

# **Ware Town Council**

## **Christmas Lights Community Consultation**

**Held on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

14:00 and 18:00 at Fletcher's Lea, Ware Priory

### **CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT**

#### **Summary**

On 17th March 2025, Ware Town Council held two public consultation sessions at Fletcher's Lea, Ware Priory, inviting residents to share their views on the 2024 Christmas lights display and contribute ideas for future years. Each session followed a citizens' assembly-style format, encouraging round-table discussion and collective reflection.

Participants were presented with background information from council officers and the Council's Christmas lighting engineer, who outlined the reasons the town's traditional lanterns could not be used in 2024 and explained the technical and legislative constraints that influence lighting decisions. This context ensured that residents could take part in informed, practical discussions.

Feedback gathered at both sessions is summarised in this report. Broadly, participants expressed a desire for a more cohesive and traditional display that reflects the character of the town, with strong support for finding ways to reintroduce or adapt the lanterns. Suggestions included improving consistency and coverage across the town centre, involving local schools and artists, and developing themes that celebrate Ware's unique identity. There was also a clear call for sustainability, quality, and community involvement to be placed at the heart of future displays.

## **Christmas 2024:**

### **A. What did people like? What worked well?**

- Lanterns in the Priory and Tudor Square were widely praised – many said they were the standout feature.
- Lighting around Keith Ian and East/West Street drew lots of compliments, with several calling it “stunning.”
- The bear outside Town Hall and Keith Ian, as well as the Father Christmas photo frame, were popular with families and young children.
- Shopfront lighting was appreciated – people liked that businesses were encouraged to take part.
- The use of warm white lights, especially around rooftops and trees, was seen as tasteful and effective.
- Many appreciated the effort made to decorate the town quickly and create a festive atmosphere.

### **B. What needs improving?**

- The Ware Bears divided opinion. Some loved them, but many felt there were too many, they looked random, and didn’t reflect Ware’s heritage. A common view was: *“One is enough – keep it outside Boots.”*
- Lack of cohesion in the overall display was a major theme. The mix of styles (bears, lanterns, polar figures) felt disjointed.
- Certain areas like Amwell End, Baldock Street, and Bridgefoot were described as underwhelming or “tacky.” Some also mentioned a safety concern about the placement of the bear in Amwell End.
- The decorations didn’t feel Christmassy enough, with many saying they lacked the traditional charm or didn’t match the town’s character.
- People felt more lights were needed, particularly across the streets, to create impact and better coverage.
- Concerns were raised about waste, cost, and long-term contracts, particularly around the bears.

## **How do we make improvements over the coming years?**

Residents were full of ideas for how to improve the Christmas display in future years:

- Fewer bears, more lanterns, with a clearer, cohesive theme rooted in Ware's heritage (e.g. swans, coaching inns, barges, maltings).
- Bring back a more traditional Dickensian-style look, with warm lights, greenery, and coordinated designs.
- Lanterns strung across streets, not just in the Priory – suggested areas include Tudor Square, East/West Street, and around the museum.
- Improve the Christmas tree in Tudor Square – larger, better lit, and ideally decorated with lanterns.
- Explore eco-friendly options, such as solar-powered or wind turbine-powered lights, especially for outlying areas.
- Consider interactive and community elements, like a selfie wall, light trails, fake snow machine, or a "Welcome to Ware" feature at the train station.
- Involve local schools, scouts, and youth groups in designing decorations.
- Support for businesses – grants or competitions to encourage shop window displays and individual lighting.
- Suggestion for a Christmas boat parade on the river, tying into Ware's waterside heritage.

## **What should happen with the old lanterns?**

There's strong affection for the traditional lanterns, with many keen to see them reused or refurbished:

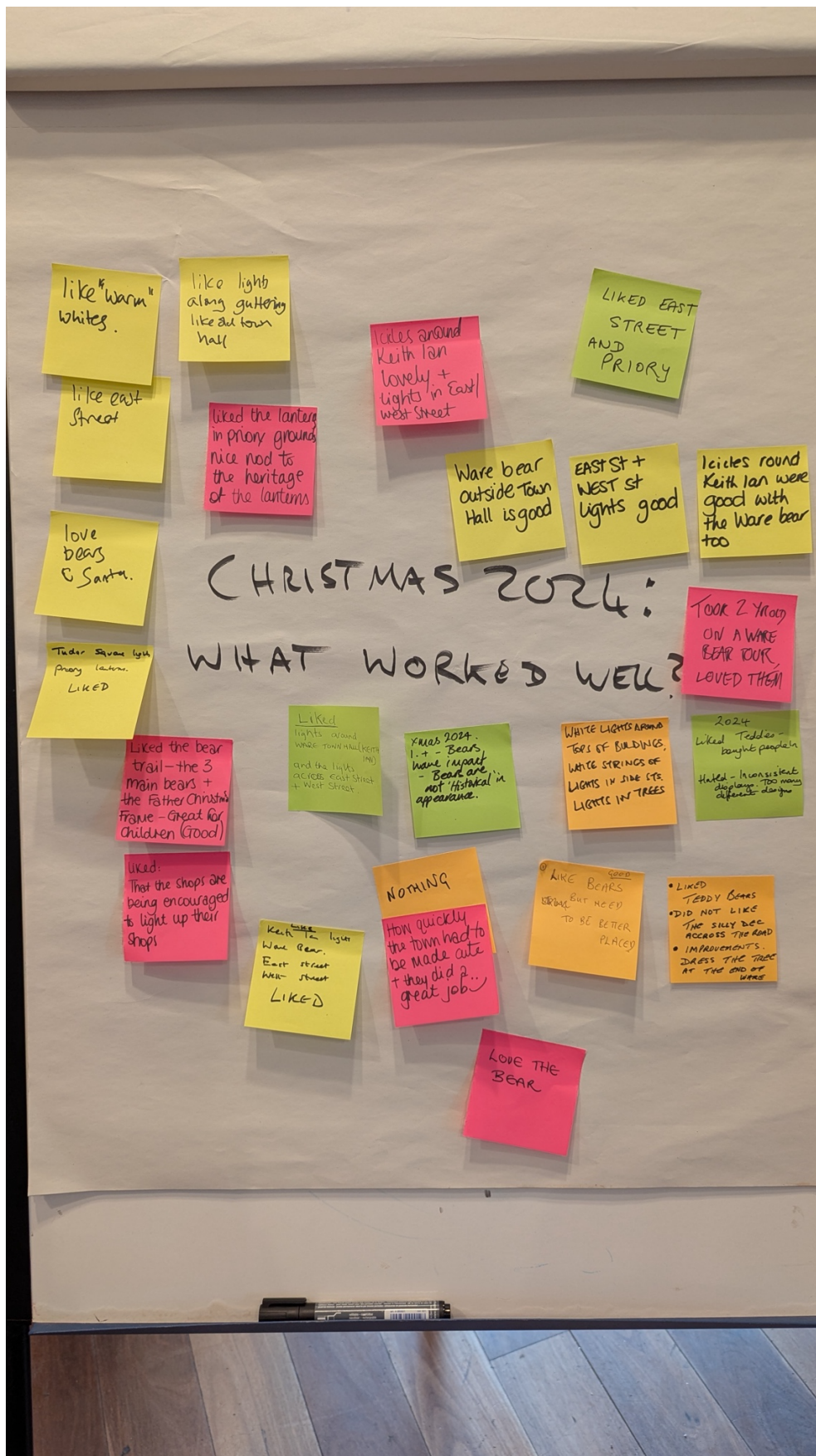
- Replacing bulbs with low-energy LEDs and installing on lampposts or freestanding poles.
- Redistributing across town: West Street, Baldock Street, the Maltings, and Bridgefoot were all mentioned.
- Use as shop window decorations, either gifted or raffled to residents.
- Incorporating them into a lantern trail, a Christmas tree of lanterns, or a Dickensian lantern parade.
- Suggestions for crowdfunding to refurbish them or to fund new lanterns that reflect the town's identity.

## **Themes and ideas for future years**

- A strong preference for a Dickensian/Victorian theme emerged, with traditional styling, lanterns, and warm colours.
- Ideas to reflect Ware's identity included: swans, moorhens, coaching inns, river barges, and maltings.
- Desire for cohesion, consistency, and quality – even if improvements need to be phased in over a few years.
- People want decorations that feel “Christmassy” and unique to Ware, not something that could belong to any town.



## Appendices: Photos of the feedback gathered from each session



Please turn on  
lights in  
morning &  
night

Over road  
not bright  
enough, not  
enough.

Do not like  
the Amwell  
End polar  
bear + ginger  
bread ~~mod.~~  
Terry

Nothing at  
Bridgefoot

Make more  
of Tudor  
Square.

Did not like  
bear outside  
Priory gates

Balbock St  
needs a hono  
- really dark  
+ not festive

## CHRISTMAS 2024:

DIDN'T KNOW  
WHY LANTERNS  
WERE IN PRIORY  
BUT NOT HIGH ST

### WHAT NEEDS IMPROVEMENT?

Sense of  
Place -  
highlight our  
high street's  
townscape

NOT-  
DISAPPEAR  
PIECES

Trees need  
more impactful  
lighting,  
especially  
Museum tree

3 YEAR CONTRACT  
FOR BEARS  
MAKES A MESS  
OF COMMUNITARIAN

LIGHTS IN  
AMWELL END  
WERE USELESS

Beats  
Need to be on  
too early AM  
61 Tam while  
dark not 10am  
in day

2024  
1. - cross-  
street banner!  
have to be  
input - too  
small, too few.

Needs improving  
The plastic - stick  
your face in ones  
were a bit tacky

Designing  
the aged  
people having  
the Bear?

Safety issue  
Amwell End  
Bear creates  
a danger

Lam pavement  
crossings  
rubbish

PANES ABOVE  
STREET DON'T  
REALLY WORK -  
BURNING

2024 lights  
in high street  
and Balbock  
Street looked  
like a Christmas card.

Too many  
Bears  
Photo shoots

Needs improving  
The old water  
gun a bit old  
and faded  
Cherry was  
in 2024

WELL TO SEE  
a well dressed  
do tree - the  
outside have  
Museum

WARE BEAR  
GOOD BUT  
DISLIKED  
OTHER PLAT  
FIGURES

Stop calling  
them 'Wore  
Bears'. They  
have 2500 to  
do with the town  
culture/history

Light over  
to town  
to get rid  
multiple be  
and was bad, 3  
must worse

STREET LIGHTS  
IN WEST + EAST  
2024. CHEAP  
BROWN BEARS  
DON'T SUIT THERE  
POSITIONS  
LOOKY WATCH BENCH

Street lights  
on both side  
of the Road  
in Amwell  
End.

Look at Hatford  
and Sharnhead  
also look at  
which are all  
part of the  
WARE

Should only be  
1 WARE  
Bears  
where it's always  
been outside  
2024

GET COUNCIL  
TO  
REVIEW & HAVE  
Sensible  
Regulation.





N.T.C.

2) Abolish Bears  
Allow individual  
shops to decorate  
their front

Light up  
Grazebo's by  
River Lea  
also - speak  
to homecare  
manager

Get town  
want more  
additional  
designs not  
so modern

Lamp posts all  
to have attached  
lights bigger &  
better than the  
ones in  
Amwell End

Have  
Bears lit  
with warm  
white lights!!  
Not bright  
white

Want lights  
same colour  
thru wa

FEWER BEARS  
MORE DECORATED  
CHRISTMAS  
TREES

DESIGN!

Solar or  
battery decs  
on  
Charvill  
Roundabout  
or Xmas figures

When the Wore  
Bears we gave  
house a Swan  
to sit in. Swan  
is on Work Town  
Council Badge

Selfie wall  
of lanterns  
in Lido or  
Paving Grounds

Lantern in  
Lido grounds

and co-ordinated  
Theme that  
reflects the town's  
Heritage & USP!

DIFFERENT  
COLOURED  
LIGHTS  
SCHEME

MODERN  
VERSION  
OF  
LANTERNS

Uplighters and  
projection  
onto buildings  
reflect history

Wine in bloom  
planters to be  
used for Christmas  
Merry Shed  
to help

Reflect the history  
and heritage of the  
town in the  
decorations

Improvements to  
be made  
more of lighting  
on old town Hall  
around the High  
Street  
Consider to local  
council

## HOW DO WE MAKE IMPROVEMENTS?

Grants?  
crowdfunding  
??

More string  
lights in  
high st +  
Baldock St.

if they put up  
their own lights?

Alternate  
Dickensian  
and  
Summer Beer/  
Music festival

Tudor Sq  
Was supposed to  
be local round for  
Xmas Tree (served  
4) and fountain.  
What happened to  
that?

GET RID OF ALL  
THE TACKY, CHEAP  
BEARS, SEE THEM  
STATUES ETC -  
HIDEOUS

ENSURE  
COHESIVE  
DESIGN

MAKE SURE  
IT IS RELEVANT  
DIFFERENT  
? DICKENSIAN?

Light colour  
street  
need more  
across the  
street.  
Lots more!

Short term:  
Adding more  
white twinkles  
with the sparkle  
→ they look  
pretty on the  
bridge

Improvements for the  
coming years:  
Can the lanterns be  
put on the large tree  
in Tudor Square/  
corner of High  
Xmas trees on Tudor  
square / PTD

COULD WE  
HAVE COLOURED  
LIGHTS  
STRETCHED  
ACROSS HIGH  
STREET

Xmas 2020  
Link to town  
History - In-keep  
-ing with  
Dickensian  
Evening

Lights not  
sufficient to  
adequately light  
the high street  
so therefore  
were not worth  
the bother.

Need more  
volume  
more light  
everywhere

New lanterns  
- meeting requested  
via... lamp post?  
please!  
Beit choice

coming years:  
Large poles for lights  
to zig zag over the  
streets? like bunting  
?? white twinkles  
with the sparkle

MAJOR  
COUNCIL THERE BE  
FOR RATHER FOR  
THE LIGHTS.

KEEP IN CONTACT  
WITH THE AGC OF  
TOWN  
more consistency  
around the town

Using schools/  
College for  
designs  
scouts / brownies

How much does  
the tacky  
animals cost  
perhaps place  
them in the  
playground.

lights need  
to have  
more  
consistency  
IMPACT.

NEW IDEA:  
LASER LIGHTS

EXTEND THE  
THING ACROSS  
THE ROAD.  
MORE OF THEM

Sasco

edding 363  
whiteboard marker

edding 363  
whiteboard marker



LED version for lanterns still use at lights square in town.

Could lanterns be attached to poles on side of Baldock St?

Could the lanterns be put on Southern Maltings?

Could lanterns be used in East St + West St?

Lantern trail in Priory to attract visitors.

Upgrade the lantern casing + bulbs.

Crowdfund & then get sponsorship for each lantern each year for a loved one.

Lantern at station to welcome people at Christmas

## WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN WITH THE OLD LANTERNS?

- lanterns - why not high street - why just west Priory - can lanterns

- change lanterns to use lower voltage bulbs - Does this mean rewire? - SORT OUT SUPPLY & FILING ISSUES

REPLICATE LANTERNS  
• Sculpture  
• Work in Bloom use as plant pots  
• Donate to residents or integration competition "what can it make?"

Concert Years - Can the lanterns be added to the cross street light above bench + bay Keith lan? Baldock where Martins was?

Add New Lamp posts or poles to support lights strong lights between them

OLD LANTERNS. ROAD TO PRIORY CAN BE LIT UP LIKE LAST YEAR. IN ADOPTED

Priory 'candlelit walk' using lanterns installed in the gardens

USE LANTERNS ON THE CHRISTMAS TREE TO DECORATE + LIGHT THESE UP.

Use the old lanterns refurbished in West Street + East Street

SHOWCASE WARE HERITAGE

Lanterns: Give a lantern to each shop + put one lantern to display in their shop + show off could use battery light

Use the Lanterns:  
1. Fake candlelit parade  
2. Fixed to Xmas tree shaped frames, collapsible

PLACE LANTERNS A FEATURE OF THE PRIORY OR MUSEUM

Possibly sell lantern as a fund raiser to install new lanterns

Lanterns could be redeployed around the Priory at lower voltages

Lanterns: raffie off ones that can't be used to use at home

New lanterns - using lamp posts or add extra power source.

Lobby building owners to allow fixings on their buildings at the correct heights

Old lanterns and lanterns use on a big Christmas tree in the town

any of the lanterns could fund-ry (like park!)

PUT OLD LANTERNS AROUND THE OLD MALTINGS

post on secured in several points or have a mixture of the both methods,

Lanterns: replicate them to make them regulation

# THEMES + IDEAS

- Make wreaths to go in public buildings  
Museum or Library.
- There for Christmas  
e.g. Carols  
Xmas Song  
Swan!!!
- Christmas  
Lights Trail  
around Priory  
Including  
Lanterns.
- Across the road whole  
lights, too many,  
modern, not in  
keeping with old  
town, looked like  
a cheap odd job
- Focus on the  
Bridge &  
waterside  
barge heritage
- Yarm  
Groups  
- Water Scouting  
& Guiding.
- MULTI-COLOUR  
LIGHT  
TIE  
RIVER!
- Coloured or  
warm white  
lights on  
the maltings  
(Christmas Lane)
- Colourwise, I  
think the colour  
of the old  
lanterns was  
perfect.
- Real Ale  
not  
'Oktoberfest'  
(which is more!)
- Barges  
boats  
Sea Scouts
- Some lights  
coming across  
different centres  
e.g. swans  
coaches  
jazz bars  
barge maltings
- Float  
THE  
LANTERNS
- Reference  
Gazebos
- Dickensian  
Community  
Spirit.
- Contact The  
College (HRC)  
Art & Design  
Dept. re. designs  
for the theme  
(Degree Students)
- LANTERNS  
INSIDE  
GAZEROS?  
(speak to owner)
- Ware Heritage  
Industry  
Maltings Beer  
Engineering  
Barges Canal  
Glaxo/Allen & Hobbs
- MULTICOLOURED  
LIGHTS. REPAIRING  
LANTERNS  
BRIDGE COULD HAVE  
A RIVER THEME  
CARVILL ROAD  
ABOUT  
BIG CHRISTMAS  
RESCUE
- Bunting style  
lights - different  
colours.  
Thames  
Traditional  
maltings, industrial  
coaching (has  
river maltings)
- Water  
Rafting
- Lantern Trail  
around the  
Priory.  
Warm White  
or coloured  
or mixture.
- LANTERNS  
Along river  
Path
- Gilpin  
Coaching  
highwaymen
- Swans  
synonymous  
with ware
- Multi coloured  
But not like  
lanterns were  
or warm  
white
- WARE HISTORY  
Market
- CHRISTMAS  
TREE IN  
SQUARE where  
Maltster  
Statue is.
- WARM WHITE  
OR COLOURED  
LIGHTS
- Bees like  
card shop  
did



with: brownish - brownish (brownish)

PILOT  
OPPORTUNITIES

We like the  
Wave Bear

lights around  
Keith Ian were  
pretty

lights in the  
back streets  
were pretty

use the lights  
(new lanterns)  
and do sections  
of high street  
with lanterns  
with new LED lights  
and fixings

LANTERNS ARE  
BEST!  
IN THE PRIORY  
GROUNDS  
+ TRADOR SQUARE

CHRISTMAS 2024:

WHAT WORKED WELL?

Good.  
Bears, East St.  
W. St.  
Priory

POSTHUMUS  
1x Wave Bear only  
outside Keith Ian  
lighting on brick of shops  
Priory (more please)  
Tobler Tree  
made on Eastwall St.

Liked lighting  
around the old  
town hall building  
(Keith Ian).

Liked bear outside  
Boots and the  
photoframe.

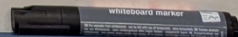
Liked lanterns  
in Priory Park  
along the wall.

Keith Ian  
lighting was  
stunning - more  
of this please.

Amwell End



Bridgefoot



Polar bear was random and in the walkway.

No column displays in Amwell End.

2024 too generic and like any other town.

Weak.  
Polar Bear complete lack of lights across the road Baldock Street

# CHRISTMAS 2024:

## WHAT NEEDS IMPROVING?

1 BEAR ONLY  
PLEASE NO UGLY DECOS  
ACROSS THE  
HIGH ST/BALDOCK ST

~~the~~  
lights on lampposts in highstreet like Amwell End

The different mix of lights & decorations were not linked

1b. 1 Bear outside Boots is enough.  
Amwell End looked very tacky.

Like the shop competition, but let the town know

Bear on plinth outside library was too high

LIGHTING WAS SPARSE

Thumbs Down  
too many bears cross streets the street light why not lanterns in East/West Street replace Tudor St. for lantern

Don't need multiple bears + polar bears. one outside Boots is enough + safe from to see

'statues' bears etc were randomly placed.

There were too many bears.

Most people on table not keen on 2024 decs.

Vintage / traditional decorations VS new (tacky) ones!



W.T.C.

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1 453 10 111 11 1

Whatever is new  
needs to be  
collusive and  
right for our  
town  
in every area

Spend the  
money on  
doing the  
same in stages

Wind turbine  
or  
Solar

Stand alone  
anchor bolts  
on posts  
or lampposts

Poles from  
electric  
sources  
to carry the  
lights

More autonomy,  
feel we need  
a theme.

SOMETHING  
THAT  
REPRESENTS  
WARE.

Christmas  
boat parade  
on the river

Fake snow  
machine in  
the high  
street

COURAGE  
SP KEEPER  
PUT  
LIGHTS IN  
WINEBAR

MORE  
LIGHTING  
OVER HIGH  
ST. BALDOCK ST.

Make a  
feature of  
the train station.  
'Welcome To  
Ware'

HIGHER LANTERNS  
with the colours  
of the old ones

Mini christmas  
trees all  
along?

CHRISTMAS  
TREE AS  
SIGN. TUDOR  
SPHERE

LIGHTS NEED  
COHESION - NOT  
DISPERATE BITS  
AND BOTS

WELCOME  
TO WARE  
AT STATION

MAP OF WHAT  
IS CURRENTLY IN  
WARE  
→ CURRENT  
AVAILABILITY

COLLECTION.  
CONSISTENCY

SOLAR PANELS  
FOR LIGHTS ON  
CHARVILLES  
ROUNDBOAT

More variety  
of lighted  
statues.

STRING  
OF LANTERNS  
ON TUDOR  
SQUARE

Bears etc. were  
disconnected  
ie lots in Amaze  
End, less after  
old library into  
Baldock street.

Vanities up to  
+ full castings  
or solar for powering  
the lights?

Light weight  
LED lights  
along high  
street.

decorations on  
the street, can  
lanterns be strung  
across the street,  
and more if possible?  
New lantern design  
across street  
More impact!  
bigger, tasteful

Gazebos would  
look nice with  
fairy lights

Be encouraged  
to put more  
lights in  
(coaching inn  
history)

Tudor Square -  
Sea of lanterns  
over head (net  
of lanterns  
suspended in air)

Crowd fund  
for a future  
bigger display  
if traditional  
lanterns are  
favourable.

UP THE PRICE  
MONEY  
FOR THE  
WINDOW-DRESSING  
COMPETITION

We want a  
traditional town.

Make a  
feature of  
the prog

WE MAKE  
IMPROVEMENTS?

Seriously look  
at spending the  
money long-  
term  
- putting in infrastructure  
- a looking at solar / wind

Not make a  
tree out of  
lanterns -  
put lanterns  
on a Xmas  
Tree + tree  
WHAT OTHER  
TOWNS DO

What about instead  
of shops having  
hanging baskets,  
they have a hanging  
lantern each -  
battery operated.

sections  
of existing lanterns  
hung across high st  
at points that  
coincide with  
street lights for  
power supply

lights could  
be strung on  
the poles over  
Bridge foot

Sasco.

edding 363

whiteboard marker



3. CROWD FUND  
FOR REFURB  
OF OLD LANTERNS  
THEY WERE  
UNIQUE TO WARE  
3. LANTERNS ARE  
IN KEEPING  
WITH OUR  
HISTORIC TOWN  
3. MAKE REFURB  
LIGHTS IN SHORT  
LENGTHS SO  
EACH SHOP CAN  
PUT UP THEIR  
OWN

Lanterns in  
Tree's of  
Ware High  
St.

Old lanterns  
- Retain on the  
buildings where  
they can be fixed  
eg Ware Museum  
Southern Maltings

Old lanterns  
- give them away  
to people in the  
town (1 per home)  
- Lantern parade  
- Dickensian

## WHAT SHOULD HAPPEN WITH THE OLD LANTERNS?

WE NEED  
SOMEONE WITH  
TALENT TO  
DESIGN A DISPLAY  
WITH LANTERNS

OLD LIGHTS  
→ BRIDGE FOOT  
→ EVERY PUB  
→ SOUTHERN MALTINGS  
→ PRIORY  
→ BUCKENRY TAP

LANTERNS ON  
TREE OUTSIDE  
PRIORY?  
BRIGHTEE!

AND/OR  
SELL OFF  
GIVE OLD  
LANTERNS TO  
SHOP KEETERS FOR  
HANGING

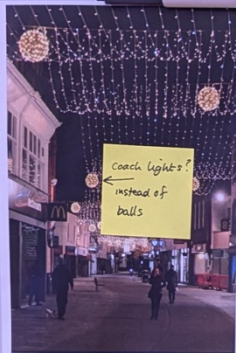
Where could  
the lanterns  
be hung in  
Ware.  
East St. West St.

old lanterns  
re-use where possible  
eg Tudor Jg.  
East St. West St.  
more in Priory  
make big "snow tree"  
out of lanterns.  
string along New Inn at End  
of road

Southern  
Maltings as  
everything is  
in place. Nice  
for Christmas  
markets there too.

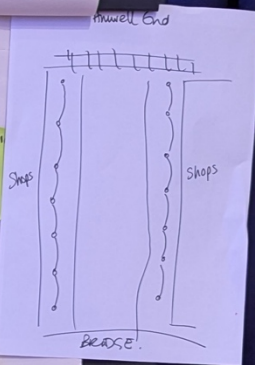
Entrance to  
one town  
D. Howell End  
Star Street  
+ Gildard v  
Welcome to Ware  
2-3  
Maltings

Put them up  
elsewhere.



Goals - Making a night time scene from the Dan Shield. Make a scene - these shapes were taken as pictures. Dickensian support that wait.

Maltings Canals: Great Bear of Dan. Make a picture in the shape of a dog - of a scene. Use the frame for making a scene. Will that be better?



# THOMES + IDENS CHRISTMAS MOONHANG

Ware is a staying post - coaching post - Inns - lanterns

White on Blue Way (River) Sheep of Wheat

Light the bridge with river theme. 1st crossing of Rv. here

Do we need to crowbar Ware into Christmas? Can't it just be Christmas?

Gold Silver Lamps

Scotty Grotto

Thames - Coloured lights - shape to display poster displaying parts of local history - Road, coaching inn & boat of Ware.

Traditional, not modern.

EP200 Christmas Lamps

WARM WHITE

Decorate the trees on bridge outside houses