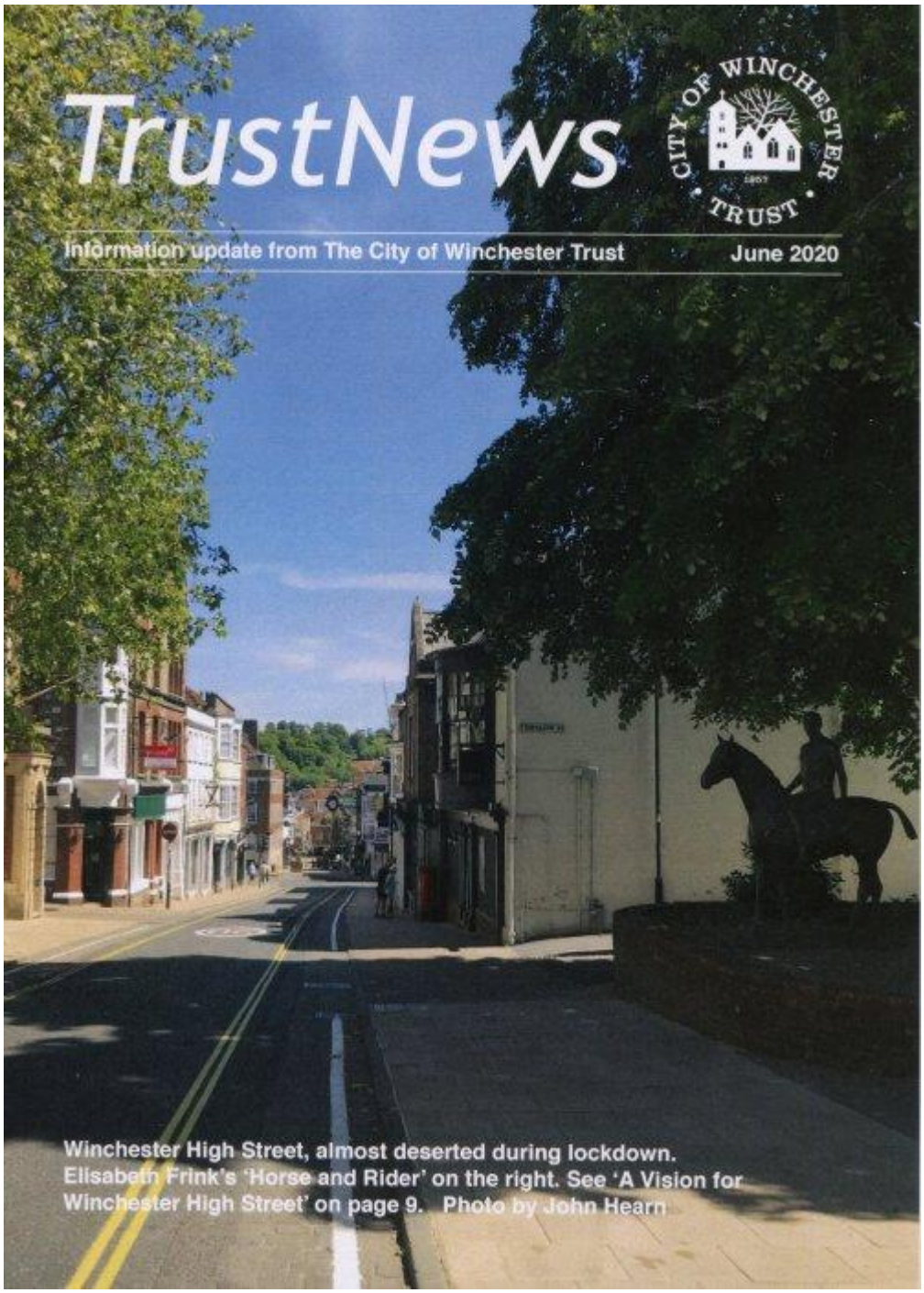
Title Picture - TrustNews Jun 20



high Street under lockdown

Chairman's Jottings - TrustNews Jun 20

A few thoughts as a result of the Lockdown

I am sure everybody is well aware by now that the lockdown is being compared by the media with the last great drama, World War 2.

The corona virus lockdown I suppose does have certain parallels, one of them being that immediately after the war, everybody was keen to see how the future for our towns and cities was going to be mapped out. To start the process, the Town and Country Planning Act was brought into being in 1947, and this Act has affected land use one way or another to this day. Today there are questions being asked about our future thinking concerning life after lockdown.

In 1947 the population had had enough of austerity and rationing, and in many urban areas the sight of bombed out buildings, squalor, and the general detritus of war time.

In the case of Winchester which had little damage, it too was caught up in the euphoria of the idea of 'a brave new world'. So-called slums were targeted for demolition: Canon Street was on the hit list and Winchester did lose much of the historic Brooks area, which made way for a town centre carpark, Kings Walk etc. A distinguished Town Planner was appointed to consider how Winchester should evolve, and developed a plan which included the pulling down of buildings on one side of both the High Street and Jewry Street to widen the roads to accommodate what he foresaw as a dramatic increase in traffic, which in turn, in his opinion would increase the commercial viability of the City.

It is not surprising that dramatic fresh thinking was on the agenda in the 1940s and 50s - it was a drab period which needed an injection of hope and a positive future.

Luckily there were a number of local people who recognised that such proposals for Winchester were many steps too far.

Today we are confronted with the most dramatic shut down of our way of life since 1947, which perhaps gives an opportunity for us to have a look at our current way of life and maybe recognise that we do have problems that require some fresh thinking which would improve all our wellbeing and be more sustainable.

The obvious problem is global warming. We know there are many things we can do about this, but we don't do them, because it is often inconvenient to our freedom and our way of life.

We have human inequality issues which should be addressed, but we don't because this is likely to affect the economics down to a personal level. An easy example of this is so-called affordable homes. They are not that affordable to a large section of our society and housing developers fight to void providing them, as they affect the financial bottom line, which in turn affects shareholders. Another financial problem is the very high land prices that developers have to account for. Homelessness and poor-quality urban living are all issues highlighted by the coronavirus.

All these issues are resolvable and within our collective power to do so. We require inspired planning, inspired politicians, inspired architects, inspired educationalists

and scientists to lead the way forward to avoid any further degradation of the human condition and our beautiful planet.

Keith Leaman

If time at home has got you thinking about life after the lockdown or you would like to comment on Keith's thoughts, please email us at secretary@cltyofwinchestertrust.co.uk. Responses will be published in the next issue of TrustNews.

Planning Appraisal Group - TrustNews Jun 20

The work of our Review Panels has continued since the lockdown, but has moved on line. This is more work for everyone, especially the PAG Chairs and we should be grateful to them for keeping the planning review process going. As anticipated the number of applications has started to fall but, because of the time lags involved, for most of the period covered by this report we were dealing with cases filed before 23 March and this was close to 140 cases. Just recently we have seen a lot of applications for relatively minor projects, perhaps a reflection of the fact that people are at home with time to think about what they might alter.

The Winchester position on Nitrate Neutrality can now be found on line at www.winchester.gov.uk/planning/wcc-position-statement-on-nitrate-neutral-development.

There are still quite a number of decisions which have not been made and seem to be waiting on documentation of compliance with this policy. The review panels saw their first use of this last week. Unfortunately it was on an application for a house in multiple occupation (HMO) to which we and some councillors had objected, but which was allowed. This underlines our view that in the currently ongoing review of the Local Plan the issue of student housing and that of HMO’s more broadly needs to be addressed. The picture with regard to student housing will be unclear until the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on overseas students and thus on University and student funding becomes clearer.

There is another issue which probably cannot be dealt with at the local level, and this concerns the damaging impact of permitted development on design standards and on our roofscapes. A recent appeal decision showed how a threat from the appellant to go down the route of permitted development led to approval of a dormer that WCC had refused. The inspector argued that at least the dormer proposed was less bad than that which might have been allowed to go ahead under permitted development.

The Trust has recently received a number of complaints about the appearance of shop-fronts. As far as I can tell the ones complained about have not gone through planning. All alterations should submit a Full Advert Consent (AVC) application. I have contacted WCC to ask what can be done about those that have not gone through planning. The shop-fronts policy for Winchester City is in any case overdue for review.

The McCarthy & Stone proposed care home in Weeke has come back again with a revised plan, which our panels found no more acceptable than the previous one. It is not that we fail to see the need for a care home, we just do not think that one designed in this way is appropriate.

Members and Public Comments

The Trust welcomes informative comments from local people, but must avoid being influenced by vested interests or personal matters. Individuals who believe their interests are being threatened by proposed schemes are advised to contact their Ward Councillors, who have more influence over such matters. If you would like to see details of Trust objections to planning applications and their fate, please go to the monthly PAG reports on our website.

Mary Tiles

Station Approach Q & A - TrustNews Jun 20

As debate continues about the development of the railway station area, and in the light of the Council's recent decision to pause the Station Approach development while the impacts of theCovid-19 pandemic are assessed, we felt it would be useful to outline the background to the development of the area, our concerns about the scheme put forward by the City Council last year and how we are working to develop an alternative proposal that could garner widespread support.

It is important first to clarify that the Trust supports development of the Station Approach area, and indeed was involved in the various steering groups and advisory groups before the City Council's planning application was submitted in March last year. However, it became apparent to us that we could not support the type of development that was being proposed, and despite making our concerns plain over and over to the City Council both before and after the planning application was made, we felt we had no alternative but to give them notice of our intention to apply to the High Court for leave for a judicial review of the decision to grant the application.

What is the extent of the Station Approach area?

The Station Approach area extends in the north to the Jolly Farmer public house on Andover Road, and to the Coach Park on Worthy Road. To the west it extends to the junction of Stockbridge Road and St Paul's Hill, to the south it extends to Newburgh Street and to the east it extends to the Carfax junction (i.e. where City Road meets Sussex Street and Andover Road). Within the area are two major development sites, Carfax and the Cattlemarket.

A large part of the area borders the Winchester Conservation Area. The Council has a duty to ensure that new development will not detract from its special quality and character or harm the setting of listed buildings.

Which part of the area is covered by the City Council’s planning application?

The proposed development is on the Carfax site. This island site is bordered by Station Hill, Station Road, Sussex Street and Gladstone Street.



Gladstone Street, looking uphill from Sussex Street; the Carfax site is on the right. Photo by John Hearn.

Are there any requirements on the type of development that should be built on the Carfax site?

Yes. The current Winchester District Local Plan, which specifies development in the District, allocates the Carfax site for a mixed-use development, including not just office space but also residential, small-scale retail or leisure/cultural uses and open spaces. It also states that any proposals should respect and retain the Hampshire Record Office and Station buildings and look at the feasibility of retaining and re-using the former Registry Office.

In March 2017 the City Council published a Station Approach Design Brief, which was an amended version of the 2015 brief. The new brief set out what the Council would like to see on the Carfax and Cattle Market sites. In terms of office space, the brief states that there should be 13,000 square metres over both sites.

What type of planning application was made for the Carfax site and what type of development is proposed?

The planning application is what is known as an 'outline' application. This type of planning application allows fewer details about the proposal to be submitted. These details may be agreed following a 'reserved matters' application at a later stage. Reserved matters can include appearance, means of access, landscaping, layout and scale.

The proposed development on the Carfax site consists mainly of large office buildings, one of which is, in effect, six storeys in height. The total proposed office space is 17,972 square metres. This is well in excess of the 13,000 square metres of office space proposed in the brief for both the Carfax and Cattle market sites.

Why are the office blocks so tall and why is so much office development needed on the site?

It is unclear why the Council proposed office floor space on the site so far in excess of the figure stated in its design brief.

However, it is a fact that employment analysis shows that there is a high level of out-commuting by high paid professional workers to other employment centres, especially to London which is just an hour away by train. Office development could therefore reduce the number of out-commuter trips. The Council has also said there is a limited number of office vacancies in Winchester and that many existing offices do not meet modern day requirements.

Why does the Trust oppose the proposed development?

The Trust objected to the application on a number of grounds:

The application was submitted as an outline application and should have been submitted as a full application. Our concern is that once the site is sold to a developer (as the Council plans), the designs in the 'reserved matters' application could be significantly different, and the local planning authority would have difficulty resisting the changes as long as the developer had complied with the approved parameter drawings.

- Even though the Local Plan allocates the Carfax site for a mixed-use development including housing, the application submitted is predominantly large-scale office development with a small amount of retail (retail being restaurant/cafe uses and convenience shopping) and no residential. There is a real need for affordable housing in the city and there would undoubtedly be a demand for housing in this sustainable location.
- The proposed offices are in two large blocks and the massing and scale are completely at odds with the character of the surrounding area, much of which is Conservation Area. The tall office blocks are proposed on the highest part of the site and will be seen in medium and distant views. They will impact on the setting of listed buildings and the setting of the city and also on the adjacent Conservation Area.

  The offices will be overbearing on the existing residents of Gladstone Street.

The application proposes up to 95 car parking spaces for office workers with an access off Gladstone Street. The Trust has consistently argued that in such a location (next to the railway station and adjacent to bus stops including park and ride buses and in view of the fact that the site is within easy walking distance to the city centre and residential areas), no employee car parking should be provided on the Carfax site (other than some street level spaces for disabled workers).

A scheme with no car parking would be in accord with the recently adopted Winchester Movement Strategy (a joint WCC and Hampshire County Council document), which states that city centre traffic should be reduced.

- The proposed car parking is provided beneath the buildings and is accessed by a ramp down from Gladstone Street. This results in a 'dead' and unattractive frontage at street level, which is directly opposite the existing terraced houses.

Is the Trust alone in opposing the proposed development?

Many other bodies and individuals have expressed concerns over the proposed development, including statutory and non-statutory bodies such as Historic England and the South East Design Review Panel. Also, Council officers responsible for the historic environment, urban design and landscape were consulted and expressed misgivings over the scale. They wrote that they understood these matters would be able to be resolved when the 'reserved matters' application was considered. Some relatively minor amendments were made to the application as a result (e.g. a small reduction in the height of the office blocks, a small increase in active frontages and a reduction in car parking spaces), but these did not address the main concerns.

Why did the Trust embark on a Judicial Review?

The Trust was very reluctant to challenge the planning decision and before doing so gave it a great deal of consideration. However, because its concerns had been ignored many times by the Council, it decided that a legal challenge was the only way of securing a review of the decision.

Why was the Council's decision to approve the application considered to be unlawful by the High Court?

The Trust gave notice to the City Council that it intended to apply to the High Court for a review of the planning permission on five grounds. Before the proceedings had been issued in the Court, the Council accepted it had made a mistake on one of the five grounds and then consented to judgment, which was enough for the decision to be quashed by the Court. This one ground stated that the Council had erred in law as it had not fully considered the effect of the development on the setting of listed buildings and the surrounding conservation area.

What is the £5 million grant that many have said has now been lost because of the Trust's action?

Before the application was determined, the City Council had secured the promise of a £5 million grant from the Local Enterprise Partnership. This was to be used for site preparation works, for archaeology and for public realm improvements. The grant was dependent on planning consent being granted.

It has recently been reported in the press that the City Council is hopeful that grant money might still be available in the future:

"...the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) have indicated that they would be receptive to a future funding application for grant works at Station Approach" and also "...any other potentially available funding sources will continue to be explored, working closely with Hampshire County Council aligned with the Movement Strategy implementation.

Is the City Council likely to progress the planning application?

A report for the council's Cabinet meeting on 21 May included a recommendation to pause development on the Carfax and Cattle market sites until the impact of the pandemic crisis is better understood. The report stated that the economy, property market, investor confidence and occupier demand may all be significantly affected. Cabinet accepted the report, so it seems unlikely that the Carfax application in its present form will be progressed. This will provide time to reassess the proposals and design a scheme that will be supported by the community.

What does the Trust plan to do next?

The Trust has written to the Leader of the Council for an update on its plans for the Carfax site. We are convinced that there are much better townscape solutions for development within the Station Approach area, and in particular on the Carfax site. To look at this in more detail, the Trust has set up a small group of architects, planners and urban designers to prepare an outline brief for more sympathetic and sustainable development. The group will make sure new proposals will have good townscape credentials, will respect the character and setting of the city and the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area and listed buildings, will comply with local planning policy and will be financially viable.

When things have got back to (the new) normal after the lockdown, we plan to arrange a public meeting where we will present our proposals for the Station Approach area.

This is an edited version of a document prepared for the Trust by John Hearn, Trust member and Planner and Urban Designer. The full version is available on our website www. cityofwinchestertrust.co.uk

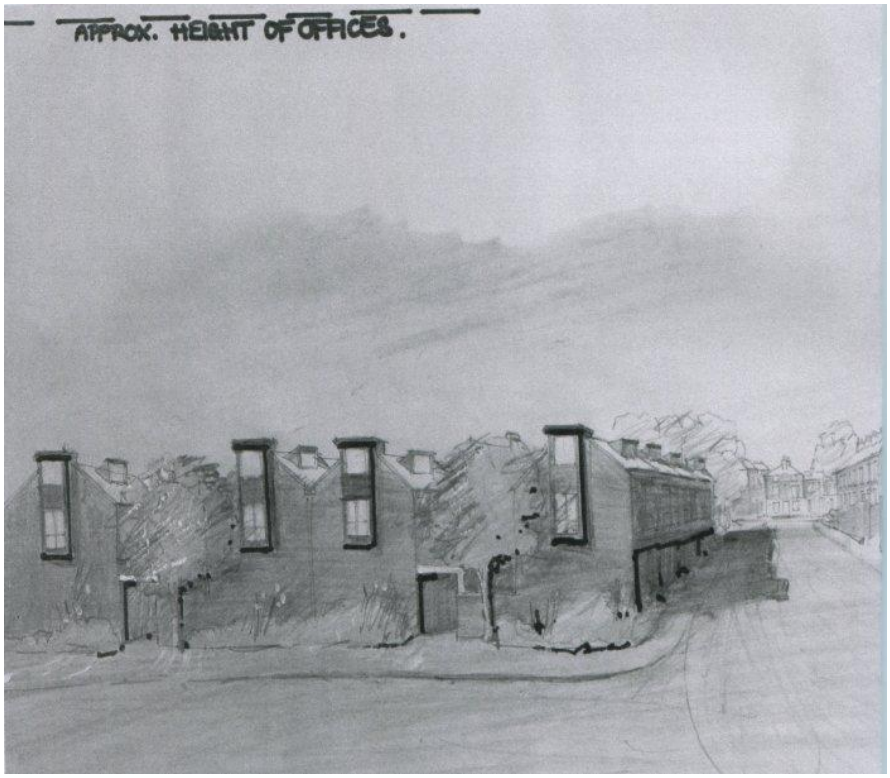
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Alternative plan for Station Approach - TrustNews Jun 20

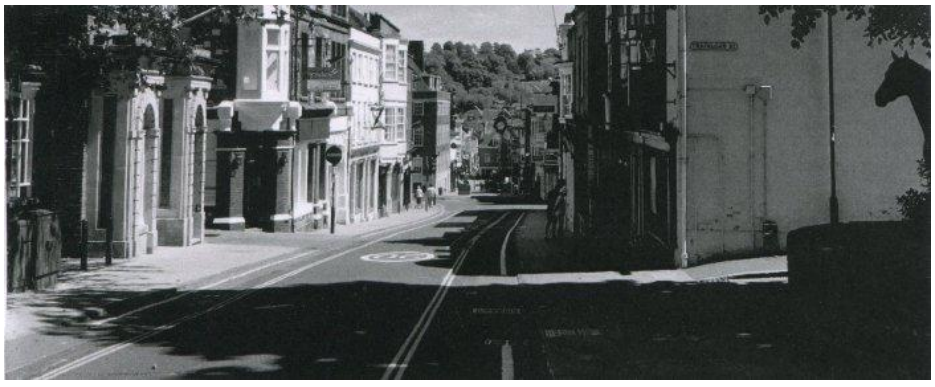
Judith Martin, a member of the Trust Council but acting in her personal capacity, has put forward a plan for low-rise social housing on the Station Approach (Carfax) site instead of the office blocks proposed by the City Council. She also suggests that the

erstwhile South Western Inn could be extended to become a boutique hotel, and that the Cattle market site could see the gradual development of office space as need arises.

Mrs Martin’s plan was summarised in the Hampshire Chronicle of 7 May and is to be launched in full detail later this year.



A Vision for Winchester High Street from Westgate to King Alfred's Statue - TrustNews Jun 20



The City of Winchester Trust serves an indispensable function in helping to conserve the character of the city. However, some criticise it for being too negative. At a time of considerable change and faced with several major controversial redevelopment schemes, vision is needed to ensure that the city's potential is maximised as a cultural centre. This article suggests realistic and positive proposals for change. It is a vision for maximising the potential of the historic High Street. These suggestions

could be taken in whole or in part or could be phased. Some may not be easily achievable but decisions need to be taken which give priority to the primary objective of a prosperous, safe, attractive and enjoyable historic city centre. The views of Trust members are sought, not least to demonstrate a positive commitment to Winchester City Centre.

The suggestions here would require difficult decisions regarding vehicular traffic movement, but similar problems have been addressed in other cities which have introduced major changes that give priority to pedestrians. Such schemes may require traffic to be replaced by public transport and cycling/walking solutions or by diversion, though it must be born in mind that diversion often results in the transfer of congestion from one place to another.

We may learn from a visit to Pallant House in Chichester. If you come by car, park by the railway station in the multi-storey car park, which is an exemplar of good design; walk to the gallery and sense what a delight it is to experience Chichester s extensive pedestrian area.

Nearby Southampton has recent examples of good design with the opening up of the city to the town wall and improvement of the pedestrian experience.

Within 3 years York is to ban all but essential vehicles from its City centre.

Winchester is unique. The original capital of England, before London, it boasts one of the most significant medieval cathedrals in Europe. It attracts thousands of visitors, each year. What also makes the city exceptional is the concentration of historic and cultural sights which occupy a compact area easily accessed from off the High Street. This forms the City spine, running the length of the old City from the Westgate to the site of the Eastgate that stood at the Bishop's Bridge.

Winchester High Street is ancient. It goes back to prehistoric times, making it one of the world's oldest thoroughfares still in use. For 8,000 years people have travelled the South Downs Way which descends and crosses the River Itchen which was initially further west until diverted by the Romans to its present position where the thoroughfare continues west along the line of the High Street. Evidence shows that the High Street has sunk over centuries from usage as a thoroughfare. As one walks in the other direction, down the High Street from the Westgate, there is a promise of countryside beyond, with the wooded backcloth of St Giles Hill. Following the River Itchen from the bottom of the High Street it connects north and south, in minutes, to the water meadows; including leading south onto St Catherine s Hill. Looking back from there, large parts of the City can be seen as tree-covered giving Winchester its natural setting.

Today, the High Street is dislocated by its road system, with traffic and the accompanying noise and pollution. Whilst the central length is pedestrianised, the

top of the street carries heavy traffic and vehicles also use the road in front of the Guildhall, past St John's and down to King Alfred Statue.

What is proposed is a fully pedestrianised High Street, a kind of linear piazza bringing together the top and lower High Street. This would give it coherence and strengthen its connection with all the sights of interest linking into it. The proposal also envisages improved linking between the top of the High Street and the major attractions above the West Gate.

As an initial observation, the recent street furniture to the pedestrianised part of the High Street feels mediocre when compared with what best design represents. It isn't as if Winchester is lacking in a variety of able planners, architects and others with design expertise.

At the top of the High Street, above the West Gate, are eight museums: Six military: the museums of the King's Royal Hussars, the Green Jackets and the Rifles, the Gurkhas, and Adjutant-General's corps, with the Guardroom. These are housed in the Barracks to which the planned Palace of Charles II was converted. The rebuilt King s House with its grand portico captures something of Wren's original design which was to extend, with avenues and parterres, to the west front of the cathedral. Just above the Westgate, itself a significant monument, approached past the castle remains, is the Great Hall. After Westminster Hall this is the finest and largest medieval hall in England. Attached to it are the Long Gallery and Queen Eleanor s Garden. The upper section of the High Street also sports significant modern urban sculpture, notably the Elizabeth Frink Horse and Rider".

To pedestrianise at least the top of the High Street would help to integrate these significant historic attractions as part of the city centre, capitalising on existing strengths and establishing a much more compelling sense of what the City represents and what it offers to visitors.

A further look at the top of the High Street reveals disappointment as well as recent improvement. Castle Avenue, dated 1895, with its Victorian flint and Bath stone, superseded the Castle Hill approach to the Great Hall.

The Avenue has been restored to a high standard, demonstrating how the historic fabric of the City can be enhanced. Where the Frink Horse and Rider faces onto the High Street, recent upgrading and additions such as to Walcott Chambers, invite us into quiet areas on each side of the street. These areas each feature two or more substantial trees. The Law Courts side, however, is less resolved. Trafalgar Street could potentially be improved and connected to the Roman Gar Street in the Barracks. This would give access off the High Street below the Westgate to the military museums and historic sights.

Descending the High Street, there is clearly scope for further enhancements. The road layout frustrates the promise of what the City could be. Making the entire High Street pedestrian is an absolute priority if the integrity and feel of the central spine, this linear piazza , is not to be compromised.

A shared pedestrian/vehicular usage at the Jewry Street/Southgate crossing could be trialled, with no traffic onto the High Street. Poynton in Cheshire provides a good example of how successful this can be.

The mobility Strategy for the City has yet to be sorted. The eight major roads which converge on the centre need to be resolved so that they do not downgrade the heart of the City. Things have to give if we value a High Street fully connected along its length. It should be an absolute priority for the High Street and would unlock opportunities for how the City centre can evolve.

In Roman times the High Street was a straight line between the Westgate and the Eastgate running through the centre of the walled city. Later traders established premises outside of William I s Palace which now include the Pentice. The Buttercross is located centrally on the High Street and connects through to The Square, the City Museum and then to the Cathedral and its precincts, on to Winchester College and Wolvesey Palace and Castle ruins and some of the older streets of the City. Along the High Street are a number of passages, St Lawrence s Church, the Buttercross, remains of William I s Palace (back of Montezuma), at no s 35 and 36 the earliest known Wealden House in England, the old Market, St Maurice Covert, the Guildhall, the Mayor's Parlour, the Nunnaminster remains, St John's House, the Town Mill, historic alms houses and numerous buildings of historic interest.

On the opposite side of the High Street there is a need for the link with Parchment Street to be improved. Also, George Street has potential for more intimate spaces protected from the road, such as the little enclosed area behind Ask and Russell and Bromley.

Guildhall Square and Saxon Gate is part of the City redevelopment awaiting clarity. This could include extending the pedestrianised High Street up to King Alfred's Statue. A current idea for this area is to enhance the cultural value of the city and create a close grouping of facilities. These could include a Saxon museum and a gallery, like Pallant House in Chichester or the Dulwich Picture Gallery. However, Winchester needs its own particular solution. There are some initial suggestions which might be considered. The Mayor's Abbey House could become a gallery, perhaps of watercolours, and could retain limited use for civic functions. This would make good use of a period house, as with Mompesson House in Salisbury, albeit on a more modest scale. St .John s, with its medieval undercroft and 18th century upper floor, could accommodate a splendid modern gallery. With a glass floor over the Nunnaminster remains, a several storey extension could be added to the Guildhall as a further gallery, giving lovely views over Abbey Gardens. Galleries could include modern as well as heritage attractions, such as the promotion of children s art and art in relation to therapy but such ideas need developing and testing.

The High Street is a key to how the City holds together and can evolve and improve in a coherent and connected way. The question is how to engage imaginatively in shaping the City. Thinking of the High Street as a linear piazza would help develop an achievable vision that could be pursued incrementally.

Your views please?

Stephen Harte

Opportunities

Establish the entire High Street as one linear piazza . The mobility strategy should have this as a priority.

1. Trial a shared pedestrian vehicular crossing at Southgate Street/Jewry street junction.
2. Form squares: Jewry Street opposite Barclays Bank and in front of the Guildhall.
3. Strengthen the connection between the High Street and the six military museums. Consider opening Trafalgar Street to Gar Street.
4. Establish a clearer pedestrian link between the High Street and Parchment Street.
5. Improve the pedestrian experience of George Street, e.g. making something of the enclosed area behind Ask.
6. Improve the St Maurice Covert/Passage to open up the High Street to the Cathedral Outer Close.
7. Use empty shop frontages for temporary or permanent display of City archaeology.
8. Create a gallery/museum area by the Guildhall and Abbey Gardens.
9. Improve the design of High Street furniture.

Postscript

Design thinking is an iterative process as ideas are tested and develop.

It was very good to see in the Hampshire Chronicle of 14 May 2020 Winchester City Council's initiative for pedestrian measures for the city. Cllr Martin Tod - County Councillor and Winchester City Council cabinet member for traffic - proposes that the one-way system is reduced to a single lane which allows for wider pavements. The east west traffic movement is retained. Wider pavements to the top section of the High Street would improve the unification of the High Street as a pedestrian spine through the heart of the historic city.

Cllr Tod proposes other measures including fully pedestrianising The Square. These and further enhancements would demonstrate a more extensive approach to city regeneration.

I hope others share my feeling that this is a time of change when we could re-visualise the future of Winchester City.

Stephen Harte

Kitty Bishop - TrustNews Jun 20

Kitty Bishop's memories of St Michael's Parish in the March edition of TrustNews made interesting reading, especially as this parish was amalgamated with St Thomas and St Swithun parishes. As choir members, we took it in turns to sing at both churches on alternate Sundays (St Swithun Church was not in use).



I knew Kitty Bishop through this connection. A delightful lady, she was a schoolteacher, possibly at St Michael Infant School in Canon Street. Her father was a window cleaner, and I remember seeing him push his wheelbarrow with the appropriate equipment around the streets of Winchester. By the way, there were six pubs in Canon Street (not three) the others being The Albert(closed 1903), The Rose and Crown (closed 1905) and The Sportsman’s Arms (closed 1911).



Kitty would not have known these as she was not born until 1916!

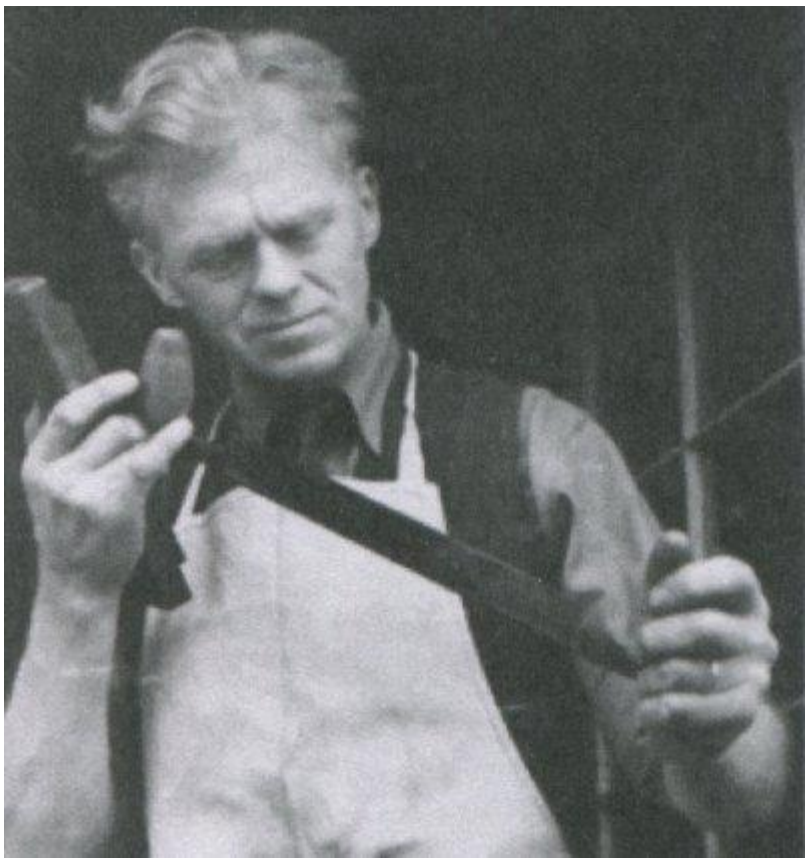
Phil Yates

The Trust still has a few copies of Phil Yates' book "Time Gentlemen, Please: the story of Winchester's pubs, breweries and hotels, past and present". Buy at www.cityofwinchestertrust.co.uk/shop.

Trust visit to The Edward Barnsley Workshop - TrustNews Jun 20

On a sunny but chilly morning on Friday 13th March - just a week before the Covid-19 lockdown began and no-one was allowed to go anywhere - a lucky bunch of Trust members convened beside a back road in Froxfield, near Petersfield. They (we) were there to visit the Edward Barnsley workshop, and we were particularly lucky as the trip was oversubscribed. Some members were politely asked if they wouldn't mind deferring their visit until a second one could be arranged, probably some time in May. You can fill in the rest of that story.

Edward Barnsley was born in 1900, the son of Sidney Barnsley and nephew of Ernest, who were both master builders and furniture makers, significant figures in the Arts and Crafts movement. Simon Jenkins, in England's Thousand Best Churches, describes Sidney's church of St. Sophia (now the Church of Jesus Christ and the Wisdom of God) in Tadworth, Surrey, as a neo-Byzantine treasure house. It is listed Grade I.



Edward Barnsley, 1945

Edward was sent to Bedales school, down the road from Froxfield, and never quite left. In 1922 he worked with Ernest Gimson (with whom his father and uncle had worked before) on the Lupton Memorial Library at the school; that is now also listed Grade I. Pevsner described Gimson as ‘the greatest of the English artist-craftsmen’. So the young Barnsley was taught by the very best masters.



Bedales library 1921, Barnsley's training ground

He established his workshop in a modest series of buildings on a sharp escarpment, in 1923, and continued to work until his death 1987. During his lifetime, in 1980, the Edward Barnsley Educational Trust was founded, to continue his work, in the recognition that small craft workshops can not usually afford to offer apprenticeships. James Ryan, the workshop manager and the man who showed us around, began as an apprentice there in 1992. He was recently awarded a Master Furniture Maker Certificate by the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers.



The workshop c. 1936

The apprentices stay for up to three years, at the end of which they are capable of the extraordinary work the organisation produces. James showed how they begin with a simple piece of work, bookends or a candlestick, graduating next to a small wall-hung cabinet using different woods and techniques. Even the brass lock is made by the apprentice. All the young workers we saw on our visit were male; we enquired whether they ever had any female apprentices. The answer was, ‘very few’. In fact the Workshop brochure we were given lists all the apprentices since 1981, and their subsequent place of work. Some continue to be makers, others designers or teachers. There is just one woman, Laura Tunstall, in 2011, who went on to design for Luke Hughes & Co., who say they ‘design and engineer furniture in architecture’ - a pretty good description of the Arts and Crafts approach. James said they would like to have more women apprentices - it’s hard to say what might be deterring them.



James Ryan with a set of library steps - and apprentice pieces in the background

The old workshops were proving insufficient, so the Foundation was able to acquire from the landowner over the road enough land for timber storage and drying sheds. One of the sheds is Barnsley’s original, relocated, the other a fine new copy. The land on which the shed originally stood is being developed for improved workshops.

Each piece of timber is named and labelled. For me the most striking thing we saw was an enormous slice of oak, about 2.5m x 1.5m, complete with bark and burrs. James had yet to decide what to do with it. The table tops he designs are vastly more sophisticated, with patterned inlays and fine veneers, but a table of this slab would be in the early tradition of the master.



From a simple Stool to the immensely sophisticated Repose Mk1 rocking chair

We saw a number of pieces that were being prepared to be shown at Masterpiece London, in June. inevitably that has been cancelled. The workshop is closed and James is principally concerned about the apprentices and the interruption to their training. But this is a wonderful traditional enterprise that has grown successfully into the 21st century, and - as long as people and institutions value the unique and handmade - will surely continue to flourish.

After leaving the workshop we called in at All Saints Church in the village, to be shown the organ case that was made by Barnsley - described in Pevsner as ‘excellent’. Also in the delightful and venerable church, dating from around 1140, is a double memorial window to the poet Edward Thomas, engraved by Laurence Whistler and installed in 1978. Thomas lived in Steep between 1906 and 1916. Shockingly one of the windows was broken in an attempted burglary in 2010 - hard to imagine in this peaceful setting. When the replica was installed three years later, it was dedicated by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams.

The visit concluded with a substantial pub lunch at The Harrow, finding which is an adventure in itself. Picturesque and agreeably eccentric - no credit cards, always fresh flowers for sale outside for local charities - its building dates back to the 18th century. CAMRA includes it in its list of ‘Britain's best real heritage pubs’- highly appropriate and very welcome after our slightly chilly morning.

Judith Martin

Picture of logo and oak slab kindly sent by James Ryan; all other photos from the Edward Barnsley Workshop Annual Review, 2018, except Bedales Library, posted by Bedales on Wikimedia Commons (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Footer - TrustNews Jun 20

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