

## Winchester Town Forum 26 January 2023

### Report of Planning for the future in Winchester Town Informal Group and Chairperson of Winchester Town Forum, Councillor Mike Craske

14 December 2022

I am writing on behalf of the Town Forum to express our support for the Winchester Local Plan.

We believe this plan will help to ensure the sustainable growth and development of our town, while also preserving its unique character and heritage

The confidence we have in the plan stems from the robustness of the process. Notably this includes:

- The initial work on the Vision for Winchester 2020-2030, sponsored by the Winchester Town Forum – and the public engagement exercise, which among other points raised the concept of the 15-minute city and the value of local walking and cycling access to services and facilities.
- The learnings that were taken in regards subsequent public engagement, notably new approaches including measures to engage with those who may not historically have participated in these types of consultations. These in turn resulted in the Planning Department receiving the RTPI South East Award for Excellence in Plan Making Practice and also the Overall RTPI South East Winner for innovative consultation.
- The Council hosting three Local Plan design workshops which included feedback on the existing Design Policies, Areas for opportunity, Movement, Open Space and Public Realm. These specifically comprised an invitational event for local architects, property developers as well as the City of Winchester Trust and Winchester Action on Climate Change (WinACC) – along with open sessions for residents.
- The identification and regular connection to key stakeholders, notably the Winchester Town Forum and the City of Winchester Trust.
- The innovation within the Plan itself to ensure it is effectively future-proofed – via policy ‘hooks’ to enable Local Design Codes, Masterplans, Design Statements and other planning detail to be produced. This is particularly notable given the recent announcement from the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities that Councils are ‘**to prepare design codes now**’.

Notably we support and are pleased with the overall strategy to prioritise brownfield first. In addition to delivering appropriate sustainability in terms of both land use and access to services and facilities, it recognises the degree to which Winchester is compromised in regards the natural and local environment, and the transport

options. There are few options for development outside of the existing town area that are acceptable for development and/or that will not overburden our already congested infrastructure. The HCC/WCC Movement Strategy is testament to this fact and much needs to be done to deliver the recommendations within, before any further expansion of the town can be considered

It is important to acknowledge the policies on Student Accommodation and Houses in Multiple Occupancy. Again, these are policies that look to the future and the expansion of education provision that is planned across the town.

These policies also respond to Winchester's Housing affordability challenge. We welcome that the delivery of affordable housing remains a key priority of the Local Plan and the overarching requirement to achieve 40% as a proportion of market schemes. The thinking that has gone into including St Peter's Car Park in the Plan is an important opportunity to quickly demonstrate this commitment and will hopefully create a blueprint for further development across the town.

We also expect this site to be a proving ground for the new Policy for Parking for New Developments where developers will need to demonstrate why they are planning for the number of car parking spaces in their developments. We see this as exciting innovation while recognising that it will require time and precedent for it to evolve.

In summary we appreciate the Local Plan for its focus on providing a range of housing options to meet the needs of different people and families. This is important because it will help to create a diverse and inclusive community where people of all ages and backgrounds can thrive. We also appreciate the plan's emphasis on protecting and enhancing our natural environment. This is crucial not only for the well-being of our residents but also for the health of the planet

In short we believe that the Winchester Local Plan is a well thought out and forward thinking document that will benefit our town for years to come.

Cllr Mike Craske  
Chair Winchester Town Forum