



THE CITY OF WINCHESTER TRUST

Comments on Local Plan Part 2 - 31st March 2014

The Trust supports WCC and its objectives of identifying areas suitable for development and improvement of the City of Winchester, providing that it recognises the City's character, builds upon that character and enables the City to grow in such a way as to enhance the quality of life of existing and new residents and businesses.

Winchester should continue to be a special place in which to live, work or visit, to grow up or grow old and to enjoy ourselves. This will entail new homes and businesses built in the best possible locations for the future of the City, in such a way as to enhance the character of the City and contribute to improvements around the site and its connections with the existing built up area, the City centre in particular.

LPP2, and decisions on where new homes and businesses should be built, should be based on clear criteria, linked to LPP1 and the Town Forum's Vision for the City, that will guide all development and respond to the growing desire for unified planning and interest in how development takes place in the City, its quality; the high level of attendance at many of the LPP2 meetings demonstrated that interest. Members of the Trust attended these consultation events around Winchester and examined the briefing boards prepared by the WCC. There is much we welcome, particularly the potential of redevelopment of the area around the Station and the Winnall Economic Framework Study. Taken together with your response to our representations about LPP1 last year, many of the proposals are supported by the Trust. We do however have some further comments to make, as set out below, referring to further work as well as suggesting criteria by which all sites should be assessed.

1. Criteria

- Promotion of development that reinforces the wider Vision for the City, developing a strategy that builds on the work of the Town Forum in 2012 and the 10 principles in particular.
- Prioritising sites that are in walking/cycling distance of the City centre and local facilities, which will not increase the number of vehicles entering the City centre or contribute to further congestion or pollution.
- Prioritising development closest to shops, schools, leisure, work and public transport.
- Considering sites that maximise benefits - planning gain that might include open space improvements, social facilities, enhancement of gateways to the City etc, as well as supporting a mix of uses.
- Retaining and reinforcing the unusually well-defined transition between town and countryside and the City's characteristic tree cover, respecting the setting of Winchester as described in the report "Winchester City and its Setting", 1998, and using this to contribute to defining, and mapping, the settlement area. The City is

also notable for the character of its “gateways”; these need to be protected and enhanced.

2. Heritage and Conservation

The Trust was pleased to hear that a policy for creating a local heritage list is going to be included in LPP2. We understand that a policy for protecting and enhancing views within, into and out of Winchester will also be in the Plan which the Trust also welcomes. It is particularly important that views from outside Winchester are protected such as views of the Town from the area of St Catherine’s Hill. For example the recent construction of the hall of residence for the University of Winchester on Burma Road has had a major adverse impact on that view and should have been avoidable; we hope an appropriate policy on views included in LPP2 will avoid a repetition of this error.

There also remain a number of outstanding actions from the 2003 Winchester Conservation Project, such as the extension of the Conservation Area into neighbourhoods of special character, which the Trust hopes can be progressed under LPP2.

3. Housing Development and the Settlement Boundary

The Trust is pleased to hear that WCC believe no more development outside the existing boundary of Winchester Town is required to provide the housing required by LPP1 (Apart from Barton Farm, Pitt Manor and Francis Gardens) and also that there is a reduced requirement for more development for employment and retail which can also be satisfied within the existing boundary.

Some of the housing need (421 dwellings) is to be provided on sites offered through the SHLAA process. The Trust believes it is important that WCC also considers whether there are other sites suitable for development that have not been offered but could be encouraged to come forward if the land owners were approached by WCC. This source of land could be particularly useful in enabling more affordable housing to be provided where the need is projected to be greater than can be satisfied on land offered through the SHLAA process.

4. Housing Densities and Design

The Trust has always supported building to higher densities since the advent of PPG3; and its view of development policies for Winchester were set out in the paper ‘The Future of Winchester a Strategic Vision’ published by the Trust in January 2001. This remains substantially our view, particularly on the question of densities which impact on levels of neighbourliness, making places more convivial, and reducing the need for hard surfacing for cars, while also making the switch to short journeys on foot or by bicycle easier, reducing congestion and pollution. This can be achieved in the future by the use of terraced housing in the form of streets and squares. There is one area of Winchester that could benefit from this approach now and this is the Barton Farm development.

The allocation of 2000 houses at to Barton Farm originated in the early 1990s in the Hampshire County Structure Plan before the appearance of PPG3. We are at the early stages of the development of this land and the Trust believes it would be possible and desirable to plan at a higher density using the design approach described above. Through our discussions with CALA Homes and their advisers the Design Guidance has been amended to encourage terraced housing. This will lead to the provision of more of a 21st century urban extension with more green space and avoid the characteristics of the car

dominated lower densities of the 20th century suburbs which exist in the outer areas of Winchester.

The Trust acknowledges it is less easy to achieve higher densities in the existing lower density areas of Winchester but a policy could be included in LPP2 which discourages individual infilling between plots, and in larger gardens, and encourages land assembly from neighbouring plots to create an area of a size where a square or courtyard development would be appropriate and thereby achieve a more attractive design solution, at higher density. Connectivity, and the design of new streets and roads, is also important in this to ensure that all new development integrates with the City as a whole.

One of the challenges of new development is to ensure that design is of the highest quality and reflects the compact and varied character of the City. The Trust is interested by the way in which this is being approached for Silverhill and hopes that this will influence the design of other sites, including Barton Farm.

5. Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces

Safeguarding and enhancing the City's attractive green infrastructure and access to public open spaces is important and the focus should be on quality and usability, not quantity. WCC state that there is a lack of green open space and play areas, but there are other aspects to be taken in to account that need to be highlighted:

- the proposals shown as part of the LPP2 exhibition and presentation failed to clearly identify all the green open spaces;
- in particular they failed to highlight accessible open spaces around the City and beyond the boundaries of the settlement which are, or could be, part of the lived experience of large numbers of residents and therefore need to be reflected in the quantity of green open spaces;
- they made no qualitative distinction between the well used and attractive open spaces, with opportunities for play, and those that are of poor quality, underused and provide limited benefits but which could be improved.

What is important is for all residents to have safe, close and attractive access to good quality green open spaces, and for the wider environment to provide informal opportunities for play, without relying only on equipped areas. Development sites do not all need to contain open spaces, or play areas, within their boundaries, especially if they have safe and attractive access to green open spaces close to homes.

6. Offices and homes in the Station area

The significance of the station area for both businesses and homes has been highlighted and is supported by the Trust providing it is sensitively planned and leads to an acceptable outcome. The current proposals, summarised in the cabinet paper of 19 March, have not been adequately considered and are opposed by the Trust because, amongst other things, they include no provision for improvement of the public realm.

The proposal for the Carfax site to include building a new multi storey car park is wholly unacceptable and misguided, especially when considered in the context of the adjacent multi-storey car park that has recently been converted into offices, the increase in capacity at the station and the need to reduce congestion and create a better environment for pedestrians so close to the City centre. Any additional car parking for rail travelers should be provide by Network Rail, which has ample space for the purpose rather than lose WCC

land with more appropriate uses. Similarly the initial proposals for the Cattle market site require considerable further work before they are acceptable and, most importantly, the Trust has argued that this area should not be considered as two sites but as a whole in the context of an overall plan, part of which needs to relate to Heritage and Conservation (see above) with emphasis being placed on retention of the station and Register Office and the Winchester Club. Further studies, planning and design is required before reference is made to specific proposals.

The potential of this area was not factored into proposals in LPP1 which may have contributed to the inclusion of Bushfield Camp as a site for business development. Now that planning proposals have progressed and suggest that 20,000 sq m of office development may be possible the Trust hopes that the allocation of Bushfield Camp for office development will be put on hold until the full potential of the Station area has been delivered.

7. Potential for development of land at Bar End

The Bar End part of the City, a major entrance, lacks appropriate presence and has potential for significant change that could add value to the area and the City as a whole. LPP2 should contain an indication of how this will be managed in a proactive way. The east of the City is within easy walking distance of the City centre but with much proposed change being focused on the west there is a danger of the City becoming even more asymmetrical, creating unwalkable distances to the centre; a proactive approach to this area would contribute to ameliorating this situation.

8. Higher Education

LPP1 refers to the growing importance of higher education in Winchester and in recent years the University of Winchester has been one of the major growth areas in the City and we believe that Southampton University may also have expansion plans. What are the future needs of the universities and how will they be accommodated in LPP2? If the universities wish to develop and expand, the Trust believes it would be in Winchester's general interest if WCC encourage them to publish their plans for approval by the City Council in a similar way to the development plans provided by the Cathedral and Winchester College.

9. Transport and Access - car parking, walking and cycling

Car parking generally

In the 2001 Strategic Vision document, The Trust proposed that the aim should be to eliminate through traffic from the centre of Winchester, reduce non essential traffic from the City core and provide parking on the edge of the City Centre. LPP1, in line with the Winchester Town Access Plan (WTAP), has similar aims including the reduction in parking by some 500 spaces from the City Centre. The Trust is therefore concerned to note, and objects to the possible increase in parking in the Friarsgate area as mentioned in WCC Parking Strategy.

Car parking for Station Approach Redevelopment

As mentioned above a further planning document to guide the development of the area is needed, including the provision of parking. There are two aspects of this that the Trust is concerned about. The total needs to be justified, fully taking into account:

- the increase in parking being built by Network Rail and South West Trains;
- the findings of the Sustainable Travel Plan for the station, which indicates a very low percentage of train travelers who come to the station by car;
- the further modal shift from cars to bicycle and walking by the time the planned improvements for their routes are implemented.

Walking and cycling, as a mode of transport

The WTAP also highlighted the importance of walking and cycling as a mode of transport although it did not include specific recommendations about how this would be achieved. This omission is being addressed by the development of a Walking and a Cycling strategy; the Trust is supportive of work that is being progressed to prepare such documents.

10. Capacity of services

Consideration is required of the capacity of services, in connection with a statement in LPP2, on the existing capacity of water, electricity, gas supply, surface water disposal and sewerage treatment to meet the needs of the City. The Plan should set out what additional capacity and work is required to serve the growth in demand that will be generated by the development proposed between now and 2031.

11. A Conceptual Framework for Winchester

Much of the above requires proactively planning the future of the City and co-ordinating development to ensure that the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts; such an approach would contribute to avoiding appeals and the risk of unsatisfactory decisions being imposed. This will be particularly important if there is any risk of sites in the SHLAA not being deliverable or failing to yield adequate social housing.

The Trust has consistently recommended that the process of proactively planning in the City should be guided by principles and strategies such as referred to the above; this would be greatly aided by the development of a Conceptual Framework for the City. Such a framework would clearly indicate areas of potential change as a result of development as well as linking this to improvements of the public realm: the streets, green open spaces and connections between them and existing, as well as new, buildings. A number of studies have been developed over the years, and more are anticipated and recommended; together these would make a significant contribution to such a Framework which would give a clear visual indication of all key features. The Trust would welcome the opportunity to support the process of developing such a Framework.

**City of Winchester Trust,
32 Upper Brook Street,
Winchester**