

SWOT analysis

Strengths

Good shopping centre	New Milton has a wide variety of shop and service types (there are 145 retail outlets of which 72% are independently owned) with well maintained frontages and well presented displays.
Mainline railway	The railway station is less than ½ mile from the town centre and provides direct access to Bournemouth, Southampton (including Southampton Airport) and London Waterloo (and therefore the Eurostar to Europe).
Location	Just two miles from the New Forest National Park and two miles from the sea makes New Milton an ideal base for touring the South Coast. Other attractions such as Beaulieu and the historic towns of Winchester and Salisbury are also close by.
Sports facilities	The sports grounds currently managed by the Council are New Milton Recreation Ground, Fernhill Sports Ground, Ashley Sports Ground and Fawcetts Field Sports Ground. In addition there are sports facilities including tennis, cricket, football, and rugby grounds.
Environmental features	There are large areas of open land in (Ballard Water Meadows) and around New Milton and these need to be protected. Barton Cliffs are listed as an SSSI and there are 12 SINCs within the parish boundary.

Good schools	eg Arnewood School and Ashley Junior School: Arnewood is internationally renowned and has been recognised for the high quality of education it provides in Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools Report (February 2001). It was recently designated as a specialist technology college. Ashley Junior School has been around for well over 100 years and has varied recreational facilities. It received excellent reports from its last OFSTED inspection in 1999.
Active voluntary sector	There are a total of 115 community organisations, clubs, activity and charity groups with an estimated $\frac{1}{3}$ of the local population as members.

Weaknesses

Insensitive development	The town centre contains some fine period buildings but has been spoiled during the 60s and 70s by unsympathetic development.
Poor traffic flow	A number of specific junctions and bottlenecks (eg Station Road/Old Milton Road/Gore Road and Spencer Road) give rise to poor traffic flow in the New Milton.
Inadequate public transport	It is the lack of co-ordination between transport providers, and a lack of provision at key times that are the main problems.
Car parking	Car Parking is "atrocious" (Market Town Mystery Visitor Town Evaluation – see Appendix VII), with insufficient long-term parking provision.
Population imbalance	The percentage of the population of retirement age (60 and over) in New Milton is 39%.
Lack of services for young people	Because of the population imbalance, services and facilities tend to cater better for the older population sectors.

Lack of entertainment	There is a lack of leisure and entertainment facilities, and the town centre shuts down at night.
No focal point for town	
Hidden deprivation	Milton Ward is the 4 th most deprived ward in the New Forest, but these pockets of deprivation are masked by statistics that measure the overall well-being of the community.
Low proportion of industries in growth sectors	There is a lack of high tech industry or companies that offer a diverse range of skilled job opportunities, leading to an outflow of qualified workers which in turn puts off new businesses from coming to New Milton.
Lack of affordable housing	Local housing is very expensive due to high levels of 'Buy to Let' and second home ownership.
Poor image for town centre	The town centre is tired looking and dated, with poor pavements and shabby street furniture.

Opportunities

Tourism	The location of New Milton makes it a gateway to the New Forest, and an ideal base for discovering the central south coast.
Technology	
Expand retail services (eg street market)	There was a very positive response from our survey in favour of a regular street market and farmers' market.
Involve young people in developing and improving services, eg cinema	Young people have been very active during the Healthcheck process and can continue to provide research and input into a number of our projects.

Develop/improve station area	As with the town centre, the station looks shabby and would benefit from a face lift. Changing the name of the station to New Milton & Barton-on-Sea might also make it a more appealing stop to visitors.
Town Plan Group and Chamber of Commerce	The Chamber of Commerce in particular can provide accessible information and effective marketing tools to sell New Milton as a destination to the wider business community.
New Forest National Park	The change of status of the New Forest to a National Park will encourage more tourism to the area generally which could and should benefit New Milton and its economy.

Threats

Lack of funding	Many of the proposed projects require substantial funding and if this is not forthcoming from grants, matched funding and/or business support, then many of the projects would be jeopardised.
Competition from other local towns	Other towns such as Lymington with its marina, or Bournemouth with its more extensive range of facilities (shopping, cinema, <i>etc</i>) might well be seen as competition in areas such as tourism, for example.
Insensitive development	Unless the New Milton Town Design Statement can be accepted as Supplementary Planning Guidance, we run the risk of continued poor design and thus erode the character of our town further.
Population pressures	New Milton has seen its population increase dramatically in recent years; the population imbalance may become worse as young people move away due to the lack of affordable housing and skilled jobs.

Strain on infrastructure	An increase in tourist and visitor numbers, whilst benefiting the economy, might exacerbate many of our existing problems (eg traffic flow, medical and emergency care) unless we plan properly.
Cost of living vs low wage economy	The lack of a diverse range of skilled jobs; many of the available jobs are relatively unskilled and therefore attract lower salaries. This, combined with high property prices, will lead to continued problems.
'Brain Drain'	A continued lack of skilled jobs locally will continue to force the qualified workforce to move to London, Southampton and Bournemouth where there is a demand for their skills.
Traffic congestion	Highlighted in the survey as a major issue now for residents, this will only get worse unless the infrastructure of the road network in and around New Milton is addressed and account taken when approving any new development plans within the town. If the high street is pedestrianised (or part thereof), where will the heavy freight traffic go?
Nuisance crime/drug abuse	This is a perpetual problem which can be addressed by providing better leisure and entertainment facilities to reduce boredom, and proper education, and the provision of advice and support groups.
Coastal erosion	Although coastal protection works were initially implemented in the 1930's, the whole area of Barton cliff tops has suffered from cliff erosion rates of up to 2 metres per year. Proper management is needed to protect them so that New Milton does not lose one of its key assets.
New Forest National Park	Whilst there are positives for New Forest National Park, the increased tourism and the problems that it is likely to bring with it (vandalism, increased traffic, etc) may threaten the stability and safety of New Milton.