

The Malpas Plan Economic Issues Focus Group Meeting 8th June 2005

Present:

Steering group Members:

Business & Community:

Peter Howell (PH)	John Barlow (JB)	(Barlows Electrical)
Laurie Crump (LC)	David Prince (DP)	" "
Margaret Barker (MB)	Cathy Tennant (CT)	(Pristine)
Eric Barker (EB)	Mark Tennant (MT)	"
Sally Sharp (SS)	Alex Abberton (AA)	Resident
Anna Patten (AP)	Val Shepherd (VS)	(Shepherds)
Mike Patten (MP)	David Shepherd (DS)	"
	Bryan Hughes (BH)	(A. Hughes & Co)
	Rob Clubbe (RC)	(Reeces Creamery)
	John Proudlove (JP)	(Laser Physics UK)
	Dave Evans (DE)	(JPCS Ltd)

+ Mr Pierson & 2 others who did not record their names (Total participants = 21)

As before PH gave a brief introduction to the purpose and scope of the meeting and how it ties into the Malpas Plan - a public consultation on the future of Malpas which will be used as evidence of the will of the people when trying to tackle issues raised.

Participants were told that their comments would help to inform the process and steer the focus of the questionnaire which will be sent to all households.

Again a SWOT chart (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) was used to list some of the issues raised.

LC - We need to look at what we've got - 3 churches, GP practice, 2 good schools.

We're well off, we have a variety of services

JP - A good range of retail outlets, post office etc

Weaknesses? Can't access some of the businesses because of the traffic - Church Street is a particularly bad bottleneck.

The car parks aren't full but too many park on the street. It deters people from shopping in Malpas. Many cars are parked all day. The ability to get traffic through would encourage people.

The Wrexham Road site is a danger because of trees reducing visibility.

A 2 hour parking restriction would allow people time for shopping.

It needs support from the council to impose parking fines

We need a lay-by where the grass verge is at the Alport school.

DS - Most other villages have expanded - we need more housing to maintain the core of the village. If there is no expansion the high street will not be able to survive

DE - Affordable housing is needed to prevent young people moving away

JP - This also impacts on the labour market

LC - We need half a ring road connecting Chester Road and Wrexham Road. This was first suggested back in the 1930's avoiding the middle of Malpas. We need to sort the traffic out before any thoughts of expanding the village.

MT - Would a ring road be a threat because people would drive past Malpas?

JB - Having seen the recent television programme about Tesco's - the village shops don't stand a chance in 5 years or so.

DS - There will be less and less shops. A good flow of traffic through Malpas will help local shops

MT - We need a strong set of retailers in Malpas. Economic growth has to come from expanding the village and maintaining its accessibility

DS - We need to change the way people shop. If people don't use the shops they won't survive. We can't compete on price with Tesco.

Shepherds is very competitive but people will travel to buy things cheaper in big shops

DS - It's keeping the core of the village with a good range of shops. We need to keep the centre alive with people and good parking

JB - There are no independent electrical retailers in Liverpool. A big place like that and there are no independents left. Malpas has two.

DS - We need to try to keep what we've got.

PH - So we need to retain niche marketing. We can't compete with complex retailers like Tesco we have to retain what we have

DE - We have to present a positive image not put people off coming

CT - Are we making ourselves attractive to visitors - walkers, cyclists, tourists? Do we give them what they want to find here?

Again it's the roads that deter people

JB - We can't put our vans in the car parks overnight, they get broken into. The words 'electrical contractor' on the side of a van, you will always get people trying to break in. I'm not saying Malpas is particularly bad. We have no choice but to park on the street.

PH - Is security an issue for businesses?

Does the car park need more security - a fenced area for overnight parking for tradesmen, CCTV?

PH - What about location of businesses, industrial, commercial, farming? It's conceivable that farms may be developed as industrial sites.

RC - There's a problem of attracting a local workforce. We employ around 50 but only about 5 are local

DE - More work experience opportunities are needed for schools

PH - Are the opportunities for industrial expansion?

LC - Hampton and No Mans Heath have the space for more units

JP - We need high tech industrial units like at Cholmondely, commercial units

DS - We need cheap housing for young people. They won't want to live in Chester and work in Malpas. Have to sort out the housing before jobs.

PH - OK, what **don't** you want Malpas to become

LC - A dormitory village, empty by day, where people just come back to sleep

MB - We don't want a clone town - all shops as branches of large chains. We need to be distinctive and individual. (Referred to Distinctive Market Town report by NEF)

We need it to be a destination, we need local businesses to be supported

How popular is Malpas as a destination for tourists?

DE - A welcome pack for new residents is needed, to let people know what we have, what's here

Maybe we need to make a conscious effort to make people aware of the importance of local shops as an active campaign