

## **WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM – SPECIAL MEETING**

**25 July 2011**

Attendance:

Councillors:

Collin (Chairman) (P)

Berry  
Higgins (P)  
Hiscock (P)  
Hutchison (P)  
Love (P)  
Mather (P)  
Maynard (P)  
Mitchell (P)

Nelmes  
Pearce (P)  
Pines (P)  
Prowse (P)  
Sanders (P)  
Scott (P)  
Tait (P)  
Thompson  
Witt (P)

Others in attendance who did not address the meeting:

Councillor Jackson

### 1. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 June 2011, be approved and adopted.

### 2. **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr J Beveridge (City of Winchester Trust) and Ms K McIntosh (WinACC) addressed the Forum on the “Plans for Places after Blueprint” document and their comments are summarised below.

### 3. **LEASE OF ALLOTMENTS TO WINCHESTER NEW ALLOTMENTS HOLDERS SOCIETY** [\(Report WTF159\)](#)

The Head of Landscape and Open Spaces explained that the report proposed the transfer of the remaining three allotment sites in the Winchester town area from the City Council to the Winchester New Allotment Holders Society.

RESOLVED:

1      **That Cabinet be recommended to agree to the proposal to lease three Council allotment sites at Greenhill Road,**

**Trussell Crescent and Prince's Place to Winchester New Allotment Holders Society, as an addition to the existing lease under the existing terms with a nominal increase in rent of £125 pa.**

**2 That Cabinet be recommended to authorise the Landscape and Open Spaces Team to assess the potential for development of additional allotment sites on Council-owned land within the Town.**

**4. PLANS FOR PLACES AFTER BLUEPRINT**  
(Oral Report)

This special meeting of the Forum had been called principally to consider questions 3 and 4 the City Council's "Plans for Places after Blueprint" document which related to the town. The Head of Strategic Planning explained that, unlike other areas of the district, the consultation had not produced a consensus on the needs or level of growth required for the Winchester town area.

However, the document did need to reach a view on those matters and had concluded that if Winchester wanted to maintain its role as the county town, increase employment opportunities, retain its position in the shopping hierarchy of the region, conserve the high value buildings in the High Street and increase its housing stock to support a diverse demographic, greenfield land would have to be released.

The document also promoted the principle that Winchester should meet its own needs within or adjacent to its settlement boundary, as other settlements would be doing.

Table 6 (page 21) illustrated the potential sources for housing within the Winchester settlement boundary and Members noted that, even if these (which included the re-development of those car parks which may be suitable for housing) were developed at high densities, they would not yield the required 4,000 dwellings needed over 20 years.

He explained that the Secretary of State's decision on the Barton Farm Major Development Area (MDA) decision was expected by mid-August 2011 and therefore Plans for Places included two scenarios – one with and one without an MDA at Barton Farm. It was noted that the scenario which included the development of Barton Farm meant that other sites which came forward in the town had more potential to be developed for non-residential uses, while the 'without Barton Farm' scenario would place great emphasis on using any available sites for housing.

During public participation, Mr Beveridge (City of Winchester Trust) explained that the Trust (along with WinACC and WACA) would be submitting a paper to the Council on Plans for Places and would respond formally to the questions it posed within the consultation period. In summary, Mr Beveridge stated that:

- As the sole representative of the town's interests in the City Council, the Forum should have an enhanced role.
- That the Trust opposed the proposed development of a knowledge park at Bushfield Camp as they considered the area crucial to the landscape setting of Winchester and there was practically no evidence regarding the need for a knowledge park.
- The Trust raised concerns regarding the number of new houses required in the town area, their deliverability and the number required in the rural areas of the District.
- The Trust advocated higher densities where appropriate in the central areas (above 75 dph), but suggested it was not appropriate in suburban areas.
- That there were a number of redevelopment opportunities arising from the reduced public sector employment uses and/or surface car parks, in particular, Gladstone Street and Cattle Market.
- That the document had over-estimated the amount of retail space required and that employment uses should first look at the re-development of land at Winnall and Bar End, before developing greenfield sites.

Ms McIntosh (WinAcc) advised the Forum of the need for the document to promote Winchester as a pedestrian and cyclist friendly town and should design-in reduced use of the private car, through avoiding the development of edge of town retail parks. Higher density development would also help to facilitate this, as well as reducing pressure on greenfield land. Finally, she invited all members of the Forum to a meeting of WinAcc to be held on 6 August 2011.

During Members' debate, the following issues were raised:

That whilst there was likely to be contraction of public sector employment space in the town centre, the City Council should encourage private sector re-development of these spaces. However, that may be constrained by the costs of renovating those buildings to the standard required by the private sector.

Whilst discussing densities, some Members noted the need to provide sufficient open space for residents and to protect against back-garden development.

Several Members recommended that the document should do more to increase the provision of primary school places in the town. Therefore, the Forum agreed to suggest that Table 7 (page 24) should segregate "access" and "infrastructure" and include reference to primary school provision.

Concerns were also raised regarding the reach of the consultation. It was explained that approximately 20 residents attended the Winnall and Highcliffe Blueprint Exercise and that most responses were submitted by groups (such as residents' associations) following local discussions, rather than individuals.

In response to concerns that the consultees who had advocated no growth had not been represented in the document, the Corporate Director (Operations) explained that their view was diametrically opposed to others, so it was not possible for the document to promote both. The approach included in the document also took account of available evidence and Government advice.

In response to concerns regarding the possible re-development of the major sites in the town, such as the Police Headquarters, the Head of Strategic Planning explained that a re-assessment of SHLAA and windfall sites would be conducted during the summer 2011.

The Corporate Director (Operations) clarified that there had been an inaccurate report in a local newspaper and the number of proposed residential units for Silver Hill remained unchanged.

The Forum also discussed the type of demographic they wanted in Winchester and noted the differences between different areas of the town and the view that, without significant new development, Winchester was likely to have fewer young people.

Several Members voiced concerns regarding the robustness of the predictions for future housing need and, if they were based on outdated assumptions, the irreversible harm that could cause the character of Winchester. Similar concerns were raised regarding the predictions for retail space (which was double the space offered by the Silver Hill development), as those were based on past behaviour and might not have taken sufficient account of the growth of internet-based shopping. The Forum noted that the numbers were based on the latest and most reliable statistics available and that evidence was used by all parties in producing plans and at planning appeals.

At the conclusion of debate, although a diverse range of views was expressed, the Forum had concerns regarding the current evidence, which set out the economic growth and housing need in the document. The Forum therefore agreed to underline to Cabinet the importance of closely scrutinising the evidence and the forthcoming consultants' economic review report. However, one Member spoke against this, as he considered it was clear that Winchester was under-providing in many of the key areas. He also spoke against what he considered to be the assumption in the document that development was, in itself, harmful and suggested that it could bring much needed housing, schools and facilities to re-generate the town.

Question 4 of the document related to Barton Farm and the Forum agreed that any discussion on this subject would be premature, before the Secretary of State's announcement on whether to grant permission to the developer. Therefore, it was agreed that the Forum should email their comments to the Head of Strategic Planning following the Barton Farm appeal decision, to be fed into Cabinet's consideration of the consultation responses.

However, the Forum noted that reference to the proposed knowledge park at Bushfield had been included in both the “with” and “without Barton Farm” scenarios, alongside the re-development of Winnall and Bar End employment land. As some Members had raised concerns regarding the Bushfield proposals, the Forum agreed that it should be listed separately from development of Winnall and Bar End, as the sites were not interdependent.

**RESOLVED:**

**1. That Cabinet be made aware of the Forum’s comments on the “Plans for Places following Blueprint” document as set out above and, in particular, the following recommendations:**

- a) The Forum expresses its concerns regarding the current evidence, which set out the economic growth, retail and housing need in the document, and underlines the importance of Cabinet closely scrutinising that evidence and the latest consultants’ economic review report.**
- b) That the references to Bushfield Knowledge Park should be set out separately from the improvement / redevelopment of Winnall and Bar End employment areas, as the sites were not interdependent.**
- c) That more detail should be added under the ‘Access and Infrastructure’ heading in Table 7 to specify infrastructure needs, such as primary education.**

**2. That the Chairman produces and submits a response in relation to Barton Farm (following the Secretary of State’s decision) for consideration by officers and Cabinet.**

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman