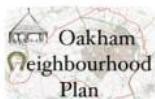


Oakham Task & Finish Group



Oakham County Town of Rutland

Recommendations and Future Framework

Oakham Task & Finish Group Report
to Rutland County Council

October 2018

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* *Section 3 should be read in conjunction with the full Task and Finish Group Evidence-base Report of 27th September 2018, which was adopted at the T&F Group's meeting on 18th October 2018, and which the Council is here recommended to accept (see pp9 and 21).*

Acknowledgements

This report reflects the achievements of the Oakham Task & Finish Group since its establishment by Rutland County Council in March 2018. There were some changes in the composition of the Group during its period of operation. Special thanks are due to the representatives and members of the partner organisations (as noted in the Group's Evidence-base Report of 27th September 2018) as well as the support provided by County Council officers and the independent chair, namely:

Task & Finish Group Members as at 1st October 2018:

- Mr D Bottomley (Oakham Town Council)
- Mr B Callaghan (RCC Ward Member, Oakham South-East)
- Mrs J Clough (Oakham Residents Group)
- Mr J Dale (RCC Ward Member, Oakham North-East)
- Mr A Dewis (Oakham Town Partnership)
- Mr P Dowse (Oakham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group)
- Mrs J Fox (RCC Ward Member, Exton)
- Mr R Gale (RCC Ward Member, Oakham North-East)
- Mr A Mann (RCC Ward Member, Oakham North-West)
- Mr T Norton (OK2Way Group)

Rutland County Council officers:

- Mrs H Bremner (Communications Manager)
- Mr S Ingham (Strategic Director for Places)
- Mrs N Taylor (Governance Manager)

Independent Chair:

- Mr C Wade (People and Places)

1. Regenerating the Town

1.1 Introduction

The report has been prepared by the Task & Finish Group members. It draws on the expertise and experience of Chris Wade, the independent chair, and provides a summary of their work, achievements and recommendations for the next steps to be considered by Rutland County Council and other partners.

The Oakham Town Regeneration Task & Finish Group was '*established to look at the options for improving Oakham Town in order to formulate a set of recommendations for consideration by RCC Council*'.

The Terms of Reference outlined a process which involved producing an evidence-based report which would be used to identify town centre issues, and then developing '*an agreed vision to guide the creation of recommendations backed by an action plan with defined objectives, proposals, roles, budgets, milestones and performance measures that would improve Oakham town centre for the benefit of residents, businesses, the wider town, villages and visitors*'.

1.2 Following national good practice

This report and its recommendations for Oakham follow the methodology recently published by the Local Government Association in its *Revitalising Town Centres*. Here we have adopted a 'lite' version of the model, to take into account the expectations of the Oakham electorate, and in order to achieve early delivery, whilst acknowledging the limitations of current financial constraints.

The LGA handbook [<https://www.local.gov.uk/revitalising-town-centres-handbook-council-leadership>] uses an 'F-factors' checklist for creating a 'forward framework' for town centre revitalisation. Key elements to consider are:

Foundations: the process should be underpinned by an up-to-date review of existing strategies, collective objectives and evidence from recent surveys.

Function: action planning should begin with a clear statement of identified issues; recognition of council and partners' roles; the creation of suitable responses; acknowledgment of gaps in delivery; and identification of impact measures.

Form and Folk: next comes the development of appropriate organisational 'form' to coordinate activity including defining the roles of key partners and wider stakeholder engagement through 'folk'.

Finances: financial planning needs to include identifying opportunities for fund-raising, inward investment and partnership sustainability.

Forward planning: finally, everything is written down as a 'forward framework' and regularly reviewed.



1.3 Using the ‘town centre checklist’

Table 1 – Town centre checklist: Success Factors	
FOUNDATIONS	
Evidence and objectives	Has a baseline survey of issues been completed, aims defined, objectives, scope and long-term monitoring of impacts agreed?
FUNCTION	
Parking, travel and access	Is an integrated and customer-focused parking, travel, and access strategy in place?
Planning and 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?
Streetscape and public realm	Has a funding strategy and ongoing, prioritised streetscape and public realm improvement plan been agreed with an understanding of ‘connected value’?
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?
Place branding and marketing	Is there a clear understanding of the town brand with pooled budgets and a creative, collective marketing campaign?
Digital technology and 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?
FORM	
Governance and influence	Is there an appropriate structure, membership and credibility to coordinate local stakeholder activity and influence cross-departmental or other strategic partnerships?
FOLK	
Community engagement and coordination	Is there strong public, private and community engagement with active and coordinated involvement in planning and delivery that extends to community assets development and is backed by a clear communications plan?
Roles and capacity	Are there an effective chair, suitably skilled board, employment of necessary staff, effective management of trained volunteers and clear lines for joint working with other stakeholder groups?
FUNDING	
Finances and investment	Is there an organisation with robust financial procedures and strategy agreed for diverse and sustainable fund raising and income to support a town centre? Is it ‘run as a business’ with inter-relationships understood and investment secured?
FORWARD PLANNING	
Strategy and plans	Is there a well-defined ‘forward framework’ comprising an overarching vision/strategy, a rolling organisational business plan and a parallel action plan coordinating delivery on the ground?

1.4 Recommended outputs for Task & Finish Group

As outlined at the Task & Finish Group's August and September meetings, the recommendation for Oakham is that this approach is used to produce an initial Future Framework for the town comprising:

1. Factual evidence-base of key performance indicators and user/non-user/business perceptions of issues and priorities.
2. Analysis and agreement on priority issues and monitoring indicators to guide project planning by partners and wider stakeholders.
3. An ongoing communications and engagement plan for broadening understanding, support and involvement of stakeholders.
4. An outline partnership structure including coordinating group, theme-based delivery sub-groups, partners and responsibilities.
5. An initial statement of future resourcing needs for partnership development and project delivery.

2. Foundation – The factual evidence-base

2.1 Previous County Council research

At the beginning of the process the Task & Finish Group was provided with a summary of key findings from previous Rutland CC research by way of a PowerPoint presentation (available on-line at

<https://rutlandcounty.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s11999/2018-04-25%20Oakham%20Baseline%20Information1.pdf>.

The large number of free-text responses recorded in the two Rutland CC consultations of 2017 were studied, and the evidence of both these sources has been taken into account by the Task & Finish Group in the making of its recommendations.

2.2 Neighbourhood Plan research

The work of the Oakham Neighbourhood Plan (ONP) Steering Group has been progressing simultaneously with that of the Task & Finish Group. The ONP has been represented on the T&F Group and the findings of its 'Big Survey' undertaken mid-2017, in particular the hundreds of free-text comments, have also been instrumental in formulating the recommendations. Results of the ONP Big Survey can be seen on its website, www.oakhamnp.org.uk.

2.3 Oakham Evidence-base Report

A major achievement of the Task & Finish Group process has been the research and preparation of a town centre evidence-base report compiled by the Oakham Residents Group (see §§2.4 & 2.5 below). Following the Local Government Association methodology noted in §2.1 above, the report measures current town centre performance and stakeholder perceptions to help understand issues as a basis for developing suitable solutions.

2.4 The Process

Following accepted local authority practice, a body of research was undertaken by the Oakham Residents Group, based on a benchmarking system of collecting data corresponding to twelve Key Performance Indicators. These KPI relate to various aspects of the town centre, including the views of those who live, work and visit there. The data collected for those indicators which are relevant to Oakham (Table 2) were compared with statistics in a National Benchmark Database for Small Towns, which consists of information from small towns which had participated in this process in 2016.

The benefit of using such a benchmarking system is that it will:

- *provide baseline data to understand individual town centres issues*
- *identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement*
- *assist in preparing local action plans to address identified issues*
- *monitor impact of local town centre regeneration over several years*
- *act as an evidence base for funding applications*

(*People & Places*)

Table 2 – Key Performance Indicators relevant to Oakham

<i>The Place: Commercial Units</i>	
KPI 1: Use Class	Visual survey
KPI 2: Comparison/Convenience	Visual survey
KPI 3: Trader Type	Visual survey
KPI 4: Vacancy Rates	Visual survey
<i>The Place: Cross-town Trends</i>	
KPI 5: Markets	Visual survey
KPI 8: Footfall	Survey on market & quiet days
KPI 9: Car Parking	Audit on busy & quiet days
<i>The People: Stakeholder Surveys</i>	
KPI 10: Business Confidence Surveys	Postal survey
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys : Town Centre Visitors	Face to face surveys / Online survey Face to face surveys
KPI 11: Town Centre Users Surveys : Rutland County Visitors	Face to face surveys
KPI 12: Shoppers Origin Surveys	Shoppers Origin survey

Between May and August 2018, with significant involvement from Oakham residents, data were collected for each KPI above. Additionally an extensive and detailed body of new observational data on footfall across the town centre and on parking has been collected, and this includes car parks and on-street parking. A full database of all businesses in Oakham was produced. In addition there were interviews with long-time market traders, and surveys carried out with Oakham Town Centre Visitors and Visitors to Rutland at specific tourist locations within a five-mile zone around Oakham.

2.5 The Evidence Base

The substantial body of data collected was the basis of a series of reports on each aspect of the town, which were illustrated with graphs and charts. The elements of the research were cross-referenced and the threads were then pulled together to paint a picture of how Oakham functions, incorporating and reflecting the views of the people who live, work and visit there.

The full Evidence-Base Report adopted on 18th October 2018 is attached and can be found on-line. The free-text answers contributed by survey respondents can be found in Appendix 1 of that Report.

3. Summary Evidence-Base Report

3.1. Local Economic Performance

It is widely recognised that High Streets are economically struggling, both nationally and indeed across Europe. Oakham is a County Market Town situated in a rural area. However there is a choice of alternative shopping and business destinations available to the people of Oakham and the surrounding villages. Within 10 to 15 miles we have the market towns of Stamford, Melton Mowbray and Market Harborough, and within 25 to 30 miles there are the cities of Leicester, Nottingham and Peterborough. For all these destinations most people are reliant upon private cars or public transport, which involve cost and time and are detrimental to the environment.

Oakham is on the doorstep, and yet one of the most important insights that come out of the Business Confidence Survey is the slowly declining rate of year-on-year growth and the lower expectation of growth continuing into 2018 in the Oakham business community, with two-thirds not expecting an increase in trade and 21% actually forecasting a decrease. It is also worrying that nearly half of the town centre businesses have been established for less than five years, which would seem to indicate a large turnover of retail premises even when allowance is made for several closures due to retirement. Customers build loyalties with local shops: individual customer comments were made bewailing the loss of well-liked shops and services, and a too-frequent coming and going of retail outlets does nothing for the economic stability of the town.

From the business perspective negative financial issues relating to fundamental business overhead costs, such as rates and rents (19%), were identified, as was competition from internet and other locations (16%). Marginally higher were concerns relating to the declining number of local clients, with low footfall (17%) and inadequate parking (22%) listed as causes. These factors beg the question as to whether if local trade were to increase, the financial strain would be correspondingly reduced.

With parking there were more comments overall relating to hourly car park charges than to availability; one business commented that parking provision should ‘remove pressure from shoppers allowing them to relax and stay’ in town. The research confirms inadequacies in both parking and footfall. The overall picture of parking in the town centre shows that at the height of each shopping day, from 11am to 3pm, the car parks are frequently well over accepted levels of occupancy, and the high levels of footfall in the main short stretch of the High Street between Mill Street and Gaol Street do not extend to any of the other town centre shopping areas.

The people living in Oakham who do use the town centre are very loyal, and in our surveys 70% of those interviewed came into town more than once a week. The Shoppers Origins survey also demonstrates that the majority of those using the local businesses come from Oakham and Rutland within 10 miles. Overall however, although half the Oakham town users walked into town, nearly 40% came by car and therefore it is not surprising that 10% of them put parking on the list of improvements they would like to see.

The main area of dissatisfaction for half those interviewed was with the available retail offer, many citing the lack of shops with mid price-range goods and High Street names, and a surfeit of charity shops of which there are seven in prime locations in the town centre. The analysis of businesses by class shows that Oakham does in fact have a lower percentage of Class A1 shops (43%) than the National Database for Small Towns average (52%). In Oakham this difference equates to over 20 more retail outlets. The retail sector, however, is driven by financial viability and perhaps only a substantial increase in footfall and spending in the town would encourage an increase in the number and range of retail operations.

Oakham is fortunate in that the town is a regular destination for day visitors from a wide area with several

major cities within driving distance. For them, with 78% coming by car, parking was one of the equal top two improvements they wished to see, although of those more were concerned with the availability of the parking than the cost. The other top improvement that would enhance their visit was a better retail mix, and for them the independent shops at 58% were recorded as one of the top positive attributes of the town, not far behind the cafés and restaurants at 64%. The retail offer in Oakham, although lower than the national average in High Street names, is strong in independent shops, which make up 69% of businesses compared with the national average of 64%.

3.2 Local Usage of the Town

The largest audience for Oakham and what it has to offer is the population of the town itself, including the new settlement on its fringe at Barleythorpe, as well as the surrounding villages. The perception of Oakham by those who live here is a positive one, and when asked for one word to describe the centre there were 73% positive words as against only 27% negative ones. Their image is of a quaint, attractive, pleasant place, friendly with a community feel, and useful, compact and convenient for their needs; 80% of them would recommend a visit to the town.

This positive image is reflected in the attributes of Oakham that people most valued, and it is the catering establishments, the cafés, restaurants, pubs and bars, that came top of their list with 73 positive comments. Levels of negativity for the town were indeed much lower, but leisure facilities with 35 negative ratings, along with parking (35) and the retail mix (38), was amongst the highest. On the list of improvements that would encourage people to use the town more, leisure facilities, with 24 comments, also featured second highest. In individual comments, activities for children and young people, bowling, and many specific calls for a cinema were noted. The 'tourist' attractions in Oakham, the Rutland County Museum, Oakham Castle and the Rutland Farm Park, show strong local usage.

Quite high up in the order of negative attributes came 'traffic', expanded with additional comments, and also with 7% of suggestions for improvements that would encourage people to use the town centre more. The railway crossings are a fact of life in Oakham, but as comments show, they are an on-going source of irritation and inconvenience for many, but parking on pavements, safer provision for pedestrians crossing near junctions, and particularly reduced traffic speed and flow through the High Street, especially involving heavy goods vehicles, were called for.

Despite the high level of positivity for the town centre, 12% of the suggestions for improvement related to general town centre maintenance. Repaired pavements, more seating areas, more planting, better new architecture and better disabled access were requested.

3.3 Tourism in Oakham

Oakham is a destination town, attracting visitors from a wide area, but the majority, 64%, come from within easy driving distance, from the areas immediately surrounding Rutland. Added to this, the Shoppers Origins survey shows that on an average day of the week in Oakham, 28% of those who use local businesses are visitors, coming from ten miles away or more.

A majority of visitors come to Oakham, and indeed Rutland, on day trips and stay for between one and three hours in town, with only a third staying longer, a reflection perhaps on how much there is for visitors to do. Asked what improvements would have helped them to enjoy their visit more, after parking and more diversity of shops, the most numerous visitor comments were related to signage in the town for tourists and more information about the town and events. In particular signage to the main attractions of the 12th century Castle and the Rutland County Museum is very poor and the latter is closed on Sundays and Bank Holidays when there are many more tourists in the town.

More of those visitors in Oakham were on occasional and regular day visits than were here for a one-off visit, which suggests visitor loyalty and a good return rate. Around half of these are pairs, or small groups of adults, with a smaller percentage coming with children, so their visits are presumably not limited to weekends and school holidays. This view is upheld by the fact that the number of those using the retail and business outlets from more than 25 miles away was consistent across the week, rising steeply on the Saturday. Twice as many visitors were from only 11 to 25 miles away, and similarly consistent from Monday to Thursday but much higher on both Friday and Saturday. Sunday is a comparatively quiet day in the town, for locals and visitors alike, as the retail Sunday opening is fairly limited, and although the Castle is open in the afternoon, the Museum is closed. The overall percentage of visitors using Oakham shops and businesses is substantially higher than the national average.

Rutland Water and its associated local attractions are only a few miles from Oakham and yet there was a disappointingly low expectation amongst visitors at those locations of a visit to Oakham, with 15% having no idea what Oakham had to offer. In fact only 13% could recall having heard about Oakham from any source. For these visitors there was a low repeat visit rate amongst those who had been to Oakham on previous occasions. Those that came into the town were drawn mostly by the cafés and restaurants, the historic centre and shopping, but less than half of them were using each of these venues.

Despite the above, visitors hold a very positive image of Oakham: quaint, picturesque and historic, friendly and busy, and diverse and compact, were words they used to describe the town. This is a very similar selection to those used by the people who live here, and there were far fewer negative words used by visitors. Their perceptions of the town were positive, not just the cafés and restaurants, historic attractions and independent shops, but also the physical appearance of Oakham, its cleanliness, friendliness and the ease of walking around were appreciated.

3.4 Evidence-Base – Conclusion

This report looks at the interests of three groups of people, those who work in Oakham, those who live here and those who come to visit here. The same strands run through their comments, and the suggestions they make for a way forward are compatible. The issues that emerge from the research in this report might therefore form the basis of the future action which will affect all of them directly or indirectly.

The research draws a picture of Oakham as a traditional market town, with a strong and friendly identity, and an equally strong loyalty from those people who rely on it, and from those who visit regularly. These people all share the same attractive image of Oakham and similar positive views.

Maintaining and enhancing the identity of the town, building on its strengths, and addressing the issues highlighted by this report will encourage growth, with popular support, while still preserving Oakham's integrity.

Recommendation:

That Rutland County Council confirms its acceptance of the Evidence-base Report and its validity to determine regeneration priorities for Oakham.

4. Summary of Recommendations

This technological age is seeing fundamental and ubiquitous changes in life styles. For instance, we can now shop and be entertained without even leaving home. Nonetheless, from the detailed research we have undertaken we have learned that people who live in Oakham and its many visitors alike have a very positive view of the town and its friendliness, and appreciate its historic character and style. To ensure its success for the future we need to demonstrate that our town is a busy, vibrant, social place. We must make local people and visitors want to come into the town centre and to use it.

Amongst the measures we recommend we include adequate and attractively priced parking, more events and activities, and more enticing spaces. Calming town centre traffic and ensuring pedestrian safety with more crossing points is recommended. To enhance the townscape, we propose the reinstatement of heritage lighting of the type we once had, but with modern energy efficiency, and the replacement of lost trees. We envisage more suitable outdoor seating, for instance in the Market Place, to add to the attractiveness of the town and encourage increased use.

We can raise awareness of the fascinating history of Oakham with an illustrated heritage trail, using decorated floor tiles around the centre which will encourage visitors to explore. We can highlight our unique Castle and County Museum with attractive innovative signage.

Visitors add a great deal to the local economy. To ensure that our visitors enjoy their time here and come again, we suggest new tourist information boards, better pedestrian signage around the town, and an enhanced tourist offer. For the many tourists who come to Rutland Water and other neighbouring venues, we need much better promotion all around the county to show the attractions of Oakham as a destination town.

In our study, residents thought that we lacked leisure facilities. However, although we do not currently have a regular cinema or a bowling alley, in fact Oakham and Rutland have a wealth of leisure activities on offer. From theatre, music and food fairs through fitness and sports groups to lunch clubs and societies of all kinds, a wide range of interests for all ages is indeed catered for. Community and social engagement is really important, but what we lack are evening casual social venues for young people, and an effective channel of communication to inform all residents what is on offer, and so recommendations are made to address these issues.

Other steps can be taken too. A project to renovate the much neglected ‘west end’ of Oakham would make its mostly 18th and 19th century buildings into an attractive and characterful entrance to the town from the west. A retail trail to attract shoppers into the lesser used courts and yards of the town would increase footfall and add to the vitality of local businesses. Encouraging more markets and similar events would do the same.

The detailed Task & Finish Group’s Visions, Recommendations and Solutions, keyed to what has been learned about the town and its people, indicate the direction of travel needed to achieve a successful regeneration of the town and are set out in Appendix 1 (pp22–29 below).

5. The Future Framework: An Oakham Regeneration Partnership

As this first part of this process draws to a conclusion with the production of the Evidence-base and Recommendations Reports, it will be important to maintain the momentum over the coming months. The formation of a new body is recommended, and a working title might be '*Oakham Regeneration Partnership*' to distinguish it from the Task and Finish Group activities to date, and to demonstrate that it represents the next phase.

Its purpose would be to deliver on the recommendations made by the Task & Finish Group by developing an action plan to implement a mix of 'quick win' projects and longer-term solutions. This initiative would need to be approved by Rutland County Council and its T&F Group partners before it could formally come into force.

The LGA handbook provides a valuable framework with a strategic long-term view of town revitalisation. However the Task & Finish Group considers that a 'lite' interpretation of the framework would be particularly useful in addressing Oakham's more short-term issues. This 'lite' approach uses fewer groups and hence fewer resources, both volunteer and official. It is also hoped that this approach will facilitate earlier delivery of all recommendations, thereby resolving issues that residents and town users have raised.

The new group would develop Terms of Reference that would outline how the following objectives could be achieved:

- Research in detail each agreed recommendation by the Task and Finish Group.
- Prepare action plans with breakdown of cost and suggested resources.
- Consult with stakeholder groups and public on proposed recommendations.
- Make any necessary amendments.
- Oversee the implementation of the recommendations as amended, with agreed timescales.
- Measure the success of each implemented element of the regeneration programme.

These terms of reference would be presented to a new Project Board or Steering Group for approval, with a development project plan including milestones, and monthly or quarterly reports.

6. Outline partnership structure

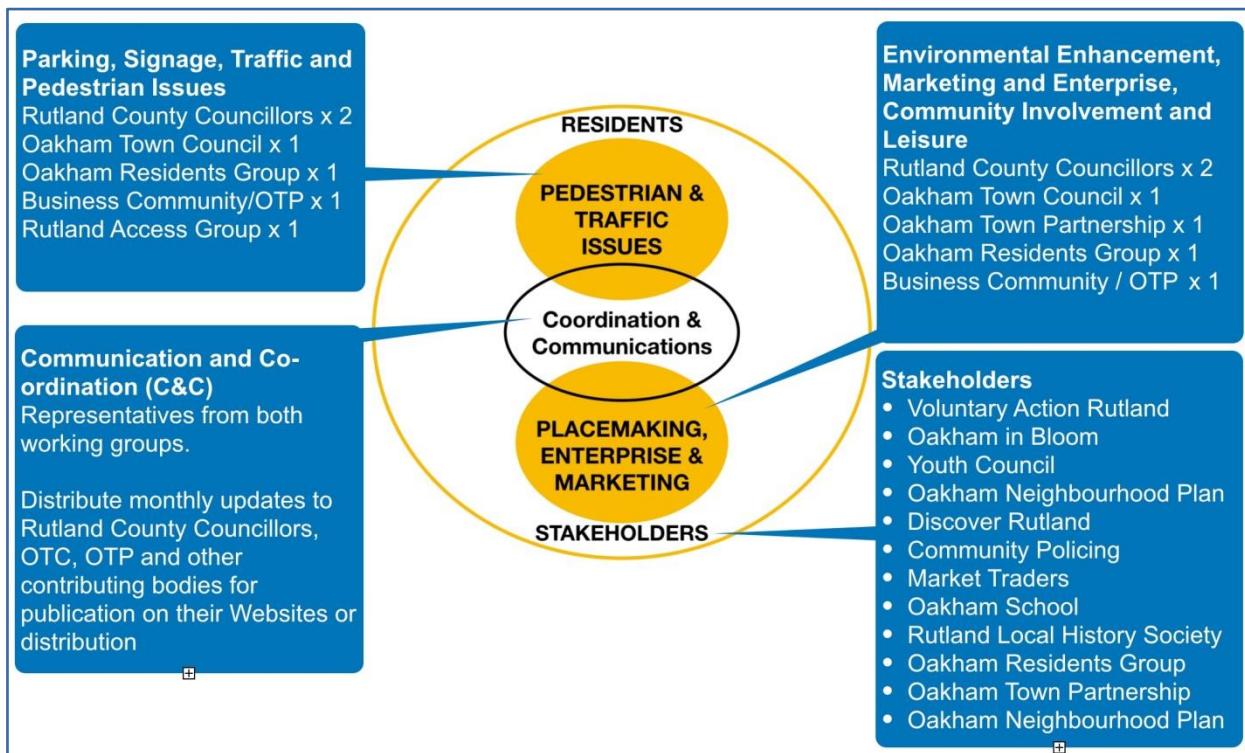
The development of an appropriate organisational 'form' is important to ensure that we have the correct structure, membership and credibility to co-ordinate stakeholder activity and influence cross-departmental or other strategic partnerships.

Community engagement for the Oakham Future Framework will be achieved through the identified local organisations and groups and their involvement in the process, with additional members co-opted onto working groups for specific projects if required. The support and engagement of Rutland County Council and Oakham Town Council will be fundamental to the success of this next phase of work.

Effective communication with key stakeholders – Oakham Residents Group, Oakham Town Partnership (OTP), Oakham Neighbourhood Plan, Voluntary Action Rutland (VAR), Oakham in Bloom, Rutland Youth Council,

Discover Rutland, Community Policing, Rutland Access Group, Oakham Market Traders, Oakham School, Rutland Local History & Record Society, Rutland Access Group and others – will be essential to our success.

The resulting populated Oakham Future Framework along with its key stakeholders might look like the diagram below.



7. Organisation and Future Planning

The overall structure suggested by the Task and Finish Group comprises two working groups, each covering related town issues, supported and co-ordinated by a third central group with chair, secretary and representatives from both working groups. This third group would also be responsible for distributing monthly updates to RCC, OTC, OTP and other contributing bodies for publication on their websites, and ensuring that the community is kept up to date with progress.

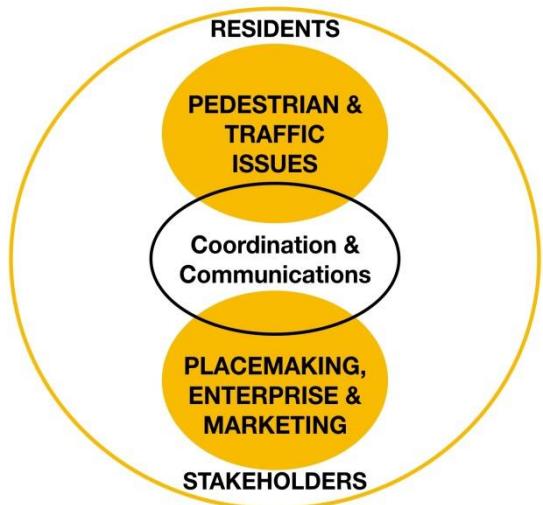
Working group areas of responsibility:

Group 1 – Parking, Traffic Issues, Pedestrian Safety and Signage

Group 2 – Placemaking, Marketing and Enterprise, Environmental Enhancement, Community Involvement and Leisure, Digital Technology & Data

Group 3 – Communication and Co-ordination, Consultation, Fundraising and Impact Monitoring

Below are suggestions for the aims, visions and scope of each of these three working groups.



Group 1: Parking, Signage, Traffic & Pedestrian Issues Working Group

Aim:

To deliver a cohesive strategy for improving the management and physical appearance of the highways and street-scene that increases the use, enjoyment and movement around Oakham by local users and visitors.

Proposed Membership:

Rutland County Council	x 2 representatives
Oakham Town Council	x 1
Oakham Residents Group	x 1
Business Community / OTP	x 1
Rutland Access Group	x 1

Monitoring indicators: *Parking usage; foot-fall; stake-holder perceptions.*

The following areas and their associated vision and summary recommendations will be within the scope of this working group. The full list of relevant recommendations and action plans is on pp22–25 of Appendix 1.

A – PARKING

THE VISION

A town with adequate car parks and on-street parking for local users and visitors, creating a positive perception that when people come into town they will easily find parking, and be encouraged to return.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Quick Wins

1. A minimum of 50 additional car park spaces be brought into public use at the earliest opportunity, and a further 50 by summer 2019.
2. Implement a zoning system to simplify on-street parking in the town centre.
3. Increase allocation of public and/or shared parking bays to the north of the High Street to achieve acceptable on-street occupancy level.
4. Implement a pricing offer to entice increased usage of the town centre by local users.

Longer Term or Strategic Projects

5. Investigate parking provision targeted at long-stay town traders.
6. Look at best practice payment systems for car parks.
7. Implement local planning consideration for new developments to provide adequate staff or resident off-street parking.

B – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

THE VISION

A town centre with a safe, comfortable environment for pedestrians, but still accessible by local road users without undue stress, and with increased ease of movement about the town.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Quick Wins

1. Introduce 20mph speed limit in the central commercial hub of Oakham.
2. Review and repair of pavements.
3. Reduce the number of heavy vehicles through the town centre.

4. Implement well-designed traffic calming measures where required.

Longer Term or Strategic Projects

5. Highways to review pedestrian crossing issues, taking into account increased foot traffic from Barleythorpe Rd, Burley Rd and Penn St as a result of housing development, and researching alternative crossings scheme for High Street.
6. Install standard run-off lane from bypass into Uppingham Road from the south.
7. Measure and produce an air pollution report for High Street and both railway crossings.

C – SIGNAGE

THE VISION

All signage from the outskirts of Oakham to the centre and within the town should be appropriate, clear, well sited, and promote the benefits of the town to its best advantage.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Quick Wins

1. Implement weight restrictions through the town centre with appropriate signage.
2. More pedestrian signage to more aspects of the town (finger posts).

Longer Term or Strategic Projects

3. Re-assessment of all signage from the bypass and outskirts to the town centre, vehicular directional signs, attraction signs and car park signs, HGV signs and all pedestrian signage (including for long distance footpaths), ensuring all signage is up to date and appropriately sized.
4. Direct tourist traffic into the town, specifically along Uppingham Rd to Rutland County Museum, Rutland Farm Park, County Offices and Parking.

Recommendation:

That Rutland County Council establish and resource a Parking, Signage, Traffic & Pedestrian Issues Working Group to deliver a cohesive strategy and measurable town improvements by June 2020 through the improved management and physical appearance of Oakham's highways and street-scene, including selected 'quick wins' by September 2019.

Group 2: Placemaking, Enterprise & Marketing Working Group

Aim:

To deliver a cohesive strategy to enhance the historic character of the town, increase social activity and tourism with an improved offer, and to support the collective action of businesses to market and boost the existing offer of Oakham as a place for local residents and visitors to shop and enjoy hospitality.

Proposed Membership:

Rutland County Council	x 2 representatives
Oakham Town Council	x 1
Oakham Town Partnership	x 1
Oakham Residents Group	x 1
Business Community / OTP	x 1

Monitoring indicators: Business confidence; foot-fall; stakeholder perceptions.

The following areas and their associated vision and summarised recommendations will be within the scope of this working group. The full list of relevant recommendations and action plans is on pp25–29 of Appendix 1.

D – ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND TOURISM

THE VISION

To conserve and enhance the heritage street scene, preventing further erosion, and to promote tourism and invigorate local pride by building on its strengths and positive local and visitor perceptions to increase the vitality of Oakham, and thus increase footfall throughout the town.

Some of these recommendations would require support from other relevant bodies, Oakham Town Council, Oakham in Bloom, Oakham Town Partnership, and local Business Groups etc. Several of the recommendations may be expected to qualify for grant-aid from external funding bodies, and every effort should be made to obtain such support.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Quick Wins

1. Define the image of Oakham we wish to promote and adopt a unifying motif for all the town signage (eg possibly based on horseshoe with coronet from Castle).
2. Install large well-sited maps with key/pictures at every car park for tourist information.
3. Pedestrian signage: plan fuller scheme of more and updated finger posts to more destinations
4. Create an illustrated heritage trail with images, reproduced onto tiles and set into the pavement.
5. Prominent promotion of Oakham Castle and Rutland County Museum at each location.
6. Consultation on shop fronts and shop signage to meet heritage requirements.
7. Crown Walk to The Maltings: liaise with landlords/property owners to agree an attractive painted/marketed pathway joining the two developments to increase footfall to both locations.
8. Design eye-catching openings into side-streets, yards and courts with composite boards for groups of businesses to replace separate A-boards and to direct shoppers into less used areas and streets.

Longer Term or Strategic Projects

9. Oakham Castle and Rutland County Museum: restructure and increase opening hours to increase the tourist offer, specifically school holidays, weekends and bank holidays.
10. Re-instate a well-signposted central tourist information office, with suitable opening hours.
11. Install heritage lighting in both Market Place and High Street to enhance the street scene.
12. Stricter planning application policy with better consultation for town centre, not just for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure the heritage street scene is protected.
13. Develop and implement a Market Place project: Submit options for public consultation. Consider increase of pedestrian area with some tree planting and additional seating possibilities, but keeping one row of chevron parking with vehicular entrance from Market Street, exiting from Market Place onto High Street.

E – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

THE VISION

Develop improved local Community Engagement by increasing the attractiveness and vitality of the town and through good publicity of events and attractions.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Set up a central, effective and free agency at Oakham Library to collect information about local events, activities, clubs and societies for adults and children, with effective strategy to disseminate information to the town and county and to wider audiences.

2. Encourage more events in the town:
 - Major events to attract visitors, eg Christmas Market, &c.
 - Smaller non-profit-making community based events to draw local people into town at weekends.
 - Special events aimed at children during school holidays.
3. Investigate ways of increasing green space in the town centre.
4. Support a local bus service with appropriate timetable to allow Oakham residents to access activities and services on offer in the town.
5. Attractively way-marked path and cycle routes into town centre through housing estates to encourage walking/cycling into town.
6. Mobility access concerns: Consult on any new town centre plans to ensure changes are sympathetic to all needs.
7. Liaise with young people through Rutland Youth Council and other organisations to consider their needs. Look to expand the Youth offer, for which there is little currently available, for example casual evening venues such as cafés or drop in centres.
8. Investigate how to facilitate current plans for a cinema in Oakham.

F – MARKETING AND ENTERPRISE

THE VISION

Lift the profile of a vibrant Historic Oakham as a destination to visitors in Rutland and beyond.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Information/advertising boards at all local tourist venues and campsites, specifically targeting places around Rutland Water.
2. Photographic images of aspects of Oakham on the by-pass, roundabouts, &c.
3. ‘Visit Oakham’ illustrated tourist signs around the county.
4. Promote and signpost Oakham’s position on the Viking Way, Hereward Way and Macmillan Way long-distance walking trails and the National Cycle Network.
5. Key into major events such as Rutland Water Birdfair and Rutland CiCLE Classic.
6. Promote Oakham through ‘Discover Rutland’ and Discover Rutland website, with tourist publications distributed in surrounding counties and placed in hotels in the area.
7. Promote educational resources in the town (Museum, Castle, Farm Park) to schools in adjoining counties.

G – ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC GROWTH

THE VISION

Support retail and business cooperation to boost the existing offer of Oakham as a place for local residents and visitors to shop and enjoy hospitality, and increase footfall in all areas of the town.

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A trade organisation is needed to coordinate promotional business and retail activity in the town.
2. Consider an Oakham ‘Buy Local’ loyalty card to encourage local shoppers.
3. Implement a ‘Retail Trail’ around the centre.

4. Consider financial start-up incentives for appropriate new businesses.
5. Consider a policy of encouraging ‘pop-up’ short-term businesses to keep empty retail premises in use till re-let.
6. Increase the use of Gaol Street as a market with more regular Farmers Markets and/or other occasional specialist markets.
7. Actively seek a change of use for the former Post Office to bring life and activity to the top of the Market Place.
8. Encourage increased offer of Sunday and evening shop/café openings.
9. Develop and implement a West End Renovation Project: Seek funding to improve the range of 18th and 19th century listed buildings, to create a characterful eatery quarter and an interesting entrance to the town from the west.

Recommendation:

That Rutland County Council establish a Placemaking, Enterprise & Marketing Working Group to deliver measurable town improvements by June 2020 through the collective action of local stakeholder groups, to boost Oakham’s character, vitality and economic viability, including ‘quick wins’ by September 2019.

Group 3: Communication and Coordination

SUMMARISED PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

Aim:

To develop and oversee delivery of the ‘Oakham Future Framework’ by coordinating the activities of the two working groups; developing and delivering the communications and engagement plan; managing fund raising and financial accountability and overseeing impact monitoring.

Proposed membership:

- Independent chair
- Representatives from each of the two working groups
- Secretary

Objectives:

a) Business planning:

To develop, deliver, and quarterly and annually review the ‘Future Framework’, comprising a business plan for organisational development and an action plan for project delivery, in close consultation with the working groups.

b) Coordination:

To co-ordinate the activities of the two sub-groups to deliver a joined-up action plan for revitalising Oakham including investigating fund-raising opportunities, overall financial accountability and collating agreed impact monitoring.

c) Communications and engagement:

To develop and deliver an agreed communications and engagement plan in conjunction with the working groups.

Recommendation:

That Rutland County Council establish a Coordination and Communication Group to develop and deliver an effective communication and engagement strategy and oversee the sourcing of internal and external funding.

8. Project Development Time-frame

As the work moves towards a delivery phase with this proposal to develop the Oakham Regeneration Partnership it is important to consider the forward resourcing needs and timetable. The table below sets out the short term timetable for the next three months. During this period there are no more scheduled meetings of the Task and Finish Group and the independent chair's role has come to an end.

<i>Future Framework Timetable and Actions November 2018 to January 2019</i>		<i>Responsibility</i>
Week 1, w/c 12th November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future Framework issued to Scrutiny Panel and all partners organisations for discussion and agreement • Committee Partners to organise presentations / engagements to their organisations 	<p>Representative of Oakham Task & Finish Group</p> <p>Dan Bottomley (OTC), Joy Clough (ORG), Alf Dewis (OTP), Paul Dowse (ONP) & Tim Norton (OK2Way)</p>
Week 3, w/c 26th November 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner feedback via meeting or email • Review and agreement on evidence collected • Responses received from Scrutiny Panel 	<p>Dan Bottomley (OTC), Joy Clough (ORG), Alf Dewis (OTP), Paul Dowse (ONP) & Tim Norton (OK2Way)</p> <p>Existing Oakham Task & Finish Group members</p> <p>Governance</p>
Week 4, w/c 3rd December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revise Future Framework in light of feedback • Membership of Oakham Regeneration Partnership to be determined 	Existing Oakham Task & Finish Group Members
Weeks 6-8, w/c 17th December 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of final responses from RCC full council meeting, all partners and stakeholder engagement to finalise the Future Framework 	Existing Oakham Task & Finish Group Members / Oakham Regeneration Partnership
Week 9, w/c 7th January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Meeting of Oakham Regeneration Partnership • Produce a schedule of meetings • Design project planning templates • Determine the final membership of the working groups • Appointment of local Oakham Chair & Secretary 	Oakham Regeneration Partnership
Week 10, w/c 17th January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish financial framework • Domain name/email account to allow for professional email • Letter heading, address for correspondence, logo, point of contact 	Oakham Regeneration Partnership
Week 11, w/c 24th January 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement & publication of outline action plan • Action plan to deliver quick win projects by June 2019 	Oakham Regeneration Partnership / RCC website; Partners' email /web sites

Longer-term resources and funding

The responsibility for providing the staff/volunteer support and skills required is outlined in the table below.

<i>Staff/volunteer support or skills required</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>
Technical expertise for working groups including highways, building conservation; planning; and parking management	RCC
Working group secretarial functions	ORP
Coordination and planning of communications and engagement	ORP
Financial accountability (treasurer)	RCC
Fund-raising research and bid writing	ORP
Coordination of impact monitoring	ORP
Coordination of action plan delivery across working groups	ORP
Independent chair	ORP

9. Recommendations to Council

It is recommended that Rutland County Council:

1. Confirm their acceptance of the Evidence-base Report and its validity to determine regeneration priorities for Oakham.
2. Support a community engagement process to ensure consultation with stakeholder groups and the wider community.
3. Agree the creation of an Oakham Regeneration Partnership by January 2019, comprising the following working groups (as detailed above, pp14–19):
 - a) Parking, Signage, Traffic & Pedestrian Issues.
 - b) Place-making, Enterprise & Marketing.
 - c) Co-ordination and Communication.
4. Agree the following support for the work of the Oakham Regeneration Partnership to enable it to deliver town benefits as set out in the T&F Group's recommendations, with measurable improvements by June 2020, including some 'quick wins' by September 2019:
 - a) Help to develop and maintain a communications strategy.
 - b) Financial management of projects by allocation of budgets and sourcing of external funding.
 - c) Input in feasibility planning and expertise in project development from relevant council officers.
 - d) Initial funding of £2,000 for admin, postage, printing, paper etc.

Appendix 1

The Task & Finish Group's Recommendations

Visions, Recommendations, Solutions

A	PARKING
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>A town with adequate car parks and on-street parking for local users and visitors, creating a positive perception that when people come into town they will easily find parking, and be encouraged to return.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>Priority</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A minimum of 50 additional car park spaces be brought into public use at the earliest opportunity, and a further 50 by summer 2019, and continued monitoring so that parking keeps pace with demand from additional housebuilding and increased tourism. 2. Implement a zoning system as detailed below to simplify on-street parking in the town centre. 3. Increase allocation of public and/or shared parking bays to the north of the High Street to achieve acceptable on-street occupancy level. 4. Implement a pricing offer to entice increased usage of the town centre by local users. 5. Investigate parking provision targeted at long-stay town traders. 6. Look at best practice payment systems for car parks. 7. Implement local planning consideration for new developments to provide adequate staff or resident off-street parking.
	<p>THE ACTION PLAN – SOLUTIONS TO CONSIDER</p> <p>Car parks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Increase parking for RCC employees on site. ➤ Investigate suitable additional car park space: Tesco has two vacant plots for sale. ➤ Negotiate with Network Rail for them to provide more parking for their rail users. ➤ Consider a basic 2-storey car park in the Westgate car park. ➤ If the Ambulance Station should move out, consider whether that site be acquired or used for parking. ➤ Given that we have so few parking spaces consider use of electronic signs at key points showing free spaces in all car parks. ➤ Investigate a park and ride scheme based at the Co-op supermarket. <p>On-street parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One hour parking zone through High St, Melton Rd, Westgate, Market Place, Mill St, Catmose St. ➤ Two hour shared zone through Station Rd, Northgate, Burley Rd, Church St. ➤ Dean Street, Finkey St, Barlow Rd, New St, John St, South St, Penn St, Brooke Rd to remain Residents-only Zone. ➤ With the current apparent under-use of both shared and residents parking Mon-Fri daytimes in Northgate, Station Rd and Burley Rd, trial converting some residents spaces into shared parking bays.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Consider converting unrestricted parking to two hour shared parking and institute parking permits for town traders in Station Rd. ➤ Choose and promote parking apps such as justpark.com to encourage householders to lease their private parking. ➤ Station Rd: Increase number of spaces by making parking bay cut into wide pavement between Kilburn Rd and Old Police Station, and remove on-street bays on south side of road.
Priority	<p>Parking Fees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Incentive: Offer two hours free parking for Christmas shopping season. ➤ Free parking for local users up to 10.30am and after 4pm, ie within shop opening hours at times when the car parks are under less pressure. ➤ When car park payment machines need replacing look at other types of system.

B	TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT AND PEDESTRIAN SAFETY
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>A town centre with a safe, comfortable environment for pedestrians, but still accessible by local road users without undue stress, and with increased ease of movement about the town.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p>
Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce 20mph speed limit in the central commercial hub of Oakham.
Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Review and repair of pavements.
Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Reduce the number of heavy vehicles through the town centre.
Priority	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Implement well-designed traffic calming measures where required.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Highways to review pedestrian crossing issues, taking into account increased foot traffic from Barleythorpe Rd, Burley Rd and Penn St as a result of housing development, and researching alternative crossings scheme for High Street.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Install standard run-off lane from bypass into Uppingham Road from the south.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Measure and produce a pollution report for High Street and both railway crossings.
	<p>THE ACTION PLAN – SOLUTIONS TO CONSIDER</p>
	<p>Traffic Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Traffic calming (as in Braunston Rd), for Barleythorpe Rd and Uppingham Rd. ➤ Barleythorpe Rd: speed limit and electronic speed signs. ➤ Look at position of Lidl supermarket entrance/exit on Lands End Way with view to separate exit away from junction with Barleythorpe Rd. ➤ Barleythorpe Rd: explore viability and benefit of widening road to three lanes alongside railway between crossing and station. ➤ Consider traffic box junctions at railway crossing junctions, ie Long Row/ Cold Overton Rd, Welland Way/Brooke Rd, Welland Way/Derwent Drive, West Rd/Cold Overton Rd. ➤ Long Row: cut parking bays back into verge to keep two free traffic lanes at Cold Overton Rd junction. ➤ Brooke Rd: implement the planned road layout between Cricket Lawns and level crossing. ➤ Monitor West Rd/Cold Overton Rd junction to check if change of priority needed. ➤ High Street: review phasing of Melton Rd/ New Street traffic lights.
	<p>HGVs and LGVs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Look at loading time restraints for town centre.

Priority	Pedestrian Safety
Priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Implement pavement repairs asap at a time convenient to traders, prioritise paving around library. ➤ Public consultation where materials might be changed. ➤ Investigate ways of discouraging parking on pavements to reduce obstruction and lessen damage to pavements. ➤ Improve facility of crossing at junction of Melton Rd, Station Rd and Northgate to include refuges. Look at existing plans for adjusting road alignment at this junction produced in 2017. ➤ Look at road marking to emphasise Melton Rd zebra crossing to increase awareness and safety. ➤ Research alternative pedestrian crossing schemes (RCC monitoring 2016/17 showed as many people cross between the marked crossings as on them) – more crossing points, with low raised pads, change of surface colour and low key marking would slow traffic and allow more on-street parking. Research DFT Capital Grants Fund. ➤ Consider new pedestrian crossing on Burley Rd near car park entrance, and South St near Penn St, the latter to enable safer crossing for residents of large sheltered housing complexes. ➤ Consider central road refuge for pedestrians crossing Burley Rd from Catmose St to High Street. A temporary refuge could be installed to trial suitability. Longer term widening the road at that point by cutting back the pavement might be considered since it would not impact on the gardens. Consult with Oakham in Bloom. ➤ Improve safety in Brooke Rd from level crossing to Trent Rd, by creating parking bays to keep pavement clear, and two clear lanes for cyclists (children cycling to school), traffic and both school and hopper buses. ➤ Investigate safety issues of Catmose College students issuing from Park Lane and heading into town.
	Pollution
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Signs to ask drivers to switch off engines while waiting for trains at crossings.

C	SIGNAGE
	THE VISION
	All signage from the outskirts of Oakham to the centre and within the town should be appropriate, clear, well sited, and promote the benefits of the town to its best advantage.
	THE RECOMMENDATIONS
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement weight restrictions through the town centre with appropriate signage. 2. More pedestrian signage to more aspects of the town (finger posts). 3. Re-assessment of all signage from the bypass and outskirts to the town centre, vehicular directional signs, attraction signs and car park signs, HGV signs and all pedestrian signage (including for long distance footpaths), ensuring all signage is up to date and appropriately sized. 4. Direct tourist traffic into the town, specifically along Uppingham Rd to Rutland County Museum, Rutland Farm Park, County Offices and Parking.
	THE ACTION PLAN – SOLUTIONS TO CONSIDER
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Uppingham Rd/Catmose St traffic lights directional parking signs for weekend parking for cars and campervans.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seasonal management of vegetation obstructing signs. ➤ Regular maintenance of signs to ensure smartness and legibility. ➤ Control proliferation of advertising banners on bypass adjoining roundabouts. ➤ For pedestrian signage see recommendations in Environmental Enhancement.
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D	ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT AND TOURISM
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>To conserve and enhance the heritage street scene, preventing further erosion, and to promote tourism and invigorate local pride by building on its strengths and positive local and visitor perceptions to increase the vitality of Oakham, and thus increase footfall throughout the town.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define the image of Oakham we wish to promote and adopt a unifying motif for all the town signage (eg possibly based on horseshoe with coronet from Castle). 2. Install large well-sited maps with key/pictures at every car park for tourist information. 3. Pedestrian signage: plan fuller scheme of more and updated finger posts to more destinations. There are currently five heritage-style finger post signs installed with a varying number of arms. These should be reviewed as to their content and position, with the aim of adding additional arms with much more local information where necessary and/or re-siting where poorly positioned. Additional sites for similar signs, including in car parks, should be identified, and other pedestrian signage should be brought into line and/or updated. 4. Create an illustrated heritage trail with images, reproduced onto tiles and set into the pavement. The tiles would be located at places of specific interest. This will create a cultural walking experience, following brass style arrows on the pavements, with local motif, for visitors and residents to celebrate the heritage and identity of Oakham and encourage the footfall and flow of people around the town. There would be a written guide and an app link to a heritage website. This should be a project with community involvement and possible Arts Council funding (as with existing Gaol St wall panels). 5. Prominent promotion of Oakham Castle and Rutland County Museum at each location. These are both tourist attractions of national importance, but very under-promoted. Prominent attractive artwork at the bottom of Castle Lane and on Uppingham Road would alert tourists to their positions. Consultation with Historic England needed, and grant funding should be sought. 6. Stricter policy and consultation on shop fronts and shop signage to meet heritage requirements. 7. Crown Walk to The Maltings: liaise with landlords/property owners to agree an attractive painted/marked pathway joining the two developments to increase footfall to both locations. 8. Design eye catching openings into side-streets, yards and courts with composite boards for groups of businesses to replace separate A-boards to direct shoppers into less used areas and streets. Entrances to passages and yards could be highlighted with tall shrubs in planters, thereby increasing the 'green' credentials of the town. Consultation with Oakham in Bloom recommended. 9. Oakham Castle and Rutland County Museum: restructure and increase opening hours to increase the tourist offer, specifically school holidays, weekends and bank holidays.

	<p>10. Re-instate a well signposted central tourist information office, with suitable opening hours.</p> <p>11. Install heritage lighting in both Market Place and High Street to enhance the street scene. Modern period-style wall mounted lamps could be installed with economic and effective LED lighting. They are available in styles akin to those used in Oakham in the past. Placement should aim to enhance the period building ranges and heritage buildings, during the day for character as well as at night. These are used to good effect in other parts of the town, ie the Maltings, Gaol St and Dean St.</p> <p>12. Stricter planning application policy with better consultation for town centre, not just for listed buildings and conservation areas, to ensure the heritage street scene is protected.</p> <p>13. Develop and implement a Market Place project: Submit options for public consultation. Consider increase of pedestrian area with some tree planting and additional seating possibilities, but keeping one row of chevron parking with vehicular entrance from Market Street, exiting from Market Place onto High Street. Consider making whole Market Place level with no raised kerbs, easier for pedestrians, pushchairs and mobility vehicles and avoiding trip hazards when events held there. Research plans made by RCC in 2017 to see if they could be adapted to meet current need.</p>
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E	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>Develop improved local Community Engagement by increasing the attractiveness and vitality of the town and through good publicity of events and attractions.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p>1. Set up a central, effective and free agency at Oakham Library to collect information about local events, activities, clubs and societies for adults and children, with effective strategy to disseminate information to the town and county and to wider audiences by a wide variety of vehicles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Start-up campaign to inform local organisations. ➤ Maintain an inclusive database of Rutland groups, clubs and societies including Parish Councils and other relevant bodies, with contact information. ➤ Promote and maintain a specific effective, well designed website (replacing the section on RIS – Rutland Information Service) with sections to include events, regular clubs and activities, local Societies and activities and events for children and for young people. ➤ Produce a monthly diary list of events for the website and circulate it by e-mail to all groups on the database for further dissemination. ➤ Install electronic sign board with scrolling information in Oakham town centre to alert town users of imminent events – footfall research suggests corner of Gaol St and High St. ➤ Liaise with free publications, eg ‘The Village Diary’ and ‘In & Around Oakham’, to disseminate event information through their diary pages. ➤ Publicise the Monthly Events Diary widely. (Rutland Radio, press, social media, RCC Website and newsletter, OTC website, Discover Rutland Website, Oakham Needs etc). <p>2. Encourage more events in the town:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Major events to attract visitors, eg Christmas Market, Food Fairs, Beer/Cider Festivals, and events to showcase local products, businesses and restaurants. ➤ Smaller non-profit-making regular events to draw local people into town at weekends: These can be community based, and of local interest, pop-up museum, farm park petting corner, demonstrations, local charity stalls, Street theatre, music groups, &c.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Special events aimed at children during school holidays. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Investigate ways of increasing green space in the town centre. Identify key spaces that could be enhanced with planting of suitable trees in association with lighting (uplighting for trees?), seating, and possible shelter structure (eg High St by Congregational Church, Baptist Church, entrance to Gaol Street, outside Wilkos, Market Place). Consultation with Oakham in Bloom is recommended for this project. 4. Support a local bus service with appropriate timetable to allow Oakham residents to access activities and services on offer in the town, particularly elderly, vulnerable and isolated people who lack transport and who may be out of walking distance. Currently no bus service to Oakham west after 2.30pm. 5. Attractively way-marked path and cycle routes into town centre through housing estates to encourage walking/cycling into town, in conjunction with RCC's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (RoWIP), with an accompanying and easily accessible printed and on-line rights of way map. 6. Mobility access concerns: liaise with Rutland Access Group on town centre issues. Consult on any new town centre plans to ensure changes are sympathetic to all needs. 7. Liaise with young people through Rutland Youth Council and other organisations to consider their needs. Look to expand the Youth offer, currently little available casual evening venues, such as cafés or drop in centres. Look at funding for making more use of the Jules Centre, which is well placed with good outside space. 8. Investigate how to facilitate current plans for a cinema in Oakham similar to that in Melton Mowbray.
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F	MARKETING AND ENTERPRISE
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>Lift the profile of a vibrant Historic Oakham as a destination to visitors in Rutland and beyond.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information/advertising boards at all local tourist venues and campsites, specifically targeting places around Rutland Water. 2. Photographic images of aspects of Oakham on the by-pass, roundabouts etc. 3. 'Visit Oakham' illustrated tourist signs around the county. Consider using suitably sited existing traffic sign poles to affix tourism signs on the back, facing traffic from the opposite direction (used to good effect eg around Ludlow). 4. Promote and signpost Oakham's position on the Viking Way, Hereward Way and Macmillan Way long distance walking trails and the National Cycle Network in conjunction with the RoWIP. 5. Key into major events such as Rutland Water Birdfair and Rutland CiCLE Classic. 6. Promote Oakham through 'Discover Rutland' and Discover Rutland website. 7. Promote educational resources in the town (Museum, Castle, Farm Park) to schools in adjoining counties. 8. Promote through tourist publications in surrounding counties. 9. Tourist literature to be placed in hotels in the area.

G	ENCOURAGING ECONOMIC GROWTH
	<p>THE VISION</p> <p>Support retail and business cooperation to boost the existing offer of Oakham as a place for local residents and visitors to shop and enjoy hospitality, and increase footfall in all areas of the town.</p>
	<p>THE RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A trade organisation is needed to coordinate promotional business and retail activity in the town. 2. Consider an Oakham 'Buy Local' loyalty card to encourage local shoppers. 3. Implement a 'Retail Trail' around the centre to increase footfall off the High Street, promote window vignettes for independent local shops/ buy local scheme. 4. Consider financial start-up incentives for appropriate new businesses. 5. Consider a policy of encouraging 'pop-up' short-term businesses to keep empty retail premises in use till re-let. 6. Increase the use of Gaol Street as a market with more regular Farmers Markets and/or other occasional specialist markets. 7. Actively seek a change of use for the former Post Office to bring life and activity to the top of the Market Place. 8. Encourage increased offer of Sunday and evening shop/café openings. 9. West End Renovation Project: Seek funding to improve the range of 18th and 19th century listed buildings, to create a characterful eatery quarter, and interesting entrance to the town from the west. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Working party to undertake research, prepare plans and gain support from businesses and landlords, and Historic England, and source project funding. ➤ Renovation of buildings, replacement windows in styles more in keeping with period. ➤ Complementary colour scheme for repainting walls. ➤ Cohesive style/colour use for shop signs. ➤ Encourage eateries to meet 5-star hygiene standards. ➤ Explore possibility of attractive well-lit covered area with benches, tables for eating out. ➤ Provision of bins for rubbish. ➤ Display board with map of all local restaurants and takeaways. 10. Promote major events to attract visitors, eg Christmas Market, Food Fairs, Beer/Cider Festivals, and events to showcase local products, businesses and restaurants (<i>see</i> E – Community Engagement). 11. Consistent look for composite shop advertising boards at junctions/ yards/passages to replace A-boards (see environmental enhancement). 12. Where suitable premises exist in town, limit further town edge shopping outlets which attract people away from the centre. 13. Encourage engagement with town centre landlords and property companies.