

Council Response to Feedback from consultation on draft proposals for Central Winchester Regeneration Nov-Jan 2021

Introduction

All comments received as part of the public consultation on the proposals for the Central Winchester Regeneration area via the feedback questionnaire hosted on Citizen Space have been recorded.

All comments received have been acknowledged and considered. A link to the responses in full on Citizen Space will be hosted on the Winchester City Council website.

A response statement has been drafted for each question to address the main themes raised.

Any comment raised in response to one question but that also relates to another question has been considered in the response statement most relevant to that comment. For example, comments regarding sustainability raised in response to the question on housing are addressed under 'Sustainable Development', rather than 'Housing'.

Any comment that falls outside of the scope of the Central Winchester Regeneration project has not been included in the response statements.

Response to comments on the proposals for housing in the Central Winchester Regeneration area

Proposals for housing, in line with the aspirations in the CWR SPD include a mix of housing and will need to meet WCC's adopted planning policies on dwelling mix, quality, maintenance, private amenity/open space accessibility and the provision and management of affordable housing.

As set out in the SPD, the development proposals look to create strong relationships between the housing and public realm which provide streets that feel safe and usable at all times of the day, encouraging interaction between residents and visitors whilst also creating more intimate spaces to serve residents' needs.

Development which reduces the provision of car parking as far as practically possible is a priority for the council to promote a sustainable city centre. This is in line with:

- The council's Car Parking Standards SPD (2009);
- The CWR SPD which supports the restriction and reduction of vehicle movement through the CWR area and aims to create a legible network which will ease movement for all modes of sustainable transport and reduce dependence on other vehicular modes;
- The council's Air Quality Action Plan

Homes should normally meet Local Plan Part 2 space requirements, however as set out in the SPD, due to the central location (as defined by LPP2 policy DM7) more compact homes may be permitted if proposals are of a very high quality and utilise innovative, creative design solutions and demonstrate an understanding of what makes these developments successful and a reflection of local housing markets and the distinctive Winchester character.

Research shows a demand for housing in Winchester and particularly the city centre. A priority for the council is to provide a mixed use regeneration of this central area that both our residents and visitors can enjoy as set out in the CWR SPD. However, we must ensure the scheme is viable. Appropriate residential provision will need to be balanced with other uses such as creative and cultural. In providing residential areas, uses such as cultural and creative can be provided too.

The CWR SPD sets out principles for design guidance. Any developer will need to take this into account as architects are brought on board / designs are developed

Response to comments on the proposals for workspace in the Central Winchester Regeneration area

In line with the council's Air Quality Action Plan (2017) and Parking Strategy (2020), the workspace proposals seek to reduce parking and traffic movements in the CWR area by encouraging parking on the periphery of the city centre and either walking or using public transport. The provision of adequate and secure cycle parking will be incorporated.

The proposals have been developed in line with CWR SPD which promotes pedestrian and cycle priority and supports the restriction and reduction of vehicle movement through the CWR area and aims to create a legible network which will ease movement for all modes of sustainable transport and reduce dependence on other vehicular modes.

As set out in the CWR SPD the aspiration for the site is to provide a mix of uses rather than domination of one use. This being said, the CWR SPD sets out ranges for various uses to ensure an appropriate balance is achieved. The development proposals are aligned to these ranges with the exception of retail due to recent significant changes to shopping behaviours and the subsequent impact on this sector.

The council has carried out and continues to carry out extensive research to test the market, where the appetite is and what the requirements are including costs and terms of renting space. The council intends to continue carrying out market research to understand demand for various types of workspace to ensure there is appetite for what is proposed.

Research has shown there is a demand for certain types of workspace in this part of Winchester. Particularly spaces that offer flexible working arrangements, that also complement the mix of housing and workspace that already exists in the city centre. The proposal is to provide a mix of uses across the site which includes spaces for start-up businesses and workshops. The public realm will respond appropriately providing creative external spill out spaces for informal meetings.

We are ensuring that sustainability considerations are taken into account at every stage of the project. The proposed creative reuse of the Kings Walk building has been considered from a sustainability perspective as the refurbishment of an existing building rather than demolition and re-build has a lesser impact on the environment.

Response to comments on the proposals for leisure, retail and cultural spaces in the Central Winchester Regeneration area

The proposals have been developed in line with the CWR SPD which describes a desire to include a cultural or heritage building. Further work is required to determine precisely what use this will be. The development proposals do not include details on the uses of specific buildings, this will follow in the next stages of the project.

The development proposals make provision for covered outdoor space, public art and waterways in line with the CWR SPD. The proposals for the leisure, retail and cultural space remain flexible so as to enable a variety of uses.

The research carried out as part of the Kings Walk feasibility study has identified cost of rent, rates, type of retail and the need to improve the evening economy in Winchester, both for residents and to encourage tourists to stay overnight. The development proposals have been created with this in mind.

The CWR SPD recognises the desire to ensure Winchester's culture and heritage is respected and the opportunity to enhance the city's historical elements and cultural offer. This will be taken into consideration as the proposals are progressed.

The aspiration for the CWR area is to provide a mix of uses that will appeal to both residents and tourists and will complement not compete with existing offerings in the city.

In line with the CWR SPD, provision for market stalls is included in the development proposals.

The need for appropriate and sufficient safety and maintenance arrangements is recognised.

Existing research has revealed a gap in the retention of tourists overnight and a gap in retention of younger people. Feedback from younger residents suggests the night time offering in Winchester is somewhat limited. Filling these gaps is an aim of the central Winchester regeneration and if we are to increase overnight tourism and retain our younger residents, activities into the evening are required.

Research has identified a gap in the retention of younger people in Winchester particular those in the 25-34 year old age groups. Filling this gap and providing a development that will encourage these people to stay has been identified as a primary objective for the regeneration. The council has made efforts to target the 15-24 age group to encourage them to participate in this consultation, this includes liaising with the universities, colleges and schools, and running segmented campaigns across social media platforms.

Noise levels will be taken into consideration as proposals are developed. It is a central city centre location however, and in order to provide an active and vibrant redevelopment, a level of noise consistent with a development and location of this type is unavoidable.

Response to comments on the proposals for movement in and around the Central Winchester Regeneration area

Car-free development as far as is possible is a priority for the council to promote a sustainable city centre. This is in line with the Council's Car Parking Standards SPD (2009) and the CWR SPD which supports the restriction and reduction of vehicle movement through the CWR area and aims to create a legible network which will ease movement for all modes of sustainable transport and reduce dependence on other vehicular modes.

In line with the CWR SPD, transport proposals require inclusive design to ensure improved access for those with disabilities. The proposals have been developed with pedestrian and cycle priority in mind. Public transport will be encouraged.

The proposal is to move the buses out of the existing bus station to enable development to start and provide an integrated on-street solution with passenger facilities in suitable places. This decision follows detailed discussions with Hampshire County Council and the bus operators which revealed that a replacement bus hub on Middle Brook Street car park is not appropriate due to the existing road network which would force some buses to travel through the city centre unnecessarily. As the outputs of the City of Winchester Movement Strategy come forward there is an opportunity to review this for the longer term. Appropriate facilities will need to be considered as the proposals are progressed. On street solutions will include facilities including covered shelters, real time information and improved public realm.

Parking charges are set out in the Council's Car Parking Standards SPD (2009) and seek to encourage parking in the most appropriate places. In line with this SPD and the CWR SPD, the council aims to reduce traffic movements through the city centre by encouraging parking on the periphery and walking or using public transport such as the Park & Ride, as well as inclusion of electric car charging points.

As set out in the CWR SPD, adequate disabled parking will need to be maintained.

The development proposals have been designed with pedestrian and cycle priority in mind, whilst recognising current levels of traffic and congestion and encouraging use of public transport and enabling access for deliveries where required.

As the development proposals are progressed and materials and construction methods are determined for new road surfaces and footways, thought will need to be given to long term maintenance. The council will need to liaise closely with Hampshire County Council as they are responsible for maintaining roads and footways in Winchester.

Walking and/or cycling will not be suitable for everyone. It is important to ensure the development is brought forward in a way that is accessible and inclusive.

Response to comments on the proposals for public spaces in the Central Winchester Regeneration area

The Central Winchester site is within the floodplain of the River Itchen and several culverted waterways extend under the site. The ground level rises from east to west and the waterways become progressively deeper. It is only safe to open the culvert on the eastern edge known as Riverside Walk, however water features revealed during periods of rainfall will be encouraged within the design of the public realm in keeping with Objective 3 of the SPD. Rain gardens will also be encouraged to manage storm water runoff and enhance green corridors.

As stated in 3.8 Housing and Community in the CWR SPD, a mixture of public and private outdoor space will be provided and residential areas will have a mixture of rear private communal space, balconies and roof terraces.

The design will include a mixture of traditional and contemporary materials in keeping with the aspiration to create a new contemporary space while maintaining a link to the character of Winchester. In regard to 'Winchesterness', a mixture of styles and materials are to be used in the design. To ensure that the proposals reflect the broader context of the city centre, materials with a warm colour palette of red brick and buff paving will be required.

Appropriate street furniture will include lighting, signage, canopies and public art. These will be integrated into the overall design so that they add value and do not impinge on the users' experience of the space. The bus and market canopies will offer opportunities for year-round use. As with materials, street furniture will be selected to reflect existing elements in terms of colour and finish to maintain the character of the city centre.

Key views and roofscape identified in the CWR SPD and the requirements of LPP2 Policy WIN3 have been retained. These include the view to the cathedral along Middle Brook Street, to the Guildhall from Friarsgate and St Giles Hill. They will be framed and enhanced where possible through careful placement of vertical elements and other built form.

The design includes a mixture of quiet and busy spaces which can incorporate numerous incidental (informal) play opportunities. There are areas with public art that would lend themselves to urban play approaches including water features and interactive sculpture. This approach is recommended in the CWR SPD street character sheets. If required, formal dedicated play provision will be incorporated into the residential areas of the site.

The CWR SPD Development Framework illustrates the areas of greenspace and hard landscape. The proposed public realm approach is consistent with this and includes the greenspace Riverside Walk with pockets of tree planting in other areas. The protection, enhancement and expansion of biodiversity across the site will be key to the greenspace strategy and in line with the

council's Biodiversity Action Plan (2021). Mature trees will be retained including the Crabapple trees along Middle Brook Street, in order to ground the proposals into their surroundings. Planting strategies will be required to create green corridors, provide seasonal interest, and be cognisant of climate change and resilience.

Winchester has a complex mixture of materials, details and styles. The historic core is defined by narrow lanes, alleys and courtyards as well as historic spaces and buildings. The design will therefore vary across the site to provide variety and wayfinding in keeping with the existing layout. A mixture of traditional and contemporary materials will help to blend the new development into the surrounding character, while retaining a distinctive sense of place. In terms of 'Winchesterness', a mixture of styles and materials are to be used in the design.

The public realm design includes a variety of spaces, ranging from tranquil, through to more dynamic. These spaces include multi-purpose event and market areas, café and spill out zones next to the workspace, and quieter spaces next to homes. The variety of open space typologies will allow for a diverse range of activities within the public realm. Flexible spaces can accommodate an array of programmed or spontaneous activities that can respond to the adjacent building uses. In terms of 'Streets Spaces and Water', it is stipulated that flexible use space is to be provided.

Providing active frontages onto public streets and spaces will provide passive surveillance to improve safety and security. Elements will be carefully positioned, and planting will be maintained to provide clear sight lines.

Response to comments on the proposals for sustainable development within the Central Winchester Regeneration area

Sustainability is a key focus for the council. Winchester City Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and the council is now committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2024 with Cabinet looking to the wider district to become carbon neutral by 2030.

The Central Winchester Regeneration scheme is a key focus for the council in terms of delivering on its sustainability commitments. It is the council's ambition that the regeneration of this site will be the flagship sustainable development for the city.

The suitability ambition for the site forms one of the nine key objectives in the CWR SPD. Sustainability considerations will be taken into account at every stage of the project.

When the project transitions into design stage more detail on the sustainability approach will be developed and embedded within the project. This will include consideration of sustainable technology or approaches such as the use of renewable materials and developing circular economy systems.

All new buildings will need to conform to rigorous building performance standards, and ensure the reuse of buildings and materials, wherever possible. It is the council's ambition to limit the use of private vehicles across the site and therefore encouraging sustainable forms of travel through the provision of cycle ways and walkways within the site so these forms of movement are both supported and safe.

Response to comments on the development delivery approach

The council has not yet taken a decision on how this scheme will be delivered. A soft market testing exercise has been undertaken alongside viability studies and public consultation. All this information will be considered by Cabinet when making a decision on the delivery approach.

The delivery of the CWR site is complex meaning the council is seeking to balance a number of key factors including cost, speed, risk, control and expertise whilst allowing for this complexity.

The council is aware of and understands the views of those members of the community that are concerned by a single developer route due to the issues related to previous redevelopment plans for this site. The lessons learned from the past have helped the council move forward to this point and it should be noted that there are major differences between the council's position previously and now, for example the council now owns the majority of the site, and there is clear planning guidance in the form of the CWR SPD. The aspirations of local people have been captured through the consultation on the CWR SPD and the consultation on the current development proposals.

The delivery route for the scheme is being reconsidered in light of the consultation feedback and several options will be revisited through work on the Business Case.

The council will seek to identify the optimal delivery route which can deliver community aspirations whilst balancing a range of key factors, including development viability, and makes the best of the delivery capability available across public and private sectors. Once this work has been completed, a report will be brought back to Cabinet in the summer with recommendations on the way forward.

Response to general/further comments and concerns on proposals for the Central Winchester Regeneration area

We have included a number of images as part of our virtual public exhibition to give a flavour of the types of buildings and features of public realm we want to include on the site. At this stage there are no detailed designs - these will be shared at a later stage in the development process.

We understand the desire for the Central Winchester Regeneration to be in keeping with the character of Winchester. The CWR SPD 'Objective 2 – Winchesterness' discusses this concept in detail and recommends 'local distinctiveness, in keeping with the historic context whilst providing for 21st century needs of residents, workers and visitors'. The work done to date is aligned to all elements of the CWR SPD guidance including 'Winchesterness'. Any development that comes forward will be required to directly address this objective and the council fully understands the need for the development to be aligned to the character and historic nature of the city. Further detail on this element can be found in the Public Spaces response.

JTP worked with the council on the development of the CWR SPD which included comprehensive public consultation activity. JTP also undertook some high-level initial work to assess the viability of the CWR SPD, not as part of a master planning exercise. Initial output from the JTP work was that viability was challenging and needed careful consideration. The WCC Project team and its advisors have built on the JTP work, while considering the guidance of the CWR SPD, to arrive at the mix of uses presented in the Development Proposal while ensuring a viable and deliverable scheme.

It is fundamental to delivery that we have a viable site and it is also the council's duty to seek best value for the land. The council team and its advisors have regularly assessed and reviewed the viability of the development proposals as they have been drawn up. It is acknowledged that there are some uses that are not as financially viable as others which is why it is important to consider the site as a whole to enable the more profitable uses to cross subsidise the uses that represent lower value.

The council understands that there may be concerns about the practical implications of the development coming forward in relation to potential noise, air and light pollution during construction. As the project progresses, detailed consideration will be given to all of the factors which may impact local residents or businesses during a construction period. Measures will be taken to keep disruption to a minimum, the council will provide detail at a later stage.

We have taken guidance from stakeholders, experts and community groups to formulate and initiate our planned approach to archaeology on the site. An Archaeology Advisory Panel was set up in Autumn 2017 by Winchester City Council, comprising

nationally-recognised archaeologists and local specialists. The Advisory Panel reported its findings in public in March 2018. National planning policy is to conserve heritage assets in situ. We are following a comprehensive process to investigate and understand the archaeology of the site. We are currently carrying out early stage work across the site that will help inform the progress of development in the best possible way - in line with national and local policy and outlined in detail in the CWR Archaeology Advisory report, which is available on our website. Updates on progress are also available on our website.