

PICKERING TOWN COUNCIL

**Memorial Hall
Potter Hill
Pickering
North Yorkshire
YO18 8AA**

**Tel/Fax 01751 476503
e-mail address: pickeringtowncouncil@pcxinternet.com
website: pickering.gov.uk**

21 August 2009

Health and Environment Manager
Ryedale District Council
Ryedale House
Malton
YO17 7HH

Re: Pickering Market – Health-check

Dear Steve

Thank you for giving the Town Council the opportunity to see, and comment on, Nabma Consultancy Services' Health-check on Pickering Market. Over a year ago the Town Council formulated an opinion about the market which it reviewed recently. The revised opinion, which is given below (a-d), forms an integral part of the Town Council's response to the Nabma document.

a) Roles of the Market

The role of the market is to enhance retail provision in the town but not to the detriment of local businesses. The market has a role to play in promoting the town as a visitor centre and in providing an outlet for the display, and sale, of local goods. The presence of the market should not inhibit the tradition of social discourse. The town should be able to take pride in both the look of the market and the quality of the goods and services it provides.

b) The present layout of the market channels pedestrians (whether or not disabled) along a tight space, particularly at the lower end of the Market Place. This means that movement is difficult and opportunity to view the wares on display either on the stalls themselves or through the shop windows is restricted, thereby compromising the viability and vitality of the town centre. The layout works against ease of social discourse: the cramped conditions (even in the more extensive space at the northern end of the Market Place) militate against local people in particular who wish to stop awhile to chat with one another.

To deal with these problems the Town Council proposes that no stall should be sited on the pavement and, if the current linear layout is to be retained, all the stalls should be moved back from the kerb. The Town Council, however, would prefer a different

b)

type of layout. The stalls could be turned through 90 degrees and positioned back to back. This would make movement along the pavement easier, clear the frontages of local businesses so that their goods and services can be easily seen by the many visitors to the town and enable both local people and visitors to browse amongst the stalls. This should free up space to enable “Country Crust” to put out tables and chairs each Monday outside its premises (as it does every other day) to help create a “café culture” and to keep people longer in the Market Place. It may be that the alignment of stalls in the upper reaches of the southern side of the Market Place should be linear; however, they should not encroach on the pavement as they do at present.

It is also proposed that the space in front of the Yorkshire Building Society’s premises and at the top, northern side of the Market Place should be investigated as potential sites for stalls.

Finally, to ensure greater safety for pedestrians and the disabled, it is proposed that the barriers at the bottom of the Market Place are placed side by side and not staggered. This should deter those who still use the Market Place as a rat run. The barriers would remain staggered at the upper end of the Market Place to enable those who are entitled to enter and leave the thoroughfare via Burgate or Birdgate.

c) Range of goods

The range of goods (and, concomitantly, the number of stalls) is not uniform throughout the year. At its busiest, goods for the home, clothes and footwear and food can be found in the Market as well as some miscellaneous items, e.g. cards, pet accessories and foodstuffs. Local produce whether food or crafts is rarely on sale. Given the emphasis on the reduction of food miles, there is a case for better promotion of local goods.¹ The contraction of the market during the winter months should be addressed: local clientele have to look elsewhere for (or do without) goods that are usually purchased from stall-holders. Furthermore the absence of many stall-holders suggests that the market is there for the benefit of tourists rather than townspeople.

d) The location of the Market

The case for the Market Place continuing to host the market is a strong one and commands most support in the Council: the thoroughfare is the main shopping area; the market has been sited there for many generations. The Ropery car park may provide an alternative venue: it is, for many people, on their route to the Market Place and the temporary loss of car parking space would be outweighed by the opening up of the Market Place to traffic and the availability of some parking spaces on the southern side of the road. The eastern section of Potter Hill, in the vicinity of the Memorial Hall and the Methodist Chapel, might also be investigated: it adjoins the main shopping centre and has a suitably large amount of space which is currently available as free parking.

¹ It may be that Monday is not a profitable day for local food producers (whose potential clients may have done their main food shopping over the weekend and, if dependent on the car, may be inhibited by the strain of finding a car parking space from venturing to the town centre).

About the Nabma Health-check the Town Council has observations to make on

- e) the District Council's management of the markets;
 - f) Nabma's recommendations.
- e) The Town Council was surprised to learn that the District Council does not have an annual business plan, a strategy, an investment plan and a promotional plan for the markets that remain under its control. This information led members to question how interested the District Council was in the markets for which they were responsible and gave substance to the view that the balance between the interests of the town and wider community and those of the stall-holders were tipped too strongly towards the latter. One can understand, because of this, why stall-holders in 2004 wanted the District Council to retain control of the Pickering and Helmsley markets (Note 18, p5). This would also explain why the market looks shabby and ramshackle, why the historic centre of the town loses its attractiveness every Monday, why stall-holders have been allowed to invade the pavement, why pedestrians are at a disadvantage and why the movement and parking of stall-holders' vehicles remains an issue.

The Town Council is broadly supportive of the points made in the first paragraph of Note 18; however, its support should be interpreted in the light of points a-c) given above. The Town Council is cautiously optimistic that there is the will within the District Council to bring about imaginative and effective change.

- f) The Town Council supports each of Nabma's four recommendations; however, re Recommendation 2 (Encroachment) the Town Council thinks that the layout of the market must be fundamentally reconsidered if the market is to remain in the Market Place: having the stalls trade up to the kerb edge but not beyond does not address the pressing need for ease of movement, important in its own right, or meet the legitimate expectation of both local businesses and stall-holders that people passing by have sufficient space to stop and view their goods without having to fight for space to do so.

The Town Council wishes the market to serve the local community and be attractively appavelled and an attraction to the town's visitors and, if it is to remain in the Market Place, to operate within a safe environment. The Town Council believes that necessary improvements to the market have to be seen in the context of traffic management within the town centre and, therefore, asks that Highways and Transportation Area 4 Pickering and the police be involved in the debate.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Husband
Clerk to Pickering Town Council