

Ware Town Council

Christmas Lights Community Consultation

Held on Monday 17th 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?

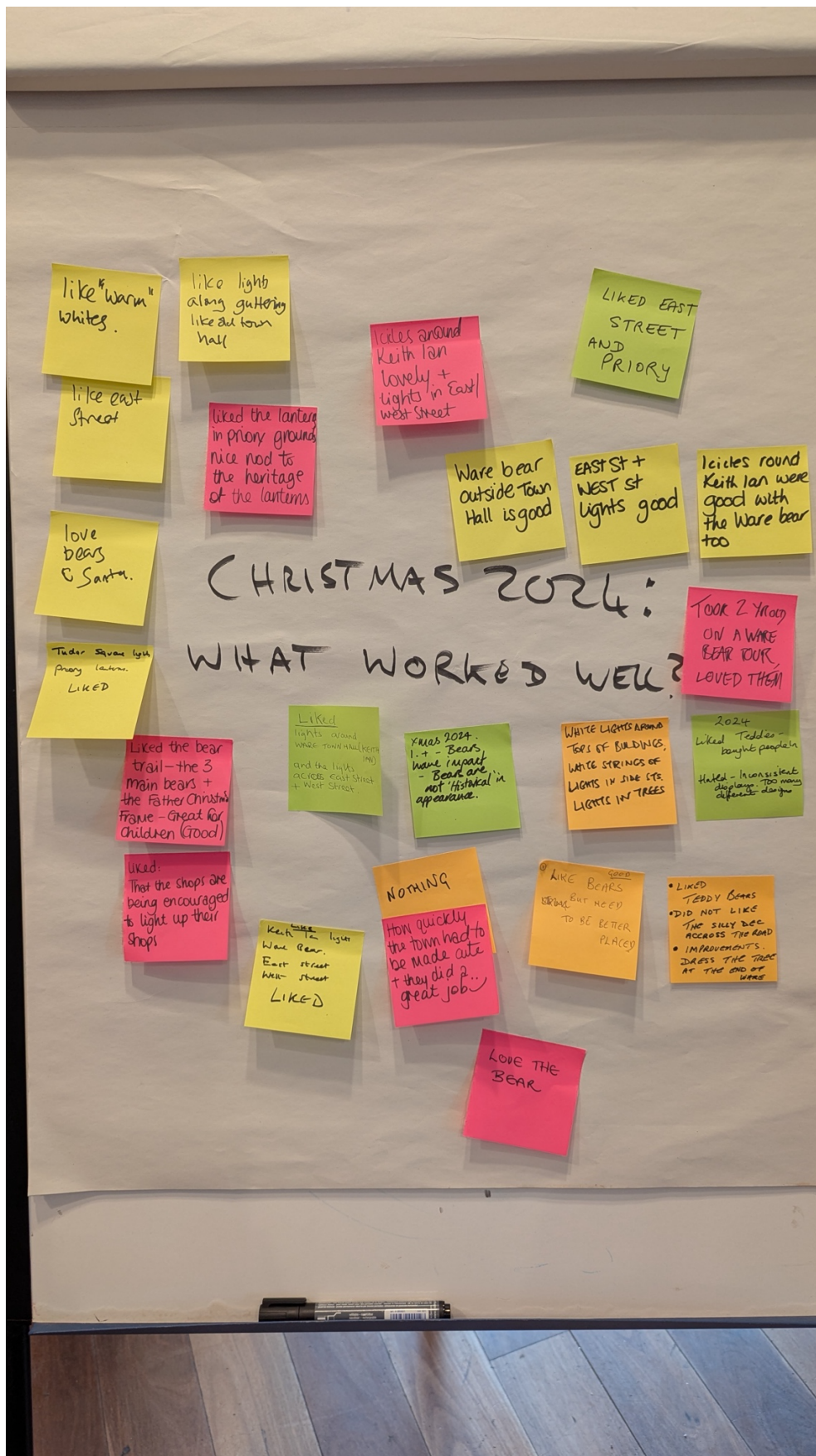
There's strong affection for the traditional lanterns, with many keen to see them reused or refurbished:

- 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?

Trees need
more impactful
lighting,
especially
Museum tree

3 YEAR CONTRACT
FOR BEARS
MAKES A MESS
OF COMMUNITY

LIGHTS IN
AMWELL END
WERE USELESS

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

Sense of
Place -
highlight our
high street's
townscape

NOT -
DISAPPEAR
PIECES

Safety issue
Amwell End
Bear creates
a danger

Lens pavement
crossings
rubbish

Stumps above
street don't
really work -
Boring

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

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

Disappearing
the aged
people having
the Bear?

Need to have
a well dressed
on 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

2024 lights
in high street
and Balbock
Street looking
a Christmas feel.

Too many
Bears
Photo shows

Needs improve
The old light
gives a better
out looking and
challenging what
Christmas is
in 2024

STRIPS LIGHTS
IN WEST + EAST
2004. CHEAP
BROKE BEARS
DON'T SUIT THERE
POSITIONS
LOOKY MATCH BENCH

Since 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
2004

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
community

HOW DO WE MAKE IMPROVEMENTS?

Grants?
crowdfunding
??

More string
lights in
high st +
Baldock St.

for
if they put up
their own lights?

Alternate
Dickensian
and
Summer Beer/
Music festival

Tudor Sq
Was supposed to
be local band for
Xmas Tree (served
d) 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 tree 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 RATING OF
THE LIGHTS.

KEEP IN CONTACT
WITH THE AGE 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

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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
TILE
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 lame!)
- 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
WREATH
- Bunting style
lights - different
colours.
Thames
Traditional
maltings, industrial
coaching (has
river history)
- 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 Sq Tree
Maze on Eastwall St.

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

Liked bear outside
Boots and the
photoframe.

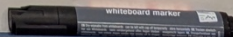
Liked lanterns
in Priory Park
along the wall.

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 lamp posts in high street 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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Whatever is new needs to be cohesive 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 lights

More lit on the one on Keith lan

Solar powered lights on Charvillat Roundabout

Fake snow machine in the high street

COURAGE SP KEEPER PUT LIGHTS IN WINEBAR

Christmas boat parade on the river

SOMETHING THAT REPRESENTS WARE.

More autonomy, feel we need a theme.

Town Southern Halls Priority to put lanterns on

Proposals for new lighting - Go find me

PUBLICISE COMPETITION LIGHTS - STOP THE LADS.

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

Ware is old and quirky so choose decorations that reflect and embrace tradition.

COUNCIL TO ADVISE WHOSE LANTERNS CAN BE FITTED

LIGHTS NEED COHESION - NOT DISPERSE BITS AND BOTS

CHRISTMAS TREE AS, SAY, TUDOR SPHERE

Mini christmas trees all along?

PAINTING TELECOMS TO MATCH BOXES

WE MAKE IMPROVEMENTS?

WELCOME TO WARE AT STATION

MAP OF WHAT IS CURRENTLY IN PLACE -> CURRENT AVAILABILITY

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

SERIOUSLY LOOK AT SPENDING THE MONEY LONG TERM - putting in infrastructure -> looking at solar / wind

Not make a tree out of lanterns - put lanterns on a Xmas Tree + tree lights

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

COLLECTION. CONSISTENCY

CROWD FUND for a future bigger display if traditional lanterns are favourable.

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

Gazebos would look nice with fairy lights

WHAT OTHER POWERS DO

lights could be strung on the poles over Bridge Foot

Power supply

SOLAR PANELS FOR LIGHTS ON CHARVILLAT ROUNDABOUT

UP THE PRICE MONEY FOR THE WINDOW-DRESSING COMPETITION

decorations on the street, can lanterns be strung across the street, and more if possible? New lantern design across street

Light weight LED lights along high street.

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

More variety of lighted statues.

STRING OF LANTERNS ON TUDOR SQUARE

We want a traditional town.

Make a feature of the preag

More impact! bigger, tasteful

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

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 Str.

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?
BRIGHTER!

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

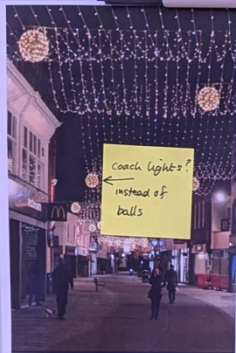
Where could the lanterns be hung in Ware.
 East Str. West Str.

old lanterns
 re-use where possible
 eg Tidar Ig.
 East Str. West Str.
 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.

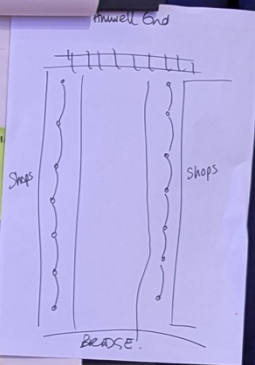
Entrance to Ware town
 @ Howell End
 Stan Street
 + Gildard v
 Welcome to Ware
 2-3 lanterns

Put them up elsewhere.



Goals - Making
- in making
- more
- from the
- Dare Shield.
- these shapes
- more than as
- features.
- Dickensian
- support that
- wait.

DICKENS
CHRISTMAS
(Victorian)



THOMES
+
CHRISTMAS
IDENS

Make a picture
in the shape of
design of Ware
Shield.
Use the frame
for making it
hang light
will shed the
setting?

River - Barges
Not all white
lantern lit &
displayed in
every shop
window

Lanterns
traditional
ware Bear
Hollows (pubs
have white &
pops of colour)

Ware is a
staying post -
coaching
lms -
lanterns

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

Gold
Silver
Lanterns

Scotty
Grotto

EP200
CHRISTMAS
Lanterns

WARM
WHITE

Decorate
the trees
on bridge
outside houses