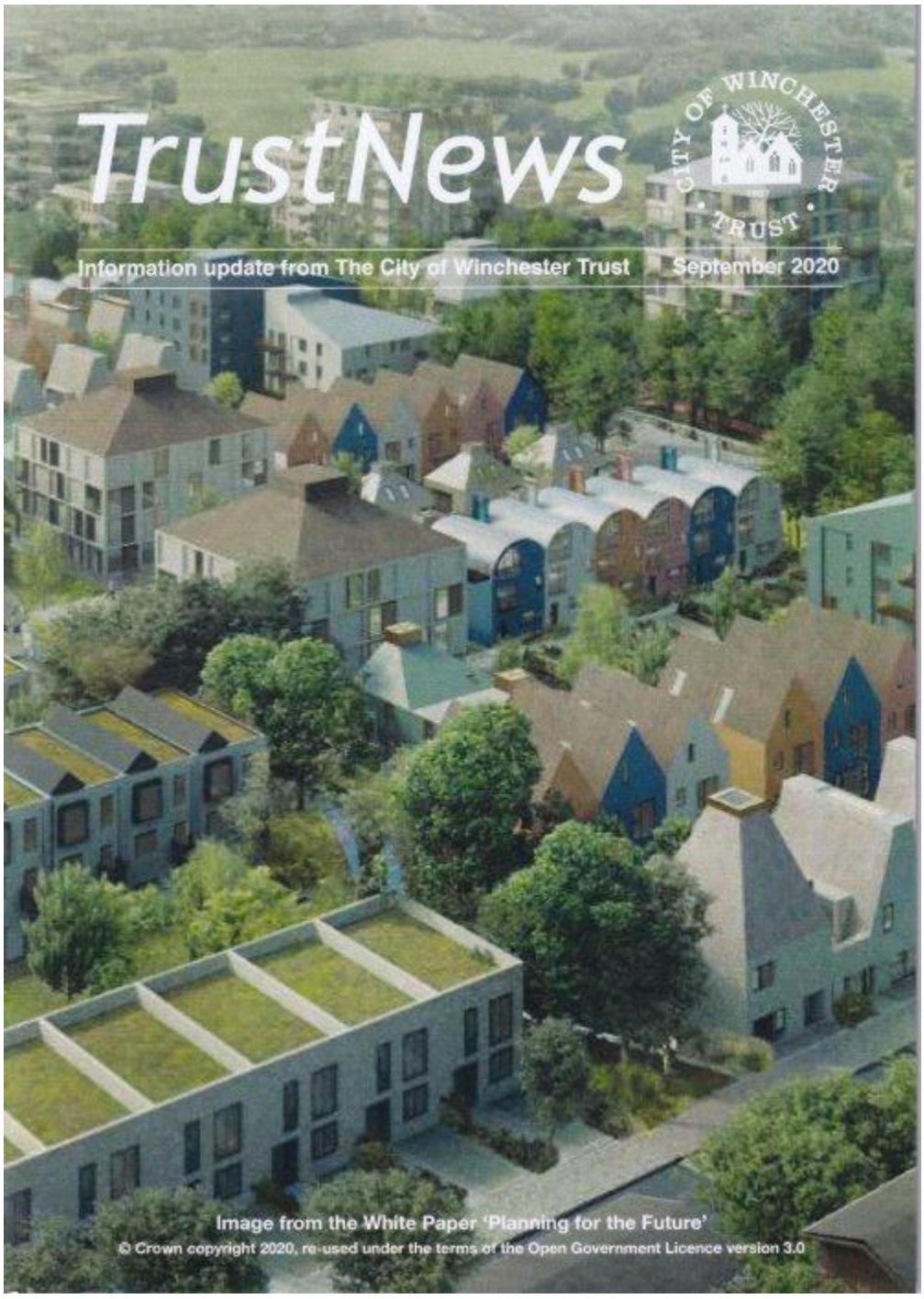
Trust Picture - TrustNews Sep 20



White Paper image

Chairman's Jottings - TrustNews Sep 20

One of the problems we have with the Trust is the lack of representatives on the council of younger age groups. We therefore often get accused of wishing to preserve Winchester in aspic and not accepting that it has to evolve with new, fresh

ideas, new buildings, and ways of improving the city's economic success. It seems to be considered that this attitude towards presentation is represented by the older members of Winchester society and is not necessarily representing the younger age groups attitude as to how Winchester should evolve.

It personally do not believe that it is correct to think that the majority of retirement age people consider that the preservation of Winchester's historic background has to be kept at all costs and therefore refuse to accept progress. Equally, it is an incorrect assumption to consider that younger age groups wish to see progress regardless of consideration towards place and context. In fact, my experience of dealing with young generations is that in many ways they are more radical in their thinking towards how development and movement is concerned, than the older generations. Nevertheless, I have even been surprised by how aligned ideas are across all generations concerning Winchester and the way in which the City should evolve.

I think that it is generally recognised that there is a responsibility towards respecting an historic City that has evolved over hundreds of years with buildings, roads, and spaces reflecting this history. It is also generally recognised that the City has to continue evolving by adding our story to the mix, but at the same time always honouring the past which is the city's primary asset.

On behalf of all members of the Trust and particularly the Council I would like to thank Mary Tiles for all the work she has done for us. Mary has been the overall chair of P.A.G. for a number of years and has informed us that she is moving to another area of the country. This is a great loss to us for Mary has undertaken this job with enthusiasm and expertise. Not only that, but she has kept us, the Trust Council, well informed with the latest twists and turns of planning legislation that are likely to affect the City. So, thank you Mary, for all that you have done for the City of Winchester Trust and we all wish you the very best for the next episode of your life.

We have just been informed that Christmas Cards this year may be sold via a company that is likely to charge 30% on the card sales. Together with the printing costs, this would wipe out most of the profit. We are currently debating whether to handle this "in house". We will be informing everyone of a decision before we go or if we go to print!

Keith Leaman

Heritage Open Days - TrustNews Sep 20

England's largest festival of history and culture will return on 11-20 September, and this year for the first time, the Heritage Open Days (HODs) programme will be a mix of in-person and digital events. Communities will be able to celebrate the stories of the places and spaces that are important to them while staying safe and adhering to current social distancing measures. Digital events will include pre-recorded walks and talks, live streaming of lectures and performances and specially commissioned films and audio. Winchester Heritage Open Days events listing and box office are on the web site www.winchesterheritageopendays.org

The Trust's contribution to this year's HODs is a specially commissioned video narrated by well-known travel writer and Trust member John Pilkington. Entitled The City of Winchester trust: sixty years of influencing the heritage and character of Winchester, the ten-minute film will show how Winchester has developed over the last sixty years, some of the important changes in the city's life and appearance since the 1950s, and the Trust's role in working to safeguard the unique character of the city. The film will be available on our website: www.cityofwinchestertrust.co.uk

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Letter to Steve Brine, MP - TrustNews Sep 20

I am writing to voice the Trust's concerns over the Governments White Paper on planning. We are very concerned at the direction the Government is taking in its proposed overhauling of the planning system, which we believe will in effect emasculate part of the local planning procedures.

We think most people would agree that the planning system is by no means perfect, in which case it should be strengthened, not weakened.

As far as Winchester is concerned, the planning department has, over many years now, been under-resourced, with the result that indifferent decisions have been taken against a background of virtually non-existent strategic thinking. To develop coherently, Winchester needs some first-class strategic thinking, backed up by sound design principles, fully understood by development control officers, who understand the economic, environmental and quality expectation. It does not seem that many local authorities have the inbuilt ability to provide imaginative expertise and leadership; their strategic planning departments have been stripped and the development control sections follow questionable development rules unquestioningly. No doubt Winchester's planning problems are repeated up and down the UK. It is extremely unlikely that central government will provide a better system - in fact their proposed system is more likely to deliver development that is inappropriate and poor in execution.

To simply remove planning requirements and provide a free fall environment in order to try and achieve speed and cost saving, is a route to potential disaster, which any government will not want on their CV. To carefully reconstruct the planning system in order to enhance and deliver a system that works, and provides the right type of development, is surely a goal for any government to leave as a legacy that they can be proud of.

We would very much appreciate meeting with you to discuss our concerns in more detail.

Kind regards,

Keith Leaman

12 August 2020

Planning Appraisal Group - TrustNews Sep 20

Our Review Panels have continued to work online, although this is not sustainable in the long term. They need to get back to being able to meet at the Heritage Centre (appropriately distanced of course). The number of cases has not dropped off precipitously although we have been dealing with many more minor things such as extensions and loft conversions rather than large projects.

There still seem to be cases being held up by the nitrate issue. We have also seen some really ugly loft conversions which are going through under permitted development (meaning that the council has no say once it is deemed to be legal). Even where the council has a say, it seems not to be abiding by its own High Quality Places SPD and we have complained about this.

All of which may soon be irrelevant if what is said about central government's overhaul of the planning system goes ahead. At least in Winchester we know from the experience of the very slow build-out of Barton Farm that developers can be responsible for delays in the provision of homes and there have already been problems, highlighted by the COVID situation, with conversions of office to residential. Assuming these reforms go ahead attention will now be focussed on the local plan and PAG will be out of a job. CWT will need to find new ways of working to prevent poor development taking place.

This may however the last report you get from me, since I am hoping to move to Scotland at the end of August. Tessa Robertson, CWT secretary has kindly agreed to step into the breach while we see what actually emerges from the Government. But whatever it is, there are likely to be implications for Trust activities.

Mary Tiles

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.

Trust Visits - TrustNews Sep 20

The visits planned for this year came quickly to a halt, with only one taking place before lock-down. This is the current situation:

Barnsley Workshop at Steep: the visit had to be postponed and we will try to revive it in October (it was fully booked).

Painted churches in Hampshire and Sussex: postponed for the time being because it involves coach travel (also fully booked).

Visits being explored for next year, which would not need a coach:

Portsmouth Dockyard - the boat sheds.

Victorian fortifications around Portsmouth.

Sandham Memorial Chapel and Dorchester Abbey.

Iain Patton

WCC Local Plan Review 2023 – 2038 - TrustNews Sep 20

The publication at the beginning of August of the government's planning white paper should increase public interest and involvement in the review of local plan for the district over which the City Council has jurisdiction. The review process is about to speed up with the anticipated launch in September of the issues and Options stage of the review with the City Council publishing what it believes are the issues that should be covered in the plan and setting out 4 strategic options for the allocation of all forms of development over the years up to 2038. This stage precedes the publication of a draft of the plan itself which is scheduled for the early months of 2021.

Everyone, both individuals and local community groups, is given the chance and indeed encouraged to engage with the proposals this autumn and commenting on them with a view to influencing what is in the plan. The coronavirus pandemic is going to constrain the way public engagement happens and it is likely more will take place online and there will be fewer, if any, conventional meetings.

The Trust local plan group has been monitoring the review and saw the outline of the 4 strategic development options to be published in the autumn. It is clear that one of these will be for a shift towards Winchester of the development required in the District by central government, away from the south of the District in the Whiteley area; another will be for a new settlement, so the ancient Micheldever Town idea will arise again. There will be many factors to be taken into account before any option is chosen but it is important that as many of our members as possible get involved. The Trust will endeavour to keep our members informed through email alerts.

How does the government's white paper affect the local plan review? It is too early to know, particularly as any changes are unlikely to become law before the middle of 2021, but I think it is likely to have some effect from early next year and if the changes proposed in the white paper are adopted, it means the allocation of land for any type of development will reduce or remove local influence on many features of development that we have been familiar with over the years.

John Beveridge

Update: It has now been confirmed that the Local Plan process will be delayed. This is because a second White Paper proposes a change to the method councils use to calculate the number of new homes they require. For Winchester, this would mean an increase of 6,000 new homes, far more than the council had been planning. (Ed.)

George Michael Morris ARIBA - TrustNews Sep 20

We are sad to report the death of Michael Morris on 10th August, aged 85. He was a member of the Trust Council 1976-93, and remained a Trust member for the rest of his life. Until his retirement he was the historic buildings architect for HCC and, among other things, a member of the Cathedral Fabric Advisory Committee, and we benefited greatly from his expertise and gifted draughtsmanship, not least, the Trust logo. We plan to publish some of the drawings he made for us and a longer tribute in a later edition.

The Planning White Paper - TrustNews Sep 20

In my experience the planning process has never been entirely satisfactory, but in Winchester it was at its best following local government reorganisation in 1974. Before then the City Council was just that, the small city area alone with negligible planning skill available in a department where the building inspector had originally been the mayor's chauffeur. But reorganisation enlarged the area for which the Council was responsible to include a very large district, much as it is now.

A multi-skilled planning department was then recruited and headed by a highly qualified architect-planner who had been the deputy chief at the County Council and, amongst others, he brought with him the City's first Conservation Officer, another experienced architect-planner. As a director he attended cabinet meetings and thereby ensured that good planning and design were always taken into consideration. Sadly, since then there has been a downward slide with government cuts gradually reducing the Council's ability to employ sufficient staff, and critically downgrading the influence of design and planning in the City's affairs, until the last Chief Executive was able to answer our question about who was responsible for design amongst his officers, by saying that surely design was the developer's responsibility! And now the government, in a new white paper, is proposing a wholesale revision of the nation's planning system with over-simple reasoning that could very easily make matters far worse.

A member of the Trust wrote the following article in 2016, which was true then and remains true today and, to quote our chairman, may very well turn out to be just as true in 20 years' time.

Michael Carden

Plea for Visionary Planning - TrustNews Sep 20

Terry Farrell, an architect described by some as the Philosopher of Bricks & Mortar, gave the annual Sandys lecture at Portcullis House, Westminster, on 31st March. He started with a tribute to Lord (Duncan) Sandys who was a visionary figure of the post-war years whose achievements included:

- The creation of Green Belts in 1955
- The Clean Air Act of 1956, which transformed the quality of life in our cities
- The establishment of Conservation Areas in the 60s
- He also formed The Civic Trust (now replaced by Civic Voice)

When Ed Vaizey was for a brief time Minister for Architecture in the last coalition government, he appointed Sir Terry to prepare The Farrell Review; a reflection on the strengths and weaknesses of the planning system. Some two years on, Sir Terry revisited his conclusions in this lecture.

He regretted that central government undervalued the Built Environment, as, rather than being an important Ministry in its own right, its function is fragmented into numerous different departments, so becomes a potential source of conflict between the Treasury, Culture Media and Sport, Housing and Transport. Even Ed Vaizey's status as Minister for Architecture only lasted a few days, before the post was lost in the oblivion of re-organisation. Not since the days of Duncan Sandys or Michael Heseltine has the status of the Built Environment been given any real priority within the corridors of power. The same has occurred in local councils with the closure of their architects departments and the demise of a design team or leader in the planning office.

Similarly it is almost invisible within our education system, but Sir Terry believes the Built Environment should be taught in all schools across all subjects such as Geography, Art, Science, History, and Economics, so that the next generation grow up with a greater awareness of Planning, Architecture, Landscape Design, Transport and Sustainability.

Terry Farrell argued that municipal planning has been **re-active** and only rarely **proactive** as most cities do not have a master plan* or conceptual framework*. (David Mackay's visionary blueprints for Plymouth and Barcelona being well known exceptions - my words not his). The Thames Gateway has been the largest urban regeneration project in Europe, but it has had no master plan*.

So any building owner or developer may submit their application for whatever they want and the Council has to consider it; developers with deep pockets can argue and appeal, persisting until they win consent almost regardless of the local planning policies. The Shard in Southwark and the Piano Tower in Paddington were cited as examples of developer's proposals that were made with no regard for what the community really needed. The Shard was never in any local plan, but happens to have worked out fairly well; whereas Terry pointed out that the Piano Tower would be alien to the conservation area of the Paddington basin, and the same

accommodation could be constructed in blocks of no more than 8 stories within the same site area to blend with the surrounding properties rather than “shard style” high rise proportions which dominate the skyline.

So if local authorities could be persuaded to prepare their own master plans* to include well considered solutions to Planning; Landscape, Architecture, Conservation and Traffic Engineering it would become a pro-active tool. Sir Terry also hoped that a priority would be given to Pedestrian and Landscape issues with cars relegated to the lowest importance; so the quality of spaces and quality of life becomes much improved.

If we were to apply these principles to Winchester, then major developments like Silver Hill, Station Approach or Bar End Leisure Centres could and should comfortably blend with the existing infrastructure, and much of the recent controversy might evaporate.

But master plans* must be flexible and open to review as the needs of the community change. Some very bad examples from the brave new world of the 1950’s & 60's were quoted as a warning: the urban motorways that cut through Newcastle city centre; the original Bullring redevelopment in Birmingham, or indeed the demolition of our 3 medieval Brooks streets in Winchester are examples of the abuse of municipal power; which could be described as public vandalism.

Without a change in culture as suggested by Sir Terry sadly the wrong solutions will continue to be built on the wrong sites. For example, with a well considered master plan*, would the extra care unit have been built on the Chesil Street surface car park where the frail elderly residents can’t easily access the town centre? Almost certainly not! It is only located there because the site was available at the time funding became possible; not because it was a sensible place to house vulnerable elderly folk with limited mobility. I suspect a conceptual framework* would have suggested the right place to locate the extra care unit would be on the upper floors of the Silver Hill development with good lift access into the pedestrian High Street.

The challenge for the Trust is how to persuade WCC to adopt such an enlightened strategy in a time when Council resources are so strapped, and there is no suitably skilled officer responsible for design or Design Champion operating at a senior enough level to influence Cabinet.

Chris Higgins

* There is often confusion in the use of these terms so, for the sake of clarity, current definitions may be briefly summarised as follows:

Master plan - specific proposals for a development area generally (but not essentially) in single ownership and probably by a single developer.

Design framework - principles and policies for the regeneration of an area likely to be in multiple ownership, not all of which may be developed at one time or at all.

Urban design framework - within a town.

Conceptual framework - a looser term (possibly including open landscape) implying greater flexibility. (Ed.)

Planning White Paper – comment - TrustNews Sep 20

from Sue Tumer BA BArch MSc MRTPI, veteran architect and planning inspector, member of the Trust Council:

- The proposals reduce the opportunity for community participation from two chances (local plan preparation and planning application) to a single opportunity when the new style local plan is prepared.

- How can 'beautiful' realistically be defined? This sounds like a cash cow for lawyers and a recipe for more red tape and delay, not less.

Civic Voice "In Conversation" dialogues - a personal appraisal - TrustNews Sep 20

- In May, Civic Voice began a series of "In Conversation" dialogues through Zoom and Webinar to explore current topics including Planning, Building, Heritage, Conservation and Regeneration, and more, to keep alive important national issues that could no longer be pursued normally due to constraints from COVID-19. These were excellently conducted by Kevin Trickett of Wakefield Civic Society, and Ian Harvey and Sarah James of Civic Voice.
- I followed over 16 of these, together with another half dozen or so debates entitled High Street Task Force, under the direction of Simon Quinn, which specifically examined the plight of benighted commercial and retail centres within our towns and cities. As I cannot give an account of all, or as fully as I should like, I do urge Members to view the videos on the CV website, which are still available, to help form their own opinions.
- Nicholas Boys Smith of Create Streets, and member of the *Build Better, Build Beautiful Commission* gave a spirited and emotive plea for the importance of their 3 aims to be embedded in planning the culture of future development, especially in this post-COVID climate: Ask for Beauty; Refuse Ugliness; Promote Stewardship; and these can be seen to be fully considered with their 8 priorities stated within their last Report Living with Beauty. This report, which I appreciate can be controversial, is nonetheless a sound working document for our towns and cities to ensure civic pride and purpose, and communal well-being - all too often forgotten or ignored.
- The former Chief Planner of Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Steve Quartermain, explained something of the complexities and intricacies of the existing planning process which, to my mind, proves quite confounding, being legally technical, when considering larger scale developments. He felt, however, Planning should be seen as positive to bring the community together for beneficial purposes but it was argued this seemed to depend upon how local voices might be heard against those of the developers who had contrary objectives. He stressed the importance of

Councils keeping the local planning policy framework (LPPF) up-to-date and Neighbourhood Plans should be part of any development plan, and he agreed that permitted development rights (PDRs) needed review especially for utilities within conservation areas. When quizzed about bad planning decisions this was countered by statistics: 450,000 decisions p.a. with less than 2% contrary to local views! Planning is not just aesthetics but to anticipate and meet future needs, and sometimes local restrictions prevent necessary developments. It was acknowledged more communication for disseminating information on planning proposals that lead to discourse and participation could be implemented through media technology - as is now seen as a result of attempting to overcome COVID constraints. Ending on a positive note, he reiterated that Planning is something to bring the community together and to think about the good that comes from planning through its benefits (the controversial “Planning Reform" White Paper published subsequently on the 6th August, suggests we may have to revise this note of optimism).

- "Why we need a Healthy Home Act in the light of COVID-19?â€œ was the question raised by Mary Parsons, Chair of the TCPA and also a member of the BBBB Commission, to draw attention to the erosion of the legacy of the Garden City principle that the built environment ensures healthy living. De-regulation can now permit unsuitable dwelling provision, e.g. PDR deems 12.8m3 (size of a supermarket car space) acceptable and a windowless unit equally so, and as such will stigmatize people's lives. COVID can be seen as a housing disease generated by over-crowded conditions and that the NHS, which was founded for Health not illness, can only be supported by good housing and that good planning should help support this, homes having long-term needs. At one time our planning system was relatively clear, but it has become one of the world's most complex, where developers can argue down better outcomes claiming they meet housing needs, but these must be more than the minimum. The proposal for this Act can be read in more detail on the TCPA website.
- The issues outlined here were developed further in the Conversation with Matt Bell of Grosvenor Britain and Ireland, which has recently published a new Community Charter that signals a way forward to re-building public trust in planning. Their survey pointed out that only 2% have trust in developers and 7% in local authorities, disconcerting statistics which prompted their Charter for radical improvement. This was to be a two-way process of engagement with community organizations: Listen First; Open Up; Make it Easier; Be Accountable; co-produce a community asset map; invest time and resource in community organizations to play an active and involved role that also enables community self-accountability. On their website, www.grosvenor.com/positivespace one can access their supporting essays that underpin these aspirations. He put it quite bluntly that most developers haven't a clue about community organizations or local needs and Councils should stop using consultants but look instead to harnessing their own communal resources, and to engage the community in on-going management. Even though Grosvenor is London-centric this Charter and method could be applied universally across the UK, and he was also keen that young people become engaged as they would offer freshness to debate and be more open to change (this reminds me of JTP and their SPD workshops on Central Winchester Regeneration which involved local schools and colleges).

- A hidden element in all our towns and cities is undoubtably our Heritage, because it is something all too often taken for granted and not utilized as a magnet for regeneration. This aspect arose many times in the Conversations and seemed to be a crucial factor for any successful attempt in revitalization, especially now after the COVID-19 effect on economy. I refer here to two enthusiastic contributions, one from Reading and one from Nottingham, and again, please check their Council websites to gain a fuller picture.
- Karen Rowland, Councillor and Heritage Champion for Reading, emphasized the need for Heritage Champions to implement Heritage Strategies that would consider both place and building as assets, not to be discriminating, so within the built environment these must work and use such resources to encourage the notion of Heritage, and that the Councils should work together with the local Civic Society, which it does in Reading where its engagement with the community has produced most successful results as a consequence of collaboration. It had been noted, however, Heritage has become recently much more political, especially through ignorance, as reactions often have been wilfully destructive in certain instances and there is a need for balanced thought through intelligent and sympathetic research.
- Alice Ullathorne who is the Heritage Strategy Officer for Nottingham City Council, endorses this need for collaboration within the community which enables proactive projects to take place in their 15-year Strategy Vision for the city thereby capitalizing on assets and driving economic vibrancy to celebrate their vision. She told of the difference investment in Heritage makes whether it's tangible artefact or intangible traditional legend (Robin Hood) as all these make up the story of Nottingham and create an important attraction factor for visitors and tourism. It became clear that close collaboration with city organizations was key to the achievements of their strategy panels who worked together as partnerships for evaluation and governance. The relationship with their Civic Society is significant as their contribution is seen as integral to the work of NCO. Progress is evaluated on an on-going basis, reviewed every six months with an overall Review every 5 years. They are having to re-think their Strategy in the light of COVID-19 for regeneration to support economy and the High Street, but she felt all this does not necessarily cost lots of money, i.e. collaboration/cooperation shows that money isn't everything whereas good civic sense generates satisfaction and pride.
- The High Street Task Force conversations were themed "From Recovery to Transformation" with many case histories from towns and cities cited as examples of the many and various ways this regeneration may be achieved, and the route-map sets out the framework for this task. The Grimsey Review "Build Back Better" has updated with the COVID-19 Supplement for Town Centres. This document is full of facts and figures that point a way forward for positive regeneration that reflects a cultural shift for the future. It examines the generic nature of the town centre and high street and the reasons for decline (which had begun before Covid) were because many interests were those of absentee landlords whose concerns were hardly civic, that retail and businesses by conglomerates and chains had taken over, footfall was failing because there was little else of cultural or leisure value to attract, and dead shops do not a lively high street make - or a public space to be proud of. Transferring power to communities seems the way forward now since the old established pattern appears obsolete.

    - Neil McInroy, CEO of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies, presents this idea by referring to the High Street as the "canary in the mine" that signals the need to change the economic model with a new paradigm for capitalism that should be reset in the light of Climate Change and COVID. He gives 4 pointers towards this: 1) Dominance of economic ownership needs change for more social and local values; 2) Too much focus on financial values and returns; 3) Local matters - reflect its place, identity, history and culture; 4) Make sure more wealth is recirculated and owned in place. This would lead to Community Wealth Building, i.e. who owns it and who benefits by it - Localize, Socialize, Democratize.
- Hastings, Aldershot and Paisley were towns that had suffered considerable neglect and decay and were in a very sad state of decline. Their Councils appeared to be ineffective in creating strategies to combat their centres' wastelands so it became clear the only alternative was for the communities to take action themselves. These three very different towns show how inspired regeneration can be, and achieved, according to local community initiatives. As Jess Steele said of Hastings Council, it was not their job, and that's the reason why city centres suffer, and Gary Kerr of Paisley added that Council and Community have different roles, that Communities remain but Councils do not. Hastings set up their Community Land Trust called *Heart of Hastings*, Paisley created the *Paisley Community Trust* and Aldershot Civic Society wrote their *Town Centre Vision* to meet community needs that seemed to be ignored by their Council.

  These three very diverse and complex stories are well worth pursuing through their websites:

  www.heartofhastings.org.uk

  www.paisleytrust.org

  www.aldershotcivicsociety.org.uk

Realising a Practical Vision for Winchester High Street - TrustNews Sep 20

These proposals started as a personal initiative and Stephen Harte did not seek the Trust's view other than looking for responses to his original article. However, Trust members Richard Baker and Arthur Morgan have now contributed to this response.

If one seeks to establish the role of the Trust at this important time, it is clear that the Trust is not the "planning and delivery body", for that is the role of the city and county councils and builders and developers in the solutions they provide. The role of the Trust is to access the extraordinary professional expertise in the City and generate a dialogue and strategy that the councils embrace and take forward and to support them in their deliberations, plans and developments. "How can we help" is the motto. These ideas are put forward to promote a strategy, framework plan and investment programme by the two councils ideally collaboratively which will secure community support.

We argue that the cultural/ historic value of the City should be prioritised by reuniting the High Street with the pedestrian, so as to give the City a coherent structure - a 'linear piazza' should be created as a strong spine through the centre of the historic walled City - as an impetus to evolve a range of changes and improvements.

We thank those Trust members who responded in writing and verbally. There is wide concern to overcome the serious traffic congestion which blights Winchester. The 'linear piazza' idea for the High Street was liked as it would give a real public space to Winchester, as in some of the great European cities.

The Atkins 'Winchester Movement Strategy' gives a different emphasis. It does not define the historic/cultural and physical importance of the City centre, so achieving a reunited High Street is not explored. As we see this as a 'necessity' we concentrate here on how this can be achieved.

Traffic Solutions

Most comments were concerned with traffic management including making Sussex Street two-way, pedestrianising Upper High Street, questioning how a shared pedestrian/vehicular crossing would work at the Jewry Street-Southgate Street junction and alternative ways of vehicular circulation through the City centre.

There have been years for experts to analyse and find a way to reshape the traffic system so as to create more pedestrianised areas and so maximise the pleasure of the city. There has been some success but a more radical revaluation is needed. Traffic is having an increasingly degrading effect on the City centre. The main problem is through-traffic. Priority must be given to public transport, cycles and pedestrians even though that will result in cars taking longer routes to circumvent the City centre with short cuts discouraged.

There can be initial experimentation to test out new arrangements and change can be gradual and phased.

1. Making Sussex Street two way would get major traffic out of the Upper High Street and reduce traffic at the top end of the High Street. That would establish Upper High Street as the primary link from the station to the City via the Westgate which is the historic gateway to the High Street. The effect would be to anticipate the 'linear piazza', beyond the Westgate, running the length of the City centre. The effect would be to connect the city's cultural and leisure facilities. A visually strong entrance to the barracks and the military museums is also needed to attract visitors from off the High Street.
2. A first phase, which would transform the upper part of the High Street would be to extend the pavement to the road edge on the south side, taking in the current parking areas. The paved lower High Street would then have much stronger continuity with an enlarged paved area to the upper section. A strategy is needed to restrict traders' deliveries to out of hours. Parking areas for delivery vehicles would ideally be accessed with automatic retractable bollards. Initially, however, the system could be trialled quickly and inexpensively with, for example, banners inserted in ground pockets to denote the road edge. Planned temporary closures and redirection of traffic,

alternatives could be trialled first, at weekends. A fully pedestrianised top part of the High Street may take longer to achieve.

The paved area could eventually be continuous across the Southgate Street/Jewry Street junction which would become a shared pedestrian vehicle area with appropriate surface finishes. To fully pedestrianise the top end of the High Street would require detailed traffic analysis to work through the consequences and affordability. Pedestrianising the area in front of Barclays bank would create a public shared space.

3. As a second phase, if St George's Street traffic turned right into Jewry Street and only essential traffic turned left this would reduce the traffic using the Southgate Street - Jewry Street junction. The lower end of St George's Street could be one way as far as Parchment Street. Traffic heading west would go by City Road and Sussex Street to Romsey Road. To pedestrianise St George's Street would be a bigger challenge. A refinement is for traffic lights at the St George's Street/Jewry Street, Southgate Street/Jewry Street and North Walls/City Road/Jewry Street junctions to manage a two-way system alternating as one-way from Southgate Street along Jewry Street.

   At the east end, extending the pedestrianised High Street to King Alfred's Statue would raise the question of where buses and coaches would drop off passengers and where taxis would be located. If a two-way system was established on the bus station side of King Alfred’s Statue this would provide an increased area for pedestrians alongside Abbey Gardens with a square in front of the Guildhall which would permit some vehicular crossing of the Square and some access to the bus station. Bus and taxi arrangements would need adapting. Improving the pedestrian approach to the City Bridge and the Chesil Street car park and along the river would make sense for the future, improving the route to the leisure centre and Park and Ride.

Practicalities

There is a need to consider different ways of funding, so as to make the City centre more attractive for visitors, as well as residents, and for a strategy to manage visitor numbers. Making a more beautiful and relevant pedestrianised City Centre requires excellence in design and in particular landscaping, which will stimulate increasing footfall, rental values and turnover. In the mix will be specialist retail, restaurants, cafes, offices, residential, cultural, health and educational facilities.

Generally, there is the feeling that this is the time to review and manage the future of our City. Covid has focused our minds on the need for change and to respond to new ways of shopping, working and leisure in the City centre. We can learn from how other countries have achieved traffic free historic centres for visitors. There is great potential to improve the City centre.

Perhaps some of the resistance to changing the ways we access and move around this historic city is because there are not convincing narratives to show how the consequences of change can be managed effectively. There clearly are solutions available and these have in part been addressed with the Atkins 'Winchester

Movement Strategy' recommendations regarding park and rides, cycling and walking and vehicular traffic circulation, changes to the bus system. As for buses, could Park and Ride be combined more effectively with regular buses? Could staggered and flexible ways of working reduce traffic concentration at peak times, with servicing of premises outside of peak hours? Consideration needs to be given to access for emergency services, to the use of materials to mark pedestrian priority and to more imaginative ways of creating barriers.

Specific problems to be addressed:

1. How a parent can take and collect children to schools in different parts of the city and then go to their workplace.
2. How someone living locally, whose health/physical condition limits them from getting around, can access the city centre.
3. How the visitor on their first visit, or the regular visitor coming for work or for entertainment, can access the City centre from the station and also by car or bus.
4. How maintenance of premises and access for emergency vehicles in the pedestrian areas can be provided for.
5. How cyclists can get to different parts of the City on designated cycle ways.

Conclusion

Of primary importance is the achieving of a 'linear piazza' through the centre of the City. Traffic management is a key part of the whole picture but not the only concern. There will be different views about what should happen at different speeds and different emphasis. After a time of adjustment we may predict some traffic will disappear as travel behaviour changes. We share a passion for Winchester's future and believe it can be a European exemplar for the best design and management of an historic city centre.

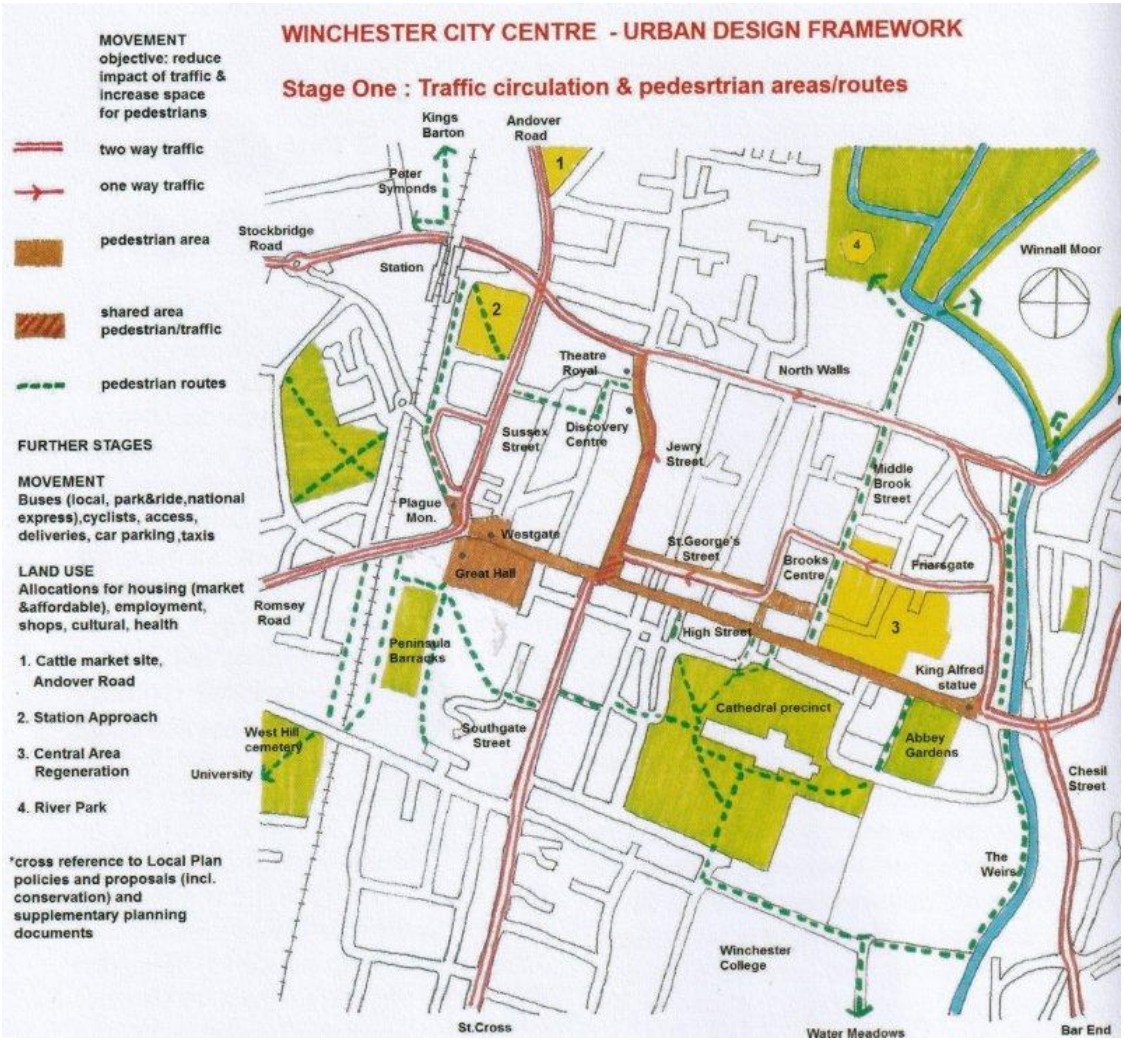
These proposals are put forward as the foundation for future changes in movement and space. They are intended to influence what the public sector and private sector might do. Cllr Martin Tod's proposals are good examples of how to achieve a wider solution but our contention is that it needs something fundamental to start with. The High Street as spine and artery for the rest of the historic core is what we believe is required. This principle can feed easily into the emerging Vision exercise. It can take the principal and other measures forward in expectation of the emerging Review Local Plan. The current transport study must provide solutions that change the balance between pedestrian and traffic requirements. There is a strong commercial case for the High Street concept. In other cities there has been an increase in footfall, in business and in rental returns from increased pedestrianisation and public realm improvement, giving a much improved return on public and private investment. It would be good if we could distinguish Winchester City Centre from others, e.g. focusing on sculptures, or a more diverse programme of street events.

There is therapeutic value for those living here to share a common inspiring vision. We have proposed solutions rather than just questions and criticism. We believe with patience and energy from different views and emphasis that improvements can be

introduced. If we respond imaginatively to the future we can enhance what we value. Schemes can be tested by temporary measures and change can be planned incrementally with some key simple interventions to begin with such as are proposed here.

Stephen Harte

Winchester City Centre - Urban Design Framework - TrustNews Sep 20



Winchester Framework Design

CWT published a 'Vision for Winchester' in 2019. The first 'vision' was that a City-wide Urban Design Framework could be produced and adopted by the City Council as a Supplementary Planning Document. A pedestrian piazza along the High Street establishes a central part of a Framework. This plan, drawn by Richard Baker, has been developed as the first stage, to place the idea of a linear piazza in the High Street in the context of traffic and pedestrian circulation proposals.

Footer - TrustNews Sep 20

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