

WINCHESTER TOWN FORUM**PUBLIC MEETING****BROADWAY/FRIARSGATE RE-DEVELOPMENT****28 February 2005****1. Introduction**

The meeting was chaired by Richard Coleman, an independent urban design and conservation consultant and former deputy secretary of the Royal Fine Art Commission. Mr Coleman introduced the panel which included Paul Appleton (Partner of Allies and Morrison), Mike Capocci (Managing Director of Thornfield Properties plc), and Vaughan Sutton (Associate Director of Arup).

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Sheila Campbell, welcomed to the Forum approximately 350 local residents, representatives of amenity groups and architects. She explained that the purpose of the evening was to hear the initial thoughts of the Council's appointed developers (Thornfield) and its architects (Allies and Morrison) about the site before developing proposals towards a planning application later in the year.

The City Council's Chief Executive, Simon Eden, added that the re-development of the site was one of the most important in Winchester's recent history and was likely to have a lasting impact on the character of the town. He explained that information on the processes that the City Council had undertaken to reach this stage of the re-development was available on the Council's website, www.winchester.gov.uk.

2. Presentation from Paul Appleton, partner of Allies and Morrison Architects

Mr Appleton described the architects' approach to the re-development. He explained that Allies and Morrison had been working to establish the principles that would help shape the design of the re-development.

He described the current Broadway/Friarsgate site as the one part of central Winchester that failed to make a positive contribution to the town, following its radical re-development in 1959. This re-development had largely demolished the medieval street pattern and had failed to translate the rich variety of building types and forms that were found in other parts of the town.

Mr Appleton proposed that the new development should re-instate the medieval street pattern and that design of the buildings should contain a variety of scales that were sympathetic to the form of the buildings on Winchester's main and secondary roads. Mr Appleton presented to the Forum a section view of the High Street that illustrated the variety of buildings both in terms of scale and style of their relationship to surrounding buildings.

The Brief for the re-development proposed the demolition of all the existing buildings on site, except for the early Victorian Woolstaplers Hall and proposed the re-opening of a number of waterways that passed beneath the site. Mr Appleton added that the re-development offered an opportunity to provide courtyards and informal public squares that would benefit the public realm.

During his presentation, Mr Appleton illustrated to the Forum examples of Allies and Morrison's previous work, which included the British Embassy in Dublin, Newham College, The National Gallery in Scotland, and Pierhead Liverpool (next to the Liver Building). Further examples of Allies and Morrison's work can be found on their website: <http://www.alliesandmorrison.co.uk>

3. **Public Comments**

During the question and answer session that followed Mr Appleton's presentation, the following comments were raised:

The Architectural Character of the Re-Development

During the public question and answer session a number of architects spoke in support of the appointment of Allies and Morrison as the Council's appointed architects, including Robert Adam, Huw Thomas, David Ash, and Graham Anfield.

However, many of the architects and several members of the public raised concerns regarding the mass and bulk of the re-development. They suggested that small two to four storey buildings typically defined the character of Winchester. In response, Mr Appleton underlined that at this stage there were no detailed proposals on the new buildings. However, he confirmed that Allies and Morrison had considered a seven storey building to provide penthouse apartments that would break through the skyline of the surrounding buildings and act as an interesting focal feature, but he emphasised that the form of the building was still open to discussion. Mr Morrison also confirmed that it was unlikely that the proposals would include buildings taller than the existing Woolstaplers Hall and that because of the crowded nature of the town centre, it would only be possible to see glimpses, rather than a full view, of any new buildings. He added that the scale of the re-development was likely to decrease as it got nearer to the St Johns Charity Buildings.

Robert Adam commented on the variety of building types in Winchester and suggested that it would be difficult for a single firm of architects to replicate this variety.

It was suggested that the architects should particularly consider the views from the development to the Guildhall and the Cathedral and from the longer distance views (from St Giles Hill, for example) looking into the development.

Whilst welcoming the appointment of Allies and Morrison as the Council's architects, a representative of the Winchester Residents' Association voiced concerns about the architect's preference for cubism. Others remarked on the importance of the development using the right materials with a preference stated for traditional materials over concrete, glass and steel. In response, Mr Capocci suggested that the new buildings should be contemporary in style and use a range of materials that related to surrounding buildings.

Whilst underlining the potential for the scheme to make a positive contribution to Winchester, there were concerns that the scheme's integrity could be compromised and that it therefore needed the visionary support of one person or group to transform it into reality.

The Existing Facilities at Broadway/Friarsgate

In response to comments about the existing doctors' surgeries and bus station, Mr Appleton explained that, through phased development, the surgeries would be relocated in (or very near to) the re-development. It was proposed that the bus station would be moved to a new location within the site, nearer to Friarsgate so that buses would no longer use the Broadway and the pedestrian lower High Street.

In response to concerns about the existing Antiques Centre in Kings Walk, Mr Appleton proposed, with regret, that the building should be demolished as its current location severely limited the re-development potential of the site. However he added that a similar facility could be created in the new Lawn Street but he suggested that the cost of relocating the existing building, brick by brick would be prohibitively expensive and would reduce the amount of money that could be spent on other items.

The proposed facilities at Broadway/Friarsgate

Several members of the public underlined the need for the development to create new facilities for young people and it was explained that this formed part of the Planning Brief. A member of the public suggested that the plans could also include a temporary ice-rink in the Broadway whilst another underlined the need for the re-development to boost the town's appeal to tourists and visitors. It was also suggested that the new development should embrace the arts with not only public art but an arts centre. In response, Mr Capocci confirmed that a percentage of the development costs were reserved for the arts.

Shopping

A number of speakers raised concerns that the re-development could be similar in character to the Brooks Centre. In reply, Mr Appleton stated that the proposed development would be a unique asset to Winchester and suggested that a covered and relatively small shopping mall would make little commercial sense competing against centres in Basingstoke and Southampton.

The Forum also discussed the types of retail outlets that were likely to rent units in the new development and the probable level of these rents. Mr Capocci explained that the units would be let at a market level to ensure maximum occupancy and that the Council, as the freeholder, would have some influence on the letting process.

A representative of the City of Winchester Trust stated that the re-development should not damage the success of the weekday markets held in Middle Brook Street and in agreeing, Mr Appleton suggested that this could be re-located in the Broadway or the new Lawn Street.

In response to questions, Mr Capocci confirmed that the existing Post Office would be demolished and that negotiations were continuing as to whether the Post Office would take an option on a new unit in the re-development.

Traffic Issues

Concerns were also raised regarding the additional traffic that was likely to be generated by the re-development and the impact that this could have on central Winchester's air quality management area. It was explained that the

proposed residential dwellings were likely to have an overall average of 0.5 car parking spaces per dwelling. He suggested that the new occupiers' reliance on the private car, particularly during peak hours, would be reduced by the development's proximity to good public transport links, employment sites and retail centres. He added that the scheme would be pedestrian friendly.

Archaeological and Construction Issues

A member of the public commented on the archaeological issues relating to the re-development and highlighted the interest amongst the local community to become involved in archaeological digs. Mr Capocci stated that the City Council's archaeological service had been consulted on the re-development and that it was likely that a team of consultants would be employed to develop an archaeological strategy. The strategy was likely to involve both desk-top surveys and a phased programme of digs and Mr Capocci welcomed the prospect of public volunteers.

In response to further questions, Mr Capocci explained that the construction process on site would be phased to ensure minimal disruption to the town.

Other Issues

Several members of the public that spoke underlined the need for public involvement throughout the process.

A member of the public questioned the financial issues relating to the re-development and in response, Mr Eden reported that the Council had taken the advice of independent consultants.

In response to concerns as to the separation of powers between the Council's role as landowner and planning authority, Mr Eden confirmed that there were statutory procedures for the Council to follow which the Standards Board and the Secretary of State monitored.

During the discussion on the development's sustainability, Mr Eden added that this was a central element of the Brief for the re-development and that this included environmental, economic and social sustainability.

In response to public comments, Mr Capocci confirmed that there were no proposals for a nightclub on the site.

Concerns were also made regarding the capability of the local electricity power sub-station, the quality of the pavements in the site

At the conclusion of the debate, the Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution to the discussion. He explained that the comments raised during the debate would help guide the form and character of the development and that there would be further public consultation as the scheme progressed towards the submission of a planning application.

The meeting commenced at 7.00pm and concluded at 9.00pm

Chairman