



Action planning for *traditional town centres in West Lothian*

BATHGATE consultation



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INTRODUCTION

West Lothian Council is committed to supporting the economic prosperity and vitality of the district's traditional towns. In November 2005 consultants were appointed to advise on rolling out an Action Plan approach in traditional towns.

Many improvements to Bathgate Town Centre have been made in the past 2 years. The Bathgate Town Centre Management Group, in association with West Lothian Council, supported the Bathgate in Bloom Committee with their entry to the Beautiful Scotland in Bloom competition in 2005. Bathgate came second in the large town category. An active and successful Bathgate Traders Forum has been established and it has produced two very successful Christmas brochures as well as a town guide for Bathgate. In May 2006 the Bathgate Town Centre Management Group and West Lothian Council secured funding



from the Scottish Executive to set up a pilot Business Improvement District. A farmers market is now operating in the town once a month. All these projects and initiatives have helped Bathgate to retain and improve its attractiveness to existing and new customers, visitors, businesses and investors.

PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

The consultants, appointed to advise the Action Planning Group carried out a "healthcheck" and the report identified opportunities and threats for the town centre of Bathgate. The council is now seeking views on the consultants findings together with other views on the priorities for investment in the town.

This consultation exercise will inform and prioritise the selection of projects to help improve town centre. The priorities will be laid out in the updated Bathgate Action Plan.



SUMMARY OF CONSULTANT'S FINDINGS

Bathgate has a range of independent traders complimented by a number of national retailers such as Boots, Woolworths and WHSmiths. The small retail park complements the range of shops with retail outlets such as Focus and Argos.

The town has a wide range of services such as various banks, a public library and a considerable number of cafes, pubs and restaurants. The shop vacancy rate is relatively low.

A regular train service connects the town to Livingston, Uphall and Edinburgh. The existing services will be improved further with the re-opening of the Bathgate to Airdrie rail link. Bathgate is well served by local bus services. The town centre benefits from a good supply of off-street public parking spaces as well as limited short stay on-street parking.

However, the consultants identified a need to introduce a parking and signage strategy to manage car parking more efficiently.

The consultants also identified a need to improve and maintain the

core of the town centre and its overall attractiveness. Shop front improvements and an enhanced streetscape would benefit the town and action is required to address crime and vandalism. In addition, the town centre could be more pedestrian friendly if footways were wider and the number of on-street car parking spaces reduced. The streets may also benefit from the removal of clutter such as bollards and signs, the removal of the brick planters and the provision of appropriate street trees.



NEXT STEPS

Your views on the main concerns for Bathgate will be used to prioritise investment from the council's town centre project budget.