

BRUTON

SOMERSET

BRUTON TOWN PLAN 2017



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INTRODUCTION

Bruton has changed a lot over the past ten years and will continue to change in the future, creating challenges and opportunities for the town and its residents. To meet those challenges and make the most of the opportunities it is essential that we have a plan of action as a community.

Over the past year, we have been consulting with residents and businesses, and comparing Bruton to other similar towns. This document is the result of that process, and we are delighted to present Bruton's 2017 Town Plan.

The Plan sets out the steps which need to be taken to ensure that Bruton and its residents continue to thrive. We hope you will agree that doing the things in this plan will help ensure that future changes bring benefits to the town and its residents, and will reduce the inevitable problems we will face.

The Plan explains why we need to take these steps. With only 2,500 permanent residents it is not possible for the Town to pay for everything we need ourselves. We believe that seeking a combination of local and external funding

(such as government and business-based grants) is the right way forward. To raise money however, we need evidence; it is not enough to say that we want to do something, we need to show why we need to do it. This Plan, and the research which backs it up, are intended to provide much of that evidence. It is based on:

- Previous Bruton surveys and plans as far back as 1996
- A residents' survey in October 2016 (completed by over 30% of households)
- A Chamber of Commerce survey of local businesses, also in October 2016
- The views of over 200 people who visited and talked to town councillors and others at the Packhorse Fair in 2016, and a further 67 who attended Town Plan Live events earlier this year
- A comparison of Bruton with similar small regional towns

We have kept this document short to make it easy to read (and to keep costs low). Full details of the evidence, more information about how the Plan was put together, and things that people thought important but which are not included in the Plan can be found on the Town Plan section of the Town Council's website (brutontowncouncil.gov.uk).

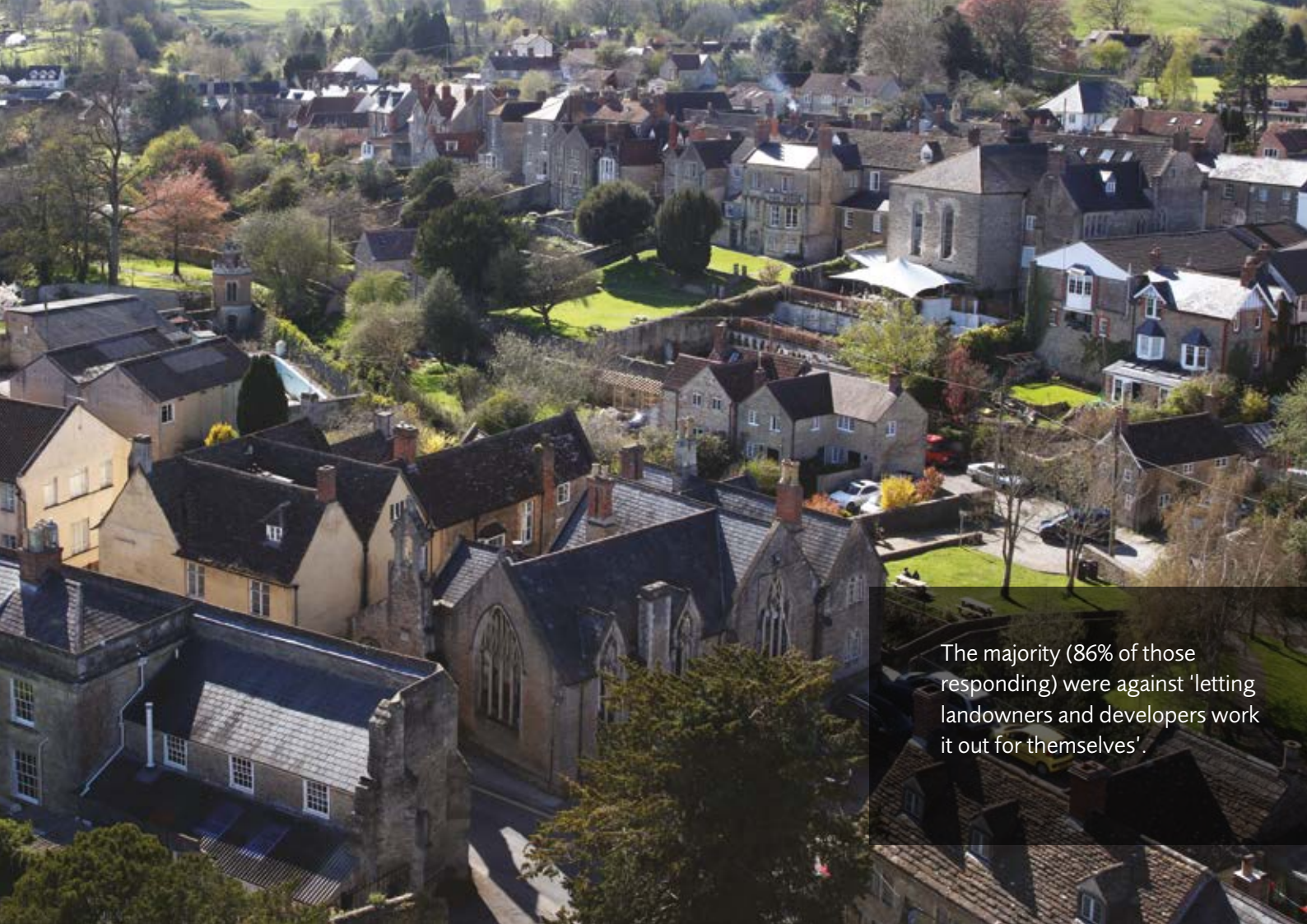
We are grateful to South Somerset District Council for a community grant of £1,000 towards the cost of putting the plan together and getting it printed. We are particularly indebted to members of the Town Plan Steering Group for their unpaid time and effort, to the volunteers who helped distribute the survey and the plan, to those residents and businesses who took the time to share their views with us, and to Mark Pickthall who gave much of his professional time and expertise free of charge to design our posters and this document.

This Plan sets out where we want to get to. Some of it we have already started, and some things in it should be simple to achieve. The rest of the Plan is, right now, a statement of our joint intent: things that we (the organisations below) think should be done. It will remain a wish-list without a lot of hard work and without funding. We are committed to getting the work started and to raising the funds, but we need your help, support and time to make the things in this Plan happen. We hope you agree that Bruton deserves a bright future, and we urge you to get involved.

Steven Hall, *Chairman, Bruton Town Council*

Gordon Fry, *Chairman, Bruton Community Partnership*

Amanda Riley Pickthall, *Chair, Bruton Chamber of Commerce*



The majority (86% of those responding) were against 'letting landowners and developers work it out for themselves'.

HOW THE TOWN LOOKS

Where we want to get to

Any development of ten houses or more in Bruton will be built where residents think it should be and will help meet local need, rather than be led by landowners or developers.

The green spaces in and around the town that are particularly valued by residents will, as far as is possible, be protected from development.

There will be attractive and modern accommodation available for small local businesses.

Why

Not one person in our 2016 residents' survey wished to see development in the historic centre of the town, the Jubilee Park/Dovecote area, or near the Duckpond and Tolbury Lane.

There were other parts of the town which more people thought suitable for development than in need of

protection: these include Frome Road/County Fields, north and south of Brewham Road, and land off Cole Road.

People want the Town Council to act. They are strongly **in favour of** the Town Council '[identifying] likely sites and [working] with landowners and developers to try and ensure that the right housing is built in the right place' (88% of those responding either supported or strongly supported this). People are also strongly **in favour of** the Council 'buy[ing] land to protect it as green space for the town'. The majority (86% of those responding) were **against** 'letting landowners and developers work it out for themselves'.


The 2006 plan noted a need for 'more starter business units suitable for the local market'. Ten years later our residents' survey identified the lack of premises or suitable space as the single biggest obstacle to starting a business in Bruton. The Chamber of Commerce's 2016 survey of local businesses also found the availability of office or business space to be a major constraint.

How

Development is controlled by national and local (district council) planning policy, not by the Town Council. Under current law, unless there is a policy or law that says that a development should not take place, there is a strong presumption that it will go ahead, regardless of what the Town Council or residents may think.

The policy governing development in Bruton is set out in South Somerset District Council's Local Plan 2015, which is now being reviewed. Town councils can get their own policies included in a Local Plan by making a 'Neighbourhood Plan'. This is not straightforward: expert assistance is needed to ensure that the policies are lawful. There must be further public consultation, an external inspection of the draft plan, and a referendum. We estimate that it would take at least 18 months and cost around £10,000 to make a Neighbourhood Plan for Bruton.

1. As a first step, we intend to do all we can to influence South Somerset District Council's review of its Local Plan.
2. If, in our view, this does not give enough local control, we will also go on and develop our own Neighbourhood Plan.
3. We will use this process to do what we can to provide suitable business accommodation in the town.
4. We will identify and try and work with landowners to ensure that their decisions about developing their land reflect residents' views.
5. We will consider raising funds to purchase land to protect it.

A photograph of a stone arch bridge spanning a river. The bridge is made of large, weathered stone blocks. The river flows through a dense forest of green trees and bushes. The water is clear and reflects the surrounding greenery. The scene is peaceful and scenic.

Not one person in our 2016 residents' survey wished to see development in the historic centre of the town, the Jubilee Park/Dovecote area, or near the Duckpond and Tolbury Lane.



GETTING AROUND

Where we want to get to

We want Bruton to be a place where it feels easy and safe to walk around, but wrong to drive fast; a place where those residents and visitors who can do so choose to walk or cycle rather than getting in their car.

It should be possible to get around our town safely in a wheelchair or pushing a buggy. People should be able to pass each other in our town centre without having to step into the road. Parents should not have to use a car to take their young children to school simply because it is unsafe to walk.

This does not mean that we should become anti-car. We must have good town centre parking, and it must be possible to get into and around the town in a car or a delivery vehicle. But there is no need to be able to get around fast. We are a small town.

Why?

There is overwhelming evidence in the 2016 residents' survey that the volume and speed of traffic remains people's biggest concern. When we asked 'if you could improve just one thing about Bruton what would it be?' traffic was mentioned by almost half the people answering the question (the next most commonly mentioned issue was mentioned by one in ten).

When asked to make a choice, people voted:

- **For** better walking routes being the highest priority (80% said most important, 20% least);
- **Against** making it easier to drive through the town (16% said most important, 84% least).

Wider pavements and better public transport were also voted as important by the majority. (There was no agreement about the need for more parking: almost equal numbers saw it as most and least important).

GETTING AROUND CONTINUED

We asked which locations were priorities for improvement for walking. The Library Junction came first. Good access to the Westbound platform at the station was second, and the High Street third.


None of this is new. Speeding traffic was the most concerning road hazard in 1996, and the Library Junction came second. The Bruton the Way Forward Action Plan of 2006 noted speeding and flouting of weight restrictions (particularly in the High Street and Quaperlake Street) and pedestrian safety as key issues.

When compared with other similar towns Bruton had higher parking pressure. On a non-market-day other towns had on average 67% of their parking spaces occupied. The figure for Bruton was 78%. The parking available in Bruton is different from that of other towns: a far higher proportion (66%) of it is on-street (20% in other towns) and a lower proportion short-stay (Bruton 26%, others 47%).

How?

Since 1996 a lot has been done to control traffic (such as a new crossing at the West End, traffic calming in Silver Street, Plox and Cole Road, Speedwatch and the 20-mph limit). In 2008, following local objections, the Town Council voted against many of a comprehensive series of traffic calming measures, including detailed proposals for the High Street.

Controlling traffic can feel a lot like pushing boulders uphill, is expensive (traffic lights cost upwards of £90,000) and can be controversial. Rather than continuing to focus on the traffic itself, we want to change direction and, as far as is possible, focus instead on the needs of pedestrians. Over time we will seek to reverse the current priority for road layout, which values free movement of traffic first, parking space second, and pedestrians third. We will need expert help to do this.

A narrow alleyway in a town, flanked by stone walls and a large tree trunk. A person is walking away from the camera, accompanied by a black dog. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The alleyway leads to a brighter area with more trees and a building in the distance.

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GETTING AROUND CONTINUED

1. We will commission a series of studies and work with residents and businesses to:
 - Re-design the Library Junction;
 - Redress the balance between the needs of pedestrians, people wishing to park and traffic passing through in the High Street (there may not be a solution, but given the importance of our High Street we want to have another try);
 - Develop proposals for a wider network of safe and easy walking routes to the town centre.
2. We want to continue to work with other agencies and local businesses to limit through traffic in the town and the wider parish, and to restrict heavy goods traffic to that which is unavoidable. The Town Council will develop and adopt a transport policy to support this.
3. We want to ensure that as many visitors as possible come to the town on foot or by public transport.
We will:
 - Do everything we can to support disabled access to the Westbound platform at Bruton Station;
 - Work with partners to develop an all-weather surface walking route connecting Hauser and Wirth with the town centre.
4. We will work with the County Council and District Council to create more short-stay parking in the town centre.

LEISURE AND PLACES TO GO

Where we want to get to

Bruton will have modern and innovative sports and leisure facilities that will inspire the people of Bruton and the surrounding villages to be active, healthy and to enjoy life.

The facilities should include a modern, multi-purpose community centre for Bruton.

Bruton's riverside will be somewhere relaxing to spend time with nature, and a walking corridor connecting the historic town centre with footpaths to the East and perhaps the West.

Well-marked footpaths will enable residents and visitors to enjoy the surrounding countryside and connect Wyke Champflower and Redlynch with Bruton.



Why

The consensus in the 2016 residents' survey was that leisure facilities for teenagers and young adults (as well as for disabled people) need improvement.

The Bruton Community Partnership Action Plan of 2014 spoke of developing and securing the future of the facilities at Jubilee Park (which is leased by the Town Council from Sexeys Hospital). The facilities as they are now are not sufficient for a thriving 21st century town.

In a 1996 report the Community Hall was described as 'inadequate'. The report following the 2005 survey identified a 'pressing need' for a 'modern, multi-use community centre'. There still is no such centre.

In 2015, the Town Council started to work with the Football Club, Sexeys Hospital and others to draw up outline proposals for redeveloping both Jubilee Park and its pavilion (this work is known as the 'Jubilee Park Development Programme'). These proposals were first

presented to the public at last year's Packhorse Fair, where they received enthusiastic support. This support was confirmed in the 2016 survey: 73% either supported or strongly supported developing better facilities at the park (6% were against or strongly against), and 69% supported or strongly supported developing a community centre building in the park (13% were against or strongly against).

Over the past year Bruton Community Partnership has received several suggestions about developing and improving the River Brue. We know that in Wincanton a local community organisation has been extremely successful in improving the River Cale, and recently a group has started to support the River Frome. We decided to ask a question about the river in the 2016 residents' survey. We got many creative suggestions, and enthusiasm and interest. At the Town Plan Live events improving the river was the second most popular proposal.

Twenty years ago, 'signed and waymarked circular walks' were recommended, and the need for better footpaths has

LEISURE AND PLACES TO GO CONTINUED

been mentioned in later reports. When the 2016 survey asked 'what needed to be done to help people enjoy the

surrounding countryside', 69% of the suggestions were about better footpaths, maps, signs and cycle routes.

How

1. The Jubilee Park Development Programme, which had started prior to this Plan, will continue:
 - We now have most of the funding needed for a new multi-use games area (with £20,000 raised by Bruton Community Partnership), and it is expected that the games area will be completed later this year;
 - The plans for the park include a skate park (known as the Bru Bowl), an upgrade to the Lower Pitch and to the play areas, and rebuilding of the pavilion. These will go ahead once funding is secured.
2. Since the survey, it has become clear that the proposal to develop a new community hall in the Park has too many drawbacks. We recognise the need, and will

continue to look for an opportunity to either redevelop an existing hall or build a new hall elsewhere in the town.

3. We will start a new 'Friends of the River Brue' group to:
 - Enhance the river and the riverside as an amenity for the town;
 - Seek to extend the Riverside Walk to the East.
4. Given interest we will also start a community group to oversee and promote Bruton's footpath network. When established the group will seek funding for, develop and publish a 'Step out of Bruton' leaflet/leaflets/maps.



The consensus in the 2016 residents' survey was that leisure facilities for teenagers and young adults (as well as for disabled people) need improvement.

LIVING AND WORKING IN BRUTON

Where we want to get to

Bruton will be a town which welcomes visitors, but continues to meet the needs of both its businesses and its residents.

Why

Our survey confirmed that Brutonians value other Brutonians, with the town's friendliness, community and its countryside ranking very high among people's favourite things about living in Bruton.

Our benchmarking suggests that (compared with elsewhere) the town and its businesses are thriving, with few vacant shops and high levels of employment. This is a change. In 1996 30% of retail units were vacant, and the town had lost a net 300 jobs.

The arrival of Hauser and Wirth, with its 130,000 visitors per year, brings visitors to the area in numbers that could not have been predicted five years ago. These numbers are likely to increase with the expected opening of the

Emily Estate at Hadspen. Whilst these new visitors may bring increased prosperity and employment to Bruton, they also bring some risk to the way of life that residents value so highly. (There was an undercurrent of concern about this in about 11% of the comments in the survey). We need to retain a town centre that meets the needs of residents too.

Tourism has become and will continue to be Bruton's growth industry. Bruton Chamber of Commerce, the Town Council and the Bruton Community Partnership need to form a strong partnership so that the town's resident and business communities and local government work together to shape this growth.

Local businesses have raised concerns that there is no local source of tourist information on Fridays and at the weekends.

The Council has received several complaints about the closure of the public toilets (a decision taken by South Somerset District Council) and the lack of toilets was mentioned by several people at the Packhorse Fair last

year. We asked a question about this in the survey. The most popular view was that the existing Community Toilet Scheme would be adequate if it received better publicity.



How

To maximise the benefits and minimise the harm associated with tourism:

1. The Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce and Bruton Community Partnership will work with local businesses to develop a strategy for the town's promotion.
2. We will also:
 - Consider whether creating a 'parish ranger' post will assist in keeping the town tidy and looking good;
 - Develop a local information centre that meets the needs of tourists as well as residents;
 - Ensure that the Community Toilet Scheme is well-publicised on maps, leaflets and on the ground;
 - Replace the Welcome to Bruton signs.

How can I get involved?

We want to set up several residents' groups in 2017 and 2018 to take things forward. These will be promoted in the Dove, on the Town Council's website, and on the local Facebook groups. If you want to help with anything in this Plan, please either speak to a town councillor or to the town clerk (names and contact details are on the website brutontowncouncil.gov.uk), or sign up on the Town Plan page of the Town Council website.

Further information

We have kept this document short to make it easy to read (and to keep costs low). Full details of the evidence, and more information about how the Plan was put together, can be found on the Town Plan section of the Town Council's website (brutontowncouncil.gov.uk). (For those who do not use the internet most of this information is in the Community Office). The information available includes:

This Plan

- A copy of this document to read or print
- Information about those things which were commonly mentioned in the survey but were not included in the Plan, with reasons why
- Information about how we hope to take this Plan forward and review it

Previous plans

Summaries of the recommendations of previous plans, and copies of the following plans:

- A New Direction for Bruton and the Surrounding Areas (1996)
- Bruton-The Way Forward Report and Recommendations (2005)
- Bruton: The Way Forward Action Plan (2006)
- Bruton Community Partnership's Three Year Action Plan (2014)

The 2016 Town Plan Survey

- A copy of the survey
- A spreadsheet with every response. (All details which could identify an individual have been removed. This information is only available online.)
- A full analysis of the results of the survey
- A summary analysis of the results

The 2016 Bruton Chamber of Commerce Survey of businesses

- Objectives and Plans for 2017 (a report written following the survey)

Town Plan Live

- A report about the comments received at the Packhorse Fair 2016
- A list of all the comments received at the Packhorse Fair (only available online)
- A report about the Town Plan live events in March 2017

Benchmarking

- A report comparing Bruton with other similar small towns
- The report provided by the company we used to do the benchmarking

How the Town Plan was written

- A description of how and why the Plan was put together
- Notes of meetings of the Town Plan Steering Group (only available online)

