



## TOWN GROUP SURVEYS – EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES

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Swaffham Town Group Survey Reports Launch Event  
5pm, 6<sup>th</sup> November, 2008  
Swaffham Town Hall

## Swaffham Town Group Survey - Executive Summary

More than 350 people filled in surveys asking for people's opinions about different aspects of Swaffham. The key themes were economy, transport, social/community and environment.

- ✚ The character of Swaffham's historic town centre is vital to the town's overall sense of identity.
- ✚ Swaffham's location relative to other places is important. Residents gain access to a wide range of employment, services, goods and diverse leisure activities in the surrounding region.
- ✚ Whilst overall employment levels are good in Swaffham, local people can struggle to find reasonably paid work or work with good prospects.
- ✚ People are very positive about the range of services available in the town but less so about the range of shops.
- ✚ Although the town possesses an excellent range of clubs and societies there is a feeling that the town lacks sufficient sources of entertainment, leisure and sporting opportunities.
- ✚ There are concerns about the impacts of traffic on the town, the absence of provision for cyclists and there is a feeling that public transport provision could be improved.
- ✚ Many people feel that the town would benefit from being 'smartened up' with greater controls over problems like litter.
- ✚ People are very supportive of environmentally friendly measures (such as recycling and renewable energy) but feel that more could be done to support these in the town as a whole.
- ✚ A good proportion of people like living in Swaffham as it is a quiet, relatively crime free location whilst others have concerns about crime and anti-social behaviour.
- ✚ People's vision for Swaffham in the future is of a place that is: **WELCOMING, THRIVING, ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY and TRADITIONAL.**

## Survey of Swaffham Businesses - Executive Summary

Approximately 250 Swaffham-based firms were sent copies of the survey. Of these 63 returned completed copies.

- ✚ The majority of firms are positive about their future trading prospects.
- ✚ The town's location is of benefit to many businesses due its situation in relation to the region's road network and thus other key settlements.
- ✚ Firms are strongly opposed to the introduction of 'pay and display' parking but would like to see better signage to and from car parks in and around the town.
- ✚ Recruitment is generally satisfactory, although firms do note skill shortages as a problem in many areas.
- ✚ Firms are adopting modern technology (mobile phones and the internet) as part of their business practice. Some firms would benefit from improved service/availability of these forms of technology.
- ✚ Red tape and costs of premises are seen as two of the biggest constraints on future business development.
- ✚ Firms are confident about their own attributes, believing that they rate very highly in terms of 'quality of product/service', 'customer service' and 'reputation'.
- ✚ The town's intrinsic character (historic townscape, market etc) is important, and firms are keen that future developments enhance this character rather than compromise it. Within this context there is a feeling that the town needs a 'central anchor' to draw in more people and investment.
- ✚ The town's economy would benefit from a more co-ordinated approach to promotion.
- ✚ In terms of the way forward for the town, a range of perspectives exist, some of them contradictory, reflecting the varying perceptions of different types of business.

## Survey of People Working in Swaffham – Executive Summary

Every day more than two thousand people go to work in Swaffham. This survey explores the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of this important body of people. The research focuses upon the dynamics of local employment and the contribution of employment to the overall sustainability of the town.

✚ People's experiences of seeking employment and working in Swaffham vary greatly. A significant segment of the workforce feel that they are underpaid, have limited promotion prospects and would struggle to find suitable alternative employment in the town. For others, working in Swaffham provides a comfortable living and lifestyle.

✚ Very few people travel to work by sustainable means. Those travelling from outside the town almost invariably travel by car. The majority of those living **and** working in the town travel by car, although a number do walk/cycle.

✚ People who work in Swaffham make important contributions to the town by shopping, using services and by getting involved in community activities. However, **where** people live and the **part of the town in which they work** seems to influence the extent to which they contribute to the town's economy and society.

- Those who live in the town or a nearby village make much more use of shops and services than those who travel from further away.
- Those who work on sites away from the town centre are less likely on average to shop or be involved in leisure/community activities in the town.
- 10% of people working in the town never shop there!

✚ Many people are positive about the shopping facilities in Swaffham – but many would like to see a greater range of retail, service and social/leisure outlets.

✚ Many people express positive sentiments about Swaffham, however a significant number hold negative perceptions about the health of the economy and the extent of social problems.

✚ Links with the villages (the hinterland) are very important as these settlements are attractive locations for Swaffham's workforce to live and the rural population provide an important market for the town's businesses.

✚ Policy implications of findings:

- There is a need to challenge negative perceptions about the town.
- Links with the villages need to be enhanced.
- Sustainable modes of transport need to be promoted.
- Housing and employment need to be considered together in planning policy in order to promote environmental and social sustainability.
- More joined up thinking is required to enable local businesses to support one another.

## Town Group - Young People Survey 2008, Executive Summary

The survey was conducted during 2007 and 2008 and was ultimately completed by 536 young people, predominantly aged between 11 and 15 from Hamond's School.

- ✚ Young people engage in a wide range of sports (swimming, cycling and football are the most popular) and hobbies (listening to music and computer games are most popular).
- ✚ Young people's favourite aspects of Swaffham include the retail and catering facilities (especially the chip shops), the open spaces (including the Recreation Ground) and certain clubs and groups.
- ✚ Half the young people surveyed belong to a local club, group or society. However, many believe that there are too few things to do whether in the evenings, the weekends or during school holidays.
- ✚ An overwhelming majority believe that the range of activities and facilities needs improving. Many would like to see a greater range of shops, improvements to the transport infrastructure and for certain social problems to be tackled.
- ✚ Less than 10% believe that enough is done to encourage young people to live a healthy lifestyle.
- ✚ Three quarters of young people feel that the attitudes of their peers and adults are a problem.
- ✚ The majority would like young people to be more involved in local decision making.
- ✚ The vast majority either walk or take the bus to school, whilst 12% come by car.
- ✚ Very few cycle to school and there is concern at the lack of cycle paths around Swaffham. There are also concerns about speeding traffic and inadequate street lighting.
- ✚ There are concerns about safety in a number of locations, most especially in town in the evenings.

## Socio-economic Change in Swaffham - Executive Summary

This report is a product of research on socio-economic change in market towns being conducted as part of a PhD by Craig Wheway of Leicester University. Data was collected via questionnaires and interviews.

- ✚ Swaffham is a town undergoing the interlinked processes of gentrification and geriatrification, whereby significant numbers of people are moving to Swaffham either just prior to retirement or during retirement.
- ✚ People are attracted to the town due to the availability of a reasonable range of services and due to the semi-rural lifestyle on offer.
- ✚ The contribution of in-migrants (including the retired) to the sustainability of the social and economic infrastructure should not be underestimated.
- ✚ People's consumption habits are indicative of gentrification.
- ✚ New housing developments are perceived as lacking accessibility to key services and facilities.
- ✚ Local people make good use of local services and facilities but there is a need to travel to access a decent range.
- ✚ Young(er) people can feel isolated from certain facilities and social opportunities. A lack of ambition is evident in some sections of the population.
- ✚ Decisions makers need to be aware of the danger that Swaffham could be perceived largely as a retirement town. This could become a self-fulfilling prophecy that skews the population structure and the range of local services.
- ✚ Swaffham is an important provider of services for the surrounding villages. This role should not be under-estimated by decision makers.

## Swaffham Visitor Survey - Executive Summary

This survey was conducted during the summer of 2007. Forty three responses from visitors to the town were returned.

- ✚ The townscape (incorporating the historic centre and the modern Ecotech Centre and turbine) are defining features of the town's identity, which people find attractive.
- ✚ A significant proportion of visitors only come to the town for a few hours.
- ✚ Local people are key ambassadors for the town as many tourists come to Swaffham either on a recommendation or to stay with friends/relatives.
- ✚ Whilst the Ecotech Centre is a popular draw, a relatively low proportion of their visitors go on to visit other sites in the town.
- ✚ Generally people enjoyed their visit to Swaffham and the majority would be happy to return.
- ✚ There is a feeling that the town's overall 'tourism product' could be strengthened and better promoted. For example, more information display boards could be put up in the town.