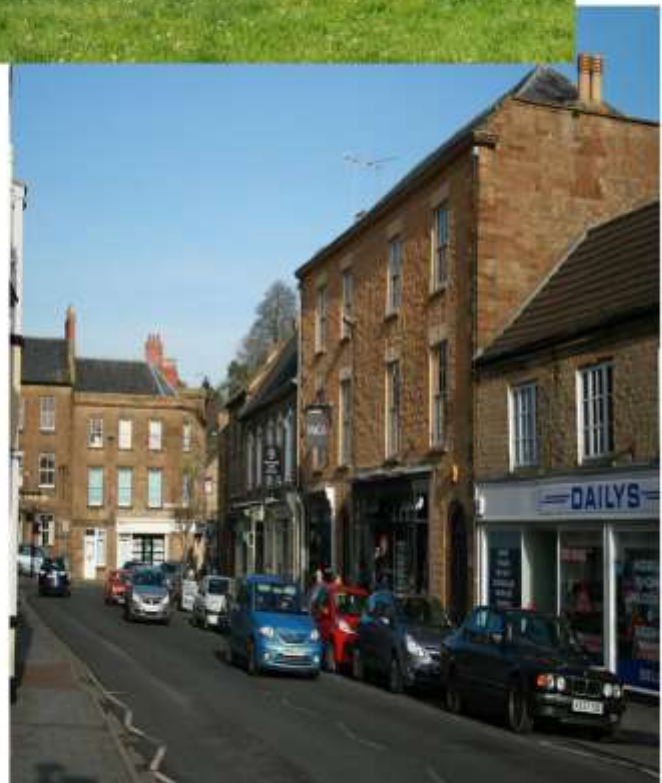


# Crewkerne's Community Plan

2016 - 2026



a better crewkerne and district

Charity No :- 1014677

Helping make Crewkerne a great place

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## **Forward by Diane Butler, Chairman of ABCD**

Welcome to the New Community Plan for Crewkerne & District.

The original Community Plan was drawn up more than 10 years ago and many of the aims have been met or have moved beyond the remit of what ABCD (A Better Crewkerne & District) could achieve.

Members of various local groups & organisations put a lot of work into consultation, planning, fundraising & providing a whole range of projects, such as extending the Conservation Area, removing excess signage, traffic studies, promoting visitors & local businesses as well as a range of workshops and arts events based on the themes identified in the original plan.

The ABCD Executive Committee continues to meet regularly and working parties who lead and further projects report back to the Committee on a two monthly basis throughout the year. These meetings are open to anybody interested in ensuring that Crewkerne remains a great place in which to live.

To keep Crewkerne moving forward, to maintain and improve the quality of life for residents, to sustain the environment and local economies, the need for a new plan became obvious and once again we consulted widely with local residents and have drawn up an Action Plan from those consultations that should provide plenty of projects for the next ten years.

Numerous individuals have given up their time and shared their expertise with ABCD: without them many of the local improvements would not have taken place. Our thanks go to them and to Crewkerne Town Council, South Somerset District Council, the Market Towns Investment Group and all of you who have provided the feedback and suggestions to help build this New Community Plan.

September 2016

## Executive Summary

ABCD consulted widely with residents to establish how they use Crewkerne, what they like about the town and what they feel needs improving. Consultation included a focus group with Wadham School students and a household survey delivered to every home, 20% of those surveys were completed and sent back.

**The majority of people like Crewkerne** and would recommend it as a place to live because it:

- is safe
- has a good community spirit with friendly people
- is a great place to bring up children
- is located well for accessing coast, countryside and nearby towns and cities.
- has a train station

**What people do not like about the town** is the heavy traffic and the shortage of evening entertainment, especially for young people.

**This is what people said about community life**

- 89% of respondents are interested in knowing about issues, events and activities in the town and require a variety of communication methods to find out what is going on in Crewkerne.
- 25% of respondents volunteer in the town.
- 45% of respondents take part in sports, arts or leisure activities in Crewkerne.
- 31% say the activity they would like to do is not available in the town.

**What you told us about the town centre**

- The supermarkets, banks and building societies bring most people into town on a weekly basis.
- People who are more likely to be in the town on a weekday during working hours (retired, part-time workers, long term sick and unemployed), are the most frequent users of the independent shops, the post office, butchers, bakers, cafes and charity shops.
- Full time workers would like to see longer opening hours and Sunday trading.
- Retired people and part time workers use the markets most often, with the Farmers Market being the most popular.
- Workers make the most use of the takeaways and many people would like somewhere to eat in the evening.

**What you told us about getting around the town and accessing places**

- 87% of people walk to places within Crewkerne, whereas 68% of them drive.
- 75% of people use the train station.
- 52% of people have no problem with parking.

- 36% do encounter difficulty with parking for a variety of reasons.

### **What you told us about Crewkerne's environment and outdoor spaces**

- Country footpaths and Bincombe Beeches are the most regularly used green spaces in and around Crewkerne.
- 19% of people feel unsafe in Crewkerne, mainly due to poor lighting.
- 59% of people would support the development of renewable energy initiatives in the town, if it was to benefit Crewkerne residents.
- 35% said there are drains, gullies and lighting in the town that need attention.
- 32% feel that more needs to be done to maintain footpaths.

### **The Main Issues**

ABCD with the help of the District Council sorted through all the returned forms to identify what issues are important to people in Crewkerne. Those issues are:

- General lack of awareness of what services and activities some of the local organisations provide.
- Many people not sure where to go to find out what's on in the town.
- Whereas some of the community facilities are busy, others are under utilised
- A desire for arts related activities for all ages
- Interest in short term volunteering for one off projects and activities
- The need to match up potential volunteers with an appropriate opportunity.
- Desire for greater choice of places to eat in the evening
- More evening events, particularly music and arts related and especially for young people.
- More markets and town centre events during the weekends
- Weak links between Crewkerne businesses and local councils
- Desire for more seating in green spaces.
- Uneven pavements with potholes
- Overgrown shrubs and fallen trees restricting use of paths
- Poorly lit paths in some residential areas and the town centre

### **What Next**

Potential projects which address the above issues are included in the Action Plan (see appendix). Some of those projects ideas can be taken forward by the volunteers involved with ABCD. Other projects will need to be dealt with by organisations like Crewkerne Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Somerset County Council or South Somerset District Council. Many of the projects will require a partnership approach, with 2 or more organisations working together to make it happen.

## About Crewkerne

Crewkerne is a market town located in the southern part of South Somerset, very close to the border of West Dorset.

The town is home to 7000 people (2011 census) and serves a number of surrounding parishes, in particular Misterton, Merriott, Clapton, Wayford, Hinton St George, North Perrot and Haselbury Plucknett.

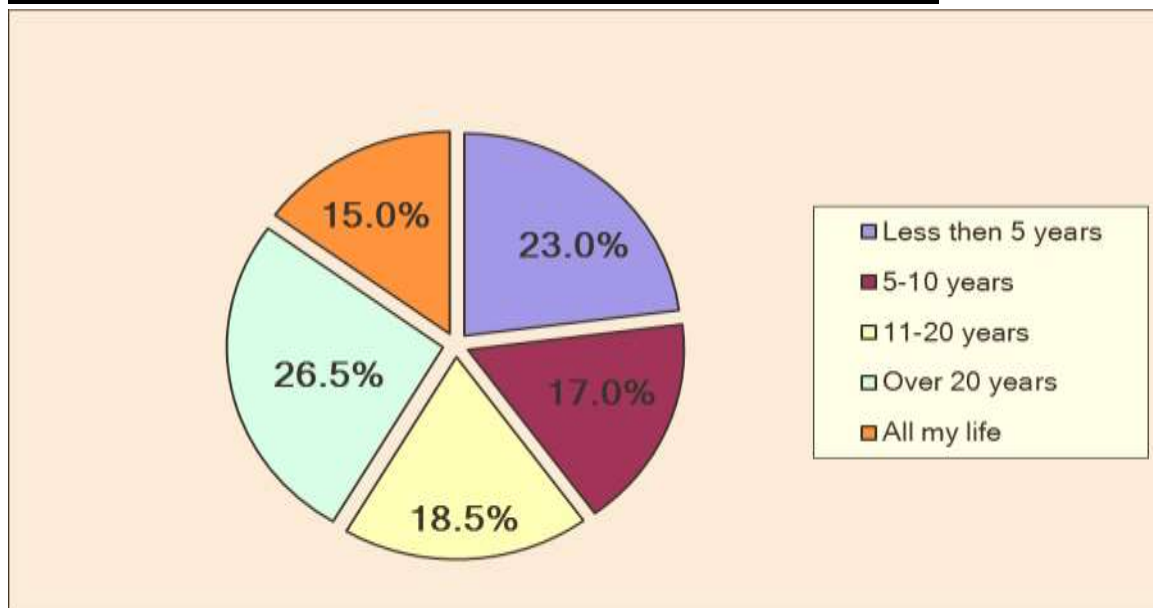
The 2011 Census showed that the population of Crewkerne was made up in the following way:

- 25.5% - Children and young people up to and including 24 years
- 50% - People aged 25 to 64
- 24.5% - People aged 65 and over

The median age of a Crewkerne resident in 2011 was 45 years (whereas for England and Wales it was 39). Like many south west market towns, Crewkerne has a higher than average number of people aged 65 and above, at 24.5%, compared to 16.4% for England and Wales. Population projections for Somerset indicate a significant increase in the number of residents aged 70+ by 2033, which will impact on Crewkerne in the future.

As can be seen from the chart below, the results of the ABCD household survey show that the town has a healthy mix of locals to newcomers.

**Chart A: Length of time respondents have lived in Crewkerne**





Children's education is served through a three tier system:

- Ashlands School and St Bartholomews School are for children up to 9 years
- Maiden Beech School provides for the ages 9 to 13 years.
- Wadham School is the third tier and also includes a sixth form.

Post 16 students also use Richard Huish College in Taunton and Yeovil College. All four of Crewkerne's schools are rated 'good' by Ofsted.

In terms of business there is a significant local strength in manufacturing with a number of long established companies. Service sector businesses are also well represented in the town with companies providing accountancy, translation and care services. Lawrence's Auctioneers are well established and located close to the town centre. In more recent years a number of vintage and antique businesses have opened attracting media attention with shows such as 'Cash in the Attic' filming in the town on several occasions. There is the opportunity to promote the antiques / vintage sector as a reason to visit Crewkerne.

Crewkerne is not a tourist hot spot but its location close to West Bay, Lyme Regis and numerous National Trust properties means it does have a steady flow of visitors. Approximately 3 miles west of Crewkerne at Cricket St Thomas, is a Warners adult only hotel which can accommodate over 400 guests and attracts visitors from across the UK. Although tourist accommodation within the town is limited many of the surrounding villages provide bed and breakfast, self-catering accommodation glamping and caravan pitches. There is potential to build on the tourist offer.

Crewkerne has good road and rail links, with easy access to London via train on the Waterloo to Exeter line and road along the A303; which is 4 miles north of the town. However, Crewkerne's good transport links also have a detrimental impact on the town centre. The A30 and A356 meet in the middle of the town, with the Town Hall effectively being a traffic island on the cross roads. The volume of traffic and HGVs driving through the town is the subject of much criticism and debate.

The health of Crewkerne's residents is generally good, 78.5% report having good or very good health (2011 Census), and the number of adults eating healthily is significantly above the national average, at 29.2%. However, public health figures show that Crewkerne has a higher than average number of obese adults.

Generally residents of Crewkerne are positive about the town and regard it as a pleasant place to live, work and visit.





## Key Developments for Crewkerne

Taylor Wimpey has been granted planning permission to build over 500 homes on the eastern side of the town. In addition to the housing the site will also include a new primary school, parkland, employment space and most significantly for the town a new road. The increased population could potentially make Crewkerne more attractive to national retailers looking for new shop premises. The employment land with improved road access could potentially attract more businesses to the town, therefore creating more jobs.

### New Link Road

The road will link the A30, close to the Wadham School junction, with the A356, towards the end of South Street. The new road will divert the traffic that currently travels through the town heading south from the A303, away from the town centre.

### East Street Car Park

South Somerset District Council has purchased some land on East Street with the intention of turning it into a long stay car park. Once in place this will free up spaces in the town centre car parks.

## Creating the Plan

ABCD (A Better Crewkerne and District) is the local community regeneration charity responsible for preparing the Crewkerne Community Plan.

Crewkerne's first Community Plan was published in 2005 after considerable consultation to establish the concerns and priorities of people in and around the town. That community plan identified a range of issues along with a list of projects to address them.

Over the following years ABCD worked with a variety of organisations to turn some of those project ideas into reality. A number of key improvements arose from that original plan and those include:

- The George Reynolds Centre – a bespoke youth and sports facility in the town centre.
- A new pedestrian link connecting Falkland Square with the George Shopping Centre.
- Visitors boards in the car parks.
- Creative Crewkerne – a group of volunteers organising arts and cultural events and activities in the town.

In 2015 ABCD went back to Crewkerne residents to again ask what their concerns and priorities are, so they can ensure future projects are developed that meet the needs of the community and benefit the town. This process has had significant support from Zoë Harris, the Area West Neighbourhood Development Officer at South Somerset District Council.

### ABCD Executive committee

This committee consists of volunteers representing a variety of organisations in the town including the Town Council, South Somerset District Council, Crewkerne Churches Together, Crewkerne Heritage Centre, Chamber of Commerce, Friends of Henhayes Play Park, Friends of Crewkerne Train Station and Wadham School.

### Consultation and engagement

Initial consultation took place at a number of community events, which included the Henhayes Fete, Crewkerne Community Safety Day and Crewkerne Business Showcase. At these events people were asked to provide comments on what they liked about the town and what they felt could be improved. The data from those events was used to identify the issues important to residents and that informed the design of the household questionnaire.

**Tell ABCD how to make Crewkerne an even better place to live**

10 years ago people in Crewkerne told us what they wished for to make Crewkerne a better place to live. These comments were used to persuade organisations and funders to support the projects and activities that had been requested. Now it's time to ask you again, the results of this survey will be written up into a community report with an action plan of projects, which ABCD, working with a variety of different organisations, will then progress over the next few years.

All completed surveys will be entered into a FREE prize draw to win a £50 Waitrose voucher

Win a £50 Waitrose voucher

**What's happening in Crewkerne - communication**

1. Are you and your household interested in knowing about the issues, events, activities, groups and initiatives in Crewkerne? Yes ☐ No ☐

2. How would your household like to find out about groups, issues, initiatives and events in Crewkerne? (tick all that apply)

Western Gazette Newspaper	
Crewkerne Weekender - free newspaper	
Facebook	
Twitter	
Crewkerne Local Information Centre in Town Hall	
Community notice board in Falkland Square	
Word of mouth	
Local websites	
Other - please state	

**Your Town Centre - how and why you use it**

3. Do you attend any of the following regular events in the town centre?

	Never	Sometimes	Usually	Every-time
Bovving day hunt & pram race				
Christmas lighting up				
CUDOS shows				
Henrievae Fete				
St Barts Street Fair in September				
Triflection				

4. Would you like to see more regular events in the town centre / on Henrievae?

Yes ☐ No ☐ No option ☐

A Focus Group was held with students at Wadham School, all of whom lived in the town. The group included children from each year group to ensure a good range of opinions. At this session the students were encouraged to write their comments and opinions on the issues that impact on their life in the town. Those subjects included transport, leisure, local economy, housing and community life.

In February 2015 a household survey was delivered to all 3556 homes in the town, 708 (20%) were returned. The data from that survey has identified the issues important to Crewkerne's residents and has informed this Community Plan.

## Surrounding Villages

As a market town, Crewkerne is a hub for the surrounding villages. Residents in the nearby parishes come into Crewkerne to do their shopping and use many of the essential services such as the doctors, schools, the hospital, library, sports facilities and the recycling centre. Since the publication of the last Crewkerne Community Plan, a number of the surrounding villages have produced their own Parish Plans. Those Plans have identified the issues that are of primary concern to the residents of those villages, which include:

- East Chinnock –loss of village shop and greater use of village hall.
- Haselbury Plucknett – need for a village hall and improvements to road safety.
- Hinton St George – improvements to the village hall.
- Merriott – better public transport between Crewkerne and Merriott, improvements to the roads and pavements.
- Misterton – improved road safety on the A356.

## Strong Community

### What Crewkerne people had to say

When asked in the household survey why they would recommend Crewkerne as a place to live, many people commented on the community spirit and friendly nature of the town.

“Safe, friendly place with great community feel and lots going on.”

“I moved to Crewkerne eight years ago from London. I find it a very friendly town. People are friendly and there is a good community spirit.”



People make up a community, and it is their involvement and interest in where they live that strengthens community spirit. The services, activities and events that bring people together helps provide the foundation for creating a good community spirit. The household survey shows that:

- 89% of respondents are interested in knowing about issues, events and activities in the town.
- Traditional communication methods such as posters and local newspapers are the most popular methods to find out what is going on in the town.
- 30% of people use websites and 28% use Facebook to find out what is happening.
- 25% of respondents volunteer in the town.
- 45% of respondents take part in sports, arts or leisure activities in Crewkerne.

- 31% say the activity they would like to do is not available in Crewkerne.
- 22% use the Aqua Centre on a weekly basis.
- The library and the Local Information Centre are used by the widest number of people.

However, the reaction from the teenagers at Wadham School to the subject of community life was not so positive.

- *“I don’t feel that we are a community!”*
- *“Lack of community activity & gathering”*
- *“No events – to join the community!”*

Their comments do reflect a broader issue that many people highlighted in the household survey, which is the lack of things to do for teenagers and young people in the town.

## Background

Crewkerne has a good track record for delivering high quality community projects. In 1998, after much local fundraising, the Aqua Centre, a brand new community swimming pool opened to the public. Additional community fundraising enabled them to add a gym and fitness studio a few years later.

In 2000 the Museum and Heritage Centre opened in Market Square, this building provides a wealth of information on the history of the town and its residents. The day care centre, a popular facility for the older residents in the town, was relocated to the Henhayes Centre, in a brand new building in 2008. Next door is the George Reynolds Centre, home to three sports clubs, the youth centre, after school club and pre-school nursery, this bespoke building opened in 2012.

All the above facilities are predominantly run by volunteers, who give up their time to help deliver the essential services Crewkerne residents can access in their town centre.

Although the town has an active voluntary and community sector, it is often the same people volunteering for different organisations. Many of these organisations would like to recruit more volunteers. The household survey highlighted that 25% of the respondents’ volunteer, with 33% of those people being retired.

A quarter of respondents said they would be interested in volunteering in the town, and the majority of those people would prefer to get involved in one off projects or occasional volunteering, rather than making a regular commitment. This suggests



there is scope for community groups to reconsider the roles and tasks they would want a volunteer to fill and how they promote those opportunities.

In recent years ABCD has organised 2 successful arts projects where residents were taught how to write poetry and short plays at workshops, the finished pieces were later performed by professionals in a variety of shops in the town. These projects enthused a small group of volunteers, who have since formed themselves into a loose collective called Creative Crewkerne, which has since organised the highly successful pompom bombing, as well as a community singing event.

### Community information

It was clear from the consultation that many people are unaware of the variety of events and activities that already take place in the town. It was also apparent that many people do not know about some of the sources of information available to them. A few commented that there is no one place they can go for information about events and activities.

Yet there are a variety of sources of community information, which include local newspapers, posters, a community noticeboard and the Local Information Centre (LIC). The LIC also has its own website and Facebook page which are updated several times a week.

Until early 2015, Crewkerne had a dedicated free newspaper that provided a good range of information relating to local politics, sport and events. The free newspaper, the Pulman's View from Crewkerne, is still available in the town but has expanded its news coverage to Ilminster, Chard, Honiton, Seaton and Axminster. This has resulted in a decline in the amount of information focused on Crewkerne, with many people feeling the paper is less relevant.

### Issues identified

- General lack of awareness of what services and activities some of the local organisations provide.
- Many people not sure where to go to find out what's on in the town.
- Whereas as some of the community facilities are busy, others are underutilised.
- A desire for arts related activities for all ages.
- Interest in short term volunteering for one off projects and activities.
- The need to match up potential volunteers with an appropriate opportunity.

## Objective (aim / aspiration)

To support and enhance Crewkerne's strong community spirit

## Projects

- 'Communicating Crewkerne' – develop a communications strategy for the town to better co-ordinate and disseminate information to residents and visitors
- 'Creative Crewkerne' – support this emerging group of volunteers to put on more arts related events and activities
- 'Crewkerne Community Network' – provide a network event for local community groups to share ideas and also gain free marketing training to enable them to better promote their activities, facilities, services and volunteer opportunities.





## Vibrant town centre

### What Crewkerne people had to say

Many people feel passionate about the town centre and as an issue this provoked a fair amount of opinion. Everyone who commented felt that the town centre could be improved, with the vast majority of opinions focusing on the current offer. Typical responses included:

*“Could do with a decent place to eat in the evenings”*

*“We need less charity shops (doesn’t make a great High Street), more independent traders and shops to be full. Better clothes shops to suit everybody. Falkland Square seriously needs an overhaul, it’s shabby and nothing is particularly inviting. Gresham Books would make a great bar / bistro. A better selection of classier wine bars and evening entertainment”*

People value the regular events that already take place in the town centre and would welcome more. The Christmas Lighting Up evening is particularly popular, with 27% of people always attending, and a further 29% usually attending.

*“We don’t think there are enough events to bring the community together”*

*“Christmas craft fair excellent but could be done monthly. Christmas lighting up very family orientated and delightful atmosphere”*

- 73% would like to see more regular events taking place in the town.
- 70% would like more specialist markets and 67% more music events.
- The supermarkets are the most frequented shops with 88% of respondents using them on a weekly basis.
- People who are most likely to be in the town on a weekday during the day (retired, part-time workers, long term sick and the unemployed) are the most frequent users of the banks, independent shops and post office.
- 75% of people want to see a wider variety of shops.
- The Farmers Market is the most popular of the three markets in the town, with 30% of people using it each month.
- Only 13% of people use the pubs on a weekly basis and 34% never use them.
- Workers make the most use of the takeaways and many people would like somewhere to eat in the evening.

## Background

South Somerset Local Plan identifies the primary shopping area as being Market Street, Market Square, Falkland Square, the George Shopping Centre, the southern part of North Street, the western part of East Street and the eastern part of Church Street. Within this area, the primary retail frontage is defined along Market Street, Falkland Square and the George Shopping Centre.

Crewkerne town centre is made up of a mix of service and retail businesses. Amongst the service sector there are a number of hairdressers, beauty salons, estate agents, solicitors, banks, building societies, 2 tattoo parlours, opticians and several cafes. The retail side is split into 2 sectors:

- Comparison goods - predominantly small independent shops selling food, gifts, toys, along with a strong antiques and vintage sector and 5 charity shops.
- Convenience goods – 3 supermarkets, a newsagent, butchers, bakers and One Stop.

Crewkerne has a small number of national retailers; Boots, M&Co, Budgens, Costa and most notably Lidl and Waitrose. Waitrose opened a new store in the town in 2008. The supermarket has brought additional people into the town, but many people feel that Crewkerne has not really made enough of the Waitrose effect.

The economic down turn in 2008 had an impact on Crewkerne's high street, with the loss of several nationals including Woolworths and HSBC and the closure of the only greengrocers and fishmongers along with a prominent local book shop, Gresham Books. At one point there were a number of empty shops in the town centre, although some of those have now been filled, in August 2016 there were 7 empty units including the site of the old Gresham Books, which is located in a very visible position on the high street.

A retail study of South Somerset's market towns in 2010 (GVA Grimley) showed that Crewkerne had a higher than average representation of service providers on the high street, at that time it was 41%, which was well above the national average of 34%. The study concluded that

*'Crewkerne now has a declining retail role and is increasing in importance as a service destination'* (Grimley p46).

An audit of the retail space in December 2015 found that the number of service businesses had increased. Given the number of retail units currently providing services in Crewkerne, e.g. hairdressers, estate agents, health services and cafes, it can be said that Crewkerne continues to be an important service destination.

Crewkerne's night time economy is provided by 6 pubs, an Indian restaurant, a fish and chip café and a few takeaways. Evening cultural events are sporadic and mainly provided by the community sector, they include:

- CUDOs – local amateur dramatic society put on a few shows per year in the Victoria Hall
- Film Crew - community cinema with screenings at Wadham School
- Creative Crewkerne, recently formed arts collective that have organised workshops and performances.
- Live music in some of the pubs
- Supper with music at the Henhayes Centre



Since the Portas Review of High Street in 2012, retail experts have suggested that High Streets are evolving and becoming more than just a place to shop. In the past few years people's shopping habits have changed, they tend to want convenience and make greater use of internet shopping. Experts suggest that town centres are no longer just places to shop, but also need to provide leisure and entertainment opportunities. These findings reflect the comments received from Crewkerne residents who want more evening entertainment, places to eat and day time leisure events in the town. The perceived lack of choice for eating out was particularly commented on, with residents wanting a bistro type establishment and /or affordable family dining.

## Issues Identified

- Desire for greater variety shops – mix of nationals & independents.
- Desire for greater choice of places to eat in the evening.
- More evening events, particularly music and arts related and especially for young people.
- More markets and town centre events during the weekends.

## Objective

A buzzy town centre with something for everyone.

## Projects

- 'Dining Out' – to encourage an increase in the choice of places for people to eat out in the evening.
- Retail Therapy – to promote the existing town centre offer highlighting the diversity and what can be purchased in the town.
- Eventful Crewkerne – provide more cultural and community events both during the day and evening throughout the year.





## Easy Access to Get About

### What Crewkerne people had to say

The issue of traffic has long been contentious in Crewkerne, many people commented on the need for changes, whether in the form of a one-way system on Market Street or a by-pass for the town.

Although many comments relate to the sheer volume of traffic and its impact on drivers travelling through the town, as many comments focused on how that traffic impacts on pedestrians and their safety. Pedestrians particularly feel unsafe walking along the narrow pavements on North Street and East Street. Many people also highlighted the need for better crossing points at the top of South Street and again on North Street.

*“North street is a huge problem area, can’t understand why no crossing by primary school and Brickyard Lane, which is used by many elderly, children and families visiting Bincombe. It is such a dangerous place to cross.”*

The concern from pedestrians is understandable when it is clear that most people in Crewkerne walk

- 87% of people walk to places within Crewkerne, whereas 68% of them drive.
- 52% of people have no problem with parking.
- 36% do encounter difficulty with parking, the reasons are varied and include inconsiderate parking, the need for residents parking and desire for more free short term parking.
- 75% of people use the train station.

Although most respondents to the survey do not use public transport, for a significant number it is the only way they can access places beyond the town. Crewkerne has an older population and many of the respondents who currently drive recognised that as they got older they may have to give up their car, and would then be reliant upon buses to access places and services outside of Crewkerne, such as Yeovil, Taunton, hospitals and care homes.

A significant minority of people (9%) do experience difficulty accessing places within Crewkerne due to a lack of transport. Mainly the train station and the residential areas on the edge of the town such as Kithill and Ashlands.

When needing to access places beyond Crewkerne, 16% of people said they had difficulties because of a lack of transport. The places they wanted to visit included hospitals in South Petherton, Taunton and Yeovil, the coast and cultural venues in Yeovil and Ilminster in the evening. With Crewkerne having an ageing population, these difficulties are likely to become more common as people get older and have to give up driving.

## Background

The centre of Crewkerne sits on a cross roads of the A30 and the A356, with the area around the Town Hall often congested due to difficulty caused by heavy traffic.

Somerset County Council recognises the problem. In 2009 ABCD worked with SCC Highways to come up with a traffic plan that would help ease the situation. Although a plan has been developed, implementation of the plan is reliant upon Section 106 agreements and the building of a link road as part of the key site on the eastern side of the town. Planning has been approved for the site but at the time of writing this document in August 2016, work had not yet started.



Crewkerne's train station is located 1.5 miles from the town centre in the parish of Misterton. The station is very popular as it provides a direct link to London Waterloo and Exeter. The station is currently managed by South West Trains and has a ticket

office which is staffed six mornings a week. In recent years there have been threats to close the ticket office. There is a very active volunteer group, 'Friends of Crewkerne Station', which support improvements to the facilities and campaigns to ensure the existing amenities are maintained.

18% of households in Crewkerne do not have access to a car; this is above the county average of 16% (2011 Census). Many of those householders fall into the retired category. The cost of learning to drive, along with purchasing and running a car is becoming prohibitively expensive for many young people. This means that a significant number of older people and young people are reliant upon public transport, taxis or other people providing lifts. This restricts their ability to access services and places.

Cuts in Local Authority budgets has resulted in a decrease in bus services as the county council can no longer afford to subsidise less popular routes. As a consequence Crewkerne no longer has a bus service on a Sunday, and the last bus to Crewkerne from Yeovil leaves early in the evening making it impossible for residents to access cultural amenities without access to a car. In addition the service between Crewkerne and South Petherton has been axed, which causes difficulty for people needing to access health services at South Petherton Hospital.

The provision of a decent place to catch a bus is also a large issue for people using the buses in and around Crewkerne. There are 3 different bus stops in the centre, none of them have a bus shelter and only one stop is able to accommodate a bench. This means that passengers get wet on the numerous occasions that it rains and elderly and disabled people are forced to stand whilst waiting for a bus.

The District Council recognise that Crewkerne has a shortage of long term parking spaces within the town centre. Land has been purchased on East Street and work is planned to turn that into additional long term parking spaces.

## Issues Identified

A number of transport and access related issues have been identified and these can be split into the following categories:

### Main issues for pedestrians

- Crossing Market Street near the top of South Street
- Narrow pavements, particularly North Street and East Street.
- Overgrown pavements making it difficult to walk on them
- Poorly lit pavements making it difficult to walk at night



#### Main issues about parking

- Perception of limited free short stay parking spaces – for very quick shopping trips.
- No residential parking scheme for town centre residents.
- Inconsiderate parking – on pavements and outside Nationwide Building Society.
- Lack of parking spaces during busy times.

#### Main issues for bus passengers

- No bus shelter to protect passengers from poor weather and people have to stand
- Poor bus connections to the train station.
- Limited bus service to Ashlands
- No evening service to allow visits to nearby arts venues, e.g. Octagon & cinema
- No direct bus to the coast
- No direct bus to hospitals so difficult for people without a car



#### Objective

Improved access for all with appropriate transport solutions

## Projects

- Walkabout – carry out pedestrian street audit.
- Better Bus Facilities – provide a bus shelter with seating in the town centre.
- Town Bus - explore feasibility of a circular town bus serving the train station, hospital, Ashlands, Kithill, Broadshard and some nearby villages.
- Cultural Bus Club - providing transport to films, theatres and shows outside Crewkerne.
- Link road – continue to lobby Somerset County Highways to ensure the development of a new road connecting the A30 to the A356 is seen as a priority.



## Thriving Local Economy

### What Crewkerne people said

- 357 of the respondents are employed, of those 172 people work in Crewkerne and 185 people work elsewhere.
- The service sector is the largest employment provider.
- 12% of respondents work from home and 62% of those are self-employed.
- 4% of respondents are thinking of starting a business

The few comments made by residents in relation to the local economy focused primarily on retail and the need to support small businesses within the town.

The Wadham School students felt there were very few opportunities for them to work part time at the weekend, and also limited opportunities to work in the town for those that would like to stay in Crewkerne after leaving school.

### Background

Historically Crewkerne developed as a market town in an agricultural community. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century it was an important centre for trade with a royal estate, a local mint and the 2<sup>nd</sup> most important market in Somerset. From the 16th century the cloth industry developed becoming the dominant industry through the 17th and 18th centuries. Diversification into sailcloth, canvas, webbing and shirt, lace and net making continued through the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. The textile industry started to decline during the late Victorian period, this was further exacerbated by the two World Wars.

In the 1950's the Crewkerne Urban District Council created the Blacknell Lane Trading Estate to attract new businesses into the town and reinvigorate the local economy. A number of manufacturing businesses developed during this time, with some of them still operating today. The trading estate is now home to several businesses across all 3 sectors; manufacturing, retail and service.

Away from the Trading Estate and the town centre there are a small number of other businesses, mainly retail or services located in the following areas:

- Linen Yard on South Street – Lawrence's Auctioneers
- South Street – Antiques Bazaar and The Original Factory Shop
- North Street – Countrywide, Crewkerne Horticultural and a dentist

The town has become a centre for the antiques and vintage trade with a number of shops opening in recent years, to join more established businesses like Lawrence's Auctioneers. The concentration of antiques businesses has gained the attention of television companies, with popular television shows like Cash in the Attic, often filming in the town.

The consultation highlighted that 79 of the respondents work from home, with most of those being self-employed. The survey also found that 25 people are looking to start their own business in Crewkerne. Those that are self-employed, home working or thinking about starting their own business were asked if they would be interested in any kind of business advice or support. 67% would like to access free training courses in the town, 25% want small office space and 30% require small workshop space. At the moment Crewkerne does lack modern office facilities and small start-up premises.

Crewkerne has below average rates of unemployment, 0.8% in June 2016 compared to 1.8% in Great Britain for the same period.

### Issues Identified

- Some interest amongst the self-employed for business support and start up premises.
- Weak links between Crewkerne businesses and the local councils, with no economic strategy for the town.

### Objectives

- Stronger partnership working between businesses and local authority.

### Projects

- Feasibility study to explore the demand for business start-up units in the town
- Networking event aimed at homeworkers and entrepreneurs in the area
- Consultation to gain a greater understanding of what the local business sector requires in support, with information informing a local economic strategy

## Local Environment

The quality of a community's local environment has a direct impact on the wellbeing of peoples' lives and how safe they feel moving about and using their town. Trees, plants, parks and green spaces, the cleanliness of local streets, the visual impact of the town centre and the general state of repair of pavements and roads all play a part in the local environment. Waste, recycling and the use of alternative energy sources are also being considered more at a local level, which again impacts on the local environment.

### What Crewkerne people had to say

*"Activities for Maiden Beech / Wadham children so that there is no need to hang around town e.g. BMX track at Henhayes. This is such a huge area in the town centre that has never catered for older children who don't like football"*

*"I would like a park where older people could stroll around and get exercise on flat surface as Crewkerne is very undulating"*

*"In the summer footpaths are overgrown"*

- Country footpaths and Bincombe Beeches are the most regularly used green spaces in and around Crewkerne.
- 19% of people feel unsafe in Crewkerne, mainly due to poor lighting.
- 59% of people would support the development of renewable energy initiatives in the town if it was to benefit Crewkerne residents.
- 35% said there are drains, gullies and lighting in the town that need attention.
- 32% feel that more needs to be done to maintain footpaths.

## Background

Crewkerne has a number of green spaces:

- Barn Street Rec- a large green space bequeathed to the town
- Bincombe Beeches – a nature reserve just off the town centre home to a wide array of flora, fauna and fungi with views across Crewkerne and the countryside beyond.





- Happy Valley – a lush green valley adjacent to Kit Hill which includes a children's play area, a MUGA, a 5 aside football pitch and a skate park.

- Henhayes Recreation Ground – located just off the town centre, this includes sports pitches as well as a children's play area. The ground is also used as a pedestrian shortcut for people walking from the Linen Yard on South Street into the town centre.

In addition to the above green spaces, many residents make use of the lanes and footpaths

surrounding the town. There are plenty of walking routes leading into adjacent villages and also connecting with the Parrett Trail, a long distance footpath. Many of these footpaths are used by the popular 'health walks' group, which meets every Tuesday.

As Crewkerne is fairly compact, the majority of residents do tend to walk when making journeys within the town. As identified under the 'Easy Access to Get About' theme, many of the footpaths in the older parts of Crewkerne are narrow. Cuts to local authority budgets has seen a reduction in how often hedges and verges in and around the town can be cut. In some parts this is problematic, because the narrow pavements in the older areas of the town quickly become overgrown with vegetation in the summer, forcing residents to walk on roads. These same cuts also mean repairs to pavements and potholes in roads are not dealt with as often as they would have been in the past. The result is poor pavement surfaces making it difficult for older people who are less mobile, as well as the users of wheelchairs, mobility scooters and parents with pushchairs.

Like all South Somerset residents, Crewkerne has a doorstep collection for many recyclable items such as paper, glass, tins and some plastics. Residents wishing to recycle other items have to take them to the local Recycling Centre. The Crewkerne Recycling Centre was threatened with closure in 2010. To ensure the service remained in the town, users of the site now have to pay £2 every time they use the facility.

The 2014 Flood Plan for Somerset identifies Crewkerne as being at risk from surface water flooding and a number of locations in the town have experienced problems with flooding in the past few years.

### Issues Identified

- Desire for more seating in green spaces.
- Uneven pavements with potholes.
- Overgrown shrubs and fallen trees restricting use of paths.
- Litter, dog faeces, and general debris.
- Poorly lit paths in some residential areas.
- Poor lighting in parts of the town centre.
- Poor pedestrian crossing at the top of South Street by Market Street.

### Objective

A safe, clean, green and attractive environment

### Projects

- Illuminating Crewkerne – improved lighting in some parts of the town centre and residential areas to make it feel safer during the darker months.
- Improve safety of pedestrians by identifying locations where overgrown vegetation restricts pavement use.
- Develop a Community Flood Plan with action group for the town



## SWOT

### Strengths

- Key supermarkets located in town centre bring people into the town
- Good track record of delivering large community projects
- Community spirit is strong
- Good health and medical facilities
- Good schools
- Transport links to London, Exeter, Taunton and Yeovil are good, making Crewkerne an ideal location for commuters.
- Low unemployment
- Good range of sports / fitness facilities and activities
- The community is well balanced with a mixture of residents of different ages and backgrounds
- Crewkerne is set in beautiful countryside within easy walking distance to green areas and a range of footpaths

### Weaknesses

- Heavy traffic going through the town centre causes congestion and is intimidating for pedestrians.
- Bus services are inadequate with many elderly and young people facing difficulty accessing essential services.
- Perception that there is a lack of variety and range of shops
- Lack of restaurants and limited options for dining out in the evening.
- Shortage of arts/cultural activities in the town
- Employment opportunities within Crewkerne itself are low.
- Clubs and organisations are too inward looking, don't work together and don't promote their strengths enough.
- Evening entertainment is limited, particularly for young people

### Opportunities

- New proposed link road will relieve traffic congestion in town centre and improve access to the Cropmead and Blacknell Lane trading estates.
- Taylor Wimpey Easthams site - - over 500 new homes will increase the population bringing new customers into the town, which could attract national retailers.
- The Taylor Wimpey site includes employment land which could lead to new job opportunities
- Better use of existing facilities may improve the cultural offer in the town.
- The Waitrose effect is not being used to its full extent.
- Some pubs in the town are up for sale, once in new ownership this potentially could improve the dining offer in the town.

- The skills, experience and time of the retired residents is not being fully utilised
- More could be made of the green spaces within the town
- The ageing population, as older residents tend to make greater use of town centre businesses.
- Substantial amount of tourist accommodation in surrounding villages
- A strong antiques and vintage sector can attract more visitors to the town
- The 'Click & Collect' and parcel collection points in the town centre, increase footfall on the high street.

### **Threats**

- Potential closure of train station ticket office
- Absentee landlords letting properties / land look shabby and fall into disrepair.
- Crewkerne is not being promoted as a business location and needs a better profile
- The rise in internet shopping could potentially impact on Crewkerne's retailers.
- Further cuts to bus services will increase accessibility problems for people without a car.
- Many young people do not feel part of the community

## Delivering the Plan

This Community plan identifies:

- 1 vision
- 5 themes
- 17 projects

The projects vary in size; some will be much quicker and easier to deliver than others. All the projects will require funding.

ABCD need the help of residents who are willing to get involved in small working groups and volunteer to help progress some of the projects. The District Council will support and assist those working groups.

Some of the projects will need to be dealt with by organisations like Crewkerne Town Council, the Chamber of Commerce, Somerset County Council or South Somerset District Council. ABCD will facilitate and encourage the development of those projects being led by partner organisations.

Many of the projects will require a partnership approach, with 2 or more organisations working together.

See the Action Plan in the appendix for a summary of the projects, their long term aim and proposed actions to tackle the problems identified.

The Action Plan is an evolving document, which will be used to chart progress of the identified projects.