

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Scrutiny Review of High Street and Town Centre Regeneration – Bolsover Town Centre Public Realm

Report – February 2014

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**Foreword of Councillor Keith Bowman
Chair of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee**

On behalf of the Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee, I am pleased to present a report on Bolsover Town Centre Regeneration Review.

The review has been a challenging one from the outset, originally arising from the Annual Scrutiny Conference of April 2013, when it was decided to review all four of our Market towns. i.e. Bolsover, Clowne, Shirebrook and South Normanton. It soon became apparent that to review all four Town Centres at the same time was too cumbersome, unwieldy and ultimately too time consuming.

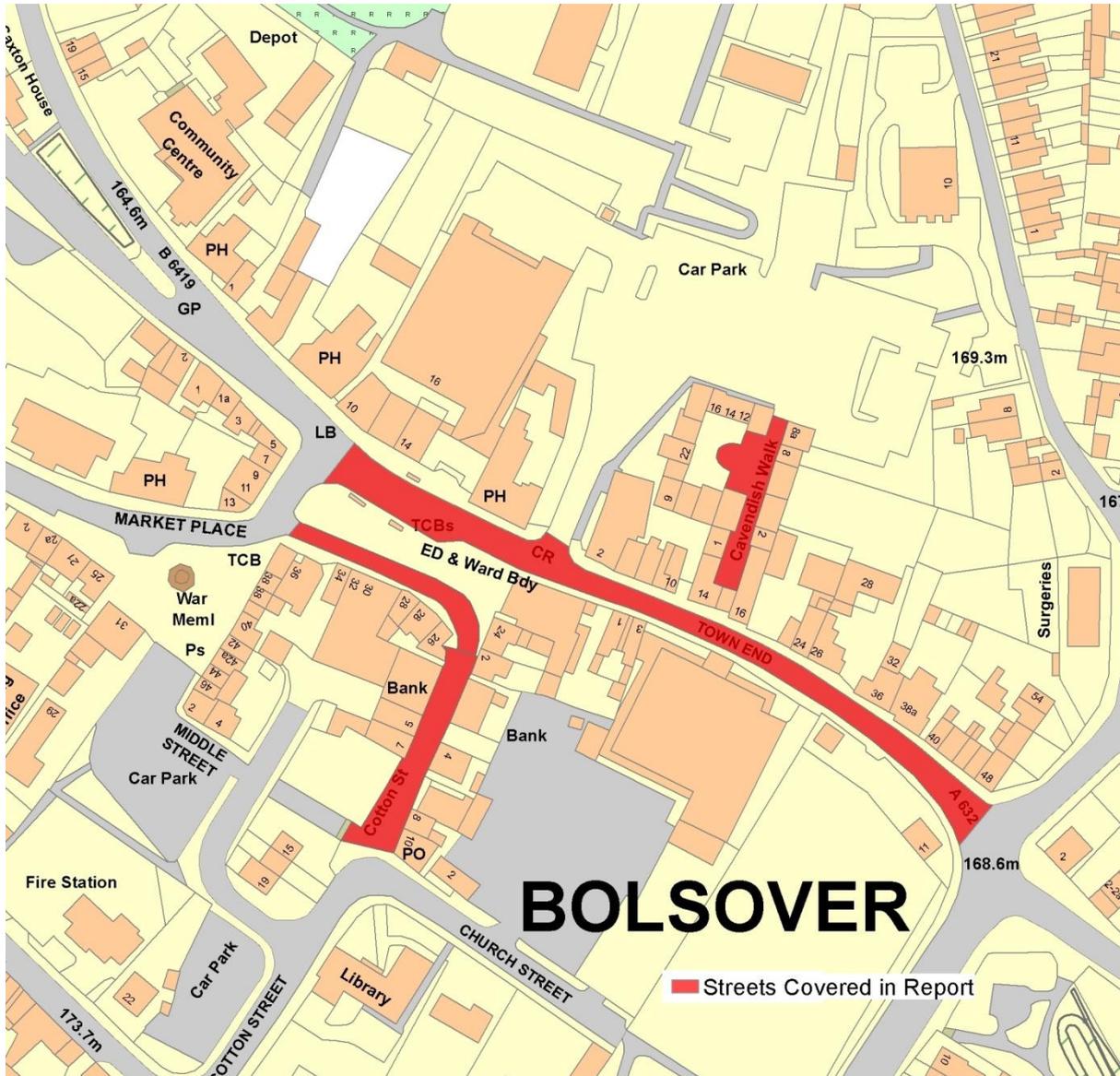
It was therefore decided at Committee that we would concentrate on Bolsover Town centre and if time allowed, do a light touch review on the other three towns. I will give the reasons for this decision in the Introduction to the Review report.

The recommendations, findings and conclusions are based on evidence derived from stakeholders, site visits, the relevant Local Authorities and other interested groups.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has participated in this Review, they are Old Bolsover Town Council, Bolsover Civic Society and Purcell; Claire Millington, Lynne Cheong, Alison Bluff, Corinna Beatson, Steve Brunt, Peter Sawdon, Therasa Garrod and of course the Cabinet Members for Regeneration and Environment, Councillors Alan Tomlinson and Dennis Kelly.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee for their commitment, co-operation and contributions to the Final Report.

Bolsover Town Centre: Area of Review



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1. Introduction

As referred to in the Chair's Foreword, the reasons for selecting Bolsover for the Review are as follows:-

1. The impending arrival of Morrison's supermarket
2. The High Street Innovation Fund for which funding has been received

3. A bid to the European Regional Development Fund had been made (and which ultimately proved successful), resulting in a consultation exercise being undertaken by Purcell
4. This consultation impacted on our Review to the extent that we could not and would not duplicate their findings and consequently we felt that we must concentrate our efforts on the other parts of Bolsover Town Centre that had not been covered by the Purcell Report.

Given the above, this Review is to be seen as complementary to the Purcell Report but confined to the other areas of Bolsover such as Cavendish Walk, Cotton Street, the main thoroughfare the A632, the disused Market Square, etc. This area is highlighted in the map above (Page 3).

Bolsover's medieval origins are evident in its townscape with Bolsover Castle - a significant and growing attraction for tourists - a 13th century church tower and the stone houses lining Market Place. The Purcell report indicates that better physical linkage between these three unique features could be achieved by works in the public realm, inviting tourists into the town centre. The role of tourism in boosting local economies is widely acknowledged:

Understanding the unique characteristics of a place and creating an authentic experience for the people who want to visit it are key to good destination management. Local authorities are at the heart of this focused and place-specific support to the tourism sector. Ultimately, tourism needs great destinations – and supporting the creation of great places for communities and business to thrive is what councils are there to do.

Local Government Association, The visitor economy: A potential powerhouse of local growth, June 2013

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **Formation of 'Town Committee' including traders, District, County and Town Councils, etc: although this is part of the Purcell work, we need to strongly underline the need for its formation.** Please see Appendix 4 (page 18) for proposed partnership structure.
- 2.2. **An advertising campaign be launched once the work to the War Memorial area etc has been completed; also the Morrisons store if it coincides within a reasonable time period.**

The Town Committee may wish to consider the following:

A voucher scheme or 'Bolsover pound' could be used to encourage people to shop at various shops in the town, eg spend so much in one store and get a £5 voucher to be used at other participating stores. A leaflet detailing participating shops could be put together and distributed around the town centre, also at the Castle, library, Contact

Centre etc. This has been successful in other towns and is one of the suggestions in the Centre for Public Scrutiny briefing document.

Initiate a dialogue with Morrisons on how they could encourage their shoppers to shop locally. Morrisons did state during their consultations that they wanted to bring business to the other shops in the town. If the above recommendation for a voucher scheme is taken up by the traders, would Morrisons be prepared to have copies of the leaflets in their store? A general directory of the shops in the town centre could be put together by the traders for display in Morrisons.

2.3. Work with the Town Council to obtain disused land.

2.4. Consider relocating the Market stalls to the War Memorial area.

This has been suggested by several people as part of the survey responses. In addition, the Purcell report has also suggested including temporary market stalls around the War Memorial to be used for special events. The stalls would attract tourists visiting the Castle into the town centre. Also, once the new BDC Contact Centre has been completed, there will be more footfall in the area from regular shoppers.

2.5. Work with Derbyshire County Council to restore the proper surfaces to Cotton Street, and enforce the pedestrian zone.

The poor standard of repair work using Tarmac instead of paving stones was highlighted on our site visits, and by both the Town Council and Civic Society. The paved area is not suited to volumes of traffic and should the market stalls be moved, there could be substantially less use. The survey work also indicates that shoppers find the traffic a nuisance, and a hazard to safety. Whilst some access is needed to the banks etc, it negates the whole point of having a pedestrianised area if being used by other vehicles. The pedestrian area does not seem to have ever been enforced, so even a short period of patrols could cut much of the traffic.

2.6. Assist the traders on Cavendish Walk to lobby their landlords to tidy up the area and make it more attractive: they should have a vested interest as it would help let the empty units.

Once the work from the Purcell review has been completed and the new Morrisons store opened, this is going to look even more dilapidated and trade is bound to suffer as a result. The survey work highlighted dissatisfaction with the area. The paving needs renewing, seating repaired or replaced and a proper display needs to go in the flower bed. An alternative area for storing waste bins would help; the bin storage area by the Ashgate Hospice shop and the Cafe does not have enough room. The rest of the bins are left outside the shops, again giving the impression of an alleyway. In addition, customers of the bookmakers on Town End use the entrance to Cavendish Walk as a smoking area. The florist and pet shop do their best to make attractive displays, but are frustrated with the overall scruffiness of the area. The co-operation of the bookmakers and the Estate Agents on the other side of the entrance also

needs to be enlisted; their businesses will also suffer if people only shop in the more attractive areas.

- 2.7. **Signage to promote Cavendish Walk, to advertise the shops.** People are more likely to be attracted into Cavendish Walk if they see something of interest to them.
- 2.8. **Request that the Tourism Officer discuss the possibility of Farmer's Market, Craft Fair etc ideas with the Old Bolsover Town Council.** Such events will enliven the town, shoppers and local people as well as attracting visitors. Bolsover has held many successful events in the past. Survey work showed a great deal of interest for such events and the new town committee should take up the suggestions.
- 2.9. **A sustained and improved attempt be made at addressing the litter and untidy areas in the town centre by BDC Street Services and aligned with Old Bolsover Town Council.**
- 2.10. **To use the learning from this report / Scrutiny review as a pilot to repeat the process for the other towns - Clowne, Shirebrook and South Normanton.**
- 2.11. **Consider establishing database/system identifying which authority, landlord or individual is responsible for which services and property.**

3. Scope of review

To carry out a review focusing on the high street and town centre public realm to complement the work of Regeneration and the ERDF Bid by continuing the public realm focus on a wider area of the town centre.

Upon completion of the scrutiny review, to produce a report to Executive detailing findings, conclusions and any recommendations arising from the review.

- To consider what local people want from Bolsover Town Centre
- To consider what local businesses want from Bolsover Town Centre
- To consider how these aspirations can be reconciled
- To consider what practical actions can be taken to put these aspirations in place
- To consider what policy areas will be affected by any actions and the impact of these actions.

The Committee comprised the following Members:

Councillor Keith Bowman

Councillor Clare Munks

Councillor Toni Bennett

Councillor Andrew Anderson

Councillor Steve Fritchley

Councillor Graham Parkin

Councillor Deborah Watson

Councillor Sue Wallis

4. Method of review

The Review drew on a range of opinions and engaged various methods.

Documentary evidence
Survey findings
Questionnaires
Interviews with stakeholders
Site visits

Members undertook two site visits to Bolsover town centre on 31 July 2013 and on 22 October 2013 with the aim of directly engaging with visitors and with local businesses.

Equality and Diversity

Within the process of the review, the committee has taken into account the impact of equalities. No adverse impacts have been identified during this process which are not already being addressed.

5. Evidence

5.1 Documentary evidence

- Centre for Public Scrutiny, High Street and Town Centre Regeneration Policy Briefing, October 2012.
- Department for Communities and Local Government, Re-imagining urban spaces to help revitalize our high streets, 2012
- Local Government Association, Local Leadership, local growth, 2012
- Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Healthy High Street? – A healthcheck for high streets and town centres, 2012

5.2 Visitors to the town centre

The User Engagement Officer, Corinna Beatson, gathered views on the health of Bolsover district's four town centres through a Citizens Panel survey in May 2013, producing a separate report for Bolsover town. This provided detailed analysis of how, when and why people used Bolsover town centre and the things they both disliked and liked about it. Most visitors come into the area by car to shop and use local businesses so effective transport networks into the town and adequate car parking facilities are central concerns. Respondents also expressed a desire for a wider variety of shops, more independent shops and better quality leisure facilities. Overall, 55% of respondents were satisfied with aspects of the public realm in the town centre but 28% were not.

People's favourite thing about the town centre was its history and character with tourism connected to Bolsover Castle seen its biggest opportunity.

Planning Officers attended the Youth Council with the User Engagement Officer on 18 June 2013 to gain the views and opinions of Youth Councillors on Bolsover District's four town centres, using the questions from the Citizens Panel survey to inform the discussion. Students highlighted graffiti and litter as a problem within the town centre but rated eating and drinking places as 'good'. Sports facilities and more specifically the Extreme Wheels portable track is the improvement they would most like to see in Bolsover town centre. This gives some insight into young people's greater use of the town centre as a social space.

A site visit on 31 July 2013 gathered a range of views from visitors to Bolsover town centre, 48% of whom did not live in the town. Free parking in Bolsover was valued by visitors but insufficient car parking was a key concern, including disabled and parent and child bays. A need for public toilets and baby changing facilities was also identified. Street cleanliness and lack of, or poor condition of seating, planting, pavements and buildings were problems but the majority felt that the town's centre was a nice place to visit due to its compact layout, friendly atmosphere and heritage features. Again, Bolsover Castle and the town's heritage were seen as the biggest opportunity for the town's future regeneration.

5.3 Local businesses

A Business Audit carried out for the Purcell report reflected the same issues being raised by local traders of street cleanliness, lack of, or poor condition of seating, planting and pavements, with parking also a problem.

Members of the Committee undertook a site visit to Bolsover town centre on 22 October 2013 where they gathered evidence from local businesses using an aide memoire to guide their questioning. Members also noted 'grot spots' which required action. The site visit focused on businesses in Cavendish Walk, Town End and Cotton Street. Whilst most traders made efforts to keep their premises and the area outside them tidy and attractive, it was felt that other businesses could do more to maintain a good image of the town centre.

Feedback from businesses gave further evidence of the need to improve the public realm and boost trade by addressing the following issues:

- Parking – car park spaces and enforcement against kerbside stops
- Traffic congestion associated with loading / unloading of deliveries
- Cleanliness of streets
- Poor condition of amenities such as seating and flower beds
- Public toilets - traders were being asked for use of their toilets as visitors were not being signposted to the existing facilities.

Some traders felt that a greater variety of businesses such as craft fairs and a farmers market alongside more local events would help to bring in more visitors and improve trade. Suggestions were made that the town's car parks were being used as a 'park and ride' facility for commuters to Chesterfield and adjacent areas, adding to the demand for spaces.

5.4 Planning

Section 106 agreements are legal agreements between a planning authority and a developer, or undertakings offered unilaterally by a developer, that ensure that certain extra works related to a development to make that development acceptable in planning terms are undertaken. S.106 agreements are used where conditions cannot be imposed on a planning permission due to legal restrictions on the use of conditions, especially where they involve works off site or the making of financial contributions.

Evidence from the Planning Officer on the availability of S.106 monies for improvements to the town centre established that these were fully allocated but had been aligned to the proposed Public Realm work around Castle Street and Market Place. This includes a bus lay-by and new traffic light system on Town End which should reduce congestion in the town centre. Traffic monitoring will be used to establish the impact of the Sherwood Lodge site development on the town centre and remedial action could then be taken if necessary.

5.5 Old Bolsover Town Council

The Chair and Vice Chair attended two meetings with Old Bolsover Town Council to explain the scope and aims of the Review and invited the Town Council to attend two Committee meetings to give their views on how the town centre might be improved. This dialogue led to immediate joint action to tackle some of the 'grot spots' by both Councils and to identify ownership of sites which appear poorly maintained by owners or leaseholders.

Old Bolsover Town Council produced an action plan document (see Appendix 2) identifying areas of concern and setting out the actions they, their partners and stakeholders could take to achieve improvements and drive co-operation.

5.6 Bolsover Civic Society

Bolsover Civic Society raised a number of issues which correspond with those of visitors and traders in the town centre. A summary was also provided to the Committee (see Appendix 3).

- Parking
- Signage to key amenities
- Public toilets
- Empty properties
- Street cleanliness
- Former market area on Cotton Street
- Historic buildings at risk

The Society expressed its support for a partnership arrangement "to encourage joined up planning and development" in the town centre.

The Civic Society raised concerns about empty properties and in particular, buildings of historical importance which are in poor repair. Whilst this is beyond the scope of this Review, Bolsover District Council has already taken steps to address some of

the issues through existing work with owners and through its Heritage at Risk Strategy 2010.

6. Key findings

- History and character of Bolsover town centre is seen as a key feature which could be linked more closely to Bolsover Castle, as the central driver for tourism
- Potential for more facilities for tourists to the area eg: overnight accommodation, evening entertainment
- More variety of shops and more independent shops to encourage visitors to explore and enjoy the town, boosting local trade
- Value/ role of key events in bringing local people together and bringing in visitors from outside the area
- Improvements to the market
- Craft fairs, food fairs, farmers market
- Parking – lack of spaces, including designated disabled and parent and child bays
- Traffic congestion
- Cleanliness and maintenance of streets and amenities as crucial to presenting a positive and welcoming image to visitors to the town
- Pedestrian access – Cotton Street
- Insufficient public toilets and better signage to those which are available

7. Conclusions

What emerged strongly from our Review was the need for a formal partnership to drive and co-ordinate the regeneration of Bolsover town centre, creating a great destination for visitors and boosting the local economy. The structure chart at Appendix 4 illustrates our proposal (page 18). Our recommendations therefore have focused on practical steps to achieve and support this goal.

A central aim is to support local shops and businesses by addressing their concerns so they can improve trade. This in turn will benefit visitors to the town centre, whether local or from outside the District.

Whilst parking issues and traffic congestion in the town centre are key concerns for businesses and visitors alike, these can be expected to reduce once the Morrisons site development, construction of the Council's new Contact Centre on Middle Street and other planned works are completed.

Street cleanliness and routine maintenance of the public realm in Bolsover town centre is a shared responsibility for councils, landlords and traders but there is no clear programme to align this work and a lack of clarity around which body is responsible for what.

Appendix 1: Stakeholders

- Cllr. Tomlinson – Portfolio Holder, Regeneration
- Cllr. Kelly – Portfolio Holder, Environment
- Planning
- Peter Sawdon – Planning Officer (Morrisons Development)
- Rachel Tate – Assistant Planning Officer
- David Eccles – formerly Joint Assistant Director of Regeneration
- Therasa Garrod – Projects Officer (Tourism)
- Leisure
- Old Bolsover Town Council
- Morrisons
- Derbyshire County Council
- Bolsover Civic Society

Appendix 2: Old Bolsover Town Council



The list below focuses on issues identified by Old Bolsover Town Council within the Town Centre for attention. It is hoped that a number of these issues may be addressed through the ERDF Funding but have been included on the list as clarification is needed on issues and improvements that can be funded through this project.

The Council recognise that collaboration and co-operation between Bolsover District Council and Derbyshire County Council are essential in achieving our aims and that the list is a living document. It is recommended that the list is shared between all partners but managed by one person who will regularly monitor progress and highlight issues to partners and other stakeholders.

We have also indicated existing work that is being carried out by the Town Council together with our proposed actions.

Improvements to Streetscene

Improvements in street cleansing and maintenance including clearance of rubbish, weeds and litter.	BDC responsibility. Suggest regular walkabouts with Streetscene. Work with private owners to encourage them to clean up their own areas e.g. Cavendish Walk, Co-op, Factory Shop. Scheduled deep clean. Jet washing. Removal of vegetation from pavement edges. Clean up stonework and paving. Repaint metalwork.
Review condition of road and pavement repairs to ensure repairs match original surface (incl. kerb edging)	Discuss with DCC, BDC Conservation Manager and Civic Society. Some work done through ERDF project to identify potential improvements.
Repair, Clean or Replace Street furniture. (Seating and Bins)	Potentially funded through ERDF. Some under Private ownership e.g. Cavendish Walk / Factory shop (OBTC discussing with owners)
Black railings on former market square opposite Town Hall	Identify who is responsible for maintenance. May be responsibility of leaseholder of Market Square.
Summer floral displays – Hanging baskets and other planters	Old Bolsover Town Council currently organise supported by local traders
Summer and Winter planting for Cenotaph	Old Bolsover Town Council currently organise supported by local traders.
Christmas Lighting	ERDF may fund purchase of Christmas Lighting as part of next years Christmas Festival Project.
Repaint Road markings	Discuss with DCC
Declutter signage and replace damaged signs (some signs are illegible)	Discuss with DCC
Review of signage and Tourist Information Boards	Discuss with DCC / BDC



Problem Premises and sites

22 High Street	BDC aware and dealing with problem. Our understanding is that action is being taken to force the sale of the property. BDC and DCC own land either side. Potential opportunity for strategic purchase site to extend Cotton Street Car Park to replace parking lost on Middle Street and longer term option for joint development on the site if the Fire station relocated in the future.
Gap Site adjacent to Banner Jones Solicitors	Old Bolsover Town Council are in discussions with Banner Jones who own the site to progress development or improve visual appearance of the site.
Cavendish Walk	Old Bolsover Town Council are in discussions with the landlords and managing agents for this site seeking improvements to be made.
Factory Shop / Former co-op	Old Bolsover Town Council are in discussions with the landlords and managing agents for this site seeking improvements to be made.
Co-op Food store	Encourage owners / tenants to clean up visual appearance of common external areas within their responsibility.
Empty Premises e.g. White Swan and adjacent premises, former Harrisons Jewellers site.	Identify barriers preventing completion and re-use of premises and encourage development to be completed.
Former Market Place area (opposite Town Hall)	200 year lease granted by BDC/OBTC in 2009. Old Bolsover Town Council have been in discussions with BDC Legal to identify responsibility for maintenance, improvement and insurance of the site and look at options to bring forward development or revoke lease.
Derelict Middle Street Car Park	Remove Heras fencing and resurface to restore site as Car Park if development not imminent.

Town Centre Events / Promotional Activity

- encourage visitors to Bolsover and the Castle
- retain spend from local residents within the town
- provide increased footfall and business for local traders

Christmas Festival / Market	Bolsover Christmas Festival and the Summer Gala have proved to bring people to the town. The Food fair that used to be held in Bolsover was also a successful event in the past. Combined with the attraction of the Castle and their planned investment there are opportunities to host a number of events during the year.
Continental Market / Food Fair	
Flea Market / Antique Market	
Other events and activities	



Marketing / Promotion of local businesses

Branding and Marketing Activities	Create a Brand and consistent image for Bolsover
Local Business Directory / Information Points	Electronic notice boards to promote local businesses and events. Free WiFi in Town Centre landing on Bolsover local website featuring local businesses, community groups and local events / activities.
Newsletter / Newspaper	Aim for publication to break-even through advertising sales. Include space for TC/DC/CC communications, events and Community Activities.
Tourism Information	Visible Information points across Town e.g. Contact Centre, Library, Town Hall Offices, local businesses e.g. Restaurants / Cafes and wider area e.g. Markham Vale service areas, businesses and other local attractions.
Resident and Stakeholder Questionnaire / Focus Groups to identify priorities, concerns and ideas	Placecheck could be used to seek views of different stakeholders.

Traffic Issues

Address traffic using pedestrianised area of Cotton Street / Market Place and parking	Work with DCC to identify practical solution and seek workable enforcement. Consideration to be given to installing bollards to close off Cotton Street as a through road. Investigate potential for Parking on Market Place on non-market days
Parking on Cenotaph area	Work with DCC to identify practical solution and seek workable enforcement. Proposals through ERDF funded project may improve issue
Parking spaces taken by residents commuting by bus to Chesterfield	Consider alternative park and ride parking outside town centre
Improve Parking facilities – Particularly problematic at times with visitors to the castle.	Identify areas to provide parking resulting from loss of Middle Street Car Park. Purchase of 22 High Street to extend Cotton Street Car Park could be an option.
Problems with deliveries at Town End	Seek options for minimising the problem
Inappropriate Parking of vehicles	Be pro-active in dealing with issues that arise by raising matters with vehicle owner.

Market

Improvements to Market	HSIF / ERDF may provide funding to promote market and improve appearance
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Larger aspirations

Leisure Facilities	Could this be funded through s106 and New Homes Bonus or alternatively encourage leisure trust or private operators. Joint venture?
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Other initiatives

Town Hall facelift (both externally and internally but external to take priority)	Identify Costs – seek opportunities for external funding.
Provision of Public Toilets and/or information on where to find them – 24/7 availability	Seek interest from local stores/pubs in providing toilets for public use. Investigate feasibility of self contained self cleaning toilets.
Repair/Replace railings at Hornscroft Park	Currently waiting for quote for replacement. External funding may be sought.
Repaint railings at Town Hall	Planned work

Appendix 3: Bolsover Civic Society

Points raised as issues by Bolsover Civic Society at a meeting with members of the District Council Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee on 2 December 2013, to be included in the Bolsover town centre regeneration report to the BDC Executive Committee.

Town centre signage, some of it now inaccurate, confusing to residents and visitors. Signage from castle needs to direct people to town facilities; Peter Fidler Nature Reserve, Parish Church, New Bolsover conservation area and other Bolsover centres of interest.

Lack of public toilets since closure of Sherwood Lodge; Castle, café, pub and library facilities not readily available to non users.

Significant Market Place properties such as Danebank House and The White Swan, both now empty and privately owned detract from the central part of the conservation area. The council should discuss with owners the future of these buildings and encourage restoration and development.

The former Bolsover Area Partnership Scheme should be reformed with representatives from BDC, DCC, Old Bolsover Town Council and Bolsover Civic Society, to encourage joined up planning and development.

Town centre maintenance of road and pavements by DCC is poor. Conservation area surfaces have been neglected and repaired with non sympathetic surfaces. Periodic meetings by a reformed Conservation Area Partnership group could prevent this happening or encourage quick remedial action.

Litter and rubbish is a large problem within the town centre. Current daily levels of street cleaning are inadequate. This encourages residents and visitors to deposit their own rubbish and regard the town as scruffy and ill cared for. Town centre litter bins provided by District and Town councils are inadequate in design, materials and quantity.

The former open market area in Cotton Street, a joint responsibility of town and district councils, needs to be developed or used for other purposes. Discussions should be held with the leaseholder. Has the latter reneged on the agreement?

67 High Street 'Gravediggers Cottage' is the oldest domestic building remaining in the town after the castle. It is in a parlous state and sits opposite the Parish Church on the way to the castle. The council should discuss with the owner possibilities for saving the building from imminent collapse. A structural report commissioned fifteen years ago by Bolsover Civic Society indicated attention was needed to save the building from eventual collapse.

22 High Street is the subject of enforcement action by BDC. Currently the council is considering compulsory purchase of this derelict building. This site could contribute towards improved parking in the town. The condition of this building was first brought

to the attention of BDC by the Civic Society three years ago. We need to reach a conclusion.

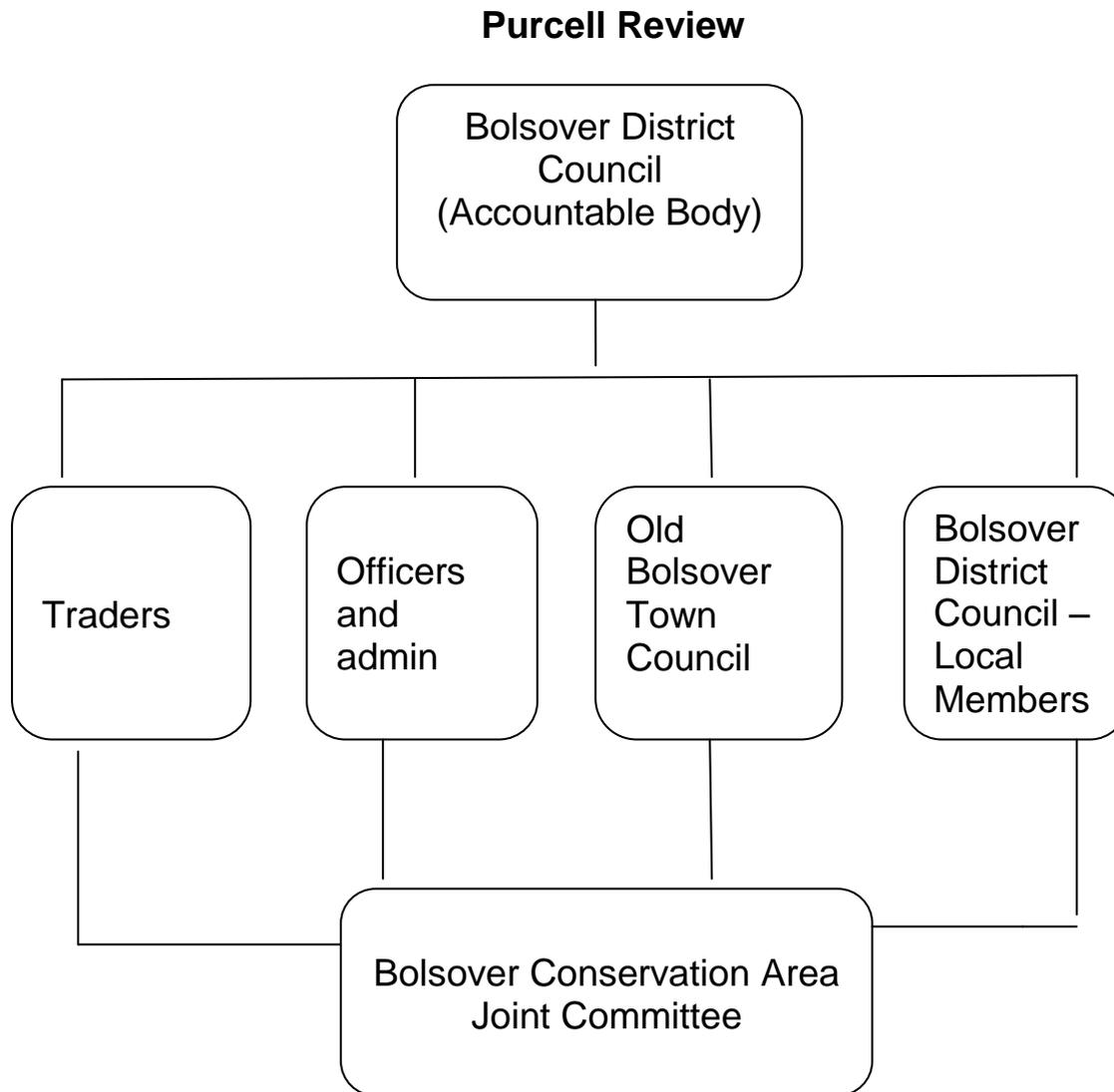
Parking has become a significant issue in the town and needs addressing with DCC, the town council and English Heritage. Enforcement action needs to be improved to deter illegal parking throughout the day.

Derelict land on Cotton Street adjoining Banner Jones requires a solution. This pedestrianised road has also become an illegal through route to the Market Place. A barrier solution preventing through access without affecting unloading to local businesses is urgently required. A multi agency Conservation Advisory Group could work on this as a priority.

Although outside the scope of this review a strategy for arresting the physical deterioration of the listed conduit houses on the Back Hills needs to be drawn up by English Heritage, district and town councils.

Bernard Haigh
Secretary Bolsover Civic Society
January 2014

Appendix 4: Proposed partnership structure



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