

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM

11 March 2015

ROGER BROWN'S MODEL OF VICTORIAN WINCHESTER

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (ECONOMY AND COMMUNITIES)

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

A scale model of Victorian Winchester was made by former Hampshire County Council officer Roger Brown over a nine year period following his retirement in the 1980s. Although it is popular with residents and visitors when on display, no permanent exhibition site has ever been identified for it. This Report provides an overview of current stewardship of the model. It also proposes an approach to co-ordinate efforts to establish a long term home for Mr Brown's model.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Town Forum:-

- i) expresses appreciation for the work of the City of Winchester Trust and Hampshire County Council in providing regular public access to Roger Brown's model of Victorian Winchester;
- ii) supports the proposals for the creation of a working group as outlined at paragraph 3.4 of this Report to champion the need for a permanent display site for the model of Victorian Winchester;

- iii) delegates the Chair to convene the above working group and report back on progress on an occasional basis to the Forum.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 On his retirement in the 1980s, Hampshire County Council's Chief Planning Officer Roger Brown set himself the challenge of making a scale model of central Winchester as it was in 1870, the date of the first Ordnance Survey map of the City.
- 1.2 The finished model is around fifteen feet (4.5m) in diameter, and benefits from impressive attention to detail. Moreover, every church and pub on the model can be lit, as can each of the model gas lamps which were painstakingly recreated from the period.
- 1.3 Thanks largely to the efforts of the City of Winchester Trust, the model makes occasional appearances in venues around the City. Following a long stint in Winchester Science Centre some years back, it has generally been exhibited at The Great Hall. There is always a positive public response when the model is shown, from residents and from visitors and also from professionals such as architects and surveyors who find it helpful for work purposes
- 1.4 Mr Brown is now 91, and has passed the model to Hampshire County Council on a permanent basis. The County provides storage as well as access to the Great Hall and practical support when the model is brought out for display.
- 1.5 There is a strong desire locally to find a permanent home for the model, and there is a potential role for Winchester Town Forum in facilitating this.

2 Stewardship of the Model

- 2.1 Although the model is safely stored by the County Council, bringing it out for display and packing it away again afterwards places a degree of strain on the structure. Leaving it out on permanent display would minimise the strain, and reducing the potential for damage.
- 2.2 It takes around a day to put the model together, requiring the commitment of volunteers and a degree of technical understanding which, at the moment, is provided by the City of Winchester Trust.
- 2.3 In order to make the most of the model, it also needs to be connected to an electrical supply, and to be accompanied by up to date and well presented

interpretation materials. Because of the fragility of the model, it requires some basic invigilation when it is on display.

- 2.4 The main costs associated with public display of the model are repair and invigilation. It would also require some professional cleaning, were it to be displayed for a longer period.
- 2.5 Mr Brown's aspiration was to include an overhead projection scheme and voice-over, in the manner of a small-scale 'son et lumière' to rival miniature cities in other destinations.
- 2.6 For many years, supporters of the model have tried to find a permanent home which would allow it to be displayed to best advantage, and provide access throughout the year for the public.
- 2.7 With clearance around the perimeter for circulation, the model needs a room at least 25 feet (7.5m) across and probably more to allow for disability access. Space of this size is not readily available in a compact city with high land values like Winchester.
- 2.8 The Trust has made attempts to provide a permanent home, but was not successful in securing a Heritage Lottery Fund grant to bring this about. Others have made efforts too, but without success.
- 2.9 Following the media coverage associated with the most recent exhibition of the model at the Great Hall, the Chair of Winchester Town Forum requested a meeting to be convened to discuss the situation.

3 Future Approach

- 3.1 The requested meeting was held at the end of February, and included representatives of
 - Winchester Town Forum / Winchester City Council
 - Hampshire Cultural Trust (the body now responsible for delivery of museum and heritage services for the Winchester District)
 - The City of Winchester Trust
- 3.2 Hampshire County Council were invited, but indicated that the Cultural Trust (which also delivers museum and heritage services for the Hampshire County Council area) would be best placed to be involved in the discussions at this stage.
- 3.3 It was agreed that no immediate solution would be found, in terms of providing a permanent exhibition space for the model, but that:
 - a) The City of Winchester Trust should be commended for their work in bringing about regular temporary displays of the model;

- b) The support of Hampshire County Council in storing and providing temporary display space at The Great Hall should be also be recognised;
- c) The creation of a small working group to pursue long term opportunities for more permanent display of the model would help to co-ordinate and potentially reinforce efforts being made by the City of Winchester Trust and others in the City;
- d) It would be helpful to have further conversations with the University of Winchester and Hampshire County Council about any additional assistance they may be able to provide in relation to permanent display space.

3.4 It is suggested, therefore, that Winchester Town Forum plays the role of facilitator in bringing together the proposed working group, under the direction of the Chair of the Forum. The working group would consist of those present at the February meeting, together with, if possible, a representative of Hampshire County Council.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

4 COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND PORTFOLIO PLANS (RELEVANCE TO):

4.1 The display of the model of Winchester would support the Community Strategy's economic prosperity outcome by "promoting tourism and the cultural assets of the District".

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

5.1 There are no immediate resource implications arising from this Report. However, it is possible that the City of Winchester Trust could apply to the Forum for a grant to support repairs or other costs associated with ongoing temporary displays of the model. Such a grant application would be considered within the normal grant budget and framework.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: None

APPENDICES: None