



# Athelstan Museum

Capturing the history of Malmesbury

Malmesbury Town Hall, Cross Hayes, Malmesbury SN16 9BZ

25 April 2013

Councillor Simon Killane  
Chairman  
MNSG  
Malmesbury Town Hall  
Cross Hayes  
Malmesbury SN16 9BZ

RE: Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan (NP)

Dear Councillor Killane

*Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Malmesbury Neighbourhood Plan. You are to be congratulated on the effort you and the Steering Group have made in preparing this draft document that will have such importance for the future of our community.*

*It was disappointing to note after reading the document that there appears to be a total omission of any consideration or even mention of the Athelstan Museum in the draft plan; an institution that has served this community for over 30 years; is the repository for the physical history of Malmesbury; is supported by close to 100 volunteers on a daily basis and attracts upwards of 15,000 visitors, both local residents and tourists, every year and is recognized by the Arts Council of England as an Accredited Museum. Further, the Athelstan Museum is an important educational resource right in the centre of town that is utilised on a growing basis by local schools as both teachers and students grasp the true knowledge that artefacts are modes for learning about their heritage when they can touch them and use them rather than inanimate objects sitting in a glass case. The Museum is itself undergoing a planning process that will see it grow and expand its role of being a tourism destination taking its place alongside the Abbey and the Abbey House Gardens. The Museum makes a major contribution to the quality of life of the town's residents. We consider that its role and importance to the local community should be recognised – not least by incorporating policies and proposals in the plan that are supportive of the museum and its future proposals and deal appropriately with some if not all of the following issues:*

- *Very little consideration appears to have been given to the issue of tourism and tourist facilities in the Neighbourhood Plan, despite the fact that that this is without doubt likely to be a major factor in the continuing success of the town. This omission*

*should be rectified. Consideration should be given to finding ways of both supporting the existing and enhancing future tourist facilities (of all types) in the town. This could be by way of improved signage, better and, most importantly, co-ordinated advertising, improving the overall appearance of the town and more particularly the town centre by introducing appropriate landscaping, street furniture and public art, and by providing space for tourist buses/mini-vans to stop in or nearer to the town centre so that best use can be made of the facilities.*

- *The NP as currently drafted appears to lack any analysis of the cultural life of the Town. Mention is made of a medium term goal of an “arts centre” (p 51 Volume I) but that is all - other than to note that the Athelstan Players keep their costumes at the football pitch. There is no mention of the Library or the gallery space in the Town Hall or the need for improvements in these facilities to enhance the attraction and the viability of the town. The Plan should make it clear that every effort will be made to retain and enhance both the library and the gallery space and it could go beyond that to incorporate a specific proposal to identify a site for an arts centre (that could be financed via developer contributions in due course that are derived from the housing proposals in the Plan).*

- *No consideration is seemingly given in the draft NP to anything that could be seen as dealing with “higher” or “post-secondary” education. One way of keeping the local economy vibrant is to introduce a technical college or other form of post-secondary education into the mix. That does not as yet seem to have been considered. Land should be identified in the Plan to accommodate this type of educational establishment. Discussions could perhaps be held with Sir James Dyson, who might be interested in the establishment of some form of engineering-based college near his own site.*

*Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We look forward to a successful outcome for everyone from your efforts.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*U. Ernest Buchner, Chairman*

*Athelstan Museum*

*Michael Johnson, Vice Chairman*

*Athelstan Museum*