

A New Regeneration Master Plan

>> To create a green town centre which reflects our railway heritage and is a family day out

Swindon Labour's priority is to deliver a new master plan for the regeneration of Swindon to create a Town Centre which reflects the railway history of our town, which provides public open space and live events so that people want to spend their time in our Town; which provides greater access and linkages to the Outlet Village and to Old Town; and which reflects a high architectural standard.



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Our Key Promises:

- >> **A new Regeneration Master Plan** to deliver a Town Centre which is attractive for shopping, leisure and culture.
- >> **Greening Swindon Town Centre** by creating new parks and open spaces in the town centre.
- >> **Promoting Swindon's Railway Heritage** by creating a Railway Village Heritage Site and heritage link between the outlet village, the Town Centre and Old Town.
- >> **Bringing Fun and Culture** by a calendar of festivals, live events and street theatre to make coming into Swindon a real day out.
- >> **Rejuvenating the Local High Street by** creating a calendar of specialist street markets and making empty shops available for business start ups and local art studios.
- >> **Getting Results from Forward Swindon** by undertaking a full review of Forward Swindon and ensuring the majority of its budget is spent on projects rather than staff.



Cllr Mark Dempsey
Deputy Leader, Swindon Labour

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1. Introduction

You only need to take a trip to the Town Centre to see that Swindon is in urgent need of regeneration.

The Tory Council has failed to regenerate the Town Centre. They have had 8 years in power in Swindon and yet our Town Centre is still scarred by wasteland, derelict buildings, and eyesores.

The Swindon College building stands as an enduring reminder of the failure of the Tories to regenerate Swindon. Promised regeneration projects have failed to be delivered. Regents Place, the Canal, Regents Circus and Union Square have fallen apart or failed to materialise.

In the past decade very little has happened other than the Library, this has affected private sector confidence in Swindon.

Evidence from local developers to the Swindon's Economic Committee

Swindon's retail ranking has collapsed from 55th to 68th, vacancy rates have increased and rental performance has declined. At the same time Bristol, Bath and Oxford have all improved. It is an indictment on the Tories that the jewels in our crown, the Mechanics Institute and the Locarno, lay decaying and in threat of destruction.

The Tories blame their failure on the recession. However during the recession Gloucester has built a new Quays designer outlet centre, Bath has built its new Southgate Centre and Bristol has developed its harbour side, including a new waterside museum. With a clear plan, we too could be forging an exciting future for our town.

2. A New Master Plan for the Regeneration of Swindon

We should learn from the successes of places like Bristol, Gloucester, Manchester and Birmingham, The foundation for the successful regeneration of these cities has been the creation of a clear long term master plan. This creates a clear vision for the future and provides developers with the certainty to plan and invest in a town.

It is time to produce a clear master plan for the regeneration of our town. This will co-ordinate and plan the different regeneration projects in order to develop a coherent town centre; and provide a clear identity and sense of place.

This new master plan should provide a Town Centre which is attractive for shopping, leisure and culture.

We need Town Centre which reflects the railway history of our town, which provides public open space so that people want to spend their time in our Town, which provides greater access and linkages to the Outlet Village and to Old Town; and which reflects a high architectural standard.

These experts have also echoed our call for the Swindon to place our railway heritage at the heart of our regeneration plan. The railway history and the historic buildings provide a wonderful platform on which to base our vision of regeneration.

Forward Swindon has a budget in excess of £1million. Gloucester's regeneration company has been enormously successful, transforming seven sites across the city, with a budget of £200,000. Nottingham's regeneration company has a similar sized budget. Many question whether our regeneration company Forward Swindon is value for money. We need to ensure more of Forward Swindon's budget is spent on projects that deliver a difference to Swindon town centre.

Gloucester's regeneration company has also benefitted from independent leadership and the involvement of all parties and stakeholders in its vision. In Swindon the Tories have prevented other political parties or stakeholders such as the Civic Trust from being involved. We need to ensure everyone can be part of building a common future for our town.

Swindon has suffered from developments with a low architectural value. We have to make sure we do not repeat the mistakes of the past. We should therefore develop a clear architectural standard for Swindon to ensure that in the future Swindon is a name connected with great design rather than mediocre design.

There was consensus among developers that the regeneration efforts in Swindon lacked overall direction and that the regeneration framework or blueprint was urgently required.

Swindon Economic Committee, 2011

In Cardiff, Bristol, Cheltenham and Birmingham there are an array of free festivals and activities including open air pop concerts, ice rinks, big wheels, urban beeches, combined with green spaces and squares which mean that going into town is a day out. Cafes and restaurants create a welcoming and family friendly atmosphere at night time.

Swindon needs to end the degeneration of our Town Centre which is the legacy of 8 years of Tory control; and achieve real, positive and long lasting regeneration of our Town Centre.

2. The Regeneration Challenge

- Swindon Town Centre is still scarred by wasteland, derelict buildings, and eyesores. Swindon's retail ranking has collapsed from 55th to 68th while Bristol, Bath and Oxford have all improved.
- According to the Council's own Health Check; vacancy rates in the town centre have increased since 2008 from 66 to 75 units. Rental values in the town centre have decreased 22 per cent.
- We should learn from the successes of places like Bristol, Gloucester, Manchester and Birmingham, and proactively forge a coherent plan for our Town Centre.
- Furthermore there is a need to co-ordinate and plan the different regeneration projects in order to develop a coherent town centre; and provide a clear identity and sense of place.
- We should be proud of our railway heritage and protect our historic assets so that they can form the centre piece of our town centre's identity.
- Forward Swindon has a budget of £1 million, but the majority of this money is spent on salaries rather than projects, and the organizations has failed to deliver regeneration or inward investment.

3. Policy Options

Key Policy Ideas

- >> **A new Regeneration Master Plan** to deliver a Town Centre which is attractive for shopping, leisure and culture.
- >> **Greening Swindon Town Centre** by creating new parks and open spaces in the town centre.
- >> **Promoting Swindon's Railway Heritage** by creating a Railway Village Heritage Site and heritage link between the outlet village, the Town Centre and Old Town.
- >> **Bringing Fun and Culture** by a calendar of festivals, live events and street theatre to make coming into Swindon a real day out.
- >> **Rejuvenating the Local High Street** by making empty shops into art studios and creating a calendar of specialist street markets.
- >> **Getting Results from Forward Swindon by** undertaking a full review of Forward Swindon and ensuring the majority of its budget is spent on projects rather than staff.

>> A new Master Plan for the Regeneration of Swindon

- We must create a clear plan for the regeneration of Swindon Town Centre to deliver a Town Centre which is attractive for shopping, leisure and culture.
- Regeneration should ensure the Town Centre reflects the railway history of Swindon, provide public open space, and provide greater access and linkages between the Town Centre, the Outlet Village and Old Town.
- The new Master Plan will provide a framework for land use in the Town Centre and achieve a high architectural standard, in order to provide prospective developers with clear guidance and certainty to invest.
- We will also create an Urban Design Guide to ensure regeneration achieves a high architectural standard.

>> Greening Swindon Town Centre

- We will create new parks and open spaces in the town centre
- We will create stronger linkages between the Town Centre, the Old Town and the Outlet Centre.

>> Promoting Swindon's Railway Heritage

- We will prioritise the railway heritage of Swindon and ensure the Town Centre reflects the railway history of Swindon.
- We will seek to create a heritage and shopping transport link between the outlet village, the Town Centre and Old Town
- We will work in partnership with stakeholders to help create a new future for the Mechanics Institute and Locarno.
- We will create the Railway Village Heritage Site as a visitor destination to showcase, educate and celebrate Swindon's railway history.
- We will organise a celebration of Swindon's railway heritage in 2015 to coincide with the 175th anniversary of the Great Western Railway.

>> Bringing Fun and Culture into Swindon Town Centre

- We will create a Swindon Fest: a calendar of festivals and live events in Swindon town centre to make coming into Swindon a real day out.
- We will bring a calendar of daytime and evening live music and street theatre into Swindon Town centre.

>> Rejuvenating the Local High Street

- We will rejuvenate empty shops by making them available for business start ups and local art studios.
- We will work with retailers to establish local high street plans which will allow the local community to have a stake in how their local high street is ran.
- We will re-introduce Street Trading to the Town Centre and we will create a clear strategy and standard for street traders to improve their appearance based on the successful approach of 'Manchester Markets'.
- We will create a calendar of specialist street markets such as a book market, arts and craft market, a food market and a Christmas market.

>> **Getting Results from Forward Swindon**

- Gloucester and Nottingham have regeneration companies but they have significantly smaller budgets than that of Forward Swindon
- We believe that partnerships between the private and public sector are vital to achieve investment in regeneration.
- However Forward Swindon has failed to deliver.
- We will undertake a full review of the management of regeneration in Swindon in order to develop the most effective model for the delivery of regeneration based on successful examples such as Bristol, Gloucester and Nottingham.
- We will maintain the budget for regeneration, but will ensure the majority of this money is spent on real improvements to the Town Centre rather than staff.

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