voluntary and, if implemented, the saving on buses being substituted by mini-buses.

Housing

Analysis

There are mature people living in houses that are too large for their requirements who may wish to downsize. Regarding all categories of housing, occupants must not be made to feel obliged to downsize. However many people are forced to downsize in order to pay for the care that they need. Regarding the occupants of Social housing, the Home Choice Plan website enables people to elect to downsize and provides incentives to those who do.

Stratford currently has a number of sheltered housing and nursing homes available but not enough variety to meet older peoples' needs and enable a maximum number of citizens to remain independent for as long as possible. Current facilities sometimes do not give sufficient security to make residents feel safe in terms of lighting and patrols.

Requirement

A range of housing type so that individuals from all 50 plus age groups can have the option of housing type whether down sizing or requiring a level of care and security as they become less able.

Solution

To have available varying types of housing to suit individual needs and to cater for the maximum number of old people remaining independent as long as possible as follows:

- A range of bungalow type with garden,
- Sheltered housing with supervision to ensure health and security needs. These would include the building of 'Smart' homes that can easily be adapted to address the meet the changing needs of individuals/families.
- Extra care sheltered housing where people can live during the rest of their life and 'buy-in' in care services (i.e. Briar Croft- Orbit)
- Nursing Homes for people who are not capable of living an independent life to any extent.

To design all new sheltered housing type developments with adequate lighting and ensure frequent enough patrols to make residents feel safe and secure

To enable this to occur:

- Developers of private and social housing must work together with local government planning departments to achieve a satisfactory conclusion.
- 'Middle-aged' residents to be encouraged to consider their long term housing needs and begin to plan at an earlier stage
- Direct support to be given from organisations such as 'First Stop' to inform and advise on the range of housing options and to minimise the 'trauma' of moving house.
- Opportunities for 'garden share' to be given, where properties are suitable but the outside space is too large to manage- to link in with transition Stratford in this respect. An example of this approach is operating in Stratford with the necessary safeguards in place.

Benefits

A variety of housing to suit individual needs leaving more houses to become available for younger families.

Older people being able to live an independent life in housing of their choice.

The correct mix of housing will utilise available capacity to the full

There could be a considerable financial saving related to minimising the number of citizens with full time care in nursing homes

Leisure

Analysis

Stratford's Leisure Centre, its vast range of societies and clubs, together with village and church halls, provide residents with opportunities to participate in a large variety of recreational pursuits from cricket to zumba, bowls to rowing , bridge to quiz nights and swimming to golf. Yet there are no public tennis courts in Stratford.

Lifelong education and learning is available through organizations such as U3A and Silver surfer. However, the high cost of night school available classes restricts mature people's opportunities to widen the scope of their knowledge and skills.

Residents and visitors alike can take advantage of the town's open spaces such as the Bancroft Gardens, the Recreation Ground, Shottery Fields and the Welcombe Hills by walking, nature watching, playing ball games, etc. Over recent years the river side has been developed into a site for more commercially driven activities such as impromptu performances, food fairs, the river festival, etc.

There are a significant number of public footpaths and cycle ways in and around Stratford, but the rural footpaths are not well maintained and the cycle ways are often inappropriate and/or random in their design.

Requirements

If we are to improve upon these facilities questions surrounding accessibility, cost, maintenance and over commercialisation must be addressed.

Each area of the town should have the basic requirements for having leisure time activities, catering for all ages, centred around a village hall/ community centre.

Solution

Village halls/community centres must be recognized as playing a vital role in producing cohesion within communities. They must be given enough resources if they are to continue to be the focal point of specific areas within Stratford and its surrounding villages. Each local area should have:

An infant school, general post office, pub and social centre built around the village hall/community centre.

Outdoor facilities for exercise, including a hard standing area for basketball, skateboarding etc..

An allotment

Adequate seating and rubbish bins

A youth centre

Stratford Leisure Centre must ensure that it provides activities to suit the needs of all the community, rather than concentrating their attention upon families and the young. Every effort must be made to encourage our aging population to be fit and healthy as possible. Public tennis courts and a swimming pool should be available for all.

Cheaper part-time college courses should be implemented for older people. Intergenerational activities should be encouraged in order to facilitate the sharing and exchange of skills.

The Avon and its surroundings must be not be allowed to become over commercialised. A cap should be placed on the number of organised activities taking place there each year. Priority should be given to preserving the idyllic quality of this area and protecting its wildlife.

The Bancroft Gardens is a key site. If it is to be displayed to the best effect, some or all of the following should be implemented:

The introduction of large planters.

A mix of flower borders, shrubberies and a variety of indigenous trees. These would be selected to provide natural colour throughout the year

Landscaping to create different ground levels which provide various levels of light and shade as well as highlighting existing and additional architectural and ornamental features.

Sponsorship and dedication for areas of gardens or trees etc to be encouraged.

Apart from the creation of areas of protected biodiversity, the Recreation Ground area will be retained as an open space without further development.

Recreational fields, parks and gardens must be kept free from litter - more strategically placed litter bins would be helpful in this respect. Pathways must be maintained. To increase the number of leisure activities pursued within the town's recreation grounds and gardens furniture, such as permanent table tennis and chess/draughts tables and chairs, should be installed.

Decisions will be taken as to which open grass areas around the town should be natural and which "formal". Formal areas will have grass cut and cuttings removed on a regular basis. This will ensure a high standard of appearance and, where appropriate, their use for sports is practicable.

Nature reserves, which include attractive wooded areas, will be introduced around the outskirts of the Inner Zone and in the Outer Zone

Lucy's Mill Bridge will be replaced by a new bridge, in situ, which will allow crossing by wheelchair, push chair, cycle as well as by pedestrians.

Current public footpaths will be maintained to a high standard and clearly signposted.

Cycling will be encouraged through specific tracks which do not conflict with pedestrian facilities. The law will be applied to ensure pavements, particularly those without lights,

are not used by cyclists. The opportunity will be taken to join the Greenway and Tramway cycle tracks.

Benefits

Through the continuation of communal pastimes within village halls, development of Leisure Centre activities, improvement of our parks, gardens, and open spaces, and walking and cycling facilities, the health and well being of residents will be better served. This will cost significant sums of money but will improve both the town's environment and the health and pleasure of both Stratford's inhabitants and its visitors.

Expressive Arts

Analysis

Performing Arts

Stratford is rightly famous for being the home of the RSC, one of Britain's major Theatre companies with its international reputation. As well as the plays of Shakespeare and his contemporaries they also present new work from living artists. In order to break down barriers between professional and amateur performers the RSC not only run workshops in voice, movement and stagecraft but also provide Stratford's Amateur theatre groups with opportunities to perform upon their stages. However, the company's work and their theatres fulfill the needs of a relatively small and quite specific section of the theatre going public. Consequently, the majority of Stratford residents, many of whom find RST prices prohibitive, seek entertainment elsewhere.

Stratford offers a large choice of amateur performing arts activities at a local level. There are several theatre groups, at least one orchestra, a variety of bands together with choral, light operatic and Gilbert and Sullivan societies. There are also opportunities to participate in ballet, ballroom and line dance, and music classes. These activities take place in a variety of venues throughout the town and its districts.

The largest performance space available to the community, other than those belonging to the RSC, can be found at Stratford's Civic Centre. However, its facilities are woefully inadequate and outdated. The octagonal shaped auditorium is an inefficient use of the space available - the proscenium stage and wing space are tiny; there is no fly floor; the acoustics are poor; the backstage facilities are very limited and limiting; the lighting and seating are primitive by modern standards. In fact better performance spaces can be found in many large secondary schools. Consequently this space holds little attraction for either amateur or professional performers and is certainly not in keeping with a town so closely linked with the performing arts. The community deserves better.

Visual Arts

Stratford upon Avon, as home to the RSC and with its annual Literary, Music and Fringe Festivals is, arguably, the most important cultural centre in England outside London. Yet there is little awareness, or recognition, given to the important contribution the Visual Arts makes to our society. The Visual Arts shape our environment and can enrich our lives. Public Art in the form of monuments, sculpture gardens, and murals, etc plays an important role in creating the town's unique character.

The Escape: Community Art in Action have worked with some of the most vulnerable members of our community. Their many and varied projects have demonstrated how the Creative Arts can empower the individual and help promote health and wellbeing. Weekly workshops are held at their Shakespeare Street base whilst, in recent times, space for larger projects has been provided by a disused shop in Town Square.

There is very little low cost space and facilities available within the town to support the practices of independent artists and designers.

There are now two dedicated exhibition spaces, the Swan Room and the PACCAR Room, within the Royal Shakespeare theatre complex. Here the public are able to see work made by some of today's most interesting artists in response to Shakespeare and the work of the RSC. However, exhibition spaces available to the artists, designers and craftspeople, both amateur and professional, who thrive within the vicinity are far from adequate. The Gallery at the town's Leisure Centre, which featured displays of local artists work together with Arts council touring exhibitions, was disbanded several years ago with nothing to replace it. During school holidays Stratford's Art Societies are able to house their annual exhibitions within King Edward VI's school gymnasium. Restaurants and cafes do provide some space to exhibit Art work. One recent initiative is The Brazz Gallery at Stratford upon Avon College. Here students and local artists, whether established or emerging, have an opportunity to display a variety of 2D artwork - painting, textiles, drawing, prints, photography and mixed media - in the college's cafe. This venue is open from Monday to Friday in term time and by appointment with the artist on Saturday mornings and during half term holidays. Another recent initiative is Arter at BirthPlace Trust property Hall's Croft where local craftsmen have an outlet to sell their wares. A town of Stratford upon Avon's stature should have a Gallery designed specifically for the exhibition of local artists and designers work.

Requirements

The town needs an up to date Community Arts centre as a focal point for the Expressive Arts within the town.

A more suitable proscenium theatre would enable local theatre goers to see to broad range of high and popular entertainment by amateur and professional performers.

Visual Arts need to be given a higher profile within the town both in terms of production and exhibition.

Solution

The Civic Centre has become a shabby, uninviting and, consequently, under utilised resource within the Stratford upon Avon. The site requires substantial renovation/refurbishment in order for it to be transformed into a local Community Arts Centre.

This centre would become a hive of activity and would provide Stratford's residents with a space where they can be creative, socialise, and be entertained.

There would be a diverse programme of events during the day and in the evening which would appeal to a broad demographic.

Refurbishment of the Civic Centre's Grade II listed building

- The facade of the building would be renovated. Its colour scheme, signage and advertising hoardings would be designed to make the building the centre piece of the Rother Market area.
- The main ground floor areas would accommodate Art Gallery/ cafe and box office.
- This would provide exhibition space for the work of local artists, craftspeople and designers.
- Two dimensional work would be displayed on the walls of the cafe.
- There would be sculpture and ceramics in the cafe garden
- Display cabinets in the box office area would feature smaller scale craftwork such as textiles jewelry and silver smithing.

Redevelopment of the Civic Centre's theatre

- The design of the new auditorium would be both practical and versatile.
- The Proscenium theatre would feature a stage considerably wider and deeper than the one presently in situ.
- There would be a sprung floor suitable for ballet and contemporary dance productions.
- Performers would have ease of access to both sides of the stage
- There would be sufficient wing space to accommodate performers, scenery and props.
- There would be a fly floor above the proscenium stage.
- The acting area could also be transformed into thrust or traverse stage or a theatre in the round.
- The stage lighting system installed would enable shows to be lit efficiently and effectively.
- Acoustics would be suitable for concerts, drama and musical productions.

- The auditorium would accommodate an audience of approximately 600 seated or 800 standing. (ie This would be larger than a studio theatre and would, therefore, be attractive to substantial number of productions/performers.)
- There would be retractable breachers seating so the space could be converted quickly and easily for performances.
- There would be a dock door of suitable size for the delivery of stage equipment/scenery.
- The design of the auditorium would also enable the space to be partitioned off into smaller units. This would enable more than one activity to take place at any one time.
- Dressing Rooms would be be large enough to accommodate the larger casts such as those for of musicals or opera.
- There would also be a workshop space which could be used for both theatre related work and large scale Community Art Projects
- Bar and refreshment facilities would cater for theatre audiences and diner dances/balls.

Programming

Performing Arts - The upgrading of the auditorium and the versatility of the new space would make the venue attractive to both amateur and professional performers. The programme of events would reflect the diverse tastes of the local residents and would include:-

- Drama, dance - classical and contemporary, opera, musical theatre
- Concerts - classical, popular music
- Stand up comedy
- Lectures on areas of local interest
- Cinema club showing Art house and classic cinema.
- Visual Arts
- Exhibitions of local artists work within the Art Gallery Cafe and its garden.
- Large scale Community Arts Projects - space and equipment to facilitate creative activity for Stratford residents of all ages, particularly the most vulnerable, such as those with learning difficulties, physical disabilities, mental health problems eg early onset Alzheimer's, etc.
- Community Arts projects would not be restricted to Visual Arts but would be interdisciplinary in their approach by combining art with creative writing, music, film etc.
- other events -
- Craft, book and vintage/antique fairs
- Social gatherings as tea dances, dinner dances and balls

The refurbished/redeveloped Civic Centre would also be rebranded and given a higher profile within the town. It would be the focal point of Expressive Arts in Stratford upon Avon and its annual Festivals of Art, Literature and Music.

Art within the District

Public art needs to be well maintained and lit effectively. Sculpture trails should be implemented around the town and information on them should be made readily available at the Tourist Information Centre, libraries etc

Complementary outdoor and marquee facilities should be available for appropriate forms of performing arts.

More large screen events would take place in Bancroft Gardens and Town Square

To encourage creativity in the young, and counter vandalism, there would be managed graffiti walls within the district.

To foster the talents of local artists owners of disused properties, whether commercial or domestic, would be encouraged to make these spaces available to artists at a peppercorn rent until redevelopment takes place.

Local schools would be encouraged to make their Art facilities, such as printing presses and kilns, assessable to local artists outside class time

Local businesses would be given the incentives to commission new Artworks from local practitioners.

A website devoted to all the Expressive Arts in Stratford upon Avon is needed so local residents are made fully aware of all the different activities that are taking place within the area.

Benefits

A relaunched Civic Centre, with its central location and accessibility, in terms of public transport and parking, would provide an excellent focal point for Artistic activity within Stratford upon Avon. It would add a further dimension to the social life and leisure facilities of Stratford. An Art Gallery Cafe would draw people into the building. The newly designed space would be more versatile and would be in use throughout the day and evening. This would be a more cost effective use of the site. Furthermore, it would raise the profile of the Rother Street market area. The consequent increase in footfall would prove beneficial to local shops and restaurants in this part of the town.

With greater support and recognition visual artists would no longer be marginalised. Instead, they would be encouraged to play an even greater role in shaping the local environment. Surely a more aesthetically pleasing environment is beneficial to both residents and visitors to the town.

Voluntary Work

Analysis

With the changes made recently by Government in relation to the retirement age, local businesses and other organisations will need to prepare for mature adults who are currently employed selecting to remain in work for longer. This may have positive outcomes in relation to retaining experience and knowledge but *may*, conversely, make succession planning more difficult and *could*, in some circumstances, exacerbate the current youth unemployment problem.

The 'Big Society' initiative introduced by the current Government encourages citizens of all ages to participate in voluntary roles within their local community. This initiative will hopefully encourage more volunteers locally.

There is much voluntary work carried out by Stratfordians, largely in the mature sector, in relation to societies of all descriptions and through VASA and SCAN particularly for the elderly. VASA has been the co-ordinating organisation for identifying, training, and co-ordinating voluntary work in Stratford for several decades. However, there is a need to review the means by which people reaching retirement age can be encouraged to give their services to the community. Also authorities often do not recognise the full scope within which the experience and knowledge of mature people gained in their professional lives can be used in assisting the community to run more efficiently and in some cases to save costs.

Several ideas have been considered but these may not be practical:

- The organization of work activities to be carried out for the unemployed, particularly 16-24 year olds. They will be responsible for keeping the town to the standard to which we aspire through gardening, painting, cleaning, slabbing, etc. It is difficult to envisage how this might work in practice. A more practical approach might be for older people to become involved in "Skills Exchange". This idea is being trialled by SCAN with local schools.
- A programme of care for older people, with the help of GP's, solicitors, etc could provide in-house support to all the town's pensioners in difficulty. This might be staffed by unemployed mature adults as well as volunteers. This would be problematic in that rigorous vetting procedures would need to be employed to ensure that recipients are protected. Administration would be difficult and expensive.
- All retiring inhabitants could be encouraged to carry out an initial 12month period to train/work with youngsters on community work and /or to assist with mutual support voluntary work. To carry this out, VASA would need to have access to inhabitants age and employment status, etc. In addition, continuation by the Government of unemployment pay for the voluntary work unemployed, despite a topping up to minimum wage arrangement paid for by the local community, would assist. There are many practical reasons why this might not work, not least of which would be social interaction. Also it cannot be assumed that people would have the necessary expertise. The Governments Apprenticeship scheme may be a more practical way of engaging with the young.

Requirements

Enabling more publicity and expanding the role of VASA as a central body for Stratford to co-ordinate voluntary activities and encourage particularly retired people to give of their time and experience to make Stratford a better place to live in and visit. This would largely bring together 'those who would otherwise not work' with 'work that would otherwise not be done' Recognition by all official bodies that retired people are a source of voluntary expertise that can be used to the benefit of the community.

Solution

Consideration should be given to expanding the role of VASA, in acting as a co-ordination and training organization for all voluntary work in Stratford and as a meeting-point for organizations and prospective new recruits, in the following ways.

- A raising in status of the fund raising section to obtain grants , bequests, collections etc.
- Retired volunteers using their professional expertise and knowledge of the locality to carry out consultancy projects for the local council, thus replacing much of the work currently satisfied by the employment of highly expensive outside consultants.
- Working with businesses to provide incentives for their employees to participate in voluntary work. This may require a significant effort in providing suitable “short term” tasks which employees can tackle. The most valuable contributions can be made on an ongoing basis which would fall outside the scope.
- Adoption of the “Time Bank” concept which is being trialled by Orbit and the Town Trust. This is bartering process whereby volunteers can exchange time to provide home care assistance on an availability basis. However significant assurance checks (such as CRB and multiple references) would be required to avoid fraud and minimise risk to the care recipients.

Benefits

For little extra cost, the potential voluntary sector could be utilized to a much greater extent to further the smooth running of the community.

The non-working section of the community can feel satisfaction that they are contributing in practical ways to the inhabitants and environment of the town

Life will be made more fulfilling for senior citizens as they become less able.

An increase in volunteers can provide opportunities for new development and activity within the town.

Local government costs can be reduced by utilizing retired peoples experience to replace high cost outside consultants.