

## **FOCUS GROUP: BUSINESSES held on 24 Sept 2009 at Waitrose**

**Composition:** Waitrose (Duncan Edwards), Brackenwood Windows (Kevin Brown), Tile and Bathroom Place (Lisa Bain), Fields Pharmacy (Vivien Readman), Stylistix (Annette Gent), plus Sue Goddard and Christian Wrigley from TVP, Cllr Stephen Conway, Andy Nicholls (Wokingham Borough Council) and Tim Palmer from CCB.

**Approach taken** – attendees were asked for main issues affecting their trading.

### **Longfield Road** (Vivien Readman and Annette Gent)

- Signage needed for Longfield Rd shops from both London Rd and Wargrave Rd as many residents are not aware of the parades existence;
- Parking problems at parade especially as it affects flow of traffic including buses turning from Pennfields into Hilltop Road;
- Anti-social behaviour especially outside hairdressers. Youths hang around on wall at front of shops until closing time and then move to rear, painting graffiti on back doors, leaving litter etc. They act as deterrent to customers. Police have not so far been very helpful. Duncan Edwards said that he had been advised to record every occurrence of ASB for the police. Stephen Conway was to meet with the Police Inspector for Twyford the following day and would brief them with the problems in Longfield Road. ASBO's are the only long-term solution. The culprits are known.

### **Main Village Centre**

#### **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

- General recognition that in the long-term some redevelopment will be necessary to make the village centre a more interesting destination for shoppers, with more varied retail circuits and to deal with the rear service car park;
- Stephen Conway can advise on ownership of the car park. Fontana own one part and another landlord the rest.
- Lack of sizeable seating area with say planting and water feature for parents and toddlers and senior citizens. Make more of Wellington Square, but striking a balance between more street furniture whilst leaving space for use at Xmas Fayre;
- The paved area between Zappas, Century Framers and Brackenwood also has potential at least for a bench (useful for bus passengers) and some planting;
- Village centre generally buoyant with only two vacancies (Nationwide and Lunchbox);

#### **GENERAL APPEARANCE**

- Brackenwood have had previous hanging baskets stolen, but are trying again;
- Lack of sizeable seating area with say planting and water feature for parents and toddlers and senior citizens. Make more of Wellington Square, but striking a balance between more street furniture whilst leaving space for use at Xmas Fayre;
- A general Twyford Facelift required – shop windows, painting, signage, hanging baskets, xmas displays – to make the best of the current architecture;
- Perhaps local garden centres eg. Sheeplands can be persuaded to sponsor floral planting or hanging baskets. AN thought that Woodley Town Council pay for flower displays in Woodley Shopping Centre;

#### **TRAFFIC & GETTING AROUND**

- Position of bus-stop outside Brackenwood causes traffic queues (but stop line for traffic in other direction coming from Reading has already been moved back, so little more can be done);
- Tile and Bathroom Place can understand residents wanting more bollards along London Road; however, their occasional large delivery lorries cannot access their rear car park because of the archway, so either have to hinder traffic by parking on double yellow lines just before the traffic lights or they go onto pavement. A lay-by

would be useful but then this would be abused. The florist has the same problem as their lorries are too large to use their rear car park. Agreed to pass this conflict of needs onto Transport Action Group.

#### PUBLICITY

- General agreement that the best type of publicity for traders would be something like an inter-active sign POD at say Waitrose Car Park or Bell Corner;
- Twyford Traders used to exist. AN thought there were insufficient numbers for a full Traders' Association but still enough for some sort of network; Kevin Brown passed on details of WBC's Small Businesses's Rate Relief Scheme as an example of information that could be circulated amongst such a group, as well as plans for any co-ordinated Christmas decorations etc.
- Xmas window competitions and also a treasure hunt, with an historical theme would also create an interest in the local shops especially the more outlying ones in Station Road and Longfield Road.