



Revitalising Bungay Town Centre Action Plan 2020-25

(June 2020)



Creating a Forward Framework

This town centre action plan is part of a ‘forward framework’ covering the ‘how’ (partnership development) and the ‘what’ (project delivery) for revitalising Bungay. Activity is organised by two broad themes.

Theme 1: Planning, property and parking

This theme considers the role of planned growth, town centre properties, parking, walking and cycling infrastructure and physical streetscape enhancement that makes the town centre more accessible and appealing to access move around. It covers the following project areas:

- Planning & property
- Parking, travel & access
- Streetscape & public realm

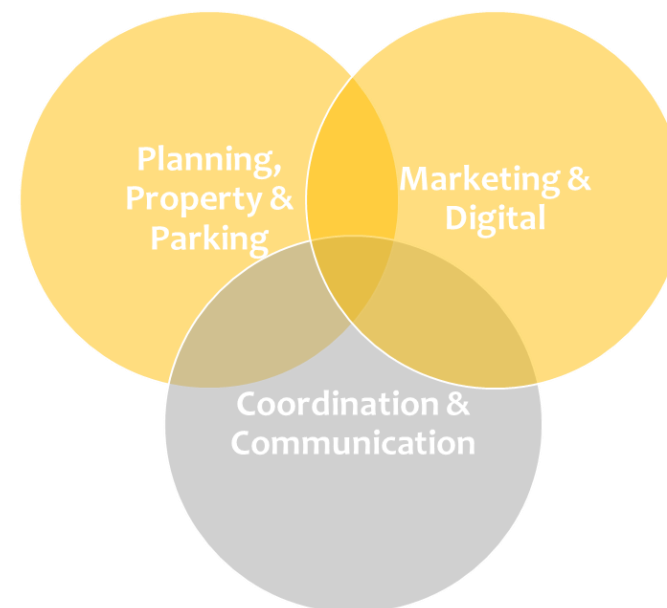
Theme 2: Marketing and digital development

A second theme for an integrated approach to town centre revitalisation in Bungay, includes support for ‘softer’ diversification and skills development, including strengthening the town-wide identity, promotion, marketing, digital infrastructure and skills, leisure, cultural activity and hospitality. It can cover the following project areas:

- Place branding & marketing
- Business support
- Digital technology & data

Coordination and communication

Alongside this focus on delivery-focused themes for the action plan, it is as important to consider how this work will be organised through partnership development involving effective coordination of groups and activities as well as communications between partners and with the wider public. Effectively, how to get everyone ‘rowing in the same direction’. This needs to be defined in an accompanying business plan that forms the second essential half of the forward framework. This action plan ends with an initial outline of the steps involved in such partnership development and partnership planning. There is a suite of resources on [creating a forward framework for town centre revitalisation](#) that support this work in Bungay.



Post-COVID-19 Recovery Planning

The People & Places Partnership has worked closely with East Suffolk Council to develop tailored resources to assist communities in post-COVID 19 recovery planning. This information can be accessed through the [beyond COVID-19](#) page of the People & Places web site and the [reopening your town centre](#) page of the East Suffolk Means Business site. It is necessary to think about post-COVID 19 recovery planning in three phases.

Re-opening town centres

This involves on focusing on the immediate steps necessary to help town centres reopen in a safe and welcoming way as lockdown eases. This is part of what is widely termed as pre-recovery planning and will hopefully mainly cover summer 2020.

A free, downloadable checklist for [managing town centre streets and public spaces in 2020](#) has been prepared by People & Places to help guide councils, town partnerships and key stakeholders wishing to work together in this re-opening phase.

In-line with the forward framework approach advocated here, this pre-recovery stage is an opportune time to also consider steps involved partnership development as new relationships are formed.

Recovery planning

This phase will last for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic which initially is expected to cover the period to summer 2021. As such, it will be an important additional focus for the first year's work programme for delivering the five-year action plan set-out below. This recovery phase will also seek to look beyond the impacts of the current COVID-19 outbreak and address other identified issues.

A comprehensive methodology for this recovery planning phase is set-out as part of an updated version of the national [Revitalising Town Centres Toolkit](#) prepared by People & Places for the Local Government Association (LGA). This is an updated version of the familiar toolkit used to guide town centre revitalisation in East Suffolk following the 'forward framework' approach. The updated toolkit includes guidance on case studies and action planning that respond to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Revitalisation

This revitalisation or transformation phase as it referred to elsewhere, focuses on the long-term reimagining of our town centres post-COVID 19 from years 2 to 5 as covered in this action plan. It continues to use the forward framework methodology outlined in the toolkit though hopefully can be solely focused on wider town centre issues and partnership development.



Agreeing an Action Plan

The table below provides an outline town centre action plan for Bungay using the checklist of issues from the LGA Handbook on revitalising town centres, the evidence identified through the survey work & subsequently proposed projects by Bungay Town Council and Bungay Events and Business Association. The outline plan, once discussed and agreed with key stakeholder groups, can be used in developing a detailed delivery plan by partners with budgets, responsibilities, defined outcomes and measurable indicators of success.

POTENTIAL PROJECT/INITIATIVE	Outcome & monitoring indicators (2 & 5 years)	Timescales & responsibilities
THEME 1: PLANNING, PROPERTY & PARKING		
PARKING, TRAVEL & ACCESS; Is an integrated and customer-focused parking, travel, and access strategy in place?		
There were mixed messages about the need to treat parking and traffic management as a high priority for Bungay that merit further research. Businesses and customers have relatively positive perceptions about current impact of parking (70% & 60%) and traffic (54% & 42%). The indication from surveying parking usage is that Bungay is a difficult place to find a parking space with only 9% of spaces available on a busy day. Improving parking through increased provision and improved management is amongst the top priorities of businesses surveyed and customers with 20% and 10% ranking it amongst their top two future priorities. Traffic and transport also ranked reasonably high amongst customers' priorities and included a mixture of calls for improved pedestrian access and reductions in traffic, especially HGVs. Whilst 71% of businesses were positive about public transport to town centre, only 36% of customers were.		
PARKING		
A thorough review of East Suffolk parking services has been completed alongside this town centre work led by the Council's Economic Development service. The aim is to apply a modern approach to delivering parking services that takes account of the requirements and travel patterns of visitors, residents and businesses. Proposals for off-street parking included: a simpler tariff structure, reflecting evidence that people want longer trips for shopping and socialising	Positive stakeholder perceptions shown by re-survey of impact of parking & reduced priority to improve. Evidence of increased availability at busy times & of different users being better	ESC with SCC, BTC, BEBA 2020-21



• better use of technology, including a parking app that allows drivers to check parking place options and extend parking sessions without returning to vehicles. • the introduction of a free half hour for parking in many off-street parking places where free on-street parking opportunities are limited • reducing the number of coins per tariff level. When the review has been completed, the agreed actions will be summarised as key parts of this town centre action plan.	able to park 'when & where' to meet their needs. Additional outcomes agreed by Parking Review.	
TRAFFIC & TRAVEL		
Initial scoping exercise could be undertaken to understand customers' varied concerns about town centre traffic including: • Possibility of restricting HGV's in the town centre. • Assessing clean air impacts caused by road layout such as one-way system and junctions.	Any outcomes sought would need to be defined by initial study with baseline indicators but could include safety and pollutant levels.	SCC with BTC 2021-22
Work with local bus service providers to investigate the feasibility of some kind of 'hoppla bus' service develop from outlying villages to include the housing to the south of the town.		SCC with BTC 2021-22
PLANNING & PROPERTY: Are there robust town-centre-first policies, master-planning, priorities within and between towns and has work been coordinated with town centre businesses and landlords?		
A supportive and challenging district and local planning policy context offers the potential for planned growth to boost the vitality of a vibrant and welcoming town centre. The policy review identifies positive Local Plan policies for safeguarding the vibrancy town of centres in the long-term and land allocations for 485 new homes in addition to the 72 on unallocated sites. Work is ongoing on the Bungay Neighbourhood Plan. Businesses have negative perceptions about competition from out of town shopping (62%), competition from other localities (51%), traffic (44%) and the available labour pool (43%), though are positive about the availability of premises (72%) and property costs (64%). Customers give a high priority to town centre planning & investment (10%) with a high proportion referring specifically to the Kings Head. Customers give a high priority to town centre planning & investment (10%) with a high proportion referring specifically to the Kings Head. The current business vacancy rate (10%) is slightly higher than district (7%) & national averages (9%).		



PLANNING		
The Bungay Neighbourhood Development Planning process will help determine detailed local planning policies including for town centre, retail & employment; urban design & historic buildings; environment traffic, transport & environment; housing. The finalised NDP will help provide a detailed and supportive policy context for the revitalisation of the town centre. The BNDP Group will take the overview for such work and feed in appropriate policies and monitoring in relation to the town centre. In relation to planned development to south of Bungay, it will be important to understand links to town centre including opportunities for 'active travel'.	Supportive planning & property policies agreed as part of Local Plan including appropriate delivery monitoring including for town centre, historic buildings & traffic.	BTC & BNPDG with ESC 2020-21
PROPERTY		
Work with Bungay Castle Trust and the new owners of the Kings Head to help understand & facilitate the development & delivery of plans to bring the properties back into service, including any town centre parking impacts.	Delivery of appropriate plans that improves the appearance & addresses calls to improve this prominent site.	BCT, ESC, BTC 2020-22
Potential relocation of the Bungay Museum to suitable site that enables it to be accessible to all visitors.	Increased local and tourist visitor numbers.	BMT, BTC 2020-24
Approach owners of empty shops to see if they can showcase the artistic activities of the town and even provide temporary 'meanwhile' uses.	Reduced percentage of empty premises	BEBA, BTC 2020>
STREETSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM: Has a funding strategy and ongoing, prioritised streetscape and public realm improvement plan been agreed with an understanding of 'connected value'?		
The data indicates good satisfaction with many aspects of the town centre environment from existing users whilst there is a challenge to boost footfall throughout the week and across the town. Customers are positive about ease of walking around the town centre (85%), convenience (80%), cleanliness (73%) and safety (73%), though improving pedestrian movement features significantly amongst their future priorities. The indicative footfall data shows that Bungay is less busy than similar sized benchmarked towns nationally with 69 passers-by per 10 minutes on a busy day compared to benchmarked towns (109) and that foot-flow is uneven across the town centre. Bungay scores highly in all three aspects of wellbeing relating to 'place', especially for culture, heritage and leisure.		



ACCESSIBILITY		
Planning & delivery of improvements to pedestrian access including potentially: • Undertaking an accessibility audit to ensure that the current street infrastructure needs to be made disabled friendly. • Re-installing permanent crossing points in the middle of the town & near the doctor's surgery. • Replacing tarmac used to repair broken paving slabs	Positive stakeholder perceptions shown by re-survey of impact & reduced priority to improve. Evidence of increased foot-flow around the town, especially disabled users.	SCC, BTC 2020-21
THEME 2: MARKETING & DIGITAL		
BUSINESS SUPPORT: Is there tailored training/mentoring and a strategy to enhance the quality and distinctiveness of retail, services, hospitality and leisure businesses based on current provision, trends and knowledge of competing centres?		
An important part of the challenge going forward will be ensuring that Bungay diversifies its mix of shops and services to encourage more frequent local use including linked trips from supermarket, greater visitor numbers and increased dwell times. Bungay provides important retail and other services for local residents in terms of goods for home, ladies fashion and 'top-up' and specialist, food and drink. Strikingly the town centre no longer has a bank (or currently a 24-hour cash machine) though it does have adequate representation of other professional, civic and medical services in the town centre. Over half of businesses (55%) said there had been an impact of bank/AMT closures on turnover. The top priority for businesses (31%) and a high priority for customers (18%) is to improve banking services. A continued decline in turnover is expected by a quarter (25%) of businesses compared to 21% across neighbouring towns. Businesses in Bungay are notably positive about potential local customers (90%), potential tourist customers (90%), cafés, pubs and restaurants (90%), prosperity of the town (86%), marketing/promotions (79%), mix of retail (77%), markets (76%) and footfall (76%). Whilst customers have a positive current assessment of customer service (81%), convenience (80%), independent shops (80%), health services (77%), and cafes and restaurants (76%) in the town centre, they call for an improved retail mix as the top future priority (25%).		
BANKING & POST OFFICE		
The lack of banking facilities in the town centre including a 24-hour cash machine continues to cause concern for its impact on spend, footfall & business banking. The announcement of the closure of Martin's and the Post Office in January 2021 adds to these concerns. The following priority actions are proposed in response: • Install 24-hour cash machine(s) in the town centre including one proposed at the Council office in Broad Street.	Positive stakeholder perceptions shown by re-survey of impact & reduced priority to improve. Evidence of increased foot-flow around the town.	ESC, BTC, SCC & ATM provider. 2020



- Investigate with Post Office & existing businesses the potential for a new Post Office facility to be located in existing premises - Secure long-term banking facilities including mobile banking, building society or credit union.	Improved business confidence in re-survey including market & street market traders.	
MARKETS		
The present Thursday market is considered locally popular but it is limited in scope with only 4 regular stalls compared to 16 for small towns nationally. With the closure of the old community centre the covered market needs a new home as the new is not suitable owing to its location. The quarterly street markets are successful in raising the wider profile of Bungay and have the potential to be extended. The following improvements to the markets are proposed: - Consult with businesses and residents around the Butter Cross about options for extended Thursday Market initially once a month including potential road closures. - Find a new central location for the community market - Identify extra space to extend quarterly street markets including possibly space in front of Whitemans and Old Post Office.	Increased number of market stalls at different markets. Evidence of increased foot-flow around the town. Improved business confidence in re-survey including market & street market traders.	BTC, BTT, BEBA 2020-21
PLACE BRANDING & MARKETING: Is there a clear understanding of the town brand with pooled budgets and a creative, collective marketing campaign?		
Analysis suggests brand development and marketing needs to continue to build on and promote the already positive perceptions of both businesses and customers. Only 26% of on-street and 9% of online town users said their experience of Bungay town centre had improved in recent years compared to 43% and 58% who said it had worsened. A relatively high 80% of town centre users would recommend a visit. The ‘sentiments’ word cloud for Bungay paints a picture of an appealing town to use and visit that nevertheless needs to boost its identity. Population data for Bungay indicates a town has a slightly older profile than typical for the UK with 33% over 60-years old. Over 42% of the population is, though, under 40-years-old. 90% of businesses consider the potential of local and tourist customers as a positive factor and a relatively high proportion are positive about existing events (87%), marketing (79%) and local partnerships (74%).		



COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING		
Improvements to Bungay town centre that are already in the pipeline along with other relatively short-term actions proposed here, provide early opportunities to boost the town's image and sense of progress. There is a great opportunity to build on the existing good reputation & track record for events, marketing & local partnership working. Effective coordination between organisations and clear communication of proposals & achievements to the wider community will be important in creating such positive sentiments. It will be important to engage businesses as part of this and reach out especially to younger generations including families. A part of this it makes to highlight the complementary identity and offer of Bungay alongside Beccles and Halesworth especially for visitors. It is proposed that a communications & marketing plan should be developed as part of work to revitalise Bungay town centre. Elements of this plan ought to include: • Mechanisms for internal coordination between key partners • Engagement and involvement of wider business community & stakeholder groups • Mechanisms such as drop-in sessions & social media to engage & involve wider community with regular good news stories • Boosted annual events programme to promote progress & attract new audiences • Integrated visitor marketing plans with Beccles and Halesworth	Positive community & business perceptions shown in re-survey including improved experience of town centre. Evidence of increased foot-flow around the town & repeat visits connected with events & marketing. Tracking of positive social media activity.	All partners with coordination & communications core group 2020>
LEISURE		
Bungay has a wealth of artists (music, painters, glass, writers and poetry). An annual town festival combining these creative talents should be organised from 2021/22.	Positive stakeholder perceptions shown in re-survey. Evidence of increased foot-flow & repeat visits.	BTC, BEBA & stakeholder groups
Bungay has a high quality natural & built environment. The town is surrounded by waterways, common land and cycle ways and has a rich built heritage. These environmental assets need to be conserved, interpreted & promoted including through	Positive stakeholder perceptions shown in re-survey.	BTC, BTT & stakeholder groups



good signposting , interpretation, guided visits & online resources. Friends of St Mary's, for example, are planning a historic video of the church and surrounding buildings It is proposed that as part of the wider revitalisation, that an environmental interpretation plan is developed and delivered to coordinate such activity.	Evidence of increased foot-flow & repeat visits.	2021>
DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY & DATA: Is there an ongoing assessment of digital infrastructure and skills with an investment plan and approach for the collective use of data in marketing and monitoring the town centre?		
Digital development in Bungay needs to strike a balance between the demand for improved infrastructure and the priority given to enhanced services by customers. Businesses give priority or high priority to town-wide investment in digital infrastructure and the highest demands are for investment in fast broadband infrastructure (74%) and the digital phone network (78%). The data indicates a relatively low priority or state of readiness in terms of digital skill development by businesses with the highest priority given to the use of social media (47%). Customers in Bungay give priority investment in digital phone network coverage (73%) and in town centre Wi-Fi (70%). Customers give a higher priority than businesses to development of digital services with targeted marketing (63%), insights through social media (55%) and web site development (38%) rated significantly as a priority or high priority by respondents.		
DIGITAL DEVELOPMENT		
In parallel to this work, East Suffolk Council is developing a District-wide Smart Towns Programme which initially focuses on investment in digital infrastructure such as town centre Wi-Fi and foot-flow monitoring. It is proposed that Bungay seeks to participate in this programme. As an extension of this work, enhanced digital services could be developed in Bungay that potentially could include: • Digital & social media training for businesses & stakeholder groups • Visual merchandising workshops • Digital activity monitoring • Curated content & sharing showcase using Bungay web site & social media accounts/app including potentially click-and-collect • Enjoy Bungay video	Improved business & customer satisfaction with town centre digital infrastructure provision. Detailed foot-flow monitoring data.	ESC, BTC & BEBA 2021>



COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS: Is there a town partnership in place to drive forward the development & delivery of proposals in a way that coordinates between stakeholder groups and effectively communicates activity to these partners and the wider community?

COORDINATION AND MONITORING: Joined-up delivery to create measurable, town-wide change

Enabling the joined-up delivery of this action plan will require the skills and capacity to coordinate measurable, town-wide change. It will be important to identify the resources and partnerships to achieve this as part of accompanying partnership development and business planning. This role will involve:

- facilitating partnership working groups
- fundraising & financial accountability
- quarterly monitoring & management
- biennial survey & progress review

Organisation & reporting of 2 theme-based working groups and coordinating 'hub'.

Expertise to identify and bid for external funding.

Routine collection, analysis & adaptation to suite of monitoring indicators.

Analysing impacts to review progress & priorities

ESC, BTC & BEBA
2021>

COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT: Engaging with stakeholders to drive and celebrate success

Engaging with partners, stakeholder groups, businesses and the wider community, will require effective 'internal' and 'external' communications, comprising:

- communications planning
- communicating between working groups
- business engagement
- stakeholder engagement including wider community

Internal communications & external engagement

Keeping working groups informed by distilled updates

Digital activity such as business involvement; content creation; and target marketing

Proposed, new digital platforms as comms platform

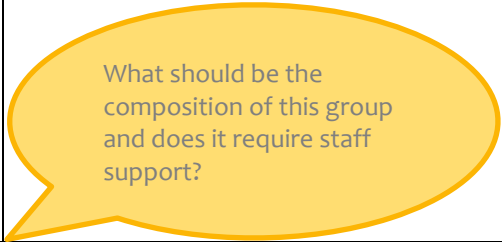
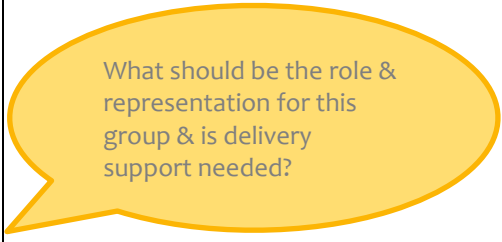
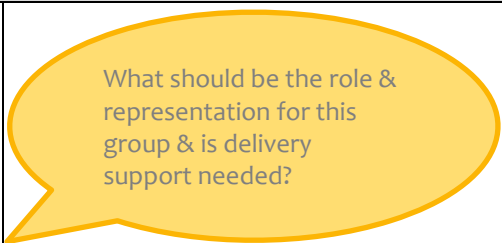
ESC, BTC & BEBA
2021>

Key to organisations involved to-date: East Suffolk Council (ESC); Bungay Town Council (BTC); Bungay Events & Business Association (BEBA); Suffolk County Council (SCC); Bungay Town Trust (BTT); Bungay Castle Trust (BCT); Bungay Museum Trust (BMT).P



Partnership Development

Alongside this town centre action plan covering the ‘what’ (project delivery) as part of a ‘forward framework’ for revitalising Bungay, it is necessary to cover the ‘how’ (partnership development). Such a partnership development plan needs to consider:

PARTNERSHIP SUB-GROUPS ROLES, OPERATION & REPRESENTATION	DEVELOPMENT NEEDS
COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION ‘HUB’	
• small & hands-on in supporting role • coordinating across organisations, working groups & projects • coordinating fund raising & finances • communicating progress to partners, stakeholders & community • comprising district, town council, BEBA • monthly, virtual catch-ups	 What should be the composition of this group and does it require staff support?
PLANNING, PROPERTY & PARKING WORKING GROUP	
• devising, managing & delivering action plan of physical change • commissioning further research • over-seeing project delivery • comprising county, district, town council, community & special interest groups • updating coordinating group • quarterly meetings	 What should be the role & representation for this group & is delivery support needed?
MARKETING & DIGITAL WORKING GROUP	
• devising, managing & delivering action plan to boost identity • liaising with ‘Smart Towns’ project • over-seeing delivery of branding, promotion, events & digital work • comprising district, BEBA, events groups & local expertise • updating coordinating group • quarterly meetings	 What should be the role & representation for this group & is delivery support needed?

