

# ALTON TOWN COUNCIL

## PRESS RELEASE



02/09/2011

# Ideas sought for town centre improvements

Following the planning inspector's decision to allow a Tesco superstore to be built in Mill Lane, Alton Town Council is calling for ideas that, in the words of the inspector, "strengthen the town centre and enable it to sustain its health and vitality". As part of their planning permission, Tesco has to provide one million pounds towards improvements in the town centre and along the route of a new bus service they will be funding. This might be used towards visual improvements, better town centre management or supporting local businesses.

Ideas for improvements are needed, lots of them, to ensure that the money is fully and effectively spent. Alton Town Council is taking the lead in making the most of this major opportunity for the town. The council wants Altonians to be as creative and imaginative as they can in putting forward suggestions.

Proposals need to encourage people to shop and do business in Alton, by actively attracting them here, by making the town centre more welcoming for visitors, by encouraging them to shop longer, ensuring they feel safer, creating a more family friendly town or similar ideas.

Suggestions could help local businesses compete more efficiently, for example energy efficiency improvements, or training in customer service, marketing and other skills. They might also make new business start-ups easier, focus on filling vacant shops, co-ordinate retail and tourism activity or just make the town look better.

Ideas that can bring in other funding are particularly welcome. For example, highways improvements might partly be funded by the highway authority, public art might be partly funded by the Arts Council and grants to local businesses might be made on the basis that the business also met a proportion of the cost of improvements.

Town Council Leader Councillor Graham Hill explained “The most beneficial, most viable and most cost effective ideas will be chosen for developing into schemes. This will be done on the basis of evidence, rather than just ideas that people like. This might include evidence of need, of success elsewhere, or of financial implications. Early in 2012 Alton Town Council aims to consult the public on a range of viable proposals, before creating a final list of projects to put forward for funding.”

An organisation called the Empty Shops Network recently noted “places that are doing well combine interesting, niche retail with good quality arts and culture, decent public realm, local distinctiveness and a vibrant, varied cafe culture.”

Councillor Hill added “Many ideas have been talked about already, from pedestrianisation to having a town centre manager, from shop improvement grants to free car parking. This a one-off chance to make changes and we need ideas that will work.”

Ideas for projects or activities should be submitted by email to [info@alton.gov.uk](mailto:info@alton.gov.uk) or by letter to the Town Hall, Market Square, Alton GU34 1HD, by 21 October. All that is needed is a brief explanation of what you propose, but if you can identify the possible costs and timescale involved, or any other available funding, that information would be very welcome.

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