

## WELSHPOOL TOWN COUNCIL TOWN CENTRE REVIEW

Last review:  
October 2017  
Current review:  
July 2018

### 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.

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

Heading	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Shop occupancy</b>							
Occupied	88%	92%	90%	95.5%	96%	96%	94.5%
Vacant	10%	8%	8%	3.3%	2.5%	3%	3.5%
Under offer	2%	1%	2%	1.2%	1.5%	1%	1%
Becoming vacant							1%
<b>Comparison with retail vacancy rates</b>							
Welsh vacancy rate	17%	17.9%	17.5%	13%	15.4%	16%	18%
Welshpool vacancy rate	10%	8%	8%	3.3%	2.5%	3%	4%***
<b>Market Halls</b>							
Occupied	77%	73%	75%	95%	87%	85%	83%
Vacant	23%	27%	25%	5%	13%	15%	17%
<b>Industrial space</b>							
Occupied	98%	87%	85%	95%	99%	99%	99%
Vacant	2%	12%	15%	5%	1%	1%	1%
Under Offer	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

**\*\*\* Including Iceland**



### **Retail footfall**

Footfall through shopping centres nationally has fallen by 1.5% in 2017 and by 0.5% in 2018.

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 25% in the first half of 2018, making it one of the worst performers. The vacancy rate was down from 22.4% in 2015.

In Rhyl, 22.5% of shops were empty, up from 17.5% in 2015.

Not much has changed since then into 2018.

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

### **Retail assessment**

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

The current vacancies are:

#### **Berriew Street**

Langford's

2 very small units forming a single unit in poor repair

#### **Severn Street**

No retail vacancies

#### **Church Street**

No retail vacancies

#### **Broad Street**

Nat West Bank building

Old Celtic Shop unit

Old Norman Lloyd's premises

#### **High Street**

No vacant units.

#### **Puzzle Square and side streets**

Small florist shop as you enter Hopkins Passage

Inglenook café (being refurbished and re-let as a café)

#### **Retail Park**

End unit by canal side

## **Changes in the retail sector in the past year and coming soon**

The changes that are known about include:

### **Berriew Street**

A new beauty shop has opened in the ex fruiterers

### **Severn Street**

No change

### **Church Street**

The smoothie shop has changed to a barbers shop

### **Broad Street**

Norman Lloyds have combined with Morris Marshal and Poole leaving a unit empty

Costa Coffee has moved into the old Pinewood Café

### **High Street**

No changes.

### **Puzzle Square and side streets**

Candle Shop moved into old Paint Shop

Monkey Puzzle has extended

Iceland as announced its closure in September 2018

### **Out of town**

A new Harry Tuffin's petrol filling station with convenience store has started construction.

## **Industrial**

The three main industrial estates at Severn Farm Little Henfaes and Buttington Cross are all almost full with little room to add more space. The two small units available have strong interest.

## **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

## **Tourism**

The Tourist attractions are reporting a mixed picture with most reporting slightly less tourists in the first half of the year. However, those coming appear to be spending more.

The market traders have reported better footfall than last year whilst the Tourist Information Centre is fairly slightly better than last year.

The Tourist Information Centre has confirmed the 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 County Council budget cuts continue and will continue into 2018-2019.

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 effect on the town from retaining these services is now showing real benefit.

### **Business rates**

The issue of business rates continues with an urgent review needed. A further approach to the Welsh Government has been made on this subject.

There is now a reluctance by Traders to pay for any further services over and above their business 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.

### **Rail 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.

### **Bus transport**

There are now plans with funding for a new bus interchange in the Berriew Street car park programme to be complete before Easter 2019.

Cuts to bus services locally are still a threat and are kept under review.

There is a new Welshpool to Cardiff bus due to start its service in early 2019.

### **Residential**

There is little property in this sector on the market with values still remaining steady even with a shortage of supply.

The lower end of the market has moved a bit (5%) but no real movement further up the chain.

### **Overall**

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

However, things can change very quickly and the loss of Iceland in Puzzle Square along with the Nat West Bank building in the main street needs to be considered.

### Action Plan for 2018

The following action plan was put in place for 2018 – the schedule shows what was to be taken forward and the progress made:

No	Activity	Action taken
1	Continue to seek a review of the rating system	Further approach to Welsh Government made with a meeting with the Ministers Department in September 2018
2	Continue to seek better facilities at the Railway Station	A new station plan has been prepared and meeting with Welsh Government arranged for August 2018
3	Continue to work with Welsh Government to gain a full hourly train service.	Work continues with the next meeting being held with Welsh Government in August 2018
4	Seek to gain a better deal on car parking for Welshpool	The traders rejected a BID and therefore no further action has followed.
5	Continue to seek improvements to the One Way System	New arrangements agreed with Welsh Government, consultation about to take place with works planned for later in 2018 or early 2019.
6	Work with the Tourism Attractions to promote the town	This work continues with the next Tourism Meeting to be held in October 2018.
7	Continue with the provision of the Tourist Information Centre and Public Toilets	Continuing.
8	Review the markets provision	Review has taken place. Refurbishment programme approved and proceeding.
9	Continue to host the Business Forum	Continuing.
10	Continue to provide and support events in the Town Centre	More events are planned for 2019 and a new event of the Transport Festival was held.

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