



AYLSHAM TOWN COUNCIL CITTASLOW PROJECT PROPOSAL



Approved in Principle:

Full Approval:

PROJECT TITLE: Market Town strategy

STAKEHOLDERS: Broadland DC, Norfolk County Council, Aylsham Business Consortium.

PROJECT LEADER: Patrick Prekopp

OUTLINE of the PROJECT

This Project Proposal follows the Norfolk Market Towns Conference held at Swaffham Assembly Rooms on Tuesday 1 October, 2024, organised by Norfolk County Council, where the need for sustained growth and investment in the market towns was outlined.

The project will attempt to evaluate what is needed in Aylsham to:

- generate economic growth
- improve the appeal of Aylsham as a historic market town
- protect its heritage
- restore a sense of identity
- What investment is required
- Identify additional stakeholders

In addition, it will identify gaps in key civic functions and how to establish greater collaborations with market traders, landlords, and the Aylsham Business Consortium (ABC).

Other missing links include sourcing funding providers and connecting with young people.

Objective :

To improve the appeal of Aylsham as a historic market town – making the high street a more attractive, engaging and vibrant place for people to live, work and spend time.

Background :

The conference was attended by Aylsham Town Councillors Patrick Prekopp, Mary Evans, and council Media Officer, Dan Apps. Tim Briscoe, vice-chair of the Aylsham Business Consortium, and Graham Peers, Broadland DC Economic Development Officer for Tourism also attended.

All 22 market towns in Norfolk were represented at the Conference.

Norfolk County Council wants to be more proactive and is interested in developments already taking place in Melton Mowbray, Swaffham, Hunstanton, King's Lynn and North Walsham.

The purpose of the conference was for NCC to bring together district and town councils, businesses and organisations with an interest in market towns to share best practice on revitalising our market towns, encouraging pride in place and increasing footfall.

Building on the engagement work, NCC have completed over the last year including the Norfolk Economic Strategy workshops and 'Love Your Market Town initiative', this included presentations and panel discussions.

Project drivers:

- Declining town centre – in terms of perception and offer
- Retail parks
- Online shopping
- Covid-19 pandemic
- Cost of living
- Local funding
- Low business start-up and success rates
- Opportunity to better utilise key council assets (and potentially generate an income)
- Pedestrian and traffic conflicts
- Deteriorating public realm
- Wayfinding and interpretation – Signposting shops.
- Poor accessibility and legibility of pedestrian routes
- Dilapidating built fabric
- Lack of identity – not delivering on reputation *eg* 'rural capital of food' (Melton Mowbray)

Timescale:

- Plan of action identifying project milestones to be prepare by April followed by feasibility study and full programme of activity by December 2025.

Processes requiring compliance

- NCC Highways approvals
- Town Planning
- Local Planning
- ATC approvals

Budget / Funding

External Funding (please specify):

Approximate funding required from Town Parish Council

£.....

to be determined through feasibility stage

ABOUT the PROJECT

What is the need for this project?

Aylsham Town Council has an identity problem when dealing with local businesses and its residents – friend or foe?

This historic conflict comes from differences in working practices – businesses work from day to day; councils think long-term (15 to 20 years).

So, for Aylsham to continue to retain its historic market town status while managing the demands and pressures created by the prospect of two new housing estates and growing popularity with tourists, it must recognise the rapidly changing ecosystem of the High Street and the environmental impact on the townfolk.

While Aylsham has so far seemingly weathered the storm of Covid and seen an exciting rejuvenation of Red Lion Street, there is no room for complacency, and it must prepare for a transformed way of life. The fact that Norfolk County Council and various local authorities have engaged over the past two years to create Norfolk Economic Strategy workshops and the 'Love Your Market Town' initiative, shows there is a need for towns like Aylsham to invest in their heritage and culture as drivers for regeneration for economic benefit.

Who will benefit?

Aylsham residents, Aylsham businesses, Aylsham visitors.

How will those taking part help design, implement & evaluate the project?

The Cittaslow working party will focus on the following:

- Creation of a Town Council 'Skills Department'— one central team to co-ordinate, connect and refer businesses, young people and providers.
(57% of High Street small businesses say a diverse range of independent businesses is one of the most important factors for the long-term future of the high street. [*Fed of Small Businesses*])
- The biggest opportunities for the local High Street include:
 - Increased investment in **marketing and promotion** of the area (57%)
 - Increased investment in **public transportation or infrastructure** (50%)
 - Introduction of **new local businesses and services** (49%)
 - Establishment of **new tourist attractions or cultural events** (45%)
- Community engagement
- Offer pop-up shop facilities – "*Meanwhile*" project for new businesses/start-ups
- Free and capped parking costs & 'hop on/off' high street bus
- Co-ordination of tourism and local organisations
- An idea to make Aylsham stand out from the crowd
- Celebrating the history of the High Street and its importance to local communities (Heritage Centre).

How many will be involved, and how they will contribute to the Project.

A small group of Cittaslow members will initiate the project and will bring in outside help, advisors, or consultants as required to prepare a feasibility study.

Is Town Council staff involvement required?

Yes

If so, what will this entail?

To support, promote and implement the Cittaslow Committee's recommendations, subject to consultations and Council approvals.

What are the publicity requirements and who will lead on this?

Media Officer Dan Apps will identify digital media requirements as well as the mainstream Press.

How will progress on the project be reported back to the Town Council?

Timeline will have regular progress and reporting milestones with scheduled presentations at Town Council meetings.

How will the success of the project be evaluated?

Implementation of any one or all of the following recommendations:

- Creation of a Town Council ‘Streetwise Project’ – **a shared vision for any investable project**. Appoint central team or manager to act as a conduit to all stakeholders including businesses, community groups and schools to prepare and collaborate on proposed town projects and event management, identify partners to secure funding, and to connect and refer businesses, young people and providers.
- Combat misinformation as presented on social media – get smarter in responses, communicate with partners – update, consult, engage.
- Establish “heritage action zones” to get buy-in from landlords, history groups, archivists to identify and promote sites of special historic interest.
- Consider BDC proposal to brand Aylsham “Food capital of north Norfolk”.
- Encourage bus usage – Consider free parking at weekends – when charges are imposed, of course.

Aylsham market traders say ‘use it or lose it’

<https://www.northnorfolknews.co.uk/news/24646900.aylsham-market-traders-say-use-lose/>

WHEN WILL THE PROJECT BEGIN & END?

START:

Month & Year: **March 2025**

END:

Month & Year: **December 2027**

Submitted by.....

Date.....

