

Cabinet – 25 July 2024

Member Question

Councillor Dilys Neill to Councillor Mike Evemy, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

I enclose FYI the policy for Stow in the current local plan. There is a recognition of the need to improve the environment of the Square by finding an alternative site for parking, there is support for a new community facility & small local workshops. None of this has been achieved, or even seriously addressed since the local plan was made in 2018 & I will be addressing this further with a members question to Council.

What I would like to raise with Cabinet today is the suggestion that a Town Museum shows be a key project. It seems that this idea has not been pursued. During this administration, hundreds of thousands of pounds have been invested by the Council in its Cirencester assets, particularly the Corinium Museum, which I understand holds some artefacts which belong to Stow, but also for example the Old Station.

CDC own the toilet block in Stow which has a couple of small rooms attached which are not in use & where a very small museum could be housed. The Battlefield Society has suggested to Stow Town Council (STC) that more information about the English Civil War & particularly the Battle of Stow should be provided in the town.

CDC has recently discussed with STC the possibility of STC taking over the toilet block which is in a central position in the Market Square where many coaches drop off tourists. No agreement has been reached.

My question to Cabinet is what do you propose to do with this building? I would ask that the Council either reconsider keeping the toilets open & looking at the possibility of using the redundant rooms as a museum. If not, please will you find a way that STC can reasonably take ownership of the building rather than leasing it.

If the building is sold on the market & becomes either another B&B or coffee shop, then there will be huge anger among the residents & businesses of Stow & I will not be able to defend this Council & this administration to my ward.

7.15 Stow-on-the-Wold (POLICY S13)

7.15.1 Stow-on-the-Wold is a compact market town, known both nationally and internationally as a tourist attraction, and locally as a service centre for nearby villages. With its striking and unusually prominent hilltop setting, Stow sits high on the Wold wholly within the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The town, along with neighbouring Mangersbury, has many listed buildings.

7.15.2 Tourism is crucial to the long-term economic prosperity of Stow, and the high quality of the town's environment has been a key factor in the town's economic success. The town is an important contributor to the District's economy, with a good range of shops and services. The centre is healthy and vibrant with lower than average vacancies. Hotels, pubs, restaurants and tea/coffee shops are abundant, and the town has a high proportion of holiday accommodation with short and long-stay, which helps to sustain the economy all year round. A significant number of working age residents are employed within the town.

7.15.3 Tourism and local tourist accommodation has a positive impact on the vibrancy of the town centre. Enhancing the town centre further (e.g. by reinstating the Market Square as the focal point of the town) is an important economic priority. Addressing car parking and congestion problems in the town would help to achieve this. The development of a Town Museum has been identified as a key project that would enhance the attraction of Stow to visitors. Proposals for new development will take account of parking

facilities and congestion issues in the centre of the town and the need for improvements to the pedestrian environment to enhance the centre.

7.15.4 Options should be explored for improving the physical environment of the town centre, including moving car parking provision from the Market Square to a suitable location within easy reach of the town centre. A suitable site could also be identified for additional off-street car parking provision to alleviate the impact of tourism and maintain the contribution that visitors make to the town's economy.

7.15.5 The District Council would support the provision of a new community facility, incorporating sports and leisure provision, new library facilities and health services. In addition, the District Council will continue to seek a site for small local workshops/B1 uses within the town.

Policy S13

STOW-ON-THE-WOLD

The following tourism initiatives are supported in principle:

- the development of a town museum to support the tourism economy.

The following non-strategic (local) infrastructure project is proposed:

- a. the provision of a new community facility.