



## LOCAL COMMUNITY HELP SHAPE VISION FOR CENTRAL WINCHESTER REGENERATION AREA

Over 900 local people participated at market town and railway station roadshows and at the Central Winchester Regeneration Community Planning Weekend held at Guildhall on Friday 24 and Saturday 25 March 2017. Some of the ideas to emerge included:

- A new city quarter with a mix of retail, commercial, cultural, housing and community uses to complement the city centre and serve the whole community;
- Attractive buildings, streets and places, designed and laid out with a Winchester character - "Winchesterness";
- The importance of beautiful and restful spaces in the heart of the city and improved links from Winnal Moors to the north and Abbey Gardens to the south;
- Re-route buses away from The Broadway and High Street to allow for environmental improvements to accommodate markets and other street based activities.

### Background

The Central Winchester regeneration area covers approximately 2.3 hectares in the heart of the city and includes the bus station, The Broadway, Friarsgate medical centre, Kings Walk and the Friarsgate car park, amongst other elements. Winchester City Council (WCC) is seeking the comprehensive mixed use redevelopment of this area to bring real benefits for local people and create a positive legacy for the city.

JTP has been appointed to prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for adoption by WCC. The SPD will set out the type and layout of land uses that could be built to help ensure that the development is fit for the future and will rejuvenate this important part of the historic city.

### Community Planning

The Community Planning Weekend was an opportunity for the community to share local knowledge with the JTP team and help shape the plans by joining workshops, walkabouts and hands-on planning groups. There was also an exhibition explaining the background to the work. Prior to the Community Planning Weekend, the consultation was also taken out to nearby towns where residents look to Winchester for shopping and services.

After the public workshop days, the JTP team analysed and summarised the contributions and presented back to the local community at the Guildhall on Tuesday 4 April.

### Supplementary Planning Document

Following this initial work, the JTP team will develop the proposals, with further opportunity for community input, and draw up the SPD for the area. The aim is to produce the draft SPD later in 2017, with the target that the Council will adopt the SPD before the end of 2017.

*"Whatever happens here must be in the town's best interest."*

# KEY THEMES

The following key themes are a distillation in words by the JTP team of the outputs from the Community Planning process. All quotes are from participants in the process unless otherwise stated.

## SUPPORT FOR CENTRAL WINCHESTER REGENERATION

The community planning process focused on a unique site in the heart of Winchester. Local people are passionate about their city and Community Planning participants supported the opportunity for positive change, brought forward in incremental phases – delivery could be ‘bit by bit’. Participants envisaged a mixed use pedestrian friendly quarter that is distinctly Winchester, supporting a vibrant retail and cultural offer and incorporating the imaginative re-use of existing buildings, such as the Antiques Market and the Woolstaplers Hall.

*“We don’t have to have one big scheme – let it happen organically.”*

## WINCHESTERNESS

New buildings, streets and spaces should be in keeping with the city’s historic context - “Winchesteriness” - whilst providing for the 21st century needs of residents, workers and visitors. Proposals should respect the DNA of Winchester whilst writing the next chapter of its history. There would be a mix of styles and materials; the roofscape, scale, massing of buildings and street design should sit appropriately within the historic townscape. The Supplementary Planning Document should be flexible but definitive enough to provide appropriate direction for forthcoming development proposals.

*“If we’re talking about Winchesterness, there are two starting points: one, there’s a crazy jumble of buildings, a “happy accident”, which makes it work, and then there’s its cultural character as a trading, educational and ecclesiastical centre.”*

## STREETS, SPACES AND WATER

The spirit of Winchester should be preserved and enhanced through the design of new streets and spaces, with

appropriate materiality, sense of enclosure and views. New streets and alleyways can stitch the neighbourhood north of the Broadway back into the city centre grain, with links to Abbey Gardens to the south and Winnall Moor to the north. The new quarter would be pedestrian friendly but accessible for disabled people, cyclists and servicing. Flexible use will allow a market to trade and provide space for other street activities and performances, all of which attract visitors to the city. Opening up watercourses of different character would change the ambiance of the spaces. The Broadway represents an opportunity to create a significant and adaptable public space in the heart of Winchester, through rerouting of buses and taxis.

*“The old street pattern used to follow the brooks – why not bring it back?”*

## “CITY EXPERIENCE” ECONOMY

It was felt that Winchester should aim for a distinctive brand and not try to compete with the Southampton and Basingstoke offer but complement them by offering visitors a “city experience” including heritage, food, leisure, retail and markets. The regeneration of the central areas provides an opportunity to invigorate the town centre, including with appropriate retail accommodation and support for the markets. There should be a mix of new small and larger shop units, but not an oversupply. There was a strong desire that shops should cater for all people and all incomes. The Brooks Centre is in need of new uses and revamping. It was felt possible to retain the Antiques Market building and make more use of this, with an improved public realm setting. Employment spaces could provide for creative and start-up businesses. The re-routing of buses would provide the opportunity for the market to move down to the lower High Street and The Broadway to reinforce the offer of the regeneration area.

*“Winchester must compete by differentiating itself!”*

## GETTING ABOUT

As with most cities, traffic has a huge impact and there was strong support for a more pedestrian and cycle friendly

environment in central Winchester. This could draw people into the site with better pedestrian links east-west and north-south and improvements to cycle routes and facilities. To achieve this end appropriate bus routing and parking strategies should be considered taking account of the needs of city dwellers and those who travel in from the wider district. Future flexibility is important to deal with the development of new technology, such as driverless cars, other policies and longer term (as yet unknown) innovations.

*“People are divided by those wanting to reduce car use and those needing to use the car.”*

*“I live outside and come to the city seven times a week, but it has become a nightmare to park. We need a backup for P&R facilities, otherwise I will stop coming to Winchester!!”*

## BUSES

Participants believe that there is no requirement for a bus depot and bus parking in the city centre. The bus interchange could stay near the High Street, but better connectivity with the railway station is important. Bus stops should be conveniently located, with facilities such as shelter, 5 star toilets and real time travel information. One option suggested was to move the bus interchange to Middle Brook car park, as it is close to the High Street and might improve footfall along Middle Brook Street. Any new interchange could incorporate a cycle focus.

*“To get proper integrated transport you’ve got to get the location right.”*

## HERITAGE AND CULTURE

Winchester’s history and culture has shaped the character of the city and represents a huge tourism asset. Cultural activities and festivals are a big attraction for residents and visitors. It is important to develop a viable strategy for archeological investigation, which will inform detailed building and public realm design. Many participants supported the interpretation of the unique Anglo Saxon heritage, possibly including a new museum and city

trails. A flexible planning brief could include the option of a museum but should not be reliant upon it. Winchester has an important creative sector, representing all ages and backgrounds, whose input into developing the character of this new quarter would be very valuable. Once again, flexibility should be a key component.

*“Winchester has a strong festival and cultural events dynamic. We want to facilitate this and recognise the need – formal and informal. It’s part of what makes Winchester “Winchester”.”*

### HOUSING AND COMMUNITY

It was understood that housing will play an important part in the Central Winchester Regeneration area, given the sustainable location. The type of housing needs to be decided and will need to be assessed in the context of other community benefits provided as part of future proposals and available residential sites elsewhere in Winchester. There were suggestions of homes for downsizers, retirement living, car free housing that was truly affordable, student accommodation, as well as living above the shop. Regeneration of the site should cater for the full spectrum of

the community, including those on lower incomes, as well as the more affluent residents or commuters to London and Southampton. It was suggested that there could be a community-focused Day Centre, which could bring people together: young parents during the day, the unwaged, lonely elderly, offering affordable classes and companionship.

*“Make it better for people to live here!”*

### DELIVERY AND MEANWHILE USES

Development of mixed use quarters is complex and opportunities should be taken to learn from other places and explore options for delivery. A key aspiration is to build for the long term, allowing future proofing for what may come later. It was felt that the potential for meanwhile uses could also be explored on site if these are needed. Participants were also keen that other development sites should be included as part of a ‘bigger picture’ assessment of the future of Winchester.

*“We need flexibly planned buildings whose ground floor can adapt over time.”*

### COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION – KEEP THE PROCESS GOING

Participants were appreciative of the community planning process, which generated a huge number of ideas, and enjoyment from working together to consider the complex design and delivery challenges. It is important to keep the momentum going, find ways to build on the enthusiasm and ensure that people from all age groups and backgrounds are well represented as the process continues. Small interventions and early wins will help. In developing the plans, it is essential to consider viability and other practical issues, and to hone the proposals so that the Supplementary Planning Document is a robust blueprint for the future.

*“The most important thing today is how much people agree.”*

*“We’re full of hope and we’re being patient – it’s all part of “Sense and Sensibility”.”*



# COMMUNITY PLANNING IMAGES

Montage of images from the Community Planning process including market town roadshow event, dialogue workshops, hands-on planning groups and walkabouts.

