Chairman's News - TrustNews Jun 2003

Vice-President.

I am delighted to report that Mr Donald Insall, CBE, FSA, RWA, FRIBA, FRTPI, SP Dipl(Hons) has accepted our invitation to become a Vice-President of the Trust.

He is a respected Conservation Architect and a Planner too and his London practice has won over a hundred awards. He has had a long association with Winchester since just after the war, when he was involved with the listing and preservation of Winchester College buildings. Later he was commissioned jointly by the City and County Councils to prepare a study and proposals for the Westgate area which included Staple Gardens. Following this, the firm was invited to produce schemes for the County Architects' offices and renewing Hyde Barn and its associated buildings - now the Historic Resources Centre. Amongst the many other major projects to his credit is the repair and refurbishment of the House of Lords. He has also written about Winchester and its architecture. I am hoping to persuade him to address the AGM in November.

Hon. Treasurer.

Following the announcement of Ian Grant's retirement in the last issue, we are fortunate to have been able to persuade Mr Peter Radcliffe, FCA to take on this office. Peter has a wide experience in accountancy having been a partner in Grant Thornton and a director of Orvis. He is a Trustee of St. Cross Hospital and has been involved with other charities and a number of schools.

Master Planner.

The interviews for the selection of the Master Planner for the Friarsgate/Broadway development took place on April 25th. Thornfield plc, the developers, included on the selection panel a representative from the Trust, Ray Attfield, who is an architect specialising in Urban Design. From a short-list of five, the choice was agreed unanimously and, subsequently, the practice of Allies & Morrison, based in London, was appointed. Their presentation demonstrated that they had studied and appreciated the requirements of Winchester and the sensitive nature of the project.

Heritage Centre Open

On May 16th we invited new members to visit the Heritage Centre, where members of the Council had mounted an exhibition using photographs and other material from our archive collection.

We should like to make these records available to a wider audience and, perhaps, open the Heritage Centre on the occasional Saturday in the summer to anyone who might like to call in. However, this would depend on finding volunteers from our membership to run such a project.

We need volunteers to help with other activities too - from Book Sales to running the Design Award Scheme and recruiting new members. Perhaps you know friends or

new neighbours who might like to join. Let us know and we can send them information about the Trust.

Roger Backhouse

Development Control - TrustNews Jun 03

Members will no doubt have noticed that the façade of the **Charles House restaurant on the corner of Sussex Street and Upper High Street** is no longer there. Hardly surprising, considering the cavalier way in which the rest of the building was removed. Having reached this unsatisfactory position, the Trust would much prefer to see a contemporary facade that would be in keeping with the new development behind to an inaccurate reconstruction of the original, which had no great merit apart from being familiar. A decision on this has still to be made.

A decision is also needed on whether **The Hermitage Retirement Home, Cheriton Road**, should be demolished and replaced by fourteen 1- to 3-bedroom fiats. The contemporary scheme now proposed is an improvement on the previous one, but the Trust very much questions whether a pleasing flint and brick house that is acknowledged to be in good condition should be demolished without any evident thought being given to its possible conversion. Winchester has many similar properties that are vulnerable to demolition in favour of higher-density schemes, and, if it becomes 'acceptable' that they can be demolished in the name of increased (PPG3) density, we fear for the future of our City's intrinsic character.

Also needing a decision is **76-82 Alresford Road**, where it is proposed the existing dwellings should be demolished to make way for a mixed development of flats and houses. In this instance the Trust has no objection to the demolitions, but it does have considerable reservations about the lack of place and neighbourhood the new development would provide. This is largely due to the proposed layout, which splits the site into two camps, with the flats near the road and the more expensive houses in the hinterland, separated by two large areas of parked cars.

Following a meeting of the St Cross Planning Sub-Committee, the development at **The Grange, 140 St Cross Road**, was withdrawn when it became clear that the density of the scheme was based on calculations using a gross rather than net area. Net calculations make allowance for land on which it is impossible to build, either because of the topography or to protect trees. As this site is mostly covered with trees, the density proposed was clearly impractical.

Decisions have been made about the proposed demolition of **Chestnut Mead, Kingsgate Road**, which was refused for many of the reasons given in the last TrustNews, and the large development at **Salters, Salters Lane**, which was granted. The Trust believes this ill-conceived permission is one that Winchester will live to regret, because of inadequate local infrastructure and the undesirable precedent that will have been set for low standards of design for both architecture and landscaping.

Two interesting developments have recently entered the planning pipeline.

The Hampshire Constabulary wants to refurbish the **Police Headquarters, West Hill,Romsey Road**. The updating of this '60s building is long overdue because of the need to remove asbestos and the intrusion by prevailing winds and rain into the south-facing offices, causing considerable discomfort and inconvenience. It is proposed that the existing structure should be clad with a glass skin, an approach with which the Trust has no quarrel. Following a helpful presentation and tour of the site, it was, however, felt that we had to object because of the lack of detail provided for a prominent structure such as this. The proposal includes the removal of the collection of ill-assorted structures that litter the site, which we welcomed, and the construction of a new 3-storey office block in the south-east corner, which was on the whole acceptable although we felt its design should echo the more simple treatment proposed for the main building.

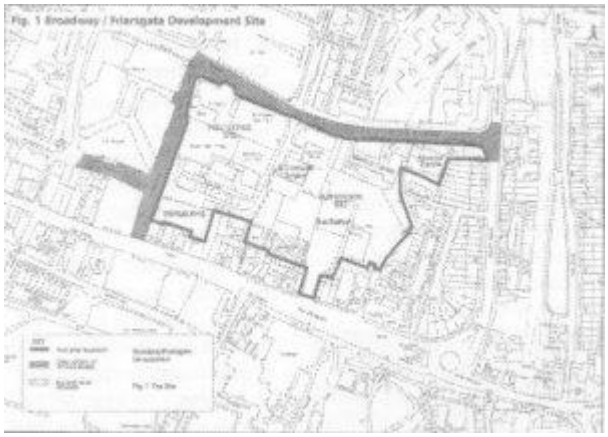
At **King Alfred's College, Sparkford Road**, it is proposed that the existing dining hall should be re-developed to provide new dining and student facilities, sited on Sparkford Road opposite the new blocks of flats currently under construction. While a large building here could be acceptable, the Trust does not feel the scheme shown in the outline application would be appropriate in its present form. The structure pays little regard to the complex topography of the site and being higher up the hill, its 3-storey frontage running along close to the road boundary, would be taller than the yet-to-be-built 3-storey flats. We felt this could produce a rather claustrophobic and canyon-like character to this stretch of the road, which would have a greatly reduced period of sunlight than at present. We have suggested that, as well as being designed to take advantage of local geography, it would be better for Sparkford Road if the building were drawn back at the southern end and either stepped or canted progressively nearer the road as, it climbs the hill, so leading to the visual pinch point where the road seems to narrow. It will be interesting to see whether this sage advice will have any bearing on the eventual decision.

Shione Carden

Friarsgate Brief - TrustNews Jun 2003

Consultation Draft Feb 2003

Response by the City of Winchester Trust April 2003


Friarsgate development site

The following comments arise from meetings of the Trust's Friarsgate Group before and after the presentation by Steven Bee, Director of Development Services, to an open meeting of Trust members on 3rd April.

The Trust congratulates the Planning Department on the straightforward nature of the Brief and the process of public consultation since its publication, particularly as both contrast markedly with the procedure at the time of the Brooks Development. We are also very pleased that on this occasion the Trust is being allowed to contribute to the process.

General Points

1. **Consideration of additional areas by the Master Planner**

We appreciate that it is important not to over-extend the scope of the Brief, but there are certain adjoining areas that are so directly related to the development that we believe they should be considered at the same time, as supplementary matters. The need for this is to some extent recognised, but it would be a sadly missed opportunity not to go a stage further and obtain the expert views of the Master Planner on how these areas would be affected by his proposals, and how he would recommend that planning policy might be framed for their future. We therefore recommend that an outer, hatched line be drawn on Fig.1 to encompass the following non-development areas for consideration:

- The Cossack Lane Car Park - the Brief recognises that the Cossack Lane Car Park may in the future be developed once there has been expansion of the park and ride facilities. We believe it important at this stage to consider how development of this large area might fit in with the rest of the plan.
- The Broadway in general, and in particular its frontage from Busket Lane to Middle Brook Street - The Trust would like detailed consideration of all the buildings on either side of the existing bus station regarded as an essential component of the development, and consideration given to the possible future uses of the Broadway.
- The full length of St George's Street - The Brief indicates in Fig.1 that works are likely to extend a short distance along St George's Street so that this

length will automatically be considered, but it would be a golden opportunity to obtain the views of the Master Planner on this problematical street as a whole, both in practical and aesthetic terms.



FRIARSGATE CAR PARK

2.**The existing Multistorey Car Park**

The Trust feels very strongly that the present car park building is wholly inappropriate to the character and quality of the centre of Winchester and should not be retained as part of what we all expect to be a development fully worthy of civic pride. We understand that demolition/replacement has a significant financial implication, but the building will in any case require major expenditure to meet present practical standards, and we suspect that its retention would also compromise sensible planning of the area. Moreover, as the photograph illustrates, it is hard to envisage how the development can achieve the design standards set by the Brief if saddled with this ugly and alien element. The views from the improved Friarsgate Road and from the adjoining future re-development of the Cossack Lane Car Park will be equally important.

3. **The role of the Master Planner**

The Brief is commendably non-prescriptive, but in one or two respects we believe the presentation might appear to limit the freedom of the Master Planner more than is desirable as, for example, where public open spaces are indicated at each of three major intersections. We appreciate that these are diagrammatic and need not be circular, but we suggest that enlarged open spaces at intersections are not characteristic of Winchester, and that the Master Planner should be encouraged to include public open space in whatever manner he feels most appropriate, rather than follow this illustration.

4. **Stages of Public Consultation**

At this early stage there is no published programme for further public consultation, and the Trust wishes to make sure that the Draft Master Plan will be available for public examination and comment before it is approved by the City Council. It is important that the people of Winchester should have the opportunity to comment on what will be the second stage of the Brief, before any work is started on the preparation of planning applications.

Comments on specific paragraphs in the Draft Brief include

It would be folly for the scheme to attempt to compete in retail or leisure terms with Southampton or Basingstoke.

Concern to ensure that the existing shopping area extends into the new development rather than that the retail centre of gravity should be moved.

Is there a possibility of servicing adjoining shops outside the development area to solve some traffic problems and improve the pedestrian environment?

Support for the retention of the mediaeval street pattern and for the imaginative use of the streams and small open spaces.

Support for the reuse of the Woolstaplers' Hall for community purposes rather than up-market flats but disagreement with the writing off of the Antiques Market which is an equally important building.

Emphasis on the importance of providing public transport access and short-stay parking for the medical centres and post office.
Welcome for the retention of the street market during and after completion of the development.

The future of the Broadway should be a matter for consideration, including its potential as a market site, and the management of coaches.

Misgivings about the siting of the Bus Station.

Support for the design section of the Brief. Encouragement of the use of the 'pentice' as a design element and the proposal for an avenue of trees along Friarsgate.

Detailed appendices covering Public Art and Retail considerations.

Copies of the full document can be obtained from the Trust's website or from The Heritage Centre on receipt of a S.A.E.