

# 3 Achieving our goals: business and economy

## Our goals

Three of Wincanton's goals directly relate to its business sector and local economy:

- **EMPLOYMENT & BUSINESS** Full employment, well-paid jobs and thriving businesses
- **SHOPS** A wealth of interesting shops in a bustling High Street
- **TOURISM & LEISURE** A vibrant market town that is a hub for visitors.

The goal for housing is also relevant but is considered in Chapter 3 which looks at social and community themes.

## Employment and business

### Where are we now?

The Healthcheck found that employment in Wincanton is high with over two-thirds of adults aged 16 to 74 in work at the time of the 2001 Census and only 1.8 per cent classified as unemployed.

But a relatively high proportion of jobs in Wincanton are relatively low-paid. Average earnings for a man in Wincanton are just £21,211, compared with £24,231 for South Somerset and over £30,000 for Britain as a whole. The average for a woman is £15,506 compared with £19,180 for South Somerset and £21,730 for Britain. Several factors contribute to our low earnings:

- a relatively high proportion of the workforce is in manual, routine and semi-routine jobs
- a low proportion is in professional and managerial jobs
- a quarter of working women are in part-time work which, apart from delivering lower earnings because of fewer hours worked, tends also to be concentrated in low-paid jobs.

Key findings of the Healthcheck are summarised in this section. For full details, see the Healthcheck Report, available from [www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk) or by calling 01963 31693

Our most important employment sectors are: wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and manufacturing. We have a few big employers, such as Wincanton plc, The Natural Selection Company and Watchbell, but are not overly dependent on any one single employer.

Over half of Wincanton residents work locally. The rest commute out of Wincanton, but a larger number of people come into Wincanton to work. In other words we have more jobs than there are local workers.

We have at least 300 private sector businesses. Many are local firms, some of which - like Rochford - have grown from small beginnings into significant UK concerns. A fifth of our private sector businesses moved to Wincanton from elsewhere outside Somerset, so we have a good past record of attracting businesses to our town.

Wincanton has a lot of good features that might attract businesses: high quality of life, good trunk road links to major destinations via the A303 (and indirectly via the M5), lack of congestion, good rail services nearby, competitive land prices, competitive wages, and conference facilities (at Wincanton Racecourse and the Holbrook House Hotel).

But Somerset as a whole, including Wincanton, suffers from a poor internal road network (especially for us, the North-South links), lack of grant aid and lack of higher education provision. It is perceived as an inaccessible county with a slow-paced, rural image.



Rochford: a growing local firm © JTL Financial Research, 2006.

**Wincanton’s employment and business SWOT [1]**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High employment</li> <li>• Large base of businesses</li> <li>• No over-dependence on single sector or employer</li> <li>• Competitive land prices</li> <li>• Low wages which are therefore relatively competitive from employers’ point of view</li> <li>• Good trunk road links</li> <li>• Good rail services nearby</li> <li>• Lack of congestion</li> <li>• Conference facilities</li> <li>• Good lifestyle</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low earnings</li> <li>• Lack of suitable business premises and employment development land</li> <li>• Low skills of working population - not helped by educational weaknesses including lack of local sixth form and no higher education facilities</li> <li>• Poor internal road network, especially North-South routes</li> <li>• Lack of grants</li> <li>• Area may be perceived as slow and rural</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing population - expands markets and labour supply</li> <li>• Ageing population - new markets, if wealthy incomers could increase average disposable income</li> <li>• Extensive housing development taking place and planned - expands markets and supply of labour</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing population - shifts demand for existing products, may squeeze out economically active population, might reduce average disposable income</li> <li>• Uncertain future for farming, especially dairy farming</li> <li>• Extensive housing development taking place and planned - could squeeze out existing and new employment land</li> </ul>

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Research shows that over half of firms that relocate cite land and premises as being the key factor. A third give highest priority to transport and infrastructure. Only a fifth say lifestyle issues (such as quality of environment) are most important.

Wincanton falls down on employment land and premises. Only 4 per cent of our existing businesses thought availability was good and not much extra land is earmarked for future employment. So we could be missing out on attracting larger businesses to Wincanton and may risk losing our existing businesses when they grow too big for their current sites.

In recent times, Wincanton has also lost employment land (for example, the two former Rochford sites in Station Road and the Cale House East site vacated by Wincanton plc) when businesses have relocated and the vacant land has been turned into housing.

## Community consultation

Residents of Wincanton and the surrounding area made a range of suggestions concerning business and employment:

- **undertake research.** They felt more information was needed about why businesses fail, what is special about other towns and why they succeed, and the needs and aspirations of existing businesses
- **land and premises.** Ensure there is sufficient employment land for a variety of business types, create sufficient industrial land to keep prices competitive, consider creating more small manufacturing units
- **increase earnings.** Try to attract light engineering (especially ICT, aviation and electronics) rather than heavy industry, encourage more high tech and value-added employment, find a niche within the economy, exploit the surrounding wealthy catchment area
- **encourage businesses to move or start up here.** Create incentives to locate here, consider a 'business incubation' cluster with special support
- **marketing.** Provide support for the local Chamber of Trade to market the town, and form partnerships with other towns or the county as a whole to market Wincanton as part of a larger area
- **other.** Link job opportunities to young people - maybe with a link to food industry, develop a strategy for increasing the impact of Wincanton Racecourse on local businesses, develop the monthly farmers' market into a more regular event, consider performing arts as an economic driver.



Community Consultation © Muriel Cairns, 2006

## Relevant framework policies

Wincanton needs to work within the framework of government and regional policies on sustainable development.

The primary aim is to enable people today to benefit from economic growth but without compromising the ability of future generations to do the same. At a practical level this involves: choosing locations for businesses and employment that minimise travel; requiring and encouraging businesses to use resources efficiently - for example, through energy-efficient premises and resource-efficient processes; and ensuring that business development does not adversely impact on the surrounding environment.

The Somerset Local Area Agreement sets outcomes for economic development and enterprise. These include increasing workforce skills levels, promoting growth and productivity of small businesses, and encouraging e-adoption by small businesses.

The South Somerset District Council Local Plan is also relevant, especially Chapter 9 on employment and tourism. Policies include:

- **ME2.** This allocates employment land for new development. There are two sites to serve Wincanton and its surrounding area (2.1 hectares on the New Barns Farm key site and 0.9 hectares at Lawrence Hill)
- **ME3.** This enables other sites within the development area of Wincanton and most of the surrounding villages to be used for employment provided the use is of an appropriate scale. Scale will take into account availability of public transport and access for locally resident workers
- **ME4.** Small scale expansion of existing businesses outside development areas may be allowed provided need is demonstrated
- **ME5.** Well-conceived farm diversification can be permitted
- **ME6.** Alternative use (such as residential development) of existing employment land should not be permitted if it would adversely affect employment opportunities unless there is an overriding need or significant environmental benefit.

## Possible business and employment strategies

Pulling together the evidence from the Healthcheck, the community views and the wider framework policies above, three strategic areas emerge as the foundation of this part of the Wincanton People's Plan as shown overleaf.

## Strategies for business and employment

Retention of existing businesses	Attracting new businesses	Building on existing businesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct regular business surveys (say, every two years) to assess constraints and needs.</li> <li>• Ensure available employment land is likely to meet needs of existing growing businesses as well as businesses newly moving into area.</li> <li>• Ensure existing businesses are aware of all available grants and rate reliefs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decide which business sectors/types to attract to Wincanton, with a view to increasing average earnings and starting young people on careers.</li> <li>• Assess needs of those businesses and work on ensuring Wincanton meets those needs.</li> <li>• Market Wincanton to those business sectors, where appropriate forming alliances with other towns, districts or county as a whole.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and encourage growth and/or new business linked to activities of Wincanton Racecourse (see also Tourism below).</li> <li>• Consider whether establishment of edge-of-town retail activities can be exploited to stimulate further retail growth (see also Shops below).</li> </ul>

### Specific projects

Working from the broad strategies, the Steering Group identified the following specific projects for employment and business as the top priorities for the next five years:

#### **B1. Research employment land needs and reasons why businesses don't locate in Wincanton.**

- **The aim** is to gather information that can then be used to make Wincanton a sought-after business location.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to include: recording the location and attributes of existing employment land available locally; surveying businesses that are already located here or have moved away; reviewing existing economic studies and commissioning new ones as appropriate; and gathering information about businesses that show an interest in locating here but then don't go ahead.
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be South West Regional Development Agency, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and local developers.

## B2. Ensure employment land meets identified needs.

- **The aim** is to ensure that Wincanton provides the quantity and variety of local jobs to meet the local population's needs and in particular to provide work and career opportunities for our young people. Informed by project B1 above, this will include ensuring that the supply of business land and premises matches demand in terms of location and attributes, and using effective lobbying to promote a consistent approach to planning applications.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to include surveying Wincanton and the surrounding settlements to identify suitable sites for different types of business, engaging with the local planning process and marketing the availability of sites to appropriate business sectors.
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, local and other businesses and developers.

## B3. Conduct business surveys at two-yearly intervals.

- **The aim** is to assess the needs of businesses (in addition to land requirements) and the constraints on business growth.
- **What's involved?** This project involves identifying appropriate survey methods, conducting surveys, analysing the results and ensuring results are effectively used to influence business-related policies.
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.

## Shops

### Where are we now?

The main retail area of Wincanton is centred in and around the High Street. There is a diverse range of small, independent retailers operating out of 57 shops and 37 other commercial premises. Important local shops include a post office and two pharmacies. There are no outlets of multiple chain stores.

The High Street has shrunk slightly over the past three years, with no new retail properties being created, five shops being converted from retail to other commercial use and three converted from retail to residential use. At the time of the Healthcheck, there were four vacant shops.

Key findings of the Healthcheck are summarised in this section. For full details, see the Healthcheck Report, available from [www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.wincantontowncouncil.co.uk) or by calling 01963 31693



Wincanton Post Office © Elaine Fraser, 2006.

The High Street also hosts key community services, including the health centre, library and police station. These help to draw potential shoppers into the town centre.

As a shopping centre, the High Street area benefits from attractive buildings but relatively little planting. There is a legacy of unattractive lighting, from the days when the High Street was part of the trunk road to the West, and lots of signs, some of which are no longer needed.

Recently, some areas of paving have been enhanced. Some pavements (particularly near the HSBC Bank) are narrow. The town centre suffers from petty vandalism which results in frequently broken shop windows.

The town centre is within walking or cycling distance for most Wincanton residents, but has a higher level of pedestrian and cycling accidents than the norm for South Somerset. At the time of writing, shoppers benefit from free car parking.

Wincanton has an edge-of-town supermarket (Morrison's) with its own car park. A planning application to build a Lidl discount store next door was refused by the local planning authority, on the grounds that, contrary to planning policy, the proposed development was outside the existing town centre, need had not been established and it could harm the vitality and viability of Wincanton town centre.

A farmers' market is held on the first Friday of every month in Wincanton Memorial Hall. A country market, selling produce, plants and crafts, is held every Friday. So Friday mornings tend to be busy in the High Street.

### Wincanton's shops SWOT [1]

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good range of shops</li> <li>• Good range of services in the town</li> <li>• Attractive buildings</li> <li>• Free parking</li> <li>• Community accessible transport scheme</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low earnings</li> <li>• Lack of planting and poor street furniture in High Street</li> <li>• Poor range of services in villages</li> <li>• High level of pedestrian and bicycle accidents</li> <li>• High level of criminal damage</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing population</li> <li>• Ageing population</li> <li>• Extensive housing development taking place and planned</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growing population</li> <li>• Ageing population</li> <li>• Possible introduction of parking charges</li> </ul>

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

Of the immediately surrounding villages, only two, Templecombe and Henstridge, have a food shop. Both also have their own post offices, as does Bayford.

Residents of surrounding villages not on a regular commercial bus route are eligible to use a community access transport (CAT) scheme, based in Wincanton to get into the town for shopping and other purposes. Wincanton residents with a disability are also eligible to use the CAT buses.

### Community consultation

There were frequent comments about business rates being too high to be affordable out of the turnover of small shops and the unfairness of the High Street being treated as prime retail space as if it were in a larger town. There was also a widespread feeling that it was unfair for small High Street retailers to have to compete with the edge-of-town supermarket. Other comments addressed a variety of themes:

- **range of shops and shopping opportunities.** Need to encourage and support more speciality shops and more independent quality shops. The farmers' market could be developed into a more regular event. Strategies should be developed to increase the impact of Wincanton Racecourse on local businesses, including its shops
- **parking and access.** The community is strongly in favour of Wincanton retaining its free parking to support trade and ensure access to the town centre for older and less mobile residents. Partial pedestrianisation of the High Street would improve access to shops

- **attracting new consumers.** It was suggested that a broader mix of housing is required to ensure a good spending range for local shops. Local retailers need to exploit the surrounding wealthy catchment area
- **understanding shoppers' needs.** A shoppers survey was suggested
- **marketing.** Local retailers should cooperate to identify and market Wincanton's unique selling point. A 'buy local' campaign should be considered to help local retailers.

### Relevant framework policies

Wincanton needs to work within the framework of central government and regional policies on sustainable development, as outlined on pages 13-14.

Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6) sets out central government's approach to promoting vital and viable town centres. It recommends accommodating growth through more efficient use of land and buildings within existing town centres and increasing the density of development. Town centres should provide high-quality and safe environments.

PPS6 requires a sequential approach to retail and related development with town centre sites being considered in preference to edge-of-centre sites and out-of-centre sites being the last resort. Both edge-of-centre and out-of-centre sites should have good connections to the town centre.

Chapter 8 of the SSDC Local Plan sets out policies on town centres and shopping. Statements and policies to note include:

- **towns as main location for services.** Wincanton, along with Yeovil, Chard, Crewkerne and Ilminster is identified as a town and as such is to be the focus for services and new development
- **MC1.** Change of use from retail to non-retail on ground floors within primary shopping areas will not be allowed if it undermines the dominant retail function of the area
- **MC2.** New shopping proposals will be considered according to the sequential approach outlined in PPS6
- **MC3.** Where non-town centre development is approved, the planning authority can impose conditions to prevent the inclusion, or later addition, of post offices or pharmacies that would adversely affect other more easily available facilities (such as those in the town centre).

Wincanton is also affected by SSDC proposals to introduce car parking charges throughout the district.

## Possible shops strategies

Based on the findings of the Healthcheck and the community consultation, the broad strategies outlined below could help us achieve our Shops goal.

### Strategies for shops

To support the existing High Street	To profit from edge-of-town shopping
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure local retailers are aware of all grants and rates reliefs available.</li> <li>• Support local retailers and/or Chamber of Trade in marketing Wincanton to consumers as a place to shop and to specialist retailers as a place to locate.</li> <li>• Retain adequate free car parking.</li> <li>• As town grows, try to attract at least one multiple chain assuming appropriate premises are available or can be developed.</li> <li>• Consider improvements to the shopping environment through, for example, planting, street furniture, and street art and performance.</li> <li>• Build on existing events, such as farmers' market to develop a Wincanton 'shopping experience'.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider whether it would be beneficial to attract further retailers to edge-of-town sites adjacent to Morrison's and (if it goes ahead) Lidl.</li> <li>• Consider how edge-of-town shoppers can be drawn into the High Street shopping area, for example through free transport or an attractive walking route.</li> </ul>

### Specific projects

Drawing from the strategies, the Steering Group identified the following priority projects for the next five years for shops:

#### **S1. Create the UK's first completely environmentally friendly wholefood supermarket.**

- **The aim** is to create a unique selling point for Wincanton as a shopping destination. The goods sold would address healthy living and many could be locally sourced. But the building itself would use sustainable straw-build technology and be energy self-sufficient (through using, say, solar and wind power). In this way, the project targets not just the shops goal but also health and the environmental framework. The unusual nature of the project is also expected to attract visitors to the town and so incidentally to address the tourism goal. The project also addresses the business and employment goal both during its construction and when up and running.

- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve identifying a suitable site, physical design, business skills, financing, engaging with the planning system, developing appropriate sustainable building skills and other skills locally.
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be South West Regional Development Agency, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, local farmers and food producers, local business people and environmental bodies.

### S2. Enhance Wincanton High Street.

- **The aim** is to make Wincanton shopping centre an attractive location and enjoyable place to be.
- **What's involved?** It is likely to involve looking at ways to make the town centre more pedestrian friendly, addressing issues around planting, railings, adequate free parking, minimising yellow lines and resurfacing the High Street. (Some progress on resurfacing the High Street has already been initiated with improvements expected in 2007.)
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.

### S3. Establish a community scaffolding project to help make renovating High Street premises affordable.

- **The aim.** The appearance of buildings in the High Street has a huge impact on the attractiveness of the town centre as a whole. While grants are from time to time available to help with the cost of renovation and repairs, owners must usually pay a large part of the cost. This project aims to reduce the cost by having community-owned (or leased) scaffolding that would be available either free or at a discounted rate.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve business skills, financing and procurement.
- **Key partners** in this project are likely to be Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce and High Street businesses and residents.

### S4. Work together with retailers to enhance the shopping experience.

- **The aim.** High Street business owners could share skills and experience in presenting their businesses to the public (for example, through marketing, window-dressing, and so on) to give the High Street an integrated, marketing appearance. Businesses could also join together in staging and marketing promotional events, such as an annual food fair, pre-Christmas shopping, and so on, to draw shoppers into the town. Such events could also simultaneously address the health, community and tourism and leisure goals. To enable the High Street to benefit from edge-of-town shoppers, consider pony-and-trap rides - say, during the summer months - from the supermarket to the High Street.

- **What's involved?** These related projects are likely to involve establishing networking between local businesses, organising events and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, High Street and other local businesses, Wincanton Town Council, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Somerset Food Links.

## Tourism and leisure

### Where are we now?

Wincanton has no natural or historic features of its own that would act as a major tourist draw and it is 40 miles from the nearest coast. However it is surrounded by a wealth of major tourist attractions including:

- **National Trust properties.** Stourhead, Montacute, Barrington Court, Lytes Cary, Tintinhull, and others
- **Other historic properties.** For example, Sherborne Castles, Sherborne Abbey, Longleat House and Safari Park
- **Museums.** Yeovilton Air Museum, Haynes Motor Museum.

There are several major events that take place close to Wincanton, including the Bath & West Show, Yeovilton Airday, Gillingham & Shaftesbury Show, Glastonbury Festival and Stourhead Fête Champêtre.



A centre for tourism © Amanda White, 2006.

Wincanton is an attractive town set on a hillside with beautiful views. The town is easily accessible via the A303 and offers free parking. It has a good range of facilities that tourists could use, including sports centre with dry-side activities and swimming pool, sports grounds including tennis courts and golf course. There is a good choice of pubs many of which serve food.

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The town lacks evening entertainment (as it has no *regular* cinema, theatre or musical events).

A tourist information centre is located at the Town Hall. A new Wincanton tourist guide has recently been published.

Wincanton hosts a few events that draw large numbers of visitors to the town for a short period. These are Discworld® weekends, Wincanton Racecourse race meetings and the annual Carnival.

Tourist accommodation in Wincanton and the immediately surrounding area is generally insufficient to meet demand. The Healthcheck found there were 50 hotel and bed-&-breakfast beds plus a camping and caravan site.

### **Community consultation**

The community suggested that Wincanton should do more to exploit travellers between London and the South West. It should improve rail and bus links, in particular addressing the way that bus services currently do not mesh with train times.

It was widely agreed that Wincanton needs to attract more tourists, particularly 'quality' tourism, perhaps by hosting events linked to local food or heritage.

There should be a concerted marketing campaign in conjunction with other South West towns.

**Wincanton’s tourism SWOT [1]**

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attractive built environment</li> <li>• Attractive location with views over scenic countryside</li> <li>• Easy access by road</li> <li>• Free parking</li> <li>• Close to rail stations</li> <li>• Proximity to major tourist attractions</li> <li>• Proximity to major events</li> <li>• Good range of services in the town</li> <li>• Excellent sports facilities</li> <li>• Lots of footpaths</li> <li>• Tourist Information Centre</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No tourist attractions in town itself</li> <li>• Insufficient tourist accommodation</li> <li>• Poor public transport links from rail stations</li> <li>• Lack of public transport links to tourist attractions</li> <li>• No direct link to national trails and cycle routes</li> <li>• Lack of circular walks</li> <li>• Lack of evening entertainment</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing population. Young retired tend to take more holidays and short breaks than working population</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible introduction of parking charges</li> </ul>

[1] SWOT = Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats

**Relevant framework policies**

Wincanton needs to work within the framework of central government and regional policies on sustainable development (see pages 13-14).

Chapter 9 of the SSDC (draft) Local Plan sets out statements and policies concerning sustainable tourism. The focus is on tourism which does not damage our heritage or natural environment or add to traffic congestion. The Local Plan states that accommodation should be located in towns, but (policy ME10) new or improved tourist accommodation outside development limits - for example, in redundant farm buildings - will be allowed provided its scale is consistent with its rural location. Camping and caravan sites with five units or less do not require planning permission.

Tourism may be affected by SSDC proposals to introduce parking charges.

**Possible tourism strategies**

The strategies below can help Wincanton achieve its tourism goal.

**Strategies for tourism**

To attract tourists	To improve tourist facilities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on major events (eg Bath &amp; West Show, Yeovilton Airday, race meetings and Discworld®). For example, market visitor packages with accommodation, transport to events and picnics showing off local foods included.</li> <li>• Focus on major attractions (eg National Trust properties, Glastonbury). For example, market packages with accommodation, transport to attractions, meal and entrance fees included. Or offer tourists staying in Wincanton ‘passport’ to local attractions.</li> <li>• Consider developing own major event(s), for example, relating to food. Build on success of Sports Ground in attracting major events (such as 2006 Honda Goldwing Treffen).</li> <li>• Market Wincanton jointly with other towns, such as Castle Cary and Bruton (‘Three Towns Breaks’) or as part of wider promotion.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase tourist accommodation - promote expansion of B&amp;B, support any planning applications for hotels or tourist cottages, ensure ready access to information for local people wishing to set up B&amp;B or small campsites.</li> <li>• Ensure town is visually attractive to tourists through planting, street furniture, and so on.</li> <li>• Ensure visitor parking is sufficient and either free or cost not a deterrent.</li> <li>• Ensure facilities likely to be used by tourists, such as Wincanton Museum, are well publicised. This could be achieved, for example, through a visitor pack issued to all hotels, bed-&amp;-breakfasts, campsites and available from tourist information centre, library, and so on.</li> <li>• Increase facilities available for tourists, for example, circular walking routes, cycle routes, craft markets, regular evening entertainment during the summer.</li> </ul>

**Specific projects**

The Steering Group identified the following projects as the top priorities for the next five years for tourism and leisure.

**T1. Expand tourist accommodation.**

- **The aim.** This is seen as urgent to meet existing excess demand and also a prerequisite to expanding the tourist trade. The most immediate solution would be to encourage more local residents to offer bed-and-breakfast (B&B) accommodation. This could be targeted by producing an information leaflet making residents aware of what’s involved and the tax breaks on offer and expanding a local register of B&B premises.

- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve research, writing and design, publication skills, distribution, administration and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be existing Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, B&B businesses, Wincanton Town Council and local information distribution networks

## T2. Guide tourists with maps in the car parks.

- **The aim** is to promote local attractions (such as the museum) and provide an advertising opportunity for local businesses who wish particularly to attract tourists.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve artistic/mapping skills or obtaining copyrights, selling advertising space, financing, procurement, liaison with car park owners and installation.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Somerset County Council, South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council and local businesses.

## T3. Establish a joint catering venture so local businesses profit from local events.

- **The aim** is to encourage visitors to events (such as the Honda Goldwing Treffen in 2006) to buy food and drink, in particular, from local businesses. A way of doing this would be for local businesses to organise a joint catering venture that could respond to events.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve establishing networking between local businesses and ensuring businesses are aware of forthcoming events.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.

## T4. Encourage local cafes to extend their opening hours.

- **The aim.** There is anecdotal evidence that visitors to the town often cannot find the refreshments they seek, especially in the late afternoon and evenings.
- **What's involved?** This project is likely to involve gathering evidence of unmet demand (for example, through surveys of tourists and coach companies, local Tourist Information Centre feedback, B&B owners' views, and so on) and liaising with local businesses to show them that there is a commercial opportunity available.
- **Key partners** are likely to be Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce and local businesses.

### Out-of-this-world visitors

Shortage of tourist accommodation has become particularly acute since 2002 when Wincanton twinned with Ankh Morpork (the fantasy city created by best-selling author, Terry Pratchett). Regular Discworld® events draw fans - many in costume - to Wincanton from all over the globe.

Wincanton Tourist Information Centre is already spearheading plans to ease the shortage by compiling a directory of all available accommodation within a seven-mile radius of the town.

**T5. Extend farmers' market to some weekends.**

- **The aim** is to enable people who are at work on Friday mornings to have the opportunity to buy from the local farmers' market.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve negotiation with the organisers of the local farmers' market and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be the farmers' market organisers, local venue suppliers.

**T6. Re-establish a local fair.**

- **The aim** is to resurrect a traditional custom of holding fairs - for example, at Michaelmas. As well as drawing visitors to the town, this would meet the community goal. If the theme of the fair were local food and/or healthy eating, it could also target the shops and/or health goals too.
- **What's involved?** The project is likely to involve organising events and marketing.
- **Key partners** are likely to be South Somerset District Council, Wincanton Town Council, Wincanton Tourist Information Centre, Wincanton Chamber of Commerce, local businesses and Somerset Food Links.

	<p><b>Quick win: sign of the times</b></p> <p>With assistance from South Somerset District Council, MCTA funding has allowed us to purchase a new sign for the Aldermeads entrance to the town. This 'Gateway to Somerset' sign incorporates images associated with the history of the town as well as our twinnings, including that with the fictional Ankh Morpork. The sign has been well received with many favourable comments.</p>
<p>Wincanton town sign © Muriel Cairns, 2007. The sign was based on a design by Bernard Pearson, a Wincanton resident.</p>	