

- One Vision
- One Place

Winchester – Towards Our Future





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Welcome to the Vision for Winchester Town

Winchester is a living community, and like all such communities it will continually evolve. But in doing so it must not lose its unique identity. We – the people who live and work in Winchester – must ensure we build on our strengths: our heritage, our culture, our people. We must tackle our weaknesses: traffic congestion, lack of facilities, pressures for more affordable housing or inappropriate development.

This document aims to help us meet the challenge of change. It's not a plan, it's a guide – a vision for the things we want to achieve. Its aim is to guide policy makers, planners and all who can and will shape our town.

The vision is proposed by Winchester's Town Forum – a cross-party group of City Councillors representing town wards¹. It is based on discussions the Forum has hosted in recent years about various aspects of Winchester life. The Forum also consulted on an earlier draft. The Forum's Members will champion this vision, keeping it under review, encouraging the City Council and others to help make its aspirations reality. And this is not just a guide for the City Council; it provides a common focus and shared agenda for all organisations who can help shape our future.

Most importantly, this must be a shared vision. I want to encourage all who read it to ask "what can Winchester become?" and "how can I help realise this vision?". Please let your local Councillor have your views on this vision and on our future.

Councillor Peter Rees
Chair, Winchester Town Forum

¹ – for clarity this document uses the term 'town' to refer to the unparished area represented by the Wards of St Barnabas, St Bartholomew, St John Et All Saints, St Luke, St Michael and St Paul – what is traditionally referred to as the old city of Winchester





TO THE GLORY OF GOD
AND THE MEMORY OF
THE OFFICERS
AND MEN OF THE
REGIMENT WHO SERVED
IN THE GREAT WAR
1914-1918
THE REGIMENTAL COMMITTEE
HAS CAUSED THIS MONUMENT
TO BE ERECTED TO THE
MEMORY OF THE SOLDIERS
WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR

Why do we need a vision?



Winchester, like many historic towns, faces huge challenges. They come from pressures for growth of our economy or of local housing, from increased transport and mobility, and from higher expectations of our citizens. Our unique historic and natural environment, that which makes Winchester so attractive, needs to be protected.

But we cannot and should not bury our heads in the sand, refuse to countenance change. Change is essential if we are to keep our place in the modern world and maintain our prosperity and quality of life. The secret is to ensure we guide and manage that change rather than have it forced upon us. That is why we need a vision, to say what we want our town to become and to give us control of our future.

This document sets out that vision. It draws on discussions at the Winchester Town Forum (see appendix) over several years, it tries to paint a picture of our future based on what local people want their town to become. That inevitably covers differing views about many aspects of our life: the local economy, leisure and recreation or our environment. Not all will agree with everything here, and our views will evolve over time. But this is the start of giving a real voice to Winchester.

This vision will be a guide for policy makers at the City Council and elsewhere. The Town Forum will use it to influence debate and decisions, to guide spending and priorities and to hold decision-makers to account. The Forum will keep the vision under review, with an annual report on progress. They will ensure that the vision is regularly refreshed with input from all who live in Winchester, work here or visit the town.

Inevitably we shall find that our ambitions will from time to time be in conflict with each other, or with the things we value. The Town Forum has a key role in balancing and resolving these conflicts. In doing so, they will seek the views of citizens and other stakeholders.





What does the vision say?



Since the Town Forum was established in 2002 it has hosted discussions on many different aspects of Winchester life: the local economy, retail and tourism, crime and safety, transport and housing have all been discussed. Local residents and local organisations have shared their views on these matters, and the Forum has helped shape all sorts of initiatives, from the exciting regeneration of Silver Hill to new community safety policies.

This document follows that tradition of looking at life in Winchester from different thematic perspectives. Starting with our historic heritage, which defines Winchester, it considers business, tourism and shopping, housing, transport, our culture and our environment. For each of these themes the vision tries to capture the aspirations for the town's future which have been voiced at public meetings or in the wider debate that takes place in all sorts of meetings, in the press and elsewhere. These aspirations are expressed simply as the key things which we, the Winchester community, will achieve in the coming years.

It's already been said that this is not a plan, so this vision does not set specific dates or allocate budgets to projects. Its aim is to encourage those organisations with budgets and the ability to achieve change – including the City and County Council, the Police, our Universities, Peter Symonds College and our schools, the Church, voluntary or health sectors, and the local business community – to do what the Winchester community has set out in this vision.

The Town Forum is made up of representatives of all parts of Winchester town, from Weeke in the north to St Cross in the south, Highcliffe in the east to Stanmore in the west. The vision is meant for all those communities, whether it is talking about the retail heart of town or maintaining the quality of our suburban housing estates. Its aim is to map out a future for all aspects of life, and for all of our communities.





What is it about Winchester that we all value?



Winchester has developed successfully over the centuries, building on its past and meeting the needs and expectations of each new generation, while retaining its unique characteristics. Today, it is a distinctive and vibrant city in a remarkable setting, with a unique heritage arising from its ancient role as the capital of England and as a major centre of civil government, the church, the law and the military. The special nature of Winchester varies from the hugely popular Farmers' Market and the Hat Fair, to its Cathedral and many other distinctive buildings, and to the special environment found in the water meadows, the green wedges, and the surrounding hills.

Winchester has welcomed and absorbed change, reflecting local people's changing needs, priorities and perspectives

It is our duty to continue this successful evolution in order to enrich the lives of future generations.

Themes for our future

This document considers aspirations for Winchester's future under eight themes, considering how we should:

- ✓ care about our history, heritage and setting;
- ✓ encourage people to do business here;
- ✓ be a natural destination for visitors and shoppers;
- ✓ provide new and affordable housing;
- ✓ improve transport, infrastructure and air quality;
- ✓ become a regional centre for creativity and culture;
- ✓ create a green and environmentally friendly city;
- ✓ be a town which supports safe and stable communities.

For each of these themes the document sets out below some important aspirations, which the vision boldly says we will achieve. If we are to be successful then we must influence the plans and actions of a number of different organisations. When you read these aspirations remember that they are often interdependent: better transport will improve accessibility to retail and leisure facilities which will encourage investment, a cleaner more pleasant environment will attract more visitors to boost the local economy.



Caring about our history, heritage and setting



Winchester has been extraordinarily successful in avoiding the worst excesses of change, and has worked hard to keep its historic qualities whilst adding some good modern buildings and facilities. But....we cannot stay still.

Our vision is to build on the past. We treasure our heritage and what it is that makes Winchester 'special'. It makes good economic sense to invest in our heritage.

The town will inevitably change, but we must make sure new buildings are sympathetic – guided by imaginative architecture bringing complementary new design. And the town must be kept alive, with buildings new and old and our public spaces being active and lively. Our history and heritage should be imaginatively displayed and accessible to all.

As the city evolves we will:

- ✓ create exciting new public spaces: a space for activity and performance at the Cultural Centre in Jewry Street, a new public area to host markets and events outside the Guildhall and a new town square in the Silver Hill development;
- ✓ protect the past, and seek imaginative new uses for redundant historic buildings and land;
- ✓ recognise and protect the outstanding landscape qualities and setting of the town;
- ✓ open up more of our heritage to the public;
- ✓ remove the worst examples of post war architecture or, where not possible, seek their renaissance by imaginative design solutions;
- ✓ insist on high quality design for all new buildings to ensure they complement our heritage;
- ✓ enhance the quality of our public spaces: parks, streets and squares, and bring them to life with entertainment and activity.



Encouraging people to do business here



The largest part of Winchester's economy is the public sector: local government, health, police, prison service and higher education dominate. These are complemented by a variety of small and medium-sized businesses: retail, professional services and creative industries. Winnall Industrial Estate is home to smaller manufacturing and other enterprises. We are home to many who work elsewhere in the region, and benefit from their presence.

We need to ensure that the town meets the needs of businesses as they establish, grow and develop. This may be a need for more or better space, support and advice services or training. Other aspirations for housing or transport elsewhere in this vision are also important for a successful economy.

We will provide opportunities for further investment and enhance our role as a major employment and service centre. Working through the Winchester 4 Business initiative, City Centre Partnership and Chamber of Commerce we will become a business friendly location promoting business excellence.

To develop our economy we will:

- ✓ market ourselves as a vibrant, exciting and safe place to do business;
- ✓ promote the Winchester 4 Business initiative to give a voice to business;
- ✓ encourage business expansion, new and small businesses and create business start up units;
- ✓ promote a 'Business Improvement District' to lead the enhancement of our town centre;
- ✓ establish an "advice hub" for business;
- ✓ support the development of our creative industries and recognise the economic contribution of the arts;
- ✓ promote mixed use city centre developments wherever possible;
- ✓ examine the opportunities for more commercial development in the town, prevent the loss of employment land and regenerate the Winnall Industrial Estate for new business uses;
- ✓ promote a transport system which meets the needs of all, balancing ease of access with the need to protect our environment;
- ✓ work with local educational institutions to promote learning excellence, to improve our skills base and to retain students and graduates;
- ✓ provide space and resources to encourage major and smaller private businesses to stay in the city;
- ✓ develop our town as a venue for conferences.



Remaining a natural destination for visitors and shoppers



Our strength lies in not just being a leisure or shopping destination but in providing a distinctive experience. The shopping centre is compact, attractive and well integrated with the historic core of the City. We should compete by offering local specialist shopping in delightful surroundings. We do not want to become a bland and branded shopping centre, a "clone town". We intend to retain our distinctive character and personality.

Quality of the offer is the key. We have over 350 shops, restaurants and café bars with a strong leisure and cultural mix. We are a high quality heritage destination. Winchester must continue to develop the quality of what we offer for local people and the visitor, with new facilities alongside our historic attractions.

The exciting new £100m Silver Hill development is due for completion in 2011. We want this to be one of the best mixed use shopping and residential schemes in the country, helping to reinvigorate our High Street and complement what we currently offer to provide a mix of shops and other facilities.

To maintain the offer for residents and visitors we will:

- ✓ build an award winning new town quarter at Silver Hill with a mix of uses to enhance the town;
- ✓ develop our role as a major tourist destination based on heritage as a backdrop for a growing reputation for creativity and the arts;
- ✓ conduct a publicity and marketing campaign to promote the mix Winchester can offer;
- ✓ invest in our retail areas to develop a good mix of quality shops mixing national retailers with smaller speciality shopping;
- ✓ become a renowned centre for food and drink with quality hotels;
- ✓ promote the message that we are a safe place, tackle anti-social behaviour, work with licensed premises and deal firmly with unwelcome drinking in public places;
- ✓ promote markets and events to complement the retail and heritage offer of the city;
- ✓ support retail business with better signage and management of our streets;
- ✓ develop an evening economy offering something for everyone;
- ✓ support our cultural facilities and develop a wider range of events and attractions.



Providing new and affordable housing



More decent homes are needed in Winchester. People are living longer; people are marrying and having children later in life; divorce rates are rising; more people remain single for longer and more people want to live here. If we can provide housing for all this will boost our economy and contribute to town life.

There has been a national decline in new social housing. We face a real challenge to provide sufficient affordable housing to meet our needs. The average price of a house in Winchester far exceeds the average across England or the South East. In a recent MORI survey house prices, lack of affordable homes and congestion were the three top concerns of residents, and we know these problems can hold back local businesses.

New homes must, however, be part of the community, not ghettos or commuter dormitories. The biggest challenge is to ensure that housing growth is sensitive to the needs of the established community. It must be integrated with the town and its communities, not bolted on.

The shortage of affordable housing causes recruitment and retention difficulties for local firms, contributes to unsustainable commuting and

damages the character and social cohesion of communities around the city. We want a city for all our residents.

To provide more homes for local people we will:

- ✓ plan for new homes to meet the needs of our community, including affordable housing;
- ✓ secure housing for Winchester's key workers essential to our economy;
- ✓ meet the housing needs of young people, older people and the disadvantaged in our community;
- ✓ work with the University of Winchester, Sparsholt College and the University of Southampton to ensure an adequate supply of well managed student housing.
- ✓ encourage sustainable housing in the right locations;
- ✓ build homes and communities;
- ✓ work with local communities on design statements for their local area to ensure new housing integrates well;
- ✓ promote the highest standards of building and urban design in all development;
- ✓ ensure new homes meet the highest environmental standards.



PARK & RIDE
To City and Station


Brooks

Doppa Buses
around
The City 20p

P
R
K

W426 NFG

Improving transport, access and air quality



Our goal is to reduce pollution and improve access by managing traffic well and providing real choice between modes of transport.

Some see Winchester as congested. It is not. The town certainly draws in traffic, which brings workers, visitors and shoppers. We will not be anti-car but we need to balance between ease of access and the economic gain that brings with the protection of our environment and the town's ambience – keeping the town centre a pleasant place for residents and visitors.

The answer lies in providing choice – good quality public transport, park and ride schemes, alternative means of getting around town, well maintained and signposted car parks, safe walking and cycling routes, traffic calming and championing excellent public spaces with good design and quality. But we also need to recognise that the many people will continue to need to use cars for business or leisure.

In recent years we have seen a number of initiatives: expanding the Park and Ride site to take 780 vehicles and reduced city centre congestion; improving the High Street and Jewry Street by reducing traffic speeds and improving the pedestrian

environment; and greatly improving the interchange between buses, taxis, trains, pedestrians and cyclists at Winchester Station. The Forum will continue to press those

responsible for transport management to provide real alternatives to the car so we can begin to tackle the twin problems of pollution and congestion.

To improve access and reduce pollution we will:

- ✓ promote choice and variety in the ways people come to the city;
- ✓ seek to reduce the need to travel by ensuring more services and facilities are provided locally;
- ✓ manage car parks to balance the need of residents, visitors and businesses;
- ✓ further expand park and ride, making it a more attractive option for visitors and workers;
- ✓ promote improvements to parking at Winchester station and establish better links to and from the station, particularly from outlying areas;
- ✓ reduce levels of congestion and manage traffic to reduce vehicle emissions and improve air quality;
- ✓ provide a new high quality bus station with good links to the suburbs and rural areas;
- ✓ establish more, safer and convenient walking and cycling routes;
- ✓ promote improvements in public and community transport;
- ✓ promote workplace and school travel plans;
- ✓ reduce street clutter and champion well designed and managed streets.



Becoming a regional centre for creativity and culture



Winchester is home to an exciting mix of creative and cultural activities. During the year we have a children's festival; folk festival; dance music festival; food festival; the Hat Fair – Britain's longest running festival of street theatre – and a variety of music, art and literary events. These complement our theatres and other performance venues and galleries.

New opportunities will open up with the flagship Discovery Centre in Jewry Street, which will bring the city libraries onto a single site. It also adds new exhibition and performance space and a public square with a café and toilets.

There are challenges: the evening economy of Winchester is lively, but does not yet offer something for everyone. Bringing families and older people into town in the evening will remove the fear of disorder. We should build on the wide ranging offer of our theatres, cinema, restaurants and bars.

The town has real potential to grow as a centre for culture. Events should be supported and allowed to develop. New businesses can emerge from the talent in the arts and creative activities – from film to design. We can help by providing an 'arts hub' – a resource to support, manage

and promote this diverse activity.

Leisure is also important, whether informal play or relaxation space or more formal

sports facilities. Our sports clubs and societies are an important resource, and help promote local peoples' health and well being.

To develop Winchester's rich cultural mix we will:

- ✓ work with the County Council to build a new Discovery Centre in Jewry Street which the City will be proud of, providing a one stop library service, exhibitions, performing arts space, and a public square;
- ✓ work through the Winchester Cultural Consortium to realise the potential for arts production and display in the town;
- ✓ work with artists to bring life to the city and help retain professional artists at work in the area;
- ✓ support an 'arts hub' at the centre of the new Silver Hill development;
- ✓ support established businesses and new entrepreneurs in the creative and cultural sector;
- ✓ work with our two Universities to promote creative activity and support new creative enterprises;
- ✓ promote a mix of leisure and entertainment activities throughout the day and evening;
- ✓ support a range of events and entertainments in venues and in our streets and public space throughout the year;
- ✓ enhance the Guildhall as an accessible, popular conference and entertainment venue;
- ✓ invest in the River Park Leisure Centre to provide a premier leisure facility;
- ✓ support local sports and recreation societies to increase their membership and activities.



Creating a green and environmentally friendly city



Winchester's environment is one of its main assets. The Town is clean and pollution levels are generally low – although we do have concerns about air quality in some areas. For many, the greatest thing they treasure about Winchester is the quality of the built environment, be it our historic buildings or well designed, sympathetic new development.

There is a very real concern that all of this is threatened. Whether it be dirt, noise, air pollution or even street clutter, there is constant risk to the environment. It must be properly managed, with care taken to ensure that its protection is uppermost in all decisions.

The Town Forum has discussed the ideas of the Cittaslow movement and support their principles: encouraging a more balanced pace of life which respects and enhances the character of the town. We do not want to be seen as 'slow'. We do want to ensure a real focus on quality of life – keeping Winchester dynamic and fresh whilst respecting our unique character.

The management of our local environment also has national, even global, implications. We can

and should play our part in seeking to address climate change, the protection of biodiversity and reduction of pollution.

Design of new development, and protection of our best historic

buildings, is crucial. Planning policies must protect older buildings and ensure new development is appropriate and sustainable.

To protect and enhance our environment, we will:

- ✓ improve the pedestrian environment and gateways into the town;
- ✓ manage our public open spaces to keep them clean and green;
- ✓ create a green town of top quality parks, gardens and open spaces;
- ✓ tackle anti-social behaviour by investing in Neighbourhood Wardens, CCTV, Shopwatch and Pubwatch schemes;
- ✓ tackle graffiti and flyposting quickly;
- ✓ remove street clutter to enhance the town's appearance;
- ✓ give a lead role of Neighbourhood Wardens in maintaining the local environment and street scene;
- ✓ establish ourselves as a "fair trade" town;
- ✓ manage our environment in a sustainable way;
- ✓ encourage the use of public transport to reduce space lost to the car;
- ✓ encourage sculpture and art in the town;



Being a town which supports safe and stable communities



Like all towns Winchester has many communities. Geographically, there are separate communities, such as those in Weeke to the north, St Cross to the south, Stanmore to the west and Winnall to the east. There are others in the town who are more dispersed communities but nevertheless share interests or aspirations – young people or people with disabilities for example.

All of these groups will gain if we realise the aspirations set out in earlier chapters. And making places cleaner, safer, better designed or better served by transport is an aim not just for the centre of Winchester, but for residential areas away from the heart of town.

Nor should anyone be excluded. When we think about new services or facilities, we must ensure that we are not inadvertently excluding one group or another from using them because of decisions taken about how, where and when they should be provided. Services can and should be designed to meet the need of all.

We also need to ensure Winchester's communities have a

voice: their own aims and aspirations for their locality and their town are heard and listened to. Winchester's Town

Forum provides an opportunity to hear those voices, and the Forum will try to ensure all have a say.

To help us understand and respond to the needs of all Winchester's communities we will:

- ✓ support the voluntary sector network;
- ✓ celebrate and encourage volunteering and active citizenship;
- ✓ support the work of Neighbourhood Wardens in managing community programmes;
- ✓ ensure all communities in Winchester have a say in local organisations' plans, policies and programmes which affect them;
- ✓ ensure organisations across the town listen to the aspirations local people voice as they set their budgets and priorities..
- ✓ use the best urban design principles to encourage sustainable communities and to discourage vandalism and crime.

What next?



This vision sets out how we see Winchester evolving. For this to happen we need co-ordinated action by many organisations and individuals. Town Forum's role is to encourage and promote that action, and ensure it is properly co-ordinated. The Forum will be assessing the plans of the City Council and others to see what is already underway to achieve the vision, and identifying the gaps that need to be filled.

So has the Town Forum set out the 'right' vision for you?

As was said at the beginning, the vision is based on widespread discussion. But it is certain that views on the future of Winchester will continue to evolve as the town itself does. The Town Forum wants to ensure the vision stays relevant, and changes along with the expectations and aspirations of the Town's communities. The Forum will keep this under view and report annually how well we are doing in realising the hopes it sets out. If you want to comment on any aspect of this vision, or suggest what might be missing, then contact your local Councillor or Colin Veal at:

- Winchester City Council
City Offices
Colebrook Street
Winchester
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e-mail: cveal@winchester.gov.uk

Our vital statistics



- population – 40,000
- workforce of 40,000
- 16,000 workers commute in daily
- 900,000 live within a 30 minute drive time
- 3,800 public parking spaces
- 3,500 private car parking spaces
- 780 space park and ride site
- 800 buses per day
- 140 trains per day
- 23 cycle routes
- 2 universities and 18 schools

Appendix: The Town Forum

The Town Forum is made up of Councillors from the six wards in Winchester town: St Barnabas, St Bartholomew, St John & All Saints, St Luke, St Michael and St Paul. Members meet quarterly to discuss issues which affect Winchester Town, and host regular public meetings on issues of concern to the town's communities. They guide the Council on priorities for spending the Town Charge, that proportion of Council Tax which Winchester town residents pay for spending on issues of local importance.

If you want to know more about the Forum, the issues it has discussed or the dates of meetings and events, then look at the City Council's website (www.winchester.gov.uk) or contact Colin Veal at the address stipulated on the left.



