Chairman's News - TrustNews Mar 2003

The City Council's Draft Planning Brief for **Friarsgate** is now available for comment. It has already been discussed by the Trust's working party which was established to consider the whole project and we have arranged a meeting for all members of the Trust to discuss the draft Brief. This will be held in the Walton Room in the Guildhall on **Thursday 3rd April at 6.30 p.m.** and addressed by Steve Bee, the Director of Development Services for the City Council. It will be remembered that Mike Capocci, director of Thornfield (the nominated developers) addressed our AGM last November about the development. The Trust has been asked by him to nominate a member of our Council to take part in the process of selecting the Master Planner whose role is set out in the Draft Planning Brief. This process will start soon. All members are urged to obtain a copy (only about 20 pages) from the City offices or from their website [http:// www.winchester.gov.uk] and read it before attending the meeting, joining in the discussion and giving your views on the Brief. It is not a document which delivers full detail as to what will happen, but it provides overall guidelines for the Master Planner.

The working group considers the following points to be of great importance as part of their initial reaction to the Brief:

- The sites for consideration by the Master Planner should also include: Cossack Lane Car Park The role of St. George's Street (especially in the traffic system). The frontage of the Broadway.
- The plans used in the Brief are too rigid, too restrictive and imprecise in their use of language. For example the word "spoke" is used when a "hub" is described.
- Parts of the document are too prescriptive at this stage of the planning process when the Master Planner should be encouraged to use his imagination and expertise to the full.
- There should be further public consultation once the Master Planner has produced his Plan for the development with the scheme put forward by him available for public consultation.
- Every effort should be made to preserve and develop the Woolstaplers Hall (at present Marks & Spencer's warehouse) for public use. Similarly the Kings Walk antique market should not be written off before its use and possible retention are considered by the Master Planner.

There were further more detailed comments made by the working group. These will form part of the formal response by the Trust to the City Council incorporating comments made by
members at the meeting on April 3rd.

Roger Backhouse

Development Control - TrustNews Mar 03

It has been a busy start to the year and Winchester has had its share of large and/or controversial schemes.

Left over from fast year is a Try Homes development for three 4-bedroom terraced houses and a three 2-bedroom apartment block in place of **Woodpeckers, Park Road**, which has been permitted, and the Wates Homes proposal to demolish **Hillcroft, Northbrook Avenue**, to make way for twelve flats and two 3-bedroom houses, which has been refused.

Although we were still concerned about the extra traffic it would bring to Park Road, the new scheme for the awkward site at **Abbotts Court, Park Road**, seemed much better than the previous one; it has been approved.

Decisions have still to be reached on two proposed demolitions in the Conservation Area.

Winchester College would like to replace **Antrim House, 37 St Cross Road** with a new boarding house, a site felt by the planners and the College to be the most appropriate of those available for a building of the size proposed. Ideally the Trust would prefer to see it retained, but it seemed this would result in a greater area of Kingsgate Park being lost to public use than would be the case with a new building. As Antrim House isn't essential to the street-scene (less so than the demolished Friary), we didn't object to its demolition - provided the new building was a worthy replacement. It wasn't, and this scheme is now being reconsidered.

The height and mass of **Chestnut Mead, Kingsgate Road** do, however, make an important contribution to the street-scene because the building can be seen from afar, and we objected to its demolition. We specially felt it would be detrimental to the Conservation Area to replace a structurally sound building with one providing no more accommodation than that provided by an extension with existing permission, although it has not been built.

It was proposed that 13 units should be built on land behind the houses on the **corner of Sparkford and Airlie Roads**. We welcomed the retention and division of the house on Sparkford Road, but felt the density was much too high for the area's character and would cause overlooking. This scheme has been refused.

The latest Banner Homes scheme for 58 units at **Salters, Salters Lane** is probably the most contentious proposal because of the size and exceptional qualities of the site. A major constraint is its parkland quality, and it seems the only way the requisite density indicated by central government can be accommodated amongst the trees is for the development to include tall and somewhat massive blocks of flats, which would be uncharacteristic of the neighbourhood.

A similar solution has been proposed for the development of 23 small flats at **The Grange, 140 St Cross Road**. This is another very sensitive site, primarily because any building here will be seen in relation to the Hospital of St Cross, on the opposite side of this important route into the City. Although screened by trees, The Grange is partially visible at this time of the year, and the massive block proposed - of no obvious design concept - would be even more visible, presuming of course that most

of the present trees survive, which seems unlikely. Trees are in any case ephemeral, so we feel that any new structure here should be able to stand on its own merits, which this could not do. The main aim of the scheme seems to be how to cram the greatest numbers of units onto the site to conform with PPG3 rather than considering how the development could make best use of its attractively treed surroundings and contribute to the neighbourhood as a whole.

This type of approach is evident in the majority of recent developments and, as there is no over-all plan for how such densities can be accommodated within Winchester without damaging its inherent character, it is a great cause for concern that the crucial components of Winchester's character may be incrementally eroded away without our appreciating that it is happening. Do we really want great blocks of flats on the outskirts of our city? Would this be an acceptable alternative to the present entry into Winchester, of being in the country one moment, immediately followed by being in a welcoming human-sized environment? This sudden change is a major part of what makes Winchester and its setting special.

While the Trust is prepared to accept increased densities in the city where appropriate, it is most unhappy at the apparent current response of allowing increased densities everywhere to accommodate PPG3 requirements, whatever the cost may be to the character and infrastructure of Winchester as a whole.

Shione Carden

OTHER DATES TO NOTE - TrustNews Mar 03

As a swan song before he retires, Canon Walker has kindly agreed to conduct a walk at the Cathedral on Tuesday April 8th at 6.30 pm.

Summer walks will start on Thursday, June 5th at 6.30 pm. The programme will be published in the next issue of TrustNews but details of the first walk will be posted on the website and at the Heritage Centre.

PPG3 Executive Summary - TrustNews Mar 2003

The Trust's document on the subject of PPG3 is nearing completion and we would like to know how many copies to produce. It is a straightforward working document - no glossy cover or illustrations - but runs to some 20 pages (6,500 words) with tables to help find references in the PPG3 document which are relevant to Winchester's problems. So that you have a foretaste of the content, the Executive Summary is printed below. If you would like to have the full document, please inform Rolly Thomas at the Heritage Centre as soon as possible.

To defray postage costs we shall be asking members who want copies to send a stamped (66p) and addressed C4 (A4) envelope.

Executive summary

PPG3

The Government published its revised version of PPG3 (Planning Policy Guidance Note 3: Housing) in March 2000. It required local authorities to build new housing on brown-field sites in preference to green-field sites, to raise the density at which new housing should be developed, and it laid on local authorities various obligations as to how this should be done; for example, local authorities were to identify available brown-field sites, improve the social mix of housing, provide sustainable neighbourhoods and achieve substantially improved designs so as to provide places that were attractive and safe in which to live. Meanwhile, the Government has required local authorities to process the increasing number of planning applications in ever-shorter time, making the successful implementation of PPG3 virtually impossible unless the planners are given more resources and expertise. The Trust fears that politicians are ignoring this fundamental flaw in the policy.

Housing Densities

Since 1945, new housing has been predominantly of suburban character. That is to say, of relatively low density, each house in its own plot, served by roads designed for cars (as opposed to streets designed primarily for people). Typical densities of such housing estates have been 20 housing units/hectare (u/ha). The Government now requires 30-50 u/ha, provided this can be satisfactorily achieved, and more where there is a good transport and service infrastructure, so as to meet its target of 60% of development on brown-field sites. In September 2001, the DTLR published Better places to live: by design - a companion guide to PPG3, and it was launched by the Minister, Lord Falconer. It demonstrates by means of case studies and examples how good urban design leads to successful communities.

The 'Good City'

In February 2001, The City of Winchester Trust published its discussion paper, The Future of Winchester, a Strategic Vision, describing in some detail the way that it believed higher densities should be achieved in Winchester. It called the concept the 'Good City'; it advocated changing from 'suburban sprawl' to 'streets and squares with pedestrian priority' as the principal way to build. Well-designed streets and squares could provide housing that reduced the need for travel by car, encouraged good neighbourliness as well as conserving the green fields, and which many people would prefer to car-based suburbia. Urban terraces of three to four floors plus basement (as in Southgate Street) could easily provide 50 u/ha even with generous gardens, and, with ingenuity, a variety of housing types could be achieved. However, it was very clear that if good urban design was to be achieved, it could no longer be left to the developer, but would be a crucial responsibility of the City Council.

The Suburbs

As far as infill and back-land development in the existing suburbs was concerned, the Trust called on the City Council to be proactive and to assemble land so as to allow development to be of high-quality. Since The Future of Winchester was

published, it has become plain that, under the pressure for new housing, infill development is bound to occur piece-meal in suburban areas where the assembly of land is not feasible. Both PPG3 and Better places to live: by design are quite clear that a flexible interpretation of policy intentions. appropriate to each urban context is required. The Trust's new paper, while maintaining the 'streets and squares' model where possible, proposes that policy for the existing suburbs should not be uniform, but should be tailored to the character of each neighbourhood. In order to provide a general framework for considering policy, it distinguishes the following broad types of suburb:

1. Potentially urban areas
2. Potentially higher-density suburban areas
3. Continuing medium-density suburban areas
4. Areas of special quality
5. New suburbs

Critical factors in identifying these areas are: adjacency to existing urban street patterns, presence of local shops and services or the ability to create them, public transport, and the current housing density. The form of development appropriate to each type of neighbourhood is discussed in this paper. The Trust believes that it is essential that our Council takes in hand the identification of the areas of the City according to these criteria, and, devoting both adequate time and first-class urban design skills, lays out the framework for the streets and spaces appropriate to each, before it is too late. Early examples of the of PPG3 in Winchester portend a disastrous distortion of the Government's good intentions.

The Central Area

Old Winchester is already developed to a high density by PPG3 standards, but has pockets of land, which for one reason or another still have potential for development to higher densities. The Trust's paper briefly explores a similar variable approach to the development of these areas, and the need for the highest possible standard of design in order to enhance the ever evolving character of the city.

Design

When Nick Raynsford, was Minister for Housing and Planning, he said that good design was probably the single most significant lever that local authorities have on their economic outlook. Ineffectively controlled, developer-led town-cramming is the awful prospect otherwise. The Trust endeavours to define the difference between good and bad design in this context.

PPG3 Working Party - 2.03.03

the design of the public space - streets, squares, parks, etc.

Ian Grant - TrustNews Mar 03

One of the important engines of any organisation is a sound, transparent and well-managed financial base. The City of Winchester Trust is fortunate to be in that situation and is thus able to finance its modest but important projects. That the Trust is in this happy state is due, in no small measure, to the hard work, wise counsels, business acumen and administrative skills of the Trust's Hon. Treasurer, Ian Grant.

Ian has held the office for five years and in that time has completely overhauled the financial affairs of the Trust. He has kept a keen eye on the day-to-day financial position and made the Chairman and the Trust's Council aware of the current state of affairs. He has done this with great single mindedness of purpose and good humour and is to be congratulated on his success. That success is of inestimable value to the work and administration of the Trust.

Possibly unique amongst Hon. Treasurers, he has the happy knack of investing, what is often a rather dull recital of facts and figures, with humour but without loss of clarity. He certainly held the attention of his audiences at Annual General Meetings and was on occasions rewarded by laughter and a round of applause. No Chancellor of the Exchequer has ever achieved that unless it was ironic.

Ian is retiring from the office at the end of the current financial year. We thank him for all the work he has put in on behalf of the Trust and wish him well for the future. No doubt we shall see him frequently as he goes about his business in our City and on social occasions. That will be good. Thank you Ian.

R.B.M.

Michael Carden - TrustNews Mar 2003

Michael's distinction at being made a Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year's Honours List is thoroughly well deserved. His outstanding work for the environment of Hampshire and of the City of Winchester is worthy of recognition at the highest level.

Over the last 30 years Michael has worked tirelessly for the conservation and preservation of many of Hampshire's large stock of historic and listed buildings. He has been involved with some of the County's most important structures, many of which are of national, and in some cases, world importance. His expertise, deep knowledge of his subject, meticulous attention to detail and understanding of the building techniques of our forbears, has ensured that those structures in his care were maintained in good order and are available for the delight of all who visit them and, thanks to his efforts, will be so for many generations to come.

As a longstanding member and past Chairman, and now a Vice Chairman of The City of Winchester Trust, he has been in the forefront of the Trust's work in trying to ensure that development in Winchester has paid due regard to the character of our ancient City and its peerless and unique setting.

He is to be congratulated on his achievements.

R.B.M.

Proposed Road Improvements - TrustNews Mar 03

Last autumn the County Council advertised on its website a consultation on its plans for Romsey Road. The plans were sketchy and a group of members from the Trust asked for a meeting with County officers to explore the proposals in more detail. The meeting was useful and illuminating. A most interesting fact emerged in that the Landscape Department had no input to the proposals. Apparently any landscaping considerations are treated as an 'add on' rather than an intrinsic requirement at a very early stage. In addition to highlighting the above deficiency, the main objections and suggestions submitted by the Trust were as follows:

- The proposed cycle route through the beech trees would be highly damaging to the trees and is unnecessary as there is a service road which can be used by cyclists.
- Welcome the installation of traffic lights at Chilbolton Avenue and suggest this should be the first proposal implemented to judge its impact.
- Object to the closing of Sarum Road and the introduction of a left turn into this road from Chilbolton Avenue.
- Object to the traffic lights in the vicinity of the railway bridge.

Other matters concerning the need to restrict signing to a minimum, restraint in the use of differing materials and colours and the, need to improve landscaping were included. We hope to be involved in further consultation when the more detailed plans become available.

Hyde Abbey Garden - TrustNews Mar 03

In the ten months since the last article about the proposed Garden appeared in TrustNews, much progress has been made. At this point in time plans for creating the imaginative design are at an exciting stage.

Friends of Hyde Abbey Garden have so far raised £30,000 which has triggered the release of the sum set aside for the project by the City. The entirely separate work of altering the Leisure Centre Car Park will commence soon in order to clear the space for the Garden. Work on laying out the basic important elements of the design will start shortly after, with further details being added as funds allow.

Fund raising therefore continues unabated to enable us to have as much in place as possible by 2 June. On this day, the commemoration of the Queen's Coronation in 1953, the opening ceremony for the Garden will be performed by the Lord Lieutenant of Hampshire, Mrs. Mary Fagan - a memorial to a past monarch in a commemoration of a present one.

Friends of Hyde Abbey Garden is now a registered charity, which allows us to claim Gift Aid on donations. We would be most grateful for contributions towards the £24,000 needed to complete the project. This site has a significance which stretches beyond the bounds of local interest and holds echoes of the efforts made to raise the great statue of Alfred at the foot of Winchester's High Street.

Anyone interested in supporting this Jubilee Project can send their contribution to the Chairman, Friends of Hyde Abbey Garden, c/o Historic Resources Centre, Hyde Street, Winchester. S023 7DW. A Gift Aid form will be sent in return.

Barbara Hall.
Chairman, Friends of Hyde Abbey Garden.

CWT Website - TrustNews Mar 03

Read All About It - the CWT Website:

www.cityofwinchestertrust.co.uk

The purpose of the CWT website is to explain to Members and non-Members the purpose of the Trust and how it sets about achieving its aims. In addition, the website gives guidance as to how to enroll as a Member of the Trust, and also includes a few stop-press items, such as forthcoming book-sales or extra walks. However, it is not intended to duplicate what you read in this news-sheet.

Following a brief introduction on the aims of the Trust since its formation in 1957, there is a section outlining some of its achievements, including its many successes and one significant failure.

The important Reference Collection is described, explaining that much of the collection has been transferred for safe keeping to the Hampshire County Record Office and the City Council's Hyde Resources Centre, but the Loan Slide Collection is held in The Heritage Centre for anyone to borrow slides for lectures or research. Subsequent sections cover how we keep our members informed as to what we are doing, including two sections containing constantly updated lists of "Hot Issues" currently under discussion by the Trust Council and lists of Planning Applications that have been examined by the Trust's Development Control Panels, and are considered to be important. The verbatim comments to the City Planning Office on these important Applications are also included together with a means of connecting on the net to maps showing the locations of the Applications.

If you are able to go on-line, have a look at the website-easily identifiable by the pale green background to the text-and let us know how we can improve it.

Antony Skinner