

CENTRAL WINCHESTER REGENERATION INFORMAL POLICY GROUP

8 November 2016

Attendance:

Councillors:

Chairman: Weston (P)

Ashton (P)

Burns (P)

Elks (P)

Hutchison (P)

Izard (P)

Read (P)

Officer: Andy Hickman - Assistant Director (Policy & Planning).

Others in attendance:

Councillors: Bell, Byrnes, Tait, Thompson and Weir.

Officers in Attendance:

Steve Tilbury – Interim Managing Director
Antonia Perkins – Head of Policy and Projects
Zoe James – Project Manager
Jenny Nell – Principal Planning Officer

1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2016 (Report CAB2863 CWRIPG refers) be approved and adopted.

2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

During public participation, Patrick Davies, Councillor Tait and Julian English addressed the meeting.

In summary, Mr Davies stated that he had studied the officer's presentation, and welcomed it, in parts. He had been involved in the previous Broadway Friarsgate study and also the 1999 Future of Winchester study, where it had been identified that buses were key. This was true today, as a modern, well planned, integrated bus service was required. He questioned whether the statistics used in the presentation had come from bus users, as these were key to encourage provision. It was not environmentally sound for a car to come into the City with a single driver and to encourage more bus users was beneficial and this also had a link with air quality. Greener journeys were

more efficient and led to more spend, which was also good for the economy and therefore the use of buses was critical to the way forward.

Councillor Tait stated, in summary, that he appreciated the work that had been carried out to clear weeds from the empty Friarsgate Medical practice and asked whether more could be done to improve the appearance of the building so that it did not look derelict with boarded windows. With the Silver Hill re-development being potentially some year's away, action could be taken to make the site look better for visitors. He expressed the view that new housing was good for Winchester and that St John's Almshouses, of which he was a trustee, could take a participatory role in developing housing. He encouraged the Group to take on wider views, as well as those with minority interests, as it worked through its methodology.

In reply to Councillor Tait's comments regarding the improvement to the appearance of the regeneration area, which were supported by members of the Group, it was stated that the Council's Head of Estates and Regeneration was investigating what could be done on this matter. The Chairman stated that this was a topic that the Winchester Town Forum may wish to address.

Julian English stated, in summary, that Winchester needed a fresh creative approach to its future direction that would turn round the decline and stagnation of its central areas.

As someone who had worked in property he recognised the benefits of using external consultants and he felt that the City Council had failed its residents in not making things happen for too many years, apart mainly from allowing considerable additional housing. Since retirement he had worked in voluntary roles at the Cathedral since 2008. In this role, he was conscious of the City's failings in not having enough of a cultural and heritage nature both to hold visitors in Winchester, and to provide for its fast growing population. The Cathedral was the City's primary draw, and was currently investing just over £20m on its conservation and also transformation. The transformation would provide new exhibition areas in the south transept that would bring in substantially more visitors when completed in 2018. He asked the Group to visit the Cathedral.

Mr English continued that with shopping trends having changed over the past 10-15 years, he was pleased that the selected Urban Design Practice would be unfettered from past planning guidelines for the central areas; and would be free to look at the City's central area needs afresh, in new creative long term ways, that complemented its heritage and history, whilst also including elements of mixed residential, suitable leisure, and appropriate retail.

WinACC and others had pointed out the congested and polluted state of the City and it was vital the brief for the HCC/WCC Movement Study gave suitably experienced large Transportation Practices full rein to come up with creative radical solutions to the City's traffic related problems. This brief would also need to be mindful of such important major employment creating opportunities as at Station Approach.

In conclusion, he stated that both briefs needed to require the two appointed practices to work together on the transportation solutions, in particular for the central areas. They also needed to be as comprehensive as possible, without any cost restraints.

3. **CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Edward Hodgson, Managing Director of Stagecoach, Peter Shelly, Head of Passenger Transport at Hampshire County Council and also Councillor Byrnes, Portfolio Holder for Transport.

The Chairman continued that she had met with Councillor Hutchinson in the presence of Cllr Izard (Vice Chairman) and Councillor Elks and officers to help explain the producing of a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and to clarify that development of the site was not within the remit of this Group. The Supplementary Planning Documents were material considerations when processing planning applications and development proposals in the City and would be considered when making a planning decision; they would be referred to as guidance when planning for development.

The Chairman continued that since the last meeting, some correspondence had been received from members of the public, including one from Julian English regarding the process in producing a SPD. There would be considerable public engagement prior to getting to the stage of development. The SPD would contain a vision, derived from the input of the stakeholders, the public and the wider District not just Winchester residents. It was also made clear that the Group were not updating the 2003 brief but were writing a new brief for 2017, and would be consulting again as the last tranche of consultation took place some years ago. The Group would co-ordinate the consultation process in all its forms, which would feed into the final document. The SPD was a supplementary planning document that would have statutory status but it would not detail how the site was to be developed.

Mr Tim Fell had also written to the Council, concerned that the Group had not discussed a vision. The Chairman had replied stating that a vision for the Silver Hill area would be part of the SPD, but to get to a vision the Group need to follow a process and most importantly consult with the residents of Winchester, Stakeholders and the wider District; It was very important that the final vision was derived from the various strands of consultation.

The Chairman added that a note had been received from a Mr Bruce Hartley-Raven, Director of Prime Planning & Development Limited. Amongst the suggestions he made were:

- 1) Bus and coach movement was one of the areas highlighted in this briefing note and it was the main item on the agenda for this meeting.
- 2) Car parking - this would be addressed but there was a car parking review planned that would feed into any further discussions and reports.
- 3) Retail was one of the studies to be commissioned.

In addition, there were a number of studies to be commissioned:

- Bus Provision/Need Assessment
- Retail Needs Assessment
- Archaeology Desk Study
- Topographical Survey
- Acoustic study/ assessment
- Lighting assessment
- Contamination Desk Study
- Level 1 Flood Risk Assessment

Further reference material had been made available for Members:

- The Councillors Guide to Urban Design
- Good Practice Guide to Public Engagement in Development Schemes

As an example of the type of format the SPD might take the Leicester Waterside SPD provided a good example, although it covered a much wider area than the Central Winchester Regeneration Study Area.

A Portfolio Holder Decision Notice had been published on Monday 7 November 2016 on the web site for consultation on the commissioning of technical studies needed to produce a robust SPD. These included:

- the Flood Risk Assessment
- Contamination Desk Study, Site Walk over and Conceptual Site Model
- Bus Provision/Need Assessment
- Retail Needs Assessment
- Archaeology Desk Study
- Topographical Survey
- Acoustic study/assessment
- Lighting assessment
- Ecological

The Council did not own the copyright for the supporting documents submitted as part of the previous planning applications on the site and therefore Councillors could not rely on these documents when making any decisions.

There were also a number of existing studies which would inform the development of the SPD (Car Parking Strategy Mid-Term Review, HCC-led Winchester City Transport Strategy as well as existing studies which were not considered to need updates for the SPD (Economic Strategy; Cultural Strategy; Walking, Cycling and Parking Strategies etc.).

4. **BUS FACILITIES**

The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) explained that buses would form a vital element within an overarching piece of work being undertaken by Hampshire County Council and stakeholders relating to a wider transport strategy.

The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) provided a short presentation, a copy of which was available for public viewing on the City Council's Website.

As part of the presentation, the Group was reminded of the facilities provided by the current traditional style bus station, which were: bus stops/waiting layover areas; an information office; cafe/toilets; central location and operation management facilities. The 2009 Silver Hill scheme had proposed a modern bus station/interchange, similar to those provided at Havant and Andover. The 2014 Silver Hill scheme had contained a split scheme with bus facilities in Friarsgate and the Broadway.

The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) continued that the work of the Group provided the opportunity to reconsider the issues and challenges of bus station provision. This included how many bus stops/coach stops were required; the best way of providing the right facilities; the issues of providing a bus route past Sainsbury's and to establish what the bus operators needed or desired.

Edward Hodgson, Managing Director of Stagecoach, continued the presentation by providing a bus operator's perspective. In summary, Mr Hodgson stated that the needs of the customer led the company's decisions and it was recognised that a good public transport network was key to the economic prosperity of the City. The bus fleet had been revamped in the previous year and buses were now badged as "Kings City", which had led to 2.3% growth in bus use, which was very encouraging.

Considering the wider network, buses were very efficient in bringing a lot of people into the City Centre and presented an environmental saving compared with the private car.

Mr Hodgson continued that the network to surrounding settlements provided bus frequencies ranging from every 10 minutes to Badger Farm and Harestock, to 60 minutes for Teg Down, Highcliffe and Sparsholt. There were wider connections to surrounding towns, for example Bishops Waltham and Fareham every 60 minutes, with connections to Romsey, Alresford and Alton every 30 minutes. The current use was significant with 1.5mn people using buses to the City Centre each year. There was in the region of 625 departures from the City each day and there had been a significant investment in the bus network in 2015 including the provision of wifi and USB chargers. Additional evening journeys had been introduced to support the night time economy. With car traffic at saturation levels, the future growth of the City Centre economy depended on high quality public transport, with every £1 spent on bus priority generating £7 of net economic benefit and 29% of City Centre expenditure was by bus customers. On average bus customers spent £28.66 per return trip.

To encourage further growth buses needed a modern hub at the commercial heart to offer interconnections, with modern, attractive waiting facilities. There was a requirement for access to the heart of the City Centre with a free flowing road network. Lay over spaces were required to help manage the

network. The facility needed to be sympathetic to the wider City Centre environment.

A possible location could be by Silver Hill/St Georges Street, accessed via Tanner Street as this would avoid the High Street and would be more environmentally sensitive. Four stops were required (with three stops currently provided), which would allow for approximately 50 departures per hour. A travel information point shared with the Tourist Information Centre and real time information and displays together with supervision facilities, would be vital to allow real time network management. A lay over area was also considered to be important.

In conclusion, buses needed to be sustainable in the long term and have a City Centre location. This would allow for growth and be sustainable.

Peter Shelley, Head of Passenger Transport at Hampshire County Council stated, in summary, that buses were essential for economic growth and the environment. The provision of real time information had been successful, but the provision of Government finance for this had now been reduced. Buses had positive benefits, but for some they were essential; the provision of raised bus stops and buses with low steps provided key access to the City Centre. The bus stops outside of Marks and Spencer's were the busiest bus stops in the City Centre and, with an increasingly elderly population, good access to the City Centre was required. The County would work with the Group on solutions.

In answer to Members' questions, Mr Hodgson stated that Stagecoach was willing to look at solutions that would be the most effective. The provision of "hopper" midi buses with shorter wheelbases to provide improved access to the City Centre, with a transfer point outside of the City Centre, would, in his opinion, add to journey times and could be a barrier to users.

Although the railway station was important (when considering the location of a transport hub, both at the station and in the City Centre to provide a service to both the north and south of the City), it was in his opinion key to have the bus hub at the heart of the commercial and retail centre, as this was where all the bus services went to an where users could interchange. The best location was at the heart of the City within easy reach of the High Street, to be as convenient as possible to users with the shortest walk possible.

For operational reasons the lay over space could not be totally located away from the hub and outside of the City Centre. The lay over period was usually 5 to 10 minutes and up to 30 minutes for the longer distance services to Alton and Romsey. The lay over space at the hub allowed for an efficient service to react to changes in traffic situations. Two or three layover spaces were required in a central location. The layover spaces provided were not for long periods but for short lay over periods as operational research had shown that there was a time delay if buses were held on the edge of the City and then had to travel in and out to provide a service.

Mr Hodgson confirmed that the information provided to the Group was not from passenger surveys from Winchester, but was based upon national studies, but local studies could be carried out.

Ninety per cent of services were run without subsidy, but the remaining 10% could be of vital in terms of need.

In considering enhanced service provision, the best waiting areas for passengers required shelter, toilets and access to information. Worthing in Sussex provided a similar example to Winchester, with pedestrian access from the main street in the heart of the city.

Bus operators favoured having a small area that could provide an interchange rather than having a traditional bus station. Passengers wished to get on and off at a central location and not in the traditional style bus station. Modern buses were also larger and difficult to move in and out. The maintenance of the buses was also not required to be at a central bus station, and Stagecoach now provided this facility at Bar End, in an industrial unit on the edge of the town.

The Chairman again thanked Peter Shelly and Edward Hodgson for their attendance and commented that Hampshire County Council's work was looking at all transport movement needs, which would lead to the technical paper.

The Assistant Director (Planning and Policy) added that this work would include research to locate bus waiting facilities in the optimum location, which would be of use to the appointed consultants. The first stage of the technical paper could be completed by January 2017.

A Member commented that the Broadway represented an important public space that was undervalued and should be at the heart of the City. It was also important to make provision for taxis that provided transport for the mobility impaired.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation on buses be noted.

5. **UPDATE ON PREVIOUS ACTIONS**

The Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) informed the meeting that the Brief had been placed on the South East Business Portal and to date 24 companies had expressed an interest, with the Council responding to supplemental questions.

A Portfolio Holder Decision Notice was being used to commission supplementary technical work as would be required, including that for retail needs which needed to be carefully prepared.

In answer to Members' questions, the Assistant Director (Policy and Planning) stated that only the straightforward technical work, such as desk top studies, would be commissioned in advance of the Urban Design practice being selected; this would help to give the consultant a 'head start' when they were appointed. The more difficult technical work would be done by the Urban Design practice consultants, except for that relating to retail which would be discussed with Members prior to commissioning. The interviews for the appointment of an Urban Design practice would take place on 6 December 2016.

The Interim Managing Director commented that the selection of companies to provide the technical work would be through an appropriate process, so that the technical work met the Council's requirements. It was not intended that their appointment would constrain the work of the Urban Design practice, and it was most probable that due to the timescale and the limited number of companies who could provide the technical expertise, that the work of the Council and the Urban Design practice would converge.

Councillor Byrnes added that the Council would shortly appoint a Procurement Officer who would provide expertise in this area and would ensure that the necessary checks and balances were in place.

The Group proceeded to discuss how the Brief and technical assessments would be accessed by Members. Members were encouraged to contact the Assistant Director (Policy and Planning), either individually or as a group, if they had any questions that they wished to be answered in-between meetings.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

6. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that future meetings of the IPG be held in the Walton Suite, Guildhall as follows:

- 6.00pm Tuesday 6 December 2016 (may be subject to cancellation).
- 6.00pm Wednesday 18 January 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 7 February 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 14 March 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 4 April 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 23 May 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 4 July 2017
- 6:00pm Tuesday 1 August 2017

The meeting commenced at 6.00pm and concluded at 7:40pm.

Chairman