

NAILSWORTH TOWN ACTION PLAN

2015 to 2020



**Nailsworth Town Council
December 2014**

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Nailsworth Town Council

Nailsworth Action Plan 2015 to 2020.

1. Introduction.

1.1. It is good practice for a community to have an up to date plan that guides the work and investment of the Town Council and its relationships with principal councils (Stroud District Council and Gloucestershire County Council), the police and health authorities.

1.2. Much has been achieved in implementing the previous plan (see annex 1) and new projects have inevitably emerged and been delivered in response to changing circumstances (see annex 2).

1.3. Nailsworth is a thriving community in which people can live and work, as evidenced by its recent national recognition. Whilst the steep wooded valley sides limit opportunities for new development, there are improvements that can be made through upgrading the street environment, providing affordable housing, enhancing recreational facilities and creating an arts venue.

1.4. Through consultation, a wide range of ideas have been proposed. These are set out in annexes 3 and 4.

1.5. Themes for improving the town, together with proposals, are set out in annex 5.

2. Background.

2.1. The current Nailsworth Action Plan was agreed in 2006 after two years of discussions involving residents and partners. The Plan set out a seven point vision of 'what people 'would like Nailsworth to be', i.e.

- An attractive Cotswold market town
- A town which protects and values the environment
- A town with opportunities for work
- A town with opportunities to learn and play
- Accessible
- A town with a range of health and social care services
- A safe place to live and welcoming to visitors.

2.2. These were expanded to 29 objectives. Five projects were adopted as priorities for action (see annex 1.) Good practice suggests five yearly reviews. This is because circumstances change, and new challenges and opportunities emerge. Such reviews are also timely because Government policy on the funding of public services is placing exceptional pressure on the

services the town currently receives from the County Council, District Council, Police Commissioner and Constabulary and Health Authorities. Town Councillors have previously agreed to retain this vision.

3. Preparing the new Action Plan.

3.1. The process started with nine town councillors meeting on 8 September 2010 to explore the context for a new Action Plan. In reviewing the previous Plan in October 2010, the then town councillors highlighted the following issues: there was no relationship between the objectives and the projects; it contained a hugely ambitious list with no indication of resource (capital and revenue) requirements, timescale, priority or route to achievement; and events had overtaken aspects of the projects without revision of the plan.

3.2. After further discussions, including a meeting in February 2012, town councillors decided the new Plan needed to be **accessible**, through both paper and on-line versions; **understandable**, through being concise and readable; **relevant** to the Town Council, local associations, businesses and residents; and **credible**, in that readers could believe it was worth having and, if implemented, would make a positive difference to the town and people's lives. It was then agreed to wait for the election of the new Town Council in May 2012.

3.3. On 19 June 2012 the new Town Council agreed to proceed with preparing a new plan via a Steering Group supported by a small budget, and to commission a Housing Needs Survey.

3.4. A Nailsworth Vision Group was set up and public meetings were held at the Town Hall and the Arkell Centre in January 2013. The following questions were posed in the publicity:

How do you want your favourite places to be in the future?

How can we: recycle our waste and provide heating for our homes ?

maintain our leisure spaces for health and recreation?

grow local food for local consumption?

walk, cycle, car share, use public transport, and park?

protect our woodlands and trees?

maintain our walking routes?

develop a new civic centre?

develop our trade and industry?

3.5. Town Councillors considered what sort of Plan they wanted in February 2013. In March 2013 an article in 'Nailsworth News' invited readers to share what they wished to see in a new Plan and asked organisations to invite members of the Vision team to meet them. A limited number of residents responded. No organisations sought a meeting. The questionnaire results (see annex3) are in response to the following questions:

- What do you value most about Nailsworth?
- What frustrates you about Nailsworth?
- What should be the main priorities for action in our town?

- What practical suggestions do you have to improve our town under these headings?

3.6. Respondents particularly highlighted concerns about the lack of affordable housing, the need for more parking, better public transport, more recreational facilities and activities, the quality of the street environment and, for young people, the need to tackle drug abuse and address issues of personal safety.

3.7. It is reasonable to conclude that there are no burning issues or concerns in the town that are not already being addressed through actions the Town Council is taking: for example, seeking a 20 mph zone along the A46; maintaining free parking; improving play facilities; and seeking to provide affordable housing.

List of Annexes.

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2. Subsequent Action by the Town Council not envisaged in the Action Plan
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5. New Nailsworth Action Plan 2015 to 2020.

Annex 1. Nailsworth Action Plan 2006 to 2011 - Progress in implementing the five key projects.

1. Old Market Regeneration – a project led by the Town Council to determine the long term potential for the regeneration of the town. Subsequently, Roger Evans Associates were employed with funding from SDC and produced ideas for enhancement and upgrading of the key streets in the town. The main determinant of the potential for positive change in Old Market was and remains the future of the bus station, because of the amount of land it uses. The Town Council set up an Old Market Working Party with GCC and SDC in February 2010. Progress, however, was slow because there are very limited public funds available and little commercial interest in new retail development - confirmed by a G A Grimley study for SDC in 2012. SDC commissioned a study of alternative arrangements for the bus interchange. Changes to the entry and exit arrangements and parking for buses were completed in 2014.

2. Forest Green Community Centre – a project to address the need for a new community venue. A site on the junction of Beechwood Close and Nymphsfield Road was provided as part of the planning consent for the adjacent housing development. An architect was appointed, a Business Plan was produced, funding assembled and the Arkell Community Centre was opened in 2011. The building and site is owned by the Arkell Community Centre Charitable Trust. The Town Council is sole trustee of this charity and councillors are automatically members of the Management Committee.

3. Town Design Statement – this is a document about managing change. It is concerned with how development should be carried out, so that it is in harmony with its setting and contributes to the conservation, and where possible, enhancement of the local environment. The work was overseen by Nailsworth Community Partnership Ltd. With the assistance of consultants, the Nailsworth Design Statement was prepared, and then adopted by SDC on 16 April 2009 as Supplementary Planning Advice within the Local Development Framework. SDC officers and councillors now regard it as a material consideration in making recommendations and decisions on planning applications.

4. Transport Working Group – a working group was to be established to deal with transport-related matters including public transport, parking and transport infrastructure. Through a Transport Sub-group, the Town Council's Environment Committee achieved the rescheduling of bus services to serve Forest Green more effectively but failed to achieve a cheaper fare from Forest Green to the town centre. Nailsworth Community Partnership Ltd undertook a survey and worked on achieving more parking spaces on the edge of town and more efficient parking arrangements within the town. Sites were identified and investigated, but there are no specific proposals.

5. Nailsworth Youth and Community Enterprise – located in the Subscription Rooms on Bath Road, which was in need of restoration. New trustees and management committee, a business plan and funding from the Arkell Trust and other sources for upgrading the building and its facilities are in place. The Sub Rooms, as they are now called, is once again the venue for a range of activities. Fundraising continues for various improvements by the Trustees.

Annex 2. Subsequent Action by the Town Council not envisaged in the Action Plan.

1. Nailsworth Recreation Centre. Saved from SDC closure by the Town Council with NCP Ltd in March 2011, the facilities have been improved and use increases each year. The unique trust operating model provides football teams, family groups, friends and 'pay as you go' class providers and users with a valuable facility. Managed by NCP Ltd for the last three years through an Agreement with Nailsworth Primary School, the School has agreed to take over management from September 2014. The Town Council seeks the implementation of the floodlit, multi-use games area (MUGA) at this location for which funding is held by SDC.

2. Community Orchard. In response to a proposal from Go Grow, a local environmental group, the Town Council agreed for the group to re-establish and improve an old orchard in Norton Wood.

3. Town Information Centre. Purchase and conversion of the former police station as the new Town Information Centre, with funding from the Public Works Loans Board. This was opened in 2013.

4. A Volunteer Bureau. Volunteering is important in making Nailsworth work. Nailsworth News, the Town Information Centre, the Sub Rooms, the churches, the many societies and community organisations, the Arkell Community Centre and the Town Council all rely on volunteers. The TIC now provides a service to link potential volunteers with opportunities and vice versa.

5. County Library. The Town Council campaigns to keep the library open for a full week. Subsequently the opening hours are maintained through a body of volunteers. The Town Council has registered the GCC library building as an Asset of Community Value to ensure the town has a say in its future if the library ever closes.

6. Market Street Gardens. Design and layout of this piece of derelict land, with funding from the Arkell Trust. These were formally opened in May 2012.

7. The Youth Centre. Following withdrawal of the remaining GCC funding, the Town Council agreed to increase the precept in order to ensure the Club continued to be fully funded, and enable the Club to employ its own youth worker.

8. Off Street Parking. Campaign to stop parking charges being introduced in Nailsworth by SDC. This was seen as critical to the economic wellbeing of the town. SDC subsequently chose not to proceed.

9. King George V Fields. Expansion of the skate park with benefit of funds from the Arkell Trust. Redesign and new equipment for the play area, funded with Section 106 planning agreement funds generated by the development of the former pie factory at Newmarket for housing. Plans are underway for upgrading the changing rooms. Part of the FGR Stadium development approval included an extension to the Fields on the completed former waste tip adjacent. Following the handover of the fenced and grassed Extension site, the Town Council has been seeking users.

10. Affordable Housing. In response to the results of the Housing Needs Survey, a Nailsworth Community Land Trust was launched in October 2013. Membership totals over 150 residents and people working in the town. The Steering Group is working to establish a partnership with a Housing Association with the aim of building affordable homes for local people on a site in Forest Green, owned by SDC.

11. Post Office. Retain post office provision in Nailsworth.

Annex 3. Nailsworth Town Action Plan – Questionnaire Results

A simple questionnaire was developed asking four basic questions:

1. What do you value most about Nailsworth?
2. What frustrates you about Nailsworth?
3. What should be the main priorities for action in our town?
4. What practical suggestions do you have to improve our town under these headings? (*List of headings given above the question*)

Approach. The questionnaires were distributed and collected by a number of means including via the TIC, and from the Youth Club. From both the sources and the handwriting, some limitations must be recognised in the information collected. The respondents comprise a self-selecting group of those who can be bothered to fill in and return the form, and it appears that the under sixteen, and over fifty-five age groups are somewhat over-represented. Experience suggests that unless one visits door-to-door it can be difficult to obtain data from the 18-50 age group. Having said that, there are several common issues raised by both groups, which is heartening. With hindsight, suggesting a list of subject headings for the final “practical suggestions” question perhaps steered responses in a way that limited the scope of ideas. However, some useful data was obtained, and the raw results are appended at the end of this report. There was a clear Forest Green bias in the Youth Club responses but one might expect that.

Having the backup of questionnaire data is important because it gives increased publically perceived legitimacy to any subsequent action that NTC may decide to take. Finally, a few points have been dealt with under a different heading to that where they were raised for consistency and clarity as the form of the questions tended to encourage duplication. Appendices are available which schedule the actual results. The completed questionnaires are lodged with the Town Hall.

So what did people say?

1. On the question of “what do you value most about Nailsworth”, there was a reassuringly positive list from both groups. Perception of a “friendly and caring attitude” was the highest common response, followed closely by “our excellent local shops and their helpful staff”. “Community spirit”, “green spaces, and our “other community facilities” also scored well, with individual praise for events, free parking, NN and NTC. Young people also valued our shops, followed by the school and youth club.

2. On the question of "What frustrates you about Nailsworth?" the clear front runner from the adult group is lack of parking, with the comment that people shop elsewhere if they can't park. NTC has known about this for some time plus its effect on footfall and trade, and this is the flip side of free parking. NTC will seek additional vehicle parking in the town centre and surrounding area.

Traffic congestion is both an irritation and a safety concern with the obvious mention of the Old Market to Spring Hill junction and the A46 mini roundabout safety issues around priorities and visibility.

Other concerns with more than one adult respondent are litter and lack of bin emptying, and complaints about the doctors' surgery. Remaining concerns are addressed as needs in question 3 as they cropped up in both sections.

For the young people, the clear front runner is the drugs problem, and drug addicts, perhaps connected with what one could class as personal safety/security issues from "alcoholics and weird people", lack of adequate street lighting in alleyways, and older boys perceived as threatening. By contrast, the youth club is seen as a safe place. Young people had the same concern about traffic congestion, also mentioning FGRFC parking problems and suggesting that the football club needed more onsite parking.

Both groups have concerns about road and alleyway surfaces and potholes, and dog mess – one young person suggested a £1000 fine for not cleaning up.

3. On the question of "What should be the main priorities for action in our town?" interestingly the highest response in the adult group was no response, which is perhaps reassuring.

The other significant response from the adult group was again parking, but in terms of the need to keep it free and more of it – park and ride was also mentioned. The adult group wants direct public transport links to the south – Tetbury, Bath, Bristol – and to Cam and Dursley rail station, a service which we had for a time but was removed in cutbacks, and the return of proper evening bus services "to get teenagers safely home".

Other comments with more than one respondent include the need for evening and weekend opening at the doctors' surgery and encourage the setting up another doctors' practice (Forest Green?), the need for a second – NHS - dentist, need for new employment and genuine shops i.e. not charity, no more houses, and the building of more accommodation for young people.

Other points with more than one respondent are steps to encourage young people to stay in the area i.e. jobs and affordable housing, the need to move towards zero waste, and the collection and anaerobic digestion of food waste.

The things that the young people want most are sports facilities such as a gym they can use, and both groups would like to see more shops, particularly clothes shops and gents outfitters. The young people mentioned Primark and New Look i.e. young, stylish, reasonably priced, which is perhaps a hint to our existing clothes shops. There were requests from individual youngsters for the banning of cigarette sales and for more litter bins, and one youngster touchingly said that he just wanted to feel safe.

4. On the question of "What practical suggestions do you have to improve our town under these headings?" (i.e. under the six headings specified in the questionnaire) the clear leader in the adult group is affordable housing and flats which was also close to the top of the young people's needs.

The need was perceived as particularly for the young and the old, and some would like preference for Nailsworth people. "But not in Forest Green" was mentioned by some. "Proper training of care workers" was mentioned by some. The adult group wanted more support for the youth services – youth club, scouts, guides – and the young people reciprocated with feeling there should be more support for the elderly.

The clear leader for the young people is activities, including for young children, and gym and sports facilities such as a football court, all open to under 16s – "healthy, physical" scored highly. Adults also rated healthy activities as important for them. Slightly worryingly, the third most popular choice from the young people was not to make any suggestions.

Unsurprisingly, the suggestion of an arts centre was welcomed by both groups.

Annex 4. Recommendations of Access Nailsworth Meeting, 26 April 2013.

1. Traffic v. pedestrians

Generally, we need to have a change of culture, so that drivers do not automatically assume priority over pedestrians, so that pedestrians can access the town safely.

- There should be a 20 mph speed limit on through and estate roads where there are pavements
- There should be a 10 mph speed limit on all other roads where there are no pavements
- Pedestrian priority signs should be erected on roads where there is a 10 mph limit

A46

- There should be a pedestrian crossing at Dunkirk Mill
- There should be dropped kerbs and tactile paving at junctions on the A46
- There should be pedestrian crossing provisions made at the bottom of Spring Hill and George Street

Town centre

- There should be new tactile paving and dropped kerbs wherever appropriate
- Market Street should be pedestrianised to allow wheelchair users to have access. Vehicles could have access at restricted times
- There should be restrictions on A Boards and display items outside shops so that access isn't restricted along pavements
- There should be new sections of pavement along Old Market and Newmarket, so that there is continuous paving along both sides of the road from Spring Hill to Newmarket
- Pedestrian access along Old Market from the Passage to India to Chestnut Hill is hazardous, due to a number of obstacles. For example, cars parked on the pavement, no clear routes to shops, and lack of definition between pavement and driveways.
- Bus station facilities should be improved and support given to increase the number of bus bays
- There should be improvements to the paving adjacent to the Co-op
- There should be more enforcement against illegal parking, especially when cars block safe pedestrian routes
- A consultant landscape architect should be taken on to produce strategic design plans for the Old Market area from Spring Hill to beyond Chestnut Hill, ensuring that there are clearly defined and segregated routes for pedestrians, cars and parking areas. This is a prime part of the town centre and needs to be attractive, welcoming and safe for residents and visitors.

2) Leisure and Independent Living

- There should be more provision of leisure and sports facilities for people with disabilities or infirmities
- There should be improved communications between volunteer service providers and residents who require help, to ensure that people who have mobility difficulties are able to maintain independence at home.

Annex 5. Proposals for a new Nailsworth Action Plan 2015 to 2020.

New Affordable Housing for Local People

The Town Council commissioned a Housing Needs Survey which showed a demand for 52 homes. In the absence of any proposals by the District Council or Housing Associations in the foreseeable future and the desire for local homes for local people which will always remain affordable, the Town Council is supporting a **Nailsworth Community Land Trust**. The CLT will acquire land and build new affordable homes which it will always own through an asset lock in its company articles. All those living and or working in Nailsworth aged over 18 years are eligible to join and be stand for election as a Director. **Resources:** voluntary time from members; funding potentially available from Homes & Communities Agency, Housing Associations , national grant funds and SDC; land by agreement from potential public and private owners. **Timescale:** the first homes could be occupied by mid- 2017.

A Safer Town For All

Nailsworth lies astride the A46 main road. Most residents will need to cross it or drive on and off it once a day. The downhill run from the south encourages high speeds. **A 20 mph zone** through the town is required to maximise safety and improve the daily experience of walking along it. **Resources:** GCC, SDC. **Timescale:** subject to approval and resource availability.

Nailsworth's population has a higher age than the national average. People are also living longer. For some a disability or old age makes pedestrian movement more difficult. We need to **ensure that dropped kerbs are in place along the A46 and the shopping streets, improved facilities for pedestrian crossing are introduced, steep paths have handrails and seats are placed in key locations.** **Resources:** GCC, SDC. **Timescale:** subject to approval and resource availability.

Market Street is an important shopping street, which vehicles use to access Shortwood and Newmarket even though it is narrow. The Town Council has supported the Chamber and the Market Street traders in introducing temporary closures to foster street activities and improve business. **Priority for pedestrians**, with vehicle access solely for servicing the businesses will transform the environment, is a worthwhile aspiration. **Resources:** GCC, SDC. Minimal for signing, but substantial if carriageway paved. **Timescale:** subject to approval and resource availability.

Improving Facilities for Recreation and Leisure.

Approx. £90,000 is held by SDC for the construction of a **floodlit, multi-use games court (MUGA)** in Forest Green. The Town Council is also keen to see the provision of further recreational facilities on **Miles Marling field**. Once a site is agreed for the MUGA and planning consent obtained, the funds could be used to bid for matching funding from national bodies.

Resources: SDC, national grant giving bodies.

Timescale: completion in 2015.

Providing Allotments.

There is continuing demand for allotments in the town, but the Town Council has no suitable site. When a site can be found, funding will be sought from grant providers to enable the necessary services and fencing.

Resources: grant-giving organisations, such as the Gloucestershire Environmental Trust.

Timescale: by 2020.

A Centre for the Arts.

Thirty years of the Nailsworth Festival, the regular Bristol Ensemble concerts at Christchurch and the thriving Nailsworth Dramatic Society prove the interest in the town in the arts. Beaudesert School is building a small theatre for their use at the top of the W. There is interest in having a permanent Centre for the Arts. Examples elsewhere locally include Prema in Uley and the Brewery Arts centre in Cirencester. The key is finding a suitable building with potential for conversion.

Resources: substantial, requiring significant fundraising for building purchase, conversion and operation.

Timescale: at least five years. i.e. 2020 at the earliest.

A Civic Centre.

Moving the Town Council's services to a more central location, along with the TIC, Library and Mortimer Rooms, would provide greater accessibility for residents, visitors and other users. Other public services could use the facility to improve access to their services.

Resources: alternative use and income for the existing Town Hall and loan funding.

Timescale: by 2020.