

# SAXMUNDHAM COMMUNITY PLAN



**Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company**

[www.saxcommunity.co.uk](http://www.saxcommunity.co.uk)



**February 2009**

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## References and supporting documents:

1. Saxmundham Community Profile -see [www.saxcommunity.co.uk](http://www.saxcommunity.co.uk)
2. Survey Report (compiled by Suffolk Enterprise Business Support) -see [www.saxcommunity.co.uk](http://www.saxcommunity.co.uk)
3. Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion, Deprivation in Rural Suffolk report – see [www.suffolkacre.org.uk/ruralreport](http://www.suffolkacre.org.uk/ruralreport).
4. Suffolk Coastal District Council Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Preferred Options - see <http://www.suffolkcoastal.gov.uk/yourdistrict/planning/review/corestrategy>
5. Suffolk Coastal District Council : Suffolk Coastal 2021, A Community Strategy for Suffolk Coastal District – see <http://www.onesuffolk.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/5DA222EA-7657-4FC7-9D41-4CC6E17DAA3B/0/SuffolkCoastal2021.pdf>
6. Regional Winners of The 2008 Market Town Awards - see [www.markettownresources.co.uk/2008MTAWINNERS/mtawinners](http://www.markettownresources.co.uk/2008MTAWINNERS/mtawinners)

# 1. Foreword

This Saxmundham Community Plan has been prepared by The Civic Trust on behalf of The Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company (SADCIC). We are grateful for the support of Suffolk County Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council, the Local Strategic Partnership, Suffolk ACRE and the Big Lottery Fund (Awards for All).

The Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company (SADCIC) covers Saxmundham and eleven surrounding parishes: Benhall and Sternfield, Farnham with Stratford St. Andrew, Friston, Great Glemham, Kelsale cum Carlton, Peasenhall, Rendham, Sibton, Snape, Sweffling and Yoxford.

Saxmundham is an attractive historic market town and an important service centre for its population and the surrounding parishes. It has grown significantly over the last 15 years

with an expansion in population and housing. However there are strong concerns locally that essential facilities have not kept pace with this growth. Priority issues for SADCIC and local people include improving sports, social and facilities for young people - principally via the development of a new Community Enterprise Centre. There are significant concerns about improving education, training and employment opportunities. The future of health provision and retailing were also issues that arose during the consultation. SADCIC has been formed to bring these issues to the fore, to take a lead within the community in pressing for change and to take action in delivering specific improvement projects.

The Outline Action Plan (Section 7) synthesizes the research and consultation with local residents and key organisational stakeholders and now needs to be further developed with all stakeholders who can make change happen. We are aware of difficult

economic times ahead but we believe this should not be used as a reason for lack of action on any elements of the plan as set out.

The Plan is the work of the Directors of SADCIC supported by The Civic Trust. The current Directors of SADCIC are:

- o *Colonel (ret.) Ron Warren*
- o *Terry Barrow*
- o *George Berry*
- o *Phil Peeling*
- o *Robin Potter*
- o *Don Tricker*

SADCIC is a social enterprise working for the benefit of the community of Saxmundham and its surrounding parishes. All directors are unpaid volunteers.

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## 2. A Time for Action

This Community Plan is the culmination of over a year's work by Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company and partners. All who live or work in Saxmundham and surrounding parishes have had an opportunity to contribute to the debate on the future of the area, either by attending workshops and exhibitions, responding to the consultation brochure, or by participating in the written surveys. We are grateful to all who have demonstrated their commitment to the town and area in this way.

The starting point for this Community Plan is that Saxmundham and its hinterland face important challenges and that now is the time to address these. People have told us of their concerns about the pace of housing growth and the lack of adequate community facilities and health provision to serve the growing population, about the future of the retail heart of Saxmundham given intense competition

from other centres, about the need for quality local employment, better public transport and, perhaps above all, the pressing need to provide better facilities and opportunities for young people.

This plan marks the end of the initial consultations and the start of a programme of action, in which SADCIC is determined to play its full part alongside others who are equally committed to our attractive town and surroundings and wish to see it thrive and prosper.

We must work together to provide:

- Better sports and social facilities for a growing population
- Improved provision for young people
- An increase in the quality of local jobs with enhanced training opportunities
- A quality of health facilities that truly match local need
- An improved retailing centre that better meets the needs of the local population

SADCIC will work with all parties on this agenda for action. We will work in two ways:

- by supporting partnership action to raise Saxmundham's profile, attract funding and investment and coordinate effort
- By undertaking a community "flagship project" – the Community Enterprise Centre - which will meet a broad range of community aspirations, services and needs under one roof.

In this report we set out an initial programme of action for the next 5 years as a basis for going



forward. We look forward to working with all parties on its implementation. It may be challenging, but others have been successful with economic, social and environmental regeneration of their communities and Saxmundham deserves the best.

*Saxmundham from the air showing  
the railway line and High Street*

### 3. Saxmundham Snapshot



**A Traditional Market Town.** Thirty years ago Saxmundham was a traditional market town, with a weekly live and dead stock market. The town was full on market day as residents of

surrounding parishes flocked to Saxmundham for shopping and for a social gathering.

**A period of decline to the late 1990s.** In the 20 years up to the late 1990s Saxmundham's shops suffered from a reduction in passing trade due to the new bypass, the opening of Somerfield which affected neighbouring shops and the closure of American airbases nearby at Woodbridge and Bentwaters

**Saxmundham is a natural hub.** Its location on road and rail networks mid way between the urban centres of Ipswich and Lowestoft makes it a service centre for surrounding parishes for shopping, employment, health and education. The parishes of Kelsale cum Carlton and Benhall are only a mile away. They both have primary schools and active social clubs. The Carlton Park sports club serves the town but also attracts sports men and women from the district as a whole. Further out from Saxmundham, residents can choose from other centres – Leiston, Halesworth, Woodbridge and Framlingham. Saxmundham itself enjoys the usual small

market town mix of sports and social clubs and church activities

**Superficially Saxmundham is a thriving town.** On the surface Saxmundham appears to be thriving and dynamic, but there are pockets of significant deprivation (*See Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion report on Deprivation in Rural Suffolk for Suffolk ACRE*).

**A Growing Town.** New housing has been built to the north and west of the town as far as the bypass, taking the population from around 2,500 (1991) to over 4,000 today. A burst of development has taken place since 2000 with 430 houses built since then – a 30% increase. The pace has slowed recently and will inevitably be affected by the recession in the industry.

**More development is planned.** Recent proposals include a scheme by Hopkins Homes for 146 houses and a river park to the east of the river Fromus, a proposal by Reef Developments for shops and housing opposite Somerfield in the town centre and a proposal

by Capital Associates for mixed development on land adjacent to the A12

**But key public services have lagged behind.** A new Health Centre was built in 1990 but this is already overcrowded. A new Primary School was completed in 1998 followed by a Childrens' Centre in 2008. NHS dentist facilities have only recently been re-established in the town and the current dental surgery in the High Street is thought by many to be in an unsuitable building.

**Education is an important local service.** There is a 600 pupil High School at Leiston, Middle Schools of around 300 at Leiston and Saxmundham, and Primary Schools at Leiston, Saxmundham, Kelsale, Yoxford, Middleton/Peasenhall, Snape and Benhall. Saxmundham Primary School was rated "good/excellent" in its 2007 Ofsted review.

**But there is concern over the future of Saxmundham Middle School.** Under Suffolk County Council's proposals for school reorganisation Saxmundham Middle School

will close in July 2012 when the introduction of a two-tier education structure for the area is completed. A group of local governors, head teachers and organisations are lobbying for the continuation of secondary education on the Middle School site. The site supports a wide range of community facilities and its future is a critical issue for the town

**An active adult education programme exists.** A wide selection of leisure and learning courses is supplied through local schools, community and village halls by Suffolk County Council with the Learning and Skills Council.

**Facilities for young children are under pressure.** The recently-built Childrens' Centre on the Middle School site caters for children up to 4yrs and is a significant new resource for the town. However the 24 part-time places are inadequate. Other facilities exist at St John's Church Hall and the Saxmundham Resource Centre for Toddlers. Saxmundham Primary School provides nursery facilities for 4 year olds.

**There is little for teenagers in Saxmundham.** There is a gap in provision for the young (11-19 yrs), beyond the normal school and guide/brownie/scout/sports club activities. Facilities for young people have actually reduced recently, due to County Council economies and a lack of local commitment. Suffolk Coastal District Council's Outdoor Playing Space Strategy says: *"It is considered there should be more provision for teenagers at various locations about the town and that a multi-purpose teenage sports area should be investigated"*. The Leiston Leisure Centre offers a comprehensive range of indoor facilities and an outdoor all weather pitch, however it is five miles from Saxmundham with very limited public transport access.

**Saxmundham residents are looking forward to a new "one stop shop" Health Centre.** There is an excellent group practice with 6 doctors, but the expansion of the town means these are over stretched and the waiting room and car parking is over-crowded. There is a

proposal for a new “one stop shop” facility and planning permission exists for the development on a site at Carlton Park. But so far the scheme has not received the support of the Primary Care Trust.

**The High Street has improved.** Over the last seven years the number and variety of shops in the High Street has improved following a successful retailer support initiative by Suffolk Coastal District Council. Traditional shop fronts have been restored and new businesses have started up

**But Saxmundham loses trade to its neighbours .** Saxmundham has a Somerfield food store in the centre of town but this does not provide the range of products or price competitiveness to be found in larger stores at Martlesham, Ipswich or Lowestoft. Many residents choose to drive out of town to these stores for their weekly shop. There have been proposals for a second food store on the edge of the town, but these came to nothing and local businesses are firmly opposed to such a development. The Somerfield store is likely to

come under new ownership in the near future following a takeover by the Co-operative Group Ltd and the requirement by the Office of Fair Trading for the store to be sold on.

**The pattern of employment has changed.**

Tourism has grown and there has been new business growth in and around the town in farm shops and farm related businesses for example.

**But there are fears that Saxmundham is becoming a dormitory town.** Sizewell power station is just 7 miles away and is a source of local employment. There is a small business park on the outskirts of the town at Carlton. The biggest employer on this site employs some 30 people. In the last 2 years a number of businesses have closed or moved away and a number of units have stood vacant for some considerable time. Many people currently travel long distances by car and train to work. Meanwhile some local manufacturing companies and other employers have closed and local employment appeared to have

stopped growing, even before the recession took hold.

**Location is good but roads are congested.**

The A12, which bypasses the town, connects Saxmundham to Ipswich, Lowestoft and East Anglia generally. It is an excellent position for commuters, but there are bottlenecks and accident black spots on this road that detract from Saxmundham’s position. The smaller B roads were not built to cope with the amount of traffic now using them. Within the town, the High Street is frequently obstructed by delivery lorries and by cars parked on the yellow lines.

**Saxmundham is on the railway, but it is standing room only!** The station is a huge bonus to the town, especially during the commuter rush hours, but by the time the trains have reached Saxmundham in the morning it is usually standing room only. The station itself has not been updated for many years and is unmanned.



**Public transport is not integrated.** Buses fail to link with trains at the station and passengers to and from the surrounding towns, villages and holiday destinations can find themselves stranded.

**Buses and bus stops need to be brought up to date.** On the whole the buses are well used by the community – including the blind, disabled and schools. However few are able to take wheelchairs and the elderly find them difficult to access. The bus routes are currently being updated and new bus stops have been placed in and around the town.

**Car parking is a bone of contention.** There are two main car parks in the town centre – at Somerfield and at the back of the Market Place. There is very limited free on street parking. The Business Association considers that additional free, time limited parking is needed in the town. Members of St John's Church are concerned that the two hour limit at Somerfield creates problems for people attending weddings and funerals at the church.

**Suffolk County Council's Properties are a key strategic asset for the town.** Suffolk County Council own a significant amount of property in the town and the future of all these is a critical issue. The old Saxmundham Primary School site has lain idle for 10 years, the Resource Centre near the Middle School is planned to be redeveloped as residential and the Library and Social Services buildings are not fit for purpose. Where land may be sold for development certain undertakings have been given that funds would be available for the benefit of the town, but nothing has been made clear on this issue so far.

## 4. WHAT THE PEOPLE SAY



### **PUBLIC CONSULTATION IN 2007**

SADCIC undertook an extensive round of consultation and review prior to launching a

major survey of the community in Saxmundham and its surrounding parishes. Initial questionnaires were issued to parish councils, local businesses and community organisations in the autumn of 2007. The objective of these was to establish a database of local organisations and identify activities going on in the area. This was then followed up with an initial workshop with these groups supported by The Civic Trust and with representation from Suffolk ACRE and Suffolk Coastal District Council. This workshop identified areas and issues that appeared significant for the town in its role of supporting the local community and these were then further tested at a 'drop-in' event at the Market Hall in February 2008. Nearly 200 local people attended and gave their inputs regarding the issues facing the town.

### **THE SAXMUNDHAM COMMUNITY PROFILE**

SADCIC produced an interim report 'The Saxmundham Community Profile' which summarised the town as it exists at this time and the changes and general issues facing it.

The report also included an audit of local facilities, clubs and groups

### **RESULTS OF INITIAL CONSULTATIONS**

The key themes that emerged were:

- Better sports and social facilities for a growing population
- Improved facilities for young people
- The local economy and quality of employment opportunities
- Improved health facilities

### **COMMUNITY SURVEY**

SADCIC carried out a community survey in June/July 2008 which involved 5,500 packs containing a consultation brochure (see section 4) and a questionnaire (with reply paid envelope for return) being delivered to all premises in the IP17 postal area.

The questions were:

- *Would you support the development of a new multi-function Community Enterprise Centre for Saxmundham?*
- *The following might feature as part of a new Community and Leisure facility. Can you indicate your preference...etc (a list followed)*
- *Apart from Somerfield how many local businesses in and around the High Street do you support on a regular basis?*
- *What other shops, trades, professions or other enterprises would you like to see in Saxmundham?*
- *Would you use Saxmundham High Street more regularly if any of the following options were available? (a list followed)*

Two questions followed to allow room for any further comments and to find out which parish respondents came from. The questions relating to retailing were included at the request of the business association

(Businesses of Saxmundham) following the earlier consultations. 1,050 questionnaires

(19%) were returned. The majority (70%) of the forms were returned by residents of Saxmundham, Benhall and Sternfield and Kelsale-cum-Carlton.

## THE RESULTS

- **A Community Enterprise Centre wanted.** An overwhelming 92% of respondents supported the development of a new multi-function "Community Enterprise Centre" for Saxmundham
- **It should have a hall.** A large general purpose hall was the most popular feature sought
- **Space for youth.** A dedicated youth facility was also something most respondents felt was essential
- **Small business units not popular.** This could be partly because of the residential outlook of respondents. However business units could generate an income to pay for providing other facilities

*Sax needs a fresh outlook. It has the potential to be brought into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, without being spoilt.*

*Saxmundham would benefit from following the Halesworth example, where a variety and quality of shops in a visually pleasing environment makes visits a pleasure*

*Compared to other local towns, sports facilities and facilities for young people are definitely left wanting*

**What should the Centre contain?** The most popular features, in priority order, were:

- Large hall for indoor sport/events
- Youth club dedicated room (with access to café and other communal facilities)
- Public library (with internet/IT facilities)
- Café for daytime/evening use by public
- Commercial kitchen facilities
- Meeting rooms for hire by community organisations and other enterprises
- Adult education training room(s) facilities
- Parent and toddler facility
- Outdoor play area for younger children
- Bar
- Social care facilities
- Small business office units

- **There is a loyal local shopping catchment.** 94% claimed to shop locally at least once a month, with 56% frequenting 4 or more local suppliers in that period
- **More and better shops are sought.** The most popular additional shops mentioned were a shoe shop, clothes shop and a new or additional food store. The type of outlets mentioned illustrated the split between income levels in the town: some favoured M & S and Waitrose, for example, whilst others mentioned discounters.
- **Potential improvements to the town centre.** In order of priority these were:
  - Increased variety of shops
  - More time-restricted free car parking
  - No early closing on Thursday
  - Improved free/cheap transport into the town from surrounding parishes
  - Later closing on a specific night
  - More pay car parking

*Sax needs a basic community centre which people/organisations can hire for regular plus one-off events. More or less every village and town has one, but Sax. does not*

*A building/facility which makes Saxmundham proud and gives its teenagers focus and self esteem*

*Workshop areas within the large hall, equipped with sound and lighting – drama and dance studios, soundproof music room, recording facilities. Let's nurture the talent of Saxmundham!*

- **A better variety of shops wanted.** The most important factor that respondents considered would make Saxmundham town centre more attractive was an increase in the variety of shops – by a significant margin.
- **More short term free car parking - the second priority.** This might be a more attainable goal in the short term.

Additional comments made by people related to the following issues (in order of popularity):

- New surgery/health centre
- Free car parking
- Traffic free High Street
- Less charity shops
- Improved bus schedules
- Increased police presence
- Reduce business rates
- Shuttle bus
- Cut illegal parking

**It is worth noting that the number of responses relating to the need for a new health centre significantly exceeded the next four items put together.**

Many comments were received about the general 'feeling' of Saxmundham, appearing somewhat run down. The railway station and old bus station and builders yard in Church street all received criticism in this respect. Comments were also directed at the possibility of pedestrianising the Market Place. Saxmundham was often compared unfavourably with the surrounding market towns and Halesworth was cited a number of times as a good local example.

The consultation revealed no significant issues around housing, environment and community safety. We are aware, however that all elements are important to the community and we will provide support as issues and opportunities arise.

*Saxmundham has a great High Street! I love the variety of shops. We used to live in Leiston, but I feel Sax caters more for what I need to buy*

*The market is vital in bringing people in from the villages who also then use the High Street shops*

*We have seen Saxmundham die over the past 13 years due to very limited free parking and time restrictions on certain parking*

*I believe the layout of the entire place lacks attractiveness. Halesworth for example has a buzz, a feel good factor – maybe need pavement cafe, precinct, covered area?*

*Paid car parking should also be available for 3-4 hour periods*

*Pedestrianise the Market Place*

## YOUTH SURVEY

A further more detailed youth survey was undertaken by SADCIC directors in response to the strength of interest and concern for this topic expressed in earlier consultations. The survey involved under 14s and 14 plus pupils at Saxmundham Middle School and Leiston High School. 245 completed questionnaires were collected from Saxmundham Middle School and 46 from Leiston High School. The questions covered facilities used by young people, their leisure interests and their ideas for additional provision.

- **Youth facilities are inadequate in Saxmundham.** Over 80% were unhappy with the level of provision.
- **Existing local clubs are under- used.** Scouts, brownies, guides, sports clubs all attracted a 'minority' following from youngsters. The exception was the tennis club which had a significant following.
- **Indoor leisure activities predominate.** The current popular interests for over half were indoor computer/electronic games and watching TV/DVDs. 40% of older

children opted for hanging around, socialising and music.

- **Sport.** Half played outdoor sport and indoor sport was also highlighted.
- **Outdoor leisure.** For outdoor leisure (other than sport) youngsters preferred things like bike riding (including BMX), skateboarding and roller skating.
- **The Parks were popular with Carlton Park particularly highlighted.** 30% visited the park. Virtually no one made use of the Middle School or library facilities.
- **New provision sought.** The most popular demands were for a youth club (mid-week for under 14's and at week-ends for the 14+ age range). A skate park, outdoor shelters to "hang around" in and an all weather soccer/hockey/basketball pitch all scored highly on the responses.
- **Carlton Park should be the location?** 60% of youngsters thought any new youth amenity should be provided here. The less popular locations were the Memorial Field and the Middle School site.

*Youth facilities – so crucial*

*Most important – anything for teenagers*

*Compared to other local towns sports facilities and facilities for young people are definitely left wanting*

*The main thing that Saxmundham lacks is a community building for our children. There is nothing provided to keep them off the streets*

*As a mother of two teenage boys it would be such a relief if there was somewhere for them to go instead of just wandering around. They don't want anything fancy or high tech, just somewhere warm and dry, where they can "hang out " with their friends*

*A skate park is a great idea because it is somewhere the youth of the town can go*

# 5. The Way Ahead

The work of SADCIC and its partners is supported by the following national policy context:

- Market towns as community hearts and economic hubs** for their residents and the rural hinterlands they serve. The vision of the former Countryside Agency and embodied in the Rural White Paper. Scores of market towns partnerships have followed the strategy-making approach set out by the Agency, in many cases leading to formal delivery agencies and valuable programmes of action
- Balanced growth.** The aspiration set out by Government in Planning Policy Statements 1, 3 and 7 that new housing growth should be accompanied by appropriate levels of community and other infrastructure provision, if development is to be sustainable

SADCIC is drawing up plans for future action. It intends to work alongside and supplement the work of other agencies and enterprises in improving Saxmundham for all who live, work and visit the town. It can act in three ways in accordance with its remit. It can:

- develop, own and manage land and buildings
- support and supplement the efforts of others, including existing public bodies
- represent the interests of the area in pressing for action by others

### Issues

In addition to the 3 priorities identified opposite, SADCIC will take action on other key issues:

#### We will press for local improved health facilities.



We will work with all medical stakeholders so that the implementation of the new Health Centre is coordinated with the development of a new Community Enterprise Centre and other facilities in the town, as identified in the consultation.

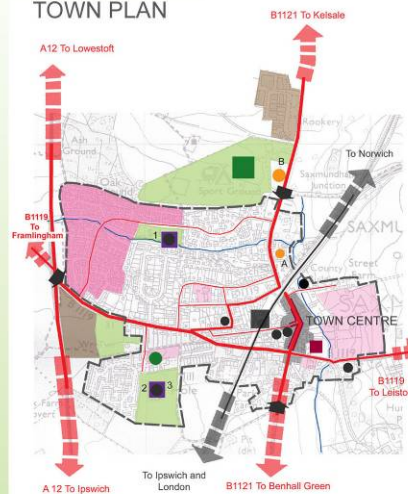
#### Raise the profile of Saxmundham and the District and put forward a case for funding and support for other SADCIC programmes.



Design the Community Development Plan to complement the priorities of the Local Strategic Partnership, the Sustainable Community Strategy and Local Area Agreement. Work with all parties to win support for SADCIC objectives.

## ACTION FOR THE FUTURE - PRIORITIES and ISSUES Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company

### TOWN PLAN



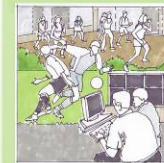
### Key

	Roads		High Street Retail		1 Primary School
	Railway		Recent housing development		2 Middle School
	Rail Station		Potential housing development		3 Children's Centre
	Town gateway		Light industrial		Health facility (A) existing (B) proposed
	Retail anchor store		Key open space resource		Sports Club facility
					Current youth facility

### Priority Themes For Action

Here are three themes for SADCIC action that came out of our consultation events in December and February.

#### 1 An Active Town and District



##### Better sports and social facilities for a growing population.

An area within the Middle School site has been identified as the most likely location for a new Community Enterprise Centre. Other options may also be possible (eg Memorial Field). Which location is best for the town and what are the issues and options that have to be addressed?

#### 2 Valuing Our Young People



##### Improved facilities for young people.

Facilities for our young people have been neglected by the authorities and must now be addressed by the community. We will ensure that their needs are fully taken into account in the new Community Centre. We recognise that the young people need their own independent facilities, which we will also support.

#### 3 Local Economy and Quality of Employment Opportunities



##### An increase in the quality of local jobs. Additional training for local people to increase the range of opportunities open to them.

While SADCIC cannot directly create jobs, any community facilities developed with them to provide further income streams. Our future activities are likely to include training, information resources and the provision of office and meeting facilities.

Centre page from the consultation brochure

- **Empowerment and local delivery.** Recent policy, in particular from the Department of Communities and Local Government (*Communities in Control: Real People Real Power. July 2008*), in which a stronger role is envisaged for grass-roots organisations in setting priorities and taking action. The structure of Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships is intended to support this, whilst funding has been allocated to support community based development projects

#### **PRIORITIES FOR ACTION**

The initial workshop and consultation events, followed by the community and youth surveys have given a clear direction to the priorities for Saxmundham going forward. These must include:

- **A Community Enterprise Centre** to provide sports and social facilities, training and employment opportunities for the town and surrounding parishes with areas specifically for youth provision.
- **Generating an income stream.** There is a need and opportunity to provide office accommodation to generate a revenue stream for the centre and to enhance employment opportunities in the locality. Community facilities could also generate an income to subsidise other activities. These might include a library, cafe, internet, hall and a bar for events.
- **Young people.** A more general improvement in facilities and support for young people in the town is needed. While the Community Enterprise Centre can go a long way towards this, it cannot cover all of the needs. It also will take a minimum of 3-5 years to complete. Thus it is important to address more immediate needs and opportunities.
- **The retail heart.** The need to improve the retail heart of the town has also featured strongly in feedback from the community. There are very real challenges to retailers in the current climate that particularly affect smaller towns. Retailers mention the

difficulties of trading in a recession, the growth in internet and out-of-town shopping and the levels of business rates - all have combined to make survival the key issue for many shops in town. The issues have to be addressed by all the relevant stakeholders including the businesses themselves, the Town, District and County Councils and local organisations. SADCIC can and will lobby for and promote the town in a broad context. Being independent of the constraints that statutory bodies must work to, it can do so with energy and commitment.

The survey comments relating to the need to improve the railway station (and also make it a proper transport hub, coordinated with buses), to pedestrianise the Market Place, to get the old bus station and builders yard in Church street developed and upgrade the river area to the East of the town all addressed the issues of general improvement of the town. These good ideas and suggestions



must be taken seriously, especially by the Town Council

Creating a viable action plan for the retail heart in the current climate will be a challenge, but we nevertheless make some proposals for this in the next section.

- **Health.** The requirement for a new Health Centre for Saxmundham is a major priority. This issue has to be addressed directly by the local team of health professionals and developers who are driving the project and who have been in discussion with the Health Authorities in Suffolk and the Eastern region for some considerable time. Clearly the local population strongly supports this project. Its continued support is likely to be vital if this development is to go ahead. We therefore include it in the overall action plan for the town.
- **The Middle School** is an important resource for the town, not just for the local education of the children but the

community facilities that it provides. The issues around school reorganisation have not been a part of the workshops and surveys carried out by SADCIC but have been reviewed by way of the statutory consultation process carried out by Suffolk County Council during the latter part of 2008. A local forum of Primary and Middle School Governors, head teachers and local organisations has been coordinating a response to the consultation and is lobbying for a continuation of secondary (i.e. 11 years and beyond) education at the site after the 2012 reorganisation takes effect. Once again the future of education in the town and use of the Middle School site must figure significantly in any action plan for the town.

- **Other opportunities.** The possible development of Sizewell C&D and the BT Martlesham Business Park will have a significant impact on the local economy and we will look to exploit opportunities arising from these for the benefit of the local economy.

*Years ago there was talk of Sax having a community centre – nothing. All around us there are lovely village halls etc. This time it's our turn. Community Centre here we come!*

*Any community project is good because it brings people together*

*Please, please, please keep fighting for us!*

## UNCERTAINTIES – A TIME FOR ACTION

SADCIC has drawn everyone's attention to some key issues and uncertainties that face Saxmundham at present. These are:

- The forthcoming school reorganisation that leaves the future of the Middle School site uncertain
- A number of sites in the ownership of the County Council that are in need of redevelopment
- Uncertainty about the future of the Somerfield food store, the possibility of a second supermarket in the town and the resultant impact of these developments
- The lack of progress on the development of the much-needed new Health Centre for the town.

SADCIC and its partners wish to fill this vacuum with positive action. Its belief is that all of the issues facing the town can be resolved for the benefit of the community and that a "transformed Saxmundham" can begin to emerge within five years. What will this look

like? The following vision attempts to capture something of the Saxmundham of the future that SADCIC is working towards.

## SAXMUNDHAM IN 2015

SADCIC's vision is that in 2015 Saxmundham will be a vibrant and socially inclusive market town, containing:

- A new Health Centre
- A Community Enterprise Centre
- More higher skilled, higher paid employment opportunities, especially for the young adults of the area
- An integrated transport hub for the area
- A revitalised secondary education facility on the current Middle School site
- A revitalised High Street with a produce market supporting the livelihoods of local suppliers
- Two popular town centre supermarkets

As an example of what outstanding Market Towns can achieve all stakeholders may wish to study reports on the regional winners of the 2008 Market Towns Awards: see

[www.markettownresources.co.uk/2008MTAW/NNERS/mtawinners](http://www.markettownresources.co.uk/2008MTAW/NNERS/mtawinners)

This excellent site shows what can be achieved when all areas of the community act towards a common vision

## 6. Policy and Action



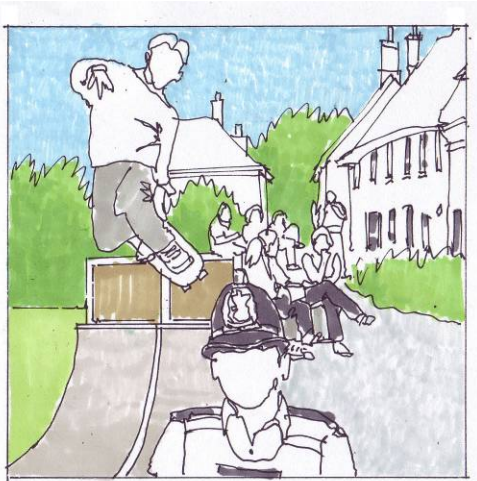
### A CONCERTED PROGRAMME OF ACTION

A concerted plan of action is needed, in which SADCIC will play its part alongside other agencies in the area. The expectation is that all appropriate bodies within the town and surrounding parishes will give their support to the plan in the common interest and that tasks and actions will be shared. For example:

- **Community Enterprise Centre.** The consultation surveys show that the development of a Community Enterprise Centre is strongly supported by the local community and will satisfy many of the needs identified. The Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company is strongly committed to this project and will act as developer and operator, together with other local organisations, plus the Saxmundham Town Council, Suffolk Coastal District Council and Suffolk County Council
- **New and improved youth facilities.** (principally the short term and areas not addressed by the Community Enterprise Centre). The lead should be taken by Saxmundham Town Council together with Suffolk County Council and local organisations. SADCIC is currently chairing a local Youth Forum to coordinate 'quick win' opportunities.
- **Social inclusion for elderly and other disadvantaged groups.** Work has started on a social inclusion forum to cover the needs and wants of the elderly and disadvantaged groups.
- **Shopping and town centre improvement.** In this case the lead should be taken by Saxmundham Town Council with Businesses of Saxmundham and Suffolk Coastal District Council.

**MANAGING THE PROGRAMME.** To ensure all the elements of the Action Plan are progressed by the responsible bodies, SADCIC will hold a regular (6 monthly) public review meeting, with members of the public invited, where the organisations are invited to review progress and discuss priority issues. The objective of the meetings will be to:

- Coordinate the delivery of the action plan and ensure it remains on course.
- Promote Saxmundham and the action plan to local residents, partners, funders and investors.
- Communicate with all parties so that the initiative remains well supported through thick and thin.



- SADCIC will set up a project group to progress the Community Enterprise Centre and will co-opt members from local organisations including the Town Council.

The centre will be a multifunction, multiagency building and SADCIC is looking to work in partnership with a variety of users in providing accommodation and services. These may include: Suffolk County Council for Saxmundham based staff, the Police, BT, University Campus Suffolk and Otley College.

## THE COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE CENTRE PROJECT

The Saxmundham and District Community Interest Company will take the following actions:

- Develop a concept paper with an outline of the building and scope to promote interest and negotiations with stakeholders
- Undertake negotiations with landowners and others, including potential building users. Identify site
- Develop a business plan and full brief for the project
- Prepare the design scheme with the support of architectural and other technical consultants
- Secure agreements with users of the facilities
- Secure grants, local government participation and sponsorship to make the scheme viable
- Purchase or lease site/building
- Obtain planning and other permissions
- Let the contract
- Manage the project

- Set up a premises management vehicle to take charge of the completed development.

**Site Options.** Five possibilities have been identified. Each has its own issues and opportunities:

- Middle School
- Resource Centre (adjacent to the Middle School)
- Memorial Field
- Carlton Park
- Land next to the A12 currently owned by Capital Associates



### Possible Schedule of Accommodation

- Reception area
- Main Hall/green room/stage/store
- Starter offices (space dividable into 4-6 units)
- Bar
- Café/IT suite
- Commercial kitchen
- Meeting/dining room
- Youth area
- Public library and information centre
- Conference/teaching/meeting room
- Training area
- Creche
- Social care day room +facilities
- Fitness room
- Changing rooms, showers etc
- Multi-media area (eg recording /radio studio)

Total area including circulation: 2,100 sq m  
Approximate cost: £5 million.

Additional possible facilities may include office space for Suffolk County Council employees currently located in Street Farm Road , the Town Council and Police This would provide a significant additional revenue stream to enhance the viability of the Centre



### THE ACTION PLAN

The outline action plan table that follows is intended to be a basis for discussion between the partners, leading to an agreed way forward. A programme of this kind is complex and will take time to complete. It is vital therefore to have shorter term initiatives that can be made to happen relatively easily and that can reassure residents and partners that the programme is about real action and improvement and not talk. For example, some possible “quick win” actions to address youth needs are:

- Revitalise youth clubs
- Upgrade Seaman Avenue play area
- Outdoor basketball/soccer surface
- Outdoor shelter
- BMX track on Capital Associates-owned “wasteland”
- Drop in café – 2 nights a week.
- Skatepark

# 7. Outline Action Plan

The Action Plan is in 2 sections. The first deals with the Plan for the Community Enterprise Centre and has a detailed schedule of activities and a timeline which has been developed by SADCIC. This plan is subject to further refinement and will be updated on our website as the project proceeds.

The second section captures the rest of the key needs and opportunities identified during our surveys and consultations and we have set out the actions we propose should be undertaken to address these areas. We have also identified the bodies responsible for taking forward these action items and will seek for these to review the Action Plan and publish their response to it. Saxmundham Town Council is a key player and we believe it is important for the council to appoint a councillor to take ownership for each key area. Most, if not all areas of this section can achieve results in the shorter term (1-2 years) if resource and energy are applied.

## Section 1: Community Enterprise Centre

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
<b>1. Community Enterprise Centre</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>SADCIC lead</b></li> </ul>
1.1 Concept Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Drawings and outline proposal concept paper to be produced</li> <li>▪ Local grants to be sought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ February 2009 ready for public review in March</li> </ul>
1.2 Identification of site options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Discussions with site owners and SCDC planning department</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ March – August 2009</li> </ul>
1.3 Funding for business plan, preliminary design, outline planning and grant applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Apply to major funders for preliminary works</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likely to require approximately £100k (estimated) to fund design and planning work</li> <li>▪ Secure funding September 2009</li> </ul>
1.4 Secure agreements with users of Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ November 2009</li> </ul>
1.5 Business plan and project brief		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ January 2010</li> </ul>

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
1.6 Preliminary design and outline Planning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 2010</li> </ul>
1.7 Funding for acquisition of site and building costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apply to major funders for support of acquisition/build</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure funding (approximately £5M estimated) January 2011</li> </ul>
1.8 Detailed design and full Planning		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 2011</li> </ul>
1.9 Tender for contract, select contractor and let contract		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>September 2011</li> </ul>
1.10 Occupy Centre		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May 2013</li> </ul>

## Section 2: Other Projects

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
<b>2. New Health Centre (One Stop Shop)</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Saxmundham Health Group</i></b></li> </ul>
	2.1 Obtain PCT support for development.(project is otherwise understood to be ready to proceed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs continued lobbying by members of the community and all organisations</li> </ul>

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
<b>3. Improved Youth facilities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Town Council lead – new Saxmundham Youth Forum</b></li> </ul>
	3.1 Upgrade Seaman Avenue facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refurbish existing play equipment</li> <li>▪ Add better outdoor sports for teenagers</li> <li>▪ Outdoor shelter</li> </ul>
	3.2 Increase number of youth club sessions per week <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Over 14's at weekends</li> <li>▪ Under 14's midweek</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ SCC already taking some initial action</li> </ul>
	3.3 Skatepark/BMX facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Funding for Skate/BMX park needs revisiting</li> <li>▪ Investigate possibility of BMX track</li> </ul>
	3.4 Drop in café in town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate temporary use of empty shop unit</li> </ul>
<b>4. Training and enhanced employment opportunities</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk Education Business Partnership with local organisations (Town council, Parish councils, employers etc)</b></li> </ul>
	4.1 Encourage strong local business support for High School Diploma courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local employers to pro-actively engage with local schools and colleges</li> </ul>
	4.2 Encourage local apprenticeships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local employers to pro-actively engage with local schools and colleges</li> </ul>
	4.3 Establish Entrepreneurial Trust to support local youngsters starting own businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work with infrastructure support groups such as The Princes Trust</li> </ul>



PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
	4.4 Locally promote opportunities for learning and skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eg Foundation degrees backed by local employers</li> </ul>
	4.5 Establish a 'Choose Saxmundham' initiative promoting Saxmundham area for potential employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A local version of 'Choose Suffolk'</li> </ul>
	4.6 Promote Social Enterprises, possibly linking youth and retired individuals as a 'winning combination'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide local support eg through local 'Entrepreneurial Trust'</li> </ul>
<b>5. Integrated Transport Hub</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Suffolk Coastal District Council, Suffolk County Council, National Express Rail, Town Council</i></b></li> </ul>
	5.1 Coordinate the bus and rail timetables.	
	5.2 Upgrade the rail station to make it welcoming and informative to travellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Suggestions include improved information, lighting (personal safety), decoration and information about the locality – maps, signage etc</li> </ul>
	5.3 Develop area around station for improved Bus terminal and expanded car parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use Police Station site</li> <li>Embargo further residential development around station until transport hub plan and parking needs are sorted out</li> </ul>
	5.4 Provide bigger capacity and more frequent trains at peak times	

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
	5.5 Improve A12 road safety at B1119 junction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This unsafe junction is key gateway to the town and needs upgrading before further major development of the town takes place</li> </ul>
<b>6. Improve the retail heart of Saxmundham</b> (Diversity of shops and attraction of Saxmundham as retail and tourist centre)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Town Council lead with Businesses of Saxmundham, Suffolk Coastal District Council</b></li> </ul>
	6.1 Lobby/support initiatives for better town centre supermarket(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Development Framework</li> <li>Planning applications</li> </ul>
	6.2 More and improved flexibility of car parking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand total car parking space</li> <li>East end of current Somerfield car park to be long/short stay</li> <li>Sort out High Street free for all</li> </ul>
	6.3 Improve information and signage displays around the town	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Map and information boards at car parks, station and market place</li> <li>Limited, good quality signposting</li> </ul>
	6.4 Incentives for and provide better support for small retailers/market traders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding for High Street enhancements and refurbishment/redecoration of building exteriors</li> <li>Reduce business rates for small retailers</li> </ul>
	6.5 Look at Halesworth and surrounding Market towns and copy their best features	
	6.6 Review pedestrianisation opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Market Place</li> <li>Part of High Street ?</li> </ul>
	6.7 Provide support for the Hopkins development to start, especially the park alongside the River Fromus	

PROJECT	PROPOSED ACTION	OWNER/TIMEFRAME/COMMENT
	6.8 Look for opportunity to enhance riverside area of the town at back of High Street	
<b>7. Saxmundham Middle School facility</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>School Governors and local organisations</b></li> </ul>
	7.1 Continue to support and plan for the future of secondary education in Saxmundham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ School Governors, SADCIC, Town Council and local Parish councils to work together</li> </ul>
	7.2 Explore greater community and enterprise use of the site	
<b>8. Elderly and Disadvantaged Forum</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Town Council</b></li> </ul>
	8.1 Set up Forum, build up resource database, identify opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Coordinate local organisations involved in elderly and disadvantaged areas</li> </ul>
	8.2 Publish events directory	