

WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL

TOWN CENTRE REVIEW

Last review: October 2016

Current review: October 2017

Introduction

The Town Centre Plan was first put in place in March 2008, it was reviewed in the Autumn of 2012, 2015 and in 2017. The Town and Community Plan 2017-2022 forms current policy of the Council. All past plans including Transport area included in this plan. The Town Centre Plan requires an annual review of the Town Centre and this report has been prepared to meet that requirement.

Retail

The overall figures for retail (170 units) compared with the previous year are:

YEAR	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Shop occupancy						
Occupied	88%	92%	90%	95.5%	96%	96%
Vacant	10%	8%	8%	3.3%	2.5%	3%
Under offer	2%	1%	2%	1.2%	1.5%	1%
Comparison with Wales overall						
National vacancy rate	17%	17.9%	17.5%	13%	15.4%	16%
Welshpool vacancy rate	10%	8%	8%	3.3%	2.5%	3%
Market Halls						
Occupied	77%	73%	75%	95%	87%	85%
Vacant	23%	27%	25%	5%	13%	15%
Industrial space						
Occupied	98%	87%	85%	95%	99%	99%
Vacant	2%	12%	15%	5%	1%	1%
Under Offer	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Footfall through shopping centres nationally has fallen by 1.5% in 2017. Wales overall has also seen a decrease in footfall by an average of 2.4%. Welshpool is not much different.

The larger towns and cities have the highest vacancy rates. Bangor had a shop vacancy rate of 21.8% in the first half of 2016, making it one of the worst performers. The vacancy rate was down from 22.4% in 2015. In Rhyl, 21.6% of shops were empty, up from 17.5% in 2015. Not much has changed since then into 2017.

The Town, from both the figures and the reports at the Business Forum, has again fared better in the last 12 months against the national average but overall the retail spend is varied with the main street doing much better than the side streets.

The Town has also seen the building of two new shops on the Tesco Site (BC&M's with specsavers and the Car Factory due to join them) along with the Pinewood Café changing hands apparently to Costa Coffee.

Industrial

The three main industrial estates at Severn Farm Little Henfaes and Buttington Cross are all full with little room to add more space.

Offices

The demand for office space in the Town has always been poor. There is a slight reduction in office available but as in previous years there is little change in the market.

Tourism

The Tourist attractions are reporting a mixed picture with most reporting less tourists in the year. There are only a few that have done better. The Mid Wales Tourism Report issued nationally shows that 2/3 of the Tourist related industry were either down or remained the same.

The Tourist Information Centre has confirmed that above from their records kept during the year.

There is a need for more promotion for Mid Wales which often takes second place in publications.

Service Delivery

The budget cuts continue and will continue into 2018.

The Town Council policy is to seek to retain services and the consultation responses confirm that stance.

The Town Council continues to support the Town with the provision of the Tourist Information Centre, Public Toilets and Street Scene.

Taxation

The issue of business rates continues with an urgent review needed.

There is now a reluctance by Traders to pay for any further services over and above their rates payments which has in turn lead to fly tipping. The Town Council has taken action to reduce this but the work needs to be under review.

Transport

The improved rail service is starting to have an effect on the town with people now being able to work in Shropshire and live in Welshpool. Further improvements to the service area being sought alongside improvements to the station.

Overall

Overall the Town is doing slightly better than the others in Montgomeryshire and against towns of a similar size

Action Plan for 2018

The following action plan is in place for 2018:

- i) Continue to seek a review of the rating system.
- ii) Continue to seek better facilities at the Railway Station.
- iii) Continue to work with Welsh Government to gain a full hourly train service.
- iv) Seek to gain a better deal on car parking for Welshpool.
- v) Continue to seek improvements to the One Way System.
- vi) Work with the Tourism Attractions to promote the town.
- vii) Continue with the provision of the Tourist Information Centre and Public Toilets.
- viii) Continue to improve the town with litter bins and street scene services.
- ix) Review the markets provision.
- x) Continue to host the Business Forum.
- xi) Continue to provide and support events in the Town Centre.

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Town Clerk

October 2017