Redevelopment in Winchester - TrustNews Dec 2002

Trust members were the first audience in Winchester to hear Michael Capocci, development director with Thornfield Properties plc, engaged to redevelop the Friarsgate area.

He explained in detail how developers work, and demonstrated how finance is obtained from institutions in which members of the public are participants through insurance policies and pension funds. He pointed out some of the many risks involved and that not all projects are successful. The Dome, when built "was worth less when finished than when it went up because nothing inside it attracted enough people." On the other hand, the Eden Project has been a great success and the Jorvik Centre "paid for itself in the first year."

In addition to obtaining finance and carrying out extensive marketing research, there are numerous planning and environmental requirements to be met and, when the area is in multiple ownerships, the purchases have to be negotiated simultaneously so that no one can "hold you to ransom."

In the course of replying to questions, Mr Capocci said, "I am not going to flatten the Marks & Spencer warehouse. I think people want a mix of building in an eclectic development. We are not putting in masses of parking, nor am I going to drown the site. The water table is just below the surface and I seek not to disturb the archaeology." He described his vision for Winchester as "keeping the old and adding a shot of adrenalin. It needs a pick-me-up. A 'Master Planner' and a specialist in housing needs will be brought in when the development brief has been approved. "Our scheme will not compete with West Quay or Basingstoke" he assured members.

In thanking Mr Capocci, Chairman, Roger Backhouse said that the Trust Council looked forward to keeping in close touch with the progress of the development and welcomed the involvement of the Trust in appointing the Master Planner.

The evening started with the Chairman, welcoming a 'full house' of members to the Annual General Meeting, when the following members were elected to the Council of the Trust: Mr M. Carden, Mrs P. Edwards, Mrs J. Martin, Mr N. McPherson, and Major A. Trimmer 0.B.E.

West Hill Cemetery - TrustNews Dec 02

I have been asked by the Trust to write about West Hill Cemetery, one of Winchester's great green open spaces. It is planned that the subject matter will not just focus on the interesting people who are buried there, but on other aspects such as its history, its designers, the ecology and archaeology of the site and its importance to our city.

The research is progressing well but I would be grateful for any information that you might have to help me with this project. If you have any information or recollections that might be relevant, I should like to hear from you.

It would be helpful if your communications were in writing, but you may, of course, telephone me if you wish. My contact details are: R.B. Merton, 17 Clifton Road, Winchester. S022 5BP Tel: 01962 853690 Fax: 01962 843898 Email: robinmerton@hotmail.com

---

The Charm of Winchester - TrustNews Dec 02

a personal comment by Michael Carden

Many of the Hampshire Chronicle's recent and well intentioned (if sometimes intemperate) correspondents seem to me to have missed an important feature of Winchester's character. They appear to believe that nothing in or around the City must ever change, or that if anything new is unavoidable, it should be in the style of a previous age. They have failed to appreciate that the most dominant characteristic of the City is that it has continuously changed, and must continue to do so if it is to retain its character. To halt development in the middle age of these correspondents would be illogical and selfish. If this had been done in the City's middle-ages, we would have none of the post-mediaeval buildings which contribute enormously to the character of the City, however much some of them upset people in their time because they too often appeared to be in stark contrast with their neighbours.

Similarly, the development of the stretch of open land between St Cross and Winchester, or the loss of the green fields at Oram's Arbour and on St Giles's Hill would not have occurred, and of course we would have no railway line or viaduct! So it is not our generation's duty to freeze things as they happen to be now, but to strive to ensure that what is built contributes in one way or another to the ever changing character of our city rather than detracting from it.

There are bound to be different opinions about the design and position of new and redevelopment, just as there are about music or food. Tastes vary, and because we may properly argue for our own preferences, we should not be offensive or untruthful about the preferences of others. We should, however, combine to exclude from our City both junk-buildings (in the sense of junk-food), and the wasteful use of precious resources like our valued buildings and our open countryside. But compromises will always be necessary, and of current examples three of the most controversial will serve as illustrations.

The Bar End Park-and-Ride is of course unwelcome loss of open land in everyone's eyes, but the intention is to make this sacrifice as part of an on-going scheme to contribute to the well-being of Winchester by reducing traffic effects from which the character of the City suffers, but without reducing its commercial life. It is only a small sacrifice because the area concerned was until recently a bypass (not water meadows or ancient wild flower meadowland as is often claimed), and it only uses about 10% of the land reclaimed from the bypass (not all of it as is often implied).

Minstrel's Restaurant is by any standards a junk-building and suitable for redevelopment. Moreover, there is an opportunity on sites like this to contribute to the preservation of the countryside by increased residential densities. Whatever personal preference may be there is no reason why the new building should not be of its century, as its neighbours were of theirs, and even (although it is not) a little taller than the tallest of them, as many of them were in their time.

The green wedge of Abbotts Barton Farm is something all of Winchester would hate to see reduced. But, if eventually forced by the Government to accept some extension of the urban boundary, where should such a development be which would not do equal harm? Each neighbourhood is entitled to fight its corner, but in the end the Local Authorities must take an objective decision (and the Trust an objective view). Whatever the outcome, we must insist that any new development does not repeat the junk-design and wasteful use of land with which we have become so familiar. I hope, should the need arise, that we might achieve something at least as good in density and design as, say, Oram's Arbour.

Responses to TrustNews - TrustNews Dec 2002

Dear Editor,

Just a note of appreciation in response to your recent copy of TrustNews.

I was impressed by the range & detail of the coverage, the calibre and clarity of the content and the quality of its readability.

It was heartening to hear of so many effective interventions in matters vital to the protection of the city and the way future plans are being so rigorously monitored.

Challenges based on design, density and detriment to the character of the neighbourhood reflect the importance given to these qualities in the Govemment's guidance in PPG3 on housing.

The concern about the proliferation of 'phone masts needs to include both the city and its adjoining countryside. Some of the city's magnificent views are becoming blighted by ugly masts in prominent positions towering above the trees. Tenant farmers are especially vulnerable to having these imposed on them.I value the more frequent update on events and current issues and endorse the importance of displaying Roger Brown's model.

Finally, could the letter reminding members to renew subscriptions include the Gift Aid form? The Standing Order Mandate could include this too. I normally sign "in perpetuity" which reduces effort and increases income. Yours etc.

CHRIS SLATTERY

Dear Sir,

Having joined the WPT (as it was then) as a life member about 17 years ago, I am becoming increasingly concerned about its visibility both to the population of Winchester & tourists to our area. 0ver the last few years, CWT has become almost exclusively just a pressure group over planning issues, & I feel that the Trust should have a much broader appeal. It does not appear to be visible to the public at large, it does not advertise or promote itself to either the residents or visitors, & 1 have yet to see any leaflets about it either in the Tourist Office or at Mottisfont Court. We should not be complacent about the number of members we have but be constantly striving to increase people's awareness of CWT and its relevance to the city of Winchester & the surrounding areas.

Several years ago, a group of us went to Poundbury and Blandford Forum for the day. At Blandford, we were hosted by the Blandford & District Civic Society. They gave us copies of their Newsletter and leaflet with which I was very impressed.. To the best of my knowledge CWT produces nothing similar to their leaflet and our Newsletter is much more limited than theirs - actually our Newsletter is becoming less and less interesting & the latest one is really rather pathetic! Whilst the inclusion of the Trust's memorandum of Association & code of conduct help members to understand its role of pressure group over planning issues, I feel that people can make better informed decisions about Winchester's architectural & density future if they are encouraged to know more about its varied & splendid past.

On another subject, however, I have much enjoyed the Summer Walks since they began a few years ago, but I wonder if the starting time is as convenient as it could be.

Starting at 6.30 means that anyone who works has little chance of getting home, changing and having a meal before the walk. Would it be possible next year to change the starting time to 7.00 pm?

The walks are an excellent way of learning about different aspects of Winchester, and I feel the slightly later time might enable more people to join them.

Yours etc.

JULIA SANDISON

The Trust would like to hear from members interested in joining future walks if the later starting time would be more convenient for them. Please send your views to the Editor at the Heritage Centre.

Development Control - TrustNews Dec 02

Members travelling along **Southgate Street** may have noticed that **No 21A**, the site of Herbert's now defunct hairdressing business, is up for sale again, this time with the added attraction of having planning permission for 7 flats with a shop below. This will have increased the value of the plot, and it seems unlikely that any developer buying the plot would be prepared to embark upon the permitted scheme because of

the cost of the very high standard of materials, detailing and workman-ship that would be necessary for its success.

The scheme for flats on the **Charles House site on the corner of Sussex Street and Upper High Street** is another development that has been sold with planning permission, and the new owners are now seeking variations of the permitted plans.

Some applicants seem to take no notice at all of the reasons given for refusing a proposal. A request to place a satellite dish on the front of **1 The Broadway**, part of a listed terrace and facing onto the statue of King Alfred, was refused in April because of the siting and lack of information about its size and position. An identical request has just been made, to install a black 3 ft-wide dish on the light-coloured front façade, in the same prominent position on the building that was refused previously.

A new application for **6 Hampton Lane** is an example of when some, but sadly not all, of the reasons for refusing the previous scheme have been taken on board. Fired with enthusiasm to fulfil the directive to increase densities, in August the applicants proposed to put two 4bedroom houses and a block of three flats onto a plot, which had an expired permission for two houses. Never mind that Hampton Lane is a single-track lane with no pavements and that the poorly-designed supposedly 'period' buildings and their layout were uncharacteristic of the locality, cram 'em all in was the order of the day, with minimal landscaping and lots of hard-standing for parking cars - it wasn't even clear whether any trees would have to be felled. This scheme was refused on the grounds that the access road wasn't wide enough and that the form, siting and design would be out of keeping with, and therefore detrimental to, the locality. A new outline application proposes two 2-bedroom houses, linked by their garages, and a detached 5-bedroom house, with little landscaping evident, apart from drives and hard-standing. Although the layout remains atypical of the area, the density is more acceptable, but again there were no details about trees (save possibly in a plan so reduced as to be illegible). In view of the previous scheme's depressingly low standard of design, we felt it was essential to have some idea of their appearance before any permission was given, and have therefore objected to the application.

Shione Carden

PPG3 - TrustNews Dec 02

Trust members interested in planning will probably know that, in order to reduce the loss of countryside, PPG3 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing) calls for new homes to be built at a higher density than previously, and for 60% of new housing to be built on brown-field sites. However there is much more to it than that.

The Government gives these main objectives:

- To provide enough homes for the whole community, including those in need of affordable housing, within mixed communities, with a greater choice of size and location, and to do it in a way that does not reinforce social divisions.
- To promote more sustainable development that makes better use of land, and reduces dependence on the car for daily tasks.
- To improve design so as to create attractive, high-quality environments which contribute to an urban renaissance, and an improved quality of life.

The Trust is broadly in favour of these objectives provided they are implemented skilfully and in such a way as to tend to improve the quality of the City rather than to spoil it, as could so easily happen. These objectives place many new demands on local planning authorities, and the Trust remains concerned that the City is not yet adequately addressing them. The Trust is working to produce its own policy on how PPG3 should be implemented in Winchester.

Note - When completed this policy document will be available to any member wishing to have a copy

Antony Proudman