

AINA CASE STUDY

PLACE MAKING AND SHAPING

Evesham: River Avon Study



A corridor study examined the ways in which the river navigation could act as a focus for market town regeneration

Evesham straddles the navigable River Avon and, following designation under a programme to improve market towns, Wychavon District Council sought to explore ways in which the river could play a more important role in the future development of the town. The brief for an externally-commissioned corridor study stressed the need to look beyond the immediate riversides in order to consider links with the famous landscape of the Vale of Evesham.

Three broad themes were identified: the Vale of Evesham, the River Avon, and the town itself. Each of these led to proposals and ideas for marketing, promotion and related projects, e.g., leisure opportunities and boating facilities, angling and waterside habitats, and improvements to tributaries and brooks. Themes in the wider Vale included strategic viewpoints, new footpath links, and connections with the famous market garden and fruit growing activities.

The themes connected to an overarching action plan which was developed following consultation with local organisations and user groups. Illustrative designs for waterside regeneration were also prepared, including outline ideas for a new marina with associated housing development and concepts for a new visitor centre focussed on the heritage of the river and Evesham's historic abbey.

The study successfully showed how a navigation can be a significant asset to a smaller town, leading to a wide range of leisure and tourism initiatives. Although the river was already a well known part of Evesham's townscape, the fresh look acted as a spur to plan for future change, including a detailed marina feasibility study.

The work, completed over a period of four months, cost approximately £9,000 and was judged to be the best recreation and tourism project in the 2006 Waterway Renaissance Awards. An update and review was undertaken in 2008, and many of the ideas have been taken forward by Evesham's Market Town Initiative, who say: "Guided by a beautifully scripted study, boaters, walkers, anglers, residents and visitors are all being accommodated in Evesham's historic tapestry for the next hundred years."